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**Capital in the Countryside:
Social Change in West Wiltshire, 1530-1680**

John Gaisford

School of History, Classics and Archaeology

Birkbeck, University of London

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2015

The work presented in this thesis is my own.

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Abstract

West Wiltshire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was among the leading producers of woollen cloth, England's most important export commodity by far, but the region's importance is often understated by modern historians. The cloth towns of Bradford-on-Avon, Trowbridge and Westbury were thriving when John Leland visited in 1540; but GD Ramsay thought they had passed their golden age by 1550 and declined during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Joan Thirsk – following the precedent of John Aubrey, who wrote a survey of north Wiltshire in the 1660s – characterised the region as 'cheese country'.

Based on new archival research, this thesis argues that, far from declining, cloth manufacture in west Wiltshire grew throughout the Tudor era and remained strong under the early Stuarts; that production of this crucial trade commodity gave the region national significance; and that profits from the woollen trade were the main drivers of change in west Wiltshire over the period 1530-1680. Supporting evidence is presented from four complementary sectors of society: London merchants, country clothiers, west Wiltshire gentry, and the villagers of Bulkington, Keevil and Seend, southwest of Devizes – an area with which John Aubrey was briefly but intensely involved.

The thesis demonstrates that the manufactory was dominated by a small group of entrepreneurs who protected their position through successive generations. As prominent landowners in their own right, as buyers of wool from the gentry estates, and as employers of large numbers of spinners, weavers and other cloth-workers, they exerted a pervasive influence over the local economy. The thesis identifies these leading entrepreneurs and for the first time examines their impact on social, economic and cultural development. It challenges the established narrative of decline, and argues that John Aubrey's account was deeply affected by his own personal circumstances and experience.

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Abbreviations

app	appendix
b	baptised, born
Britannica	Encyclopedia Britannica online (www.britannica.com)
AHR	Agricultural History Review
APC	Acts of the Privy Council
BHO	British History Online (www.british-history.ac.uk)
BRO	Bristol Record Office
CCED	Clergy of the Church of England Database (www.theclergydatabase.org.uk)
CSPD	Calendar of State Papers, Domestic series
DDNB	Canadian Dictionary of National Biography (www.biographi.ca)
c	chapter (of statute)
CPR	Calendar of Patent Rolls
CUL	Cambridge University Library
d	died
ed	editor, edited by
edn	edition
ECHR	Economic History Review
<i>et al</i>	and others
<i>et seq</i>	and following
f/ff	folio/s
fn	footnote
GL	Guildhall Library
HE	Historic England
HJ	Historical Journal
HMC	Historical Manuscripts Commission
HoP	History of Parliament (www.historyofparliamentonline.org)
HSVS	Harleian Society Visitations Series
HoP draft	History of Parliament Trust, London, unpublished article.
JBS	Journal of British Studies
JEH	Journal of Economic History
JMH	Journal of Modern History

KRO Kent Record Office
L&P HEN VIII Letters and Papers of Henry VIII
LJ London Journal
LRS London Record Society
m membrane
NRS Northampton Record Society
ns new series
ODNB Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
OED Oxford English Dictionary
os old series
P&P Past and Present
PR Parish Register
PWDRO Plymouth and West Devon Record Office
r recto
rev revised, revised by
rp reprint, reprinted
SAL Society of Antiquaries, London
SANHS Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society
SP State Papers
SRS Somerset Record Society
tab table
v verso, versus
VCH Victoria County History
Vis Visitation
TBGAS Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society
TWAS Transactions of the Worcestershire Archaeological Society
WAM Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society Magazine
WNQ Wiltshire Notes and Queries
WRO Wiltshire Record Office, now the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre
WRS Wiltshire Record Society
WSRO West Sussex Record Office

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My debt to earlier historians, most notably to Ken Rogers, George Ramsay, Julia de Lacy Mann, Eric Kerridge and Joan Thirsk, will be evident from my footnotes; even where I have questioned their conclusions, I have admired their deep scholarship. Errors and misunderstandings in my work are mine alone, but for helping to identify errors in earlier drafts I am grateful to Nigel Llewellyn (who with Linda Halvorsson supported my initial application to Birkbeck) and to Jane Edmonds, who both read and commented on the entire work.

The map of West Wiltshire on page 14 was commissioned by James Bowen to accompany my paper 'Elizabethan Entrepreneurs: Three Clothiers of the Frome Valley' in Bowen, JP and Brown, AT (eds) *Custom and Commercialisation in English Rural Society, c1350-c1750: Revisiting Postan and Tawney* (Hatfield, forthcoming)

Preface

This study developed from a micro-history of Bulkington, a small village southwest of Devizes, and refers frequently to other settlements within easy walking distance from the village, with which many family connections, marriage contracts and commercial transactions were made. There is no established geographical name for this borderless zone of familiarity; and terms such as area, district or environs have administrative overtones that are inappropriate. Since all of the villages lie in or around the clay vale in which Bulkington itself stands, I have described them collectively as belonging to 'Bulkington vale'. It is shown in Map 2.

The larger region of west Wiltshire also presents problems of usage. In its capitalised form as a unit of local government West Wiltshire extends north to south from Bradford to Warminster, and east to west from Devizes to the county border. In the earlier times, however, places as far into east Somerset as Norton St Philip, on the western flank of the Mendip Hills, were sometimes described as 'in Wiltshire' in official documents such as Exchequer records. In this study the term 'west Wiltshire' should in most cases be understood to include the strip of Somerset between Frome and Freshford on both sides of the river. The whole region is shown in Map 1.

West Wiltshire was a cloth-making centre of national importance, but this is not a study of cloth-making and I have avoided technical terms as far as possible. However it may help to know in advance that the heavy broadcloths made there were nearly two yards wide, about twenty-six yards long, and weighed some sixty-four pounds. They were thickened, and thus made water-resistant, by being soaked in a solution of water and fuller's earth, and pounded in troughs by huge wooden hammers known as stocks, in fulling mills powered by streams and rivers. The wet cloths were then hung out to dry in meadows by the fulling mills, suspended from tenter rails by iron hooks which stretched the cloth back to an even length and width. The hooks did not damage the fabric because stronger and coarser yarn was used for the edges, or 'lists' of the cloth, where the hooks were inserted. Broadcloths might be described as narrowlist or broadlist according to the width of this edging, but they were always measured 'between the lists'. In early modern documents the word 'mill' may refer either to whole building or to the individual fulling stocks it contained. When a mill-

owner is said to own four mills, these may all be housed within a single unit. In some cases a mill-house might contain grindstones for making flour, as well as fulling-stocks.

Many individuals are mentioned in this study, which has required some editorial decisions to be made. The title 'Sir' has not generally been used except where the context demands. To reduce confusion over identity within families, individuals with the same name as a predecessor have been introduced with a roman numeral, eg Edward Bayntun II, Edward Bayntun III. These numerals are repeated in the Pedigree charts, which can be consulted in case of doubt. For west Wiltshire individuals other than those noted by the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB)* or the *Houses of Parliament (HoP)*, dates of baptism, marriage or burial have usually been taken from the transcripts of parish registers held at the Wiltshire History Centre at Chippenham, and checked against the originals only where there was reason to doubt their accuracy or seek further detail.

I have followed the following conventions in terms of style. Early modern spelling and punctuation have been silently modernized. Old Style dates, in which the year commences on 25 March, have been amended to New Style. Place names have been standardised to modern Ordnance Survey forms and spellings. Titles of *ODNB* and *HoP* articles have been silently simplified and their punctuation standardised. References to the *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic series (CSPD)* and similar works are to pages rather than entry numbers unless otherwise indicated. In the bibliography and footnotes, full stops have only been used for abbreviations where essential to avoid ambiguity.

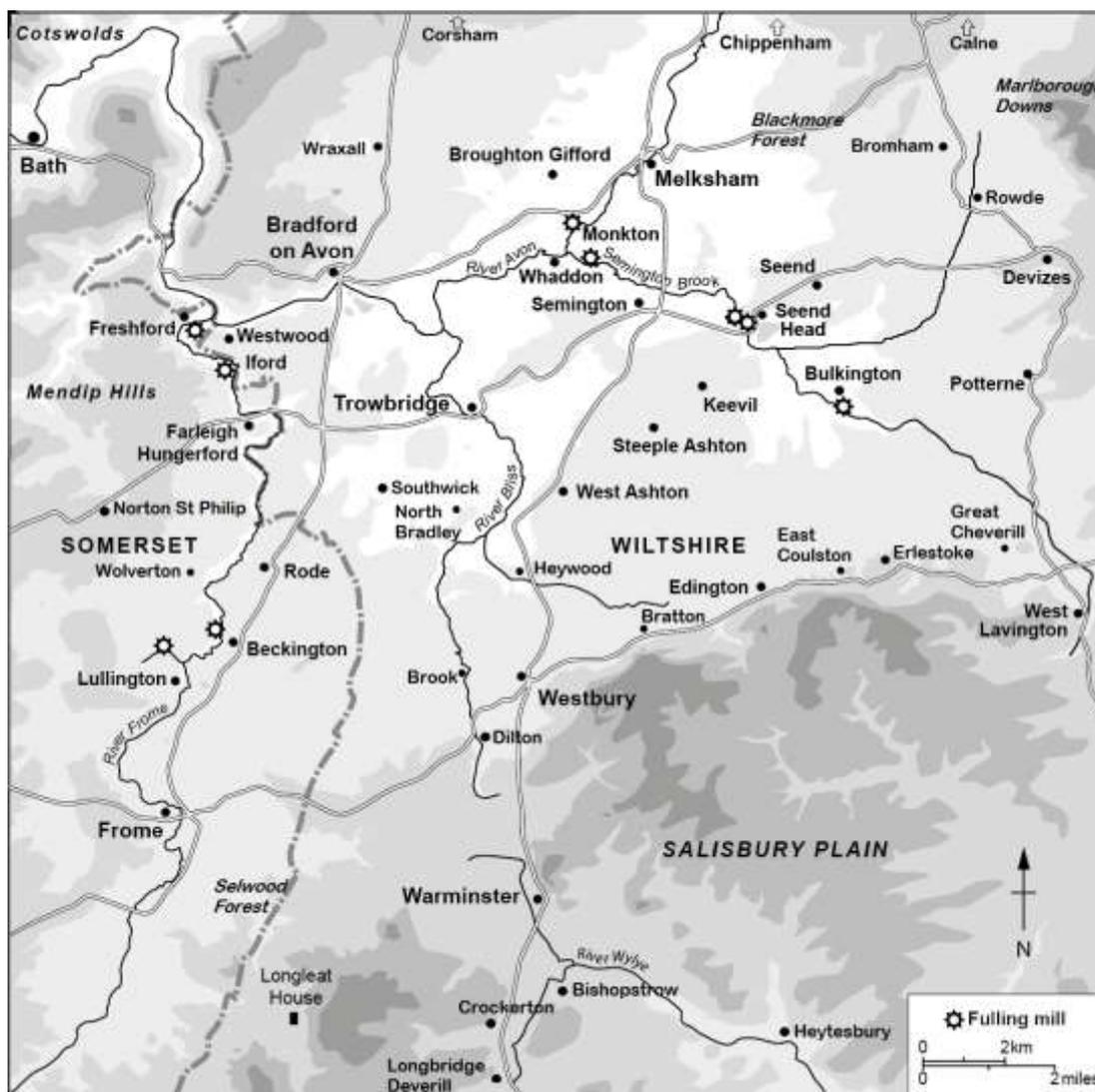
To my wife Moira, my sister Trish,
and my children Lewis and Rebecca.

In memory of my parents

Harry Ralph and Betty Louisa Gaisford.

'This searching after antiquities is a wearisome task...yet methinks I am carried on with a kind of oestrum; for nobody else hereabout hardly cares for it, but rather makes a scorn of it. But methinks it shows a kind of gratitude and good nature, to revive the memories and memorials of the pious and charitable benefactors long since dead and gone.'

John Aubrey, 1670



Map 1 West Wiltshire

This overview map shows the main landscape features, settlements and fulling mills named in the text. Only the major routes are shown: there were many lanes and tracks connecting all these settlements.

The topography of west Wiltshire consists of low-lying clay vales surrounded by uplands – the Mendips, Cotswolds, Marlborough Downs and Salisbury Plain – which supported large flocks of sheep.

One of England's most important cloth manufactories developed in the vales, along three tributaries of the River Avon – the Frome, the Biss and the Semington Brook – which flow from the Mendips and Salisbury Plain.

A more detailed seventeenth-century map of the same area, showing the forests, parks and hundred boundaries, can be found at the very end of the study, followed by an index of place-names.

Cartography by Suzanne Yee. © University of Hertfordshire Press 2015.

Chapter 1 **Review**

This is a study of the social impact of financial capital generated by the manufacture of broadcloth in the corner of Wiltshire formed by the Rivers Frome and Avon, by the Salisbury Plain and the Marlborough Downs.¹ From the early sixteenth century this part of Wiltshire, together with a strip of Somerset along the east bank of the Frome, was a thriving commercial centre, producing large quantities of undyed or ‘white’ broadcloth for sale to London’s drapers and overseas merchants. By 1600 this business had grown substantially and west Wiltshire was an important hub of the ‘western broadcloth’ manufactory extending through Somerset and Gloucestershire;² by 1700 it was the centre of what Defoe would describe as ‘this prodigy of a trade’, which ‘maintains and supports so many poor families, and makes so many rich ones.’³ The sale of cloth brought capital into the countryside and had a significant impact on west Wiltshire society.

Who were the most successful entrepreneurs? How far could they advance within a predominantly agricultural and hierarchical society? How were they accommodated by the traditional rulers of the county, the magnates and the greater gentry? And how did their activities affect their landlords, their neighbours and their workforce?

This introductory chapter is divided into four parts. The first records a single event in 1536 which took place on the road from London to Wiltshire, and provides contemporary descriptions of west Wiltshire at each end of the study period, by John Leland and John Aubrey. The second section discusses the national significance of early modern Wiltshire, the magnate governors of the county, and the Company of Merchant Adventurers which dominated the broadcloth trade in London; then turns to the society of west Wiltshire and introduces the communities examined in the study. The third section reviews the historiography of early modern change as it relates to west Wiltshire in this period. The fourth and final section restates the specific questions the study seeks to answer, explains the methodology used for researching and writing, and sets out the chapter plan and structure of the thesis.

¹ See Map 1.

² Mann, J de L *The Cloth Industry in the West of England from 1640-1880* (Oxford, 1971) xii-xiii.

³ Defoe, D *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain* ed Cole, GDH & Browning, DC (London, 1966) vol 1, 272, 271.

1 Testimonies of change: John Flower, John Leland and John Aubrey

According to his deposition at Star Chamber, the clothier John Flower the younger of Potterne in Wiltshire and his elder brother, also John Flower, had been riding peaceably together in Windsor Great Park on 8 December 1536 when they were attacked.⁴ Four men with their faces muffled – three on horseback and one on foot – robbed the Flowers of their horses, a gold ring and £59 13s 4d in ready money. With the help of the constable in Maidenhead, the victims identified their attackers as a Mr Bamfield and his servants, from Hardington in Somerset, close to the Wiltshire border. Further evidence from the ostler and a servant at The Bear in Hungerford, on the road from Wiltshire to London, showed that Bamfield had stayed there on the night of 5 December, and thus could have been in Windsor three days later. It seems a straightforward case: the clothier was riding home from London having sold a couple of packs of broadcloths.⁵ He and his elder brother, aged about sixty, were easy victims for a group of four armed men, especially since one of them was carrying a javelin. Perhaps the main points of interest in the crime itself are that the Flowers should have risked carrying so much coin, and that their attackers were led by a gentleman.

But John Flower's deposition, made five years after this event, reveals much more of interest about Wiltshire society in the 1530s. Since the day of the crime, the clothier had sought justice through every means known to him without success, and was convinced that he had become victim of a cover-up. On the advice of another kinsman, John Flower of Rowde, he had ridden to see the most powerful of the local magnates, the Queen's vice-chamberlain Edward Bayntun, at his great mansion of Bromham Hall, just a couple of miles north of Rowde. Bayntun had ordered further investigation, then met the Flowers again in the company of Henry Long, a distant kinsman of the clothier,⁶ and John Bonham of Hazelbury, the father-in-law of Bamfield. Bonham was a leading figure in the county, and

⁴ Most details of this case are from S-M, A St J 'Memoranda Relating to the Ancient Wiltshire Family of Flower' *WNQ* 8 (1914-16) 167-79, which includes a transcript of the Star Chamber depositions at TNA STAC 2/15 ff 127 & 128. For pedigrees of Flower see *Vis Wilts 1565* 19 and *Vis Hants 1634* 216.

⁵The merchant Thomas Kytson was paying about £34 for a pack of ten west Wiltshire broadcloths at this time: Brett, CJ 'Thomas Kytson and Wiltshire Clothmen, 1529-1539' *WAM* 97 (2004) 54.

⁶ John Flower's daughter Isabel was married to Thomas Long of Potterne (d 1567): WRO 947/2190 tab 3.

receiver for the Duchy of Lancaster estates.⁷ He assured the victim that he must be mistaken; Bamfield was not that kind of man.

Blocked in this channel, the clothier then sought redress through his London contacts. He approached 'his friend Mr Locke, a mercer' – probably William Lock, one of Cheapside's wealthiest overseas merchants, who was in regular contact with Thomas Cromwell as an informant on developments in Antwerp.⁸ Lock gave Flower an introduction to Cromwell, who wrote on his behalf to Henry Long ordering him to investigate further. When Long reported back to Cromwell, the Lord Privy Seal issued Flower with a summons to serve on Bamfield, ordering him to appear before the King's Council. But from that point on the case became mired in evasion, delay and obfuscation. The case dragged on; then in 1540 Cromwell was executed. The following year, in what seems to have been Flower's last attempt to win justice, the clothier sued for justice in Star Chamber, claiming that he had been forced to leave his four looms to pursue his case, 'and thereby is almost brought to extreme poverty.'⁹

No record has been found of a judgement in this case, but its accuracy as a reflection of the power relationships in Wiltshire society in 1540 is borne out by the writings of the antiquary John Leland, who travelled through the county in 1542 and 1545.¹⁰ Leland, who held property in Wiltshire,¹¹ made notes on three separate journeys through the northwest of the county,¹² on one of which – from Marlborough to Bath via Devizes and Steeple Ashton – he may have passed close by Flower's farmhouse at Worton, in the parish of Potterne. He does not mention the clothier, but does record seeing Bromham Hall as he left the heights of Devizes, 'lying in a bottom, about 3 miles off' and notes that Bayntun had taken stone from the castle gate and chapel to build his great mansion.¹³ On an earlier itinerary, from Cirencester to Bath via Chippenham and Trowbridge, Leland mentions the clothier William Stumpe of Malmesbury, who was 'exceeding rich' and records that his son

⁷ Baker, TFT 'John Bonham (by 1524-55)' *HoP 1509-58*.

⁸ McDermott, J 'Sir William Lok (1480-1550)' *ODNB*. Lock may have been known to Flower through Robert Long, a Mercer from west Wiltshire who had been Lock's apprentice before gaining his freedom in 1533. See Chapter 2.2.

⁹ This was an exaggeration, for in 1550 Flower had a flock of 800 sheep: Ramsay, GD *The Wiltshire Woollen Industry in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Oxford, 1943; rev ed 1965) 12.

¹⁰ Chandler, J (ed), *John Leland's Itinerary: Travels in Tudor England*, Stroud (1993) xxviii-xxx.

¹¹ In 1535 Leland was made a prebendary of Wilton Abbey, with the livings of North Newnton, near Pewsey, and West Knoyle, near Mere: Carley, JP 'John Leland (c1503-1552)' *ODNB*.

¹² See Chapter 2.1. A fourth journey was made through the south of the county.

¹³ Toulmin Smith, L (ed), *The Itinerary of John Leland: In or About the Years 1535-1543* 5 vols (London, 1908) vol 3, 82.

James had married a daughter of Edward Bayntun.¹⁴ A few miles further on Leland visited 'old Mr Bonham' at the manor house his father had built at Hazelbury, and mentions the two manor houses of Henry Long, at Wraxall near Bradford-on-Avon and Draycot near Chippenham.¹⁵ He notes that Master Bayntun 'in Queen Anne [Boleyn]'s time' had pulled down part of her ruined manor house at Corsham and taken the stone by licence to Bromham Hall.¹⁶

Taken together, the Flower deposition and Leland's writings provide clear evidence of the distribution of power and wealth in west Wiltshire after the fall of Anne Boleyn and Thomas Cromwell. Bayntun, Long and Bonham were leading figures in a county oligarchy headed by Edward Seymour and his brother Thomas, brothers-in-law to the King and uncles of Prince Edward. What is especially notable is that Leland, in recording 'a whole world of things very memorable,'¹⁷ provided evidence of the dramatic social change being generated by the wealth of the Wiltshire clothiers. He was aware of the new building undertaken by these men, especially by Thomas Horton in Bradford and by Thomas Baylie and Alexander Langford in Trowbridge, where Horton had also built. He recorded clothiers' benefactions to their parishes: William Stumpe had been the chief contributor in acquiring the abbey church of Malmesbury for the use of the townspeople; Thomas Horton had endowed a chantry and built a church house in Bradford; Robert Long and Walter Lucas had paid for two new aisles for the church at Steeple Ashton. Leland recorded the stone bridges so vital to the clothiers for moving goods across the brooks and rivers that powered their fulling mills, and even noted the quarries which provided the stone.¹⁸

More than a century later, during the Interregnum and the early years of the Restoration, John Aubrey visited most of the places Leland had passed through, and described many of the churches and manor houses. Aubrey had grown up at Easton Piercy close to the Longs' manor at Draycot, and knew the Bayntuns' great house at Bromham before it was destroyed in the Civil War.¹⁹ Aubrey's *Brief Lives* include comments on many of the leading gentry of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries; the royalist colonel James

¹⁴ James Stumpe married Edward Bayntun's daughter Bridget in 1537. After she and her father both died, Stumpe married Bayntun's widow Isabella. Baker, TFT 'Sir James Stumpe (by 1519-63)' *HoP* 1509-58.

¹⁵ Toulmin Smith *Itinerary* vol 1, 133-4.

¹⁶ *ibid* 133.

¹⁷ Carley 'John Leland'.

¹⁸ See Chapter 2.2.

¹⁹ Fox, A 'John Aubrey (1626-97)' *ODNB*.

Long and a later Edward Bayntun were among his informants.²⁰ But Aubrey shows little interest in the great Elizabethan clothiers. In his notes for chapters on the 'History of the Clothing' and 'Eminent Clothiers of this County' in *The Natural History of Wiltshire* he names only Robert Long of Steeple Ashton and William Stumpe of Malmesbury, both from Henrician times, as clothiers of the sixteenth century; and of the seventeenth only his own contemporaries Paul Methuen of Bradford and William Brewer of Trowbridge, who 'driveth the greatest trade for medleys of any clothier in England.'²¹ In this he follows Thomas Fuller, who had included only Stumpe of Malmesbury and Sutton of Salisbury amongst the 'Benefactors to the Public' of Wiltshire in his *Worthies of England*, published posthumously in 1662.²²

In his 'Preface' to *An Essay towards the Description of the North Division of Wiltshire*, dated 28 April 1670,²³ Aubrey also omits any mention of the clothiers when accounting for dramatic changes in Wiltshire since the turn of the seventeenth century, especially in terms of its political economy:

For the government, till the time of King Henry VIII it was like a nest of boxes; for copyholders (who till then were villains) held of the lords of the manor, who held of a superior lord, who perhaps held of another superior lord or duke, who held of the king. Upon any occasion of jousting or tournaments in those days, one of these great lords sounded his trumpets (the lords then kept trumpeters, even to King James) and summoned those that held under them. Those again sounded their trumpets, and so downward to the copyholders. Old Sir Walter Long, grandfather to Colonel Long, kept a trumpeter: and rode with thirty servants and retainers to Marlborough and so for others of his rank and time....Then were entails in fashion (a good prop for monarchy). Destroying of manors began temp. Henry VIII, but now common; whereby the mean people live lawless, nobody to govern them, they care for nobody, having no dependence on anybody. By this method, and by the selling of the church lands, is the balance of the government quite altered, and put into the hands of the common people.²⁴

The contrast between the accounts of Leland and Aubrey, at either end of a period of social, political and cultural transformation, may be taken as evidence that a major economic change – the rise of the broadcloth industry in Wiltshire – had become so familiar that it seemed scarcely remarkable by the time of Aubrey's writing. Leland's reaction to the

²⁰ Dick, OL *Aubrey's Brief Lives* (pb edn, London, 1992) xli, 193.

²¹ Aubrey, J *The Natural History of Wiltshire* ed Britton, J (London, 1847), 112-3.

²² Fuller, T *The History of the Worthies of England* ed Nuttal, PA (London, 1840) vol 3, 337-8.

²³ Aubrey, J *Wiltshire: The topographical collections of John Aubrey, FRS, AD 1659-70, corrected and enlarged by John Edward Jackson* (Devizes, 1862) 3-17.

²⁴ *ibid* 7-9.

economic indicators of costly new stone buildings and bridges and his identification of the leading clothiers is nowhere reflected in Aubrey's perception of the passing of feudal society, which he attributes by implication not to economic but to political and legal factors: the demise of local fiefdoms accelerated by the abolition of the court of wards, the breaking of entails.²⁵ To a large extent Aubrey's view of the matter persists today. The importance of legal factors is still maintained in the great debate about the transition from feudalism to capitalism that has absorbed historians since Marx, but the social significance of the broadcloth trade has remained comparatively obscure. Its economic relevance has been documented, but mainly as it affected the London merchants, not their country suppliers.²⁶ Finally, a further contrast between Leland and Aubrey should also be noted: a shift in the fortunes of the Wiltshire gentry. While Leland had recorded the scale of new building to be seen in the county, Aubrey wrote an elegy for what had been lost. For him, the lesser gentry (his own family included) faced decay in the countryside. Aubrey's future lay in London, where he would spend most of his later life, and where he was well-connected both to Wiltshire's magnate families and at Court.²⁷

2 Magnates, gentry, merchants and clothiers

The wealthiest inhabitants of Wiltshire in the early modern era were undoubtedly the landowning magnates whose political and economic fortunes fluctuated with their relationship to the Crown. These men owed an absolute duty of military service to the monarch, especially important in Wiltshire because the county lies north-south across the most important routes from the West, from the Channel ports of Exeter and beyond, and from the ports of the Bristol Channel, any of which could serve an invasion force from France or Spain. This danger was real: in 1485, Henry Tudor had landed at Milford Haven in south Wales; 200 years later Monmouth would come ashore at Lyme, and in 1688 William of Orange's army invaded at Torbay. Wiltshire's uplands – Salisbury Plain and the Marlborough Downs – provided platforms from which defence could be mounted. Devizes, on the western tip of the Marlborough Downs, was an important bastion, commanding roads from Bridgwater and Bristol. As Fuller noted in his *Worthies of England*:

²⁵ Aubrey describes the Court of Wards as 'a great bridle' and entails as 'a good prop for monarchy': Aubrey *Wiltshire* 7, 9.

²⁶ See section 3 below.

²⁷ Fox 'John Aubrey'.

We read [in Selden] how the Romans placed their *Triarii* (which were veteran soldiers) behind and the service was very sharp indeed ... We may say that these three counties, Wiltshire, Devonshire and Cornwall, are the *Triarii* of England, yet so that in our author Wiltshire appears as principal, the others being added for its assistance.²⁸

The magnates of the county were among the Tudors' most loyal supporters, and they were well rewarded for their services. In 1513 Edward Hungerford of Farleigh Castle, John Seymour of Wolf Hall and his son Edward (later the Protector) and Henry Long of Wraxall had all fought in France for Henry VIII.²⁹ Thirty years later Henry's campaign at Boulogne in 1544 was joined by Edward Bayntun, Henry Long and the King's brothers-in-law Edward and Thomas Seymour (later the Lord Admiral). Queen Katherine Parr's brother-in-law William Herbert, later the first Earl of Pembroke, served at Boulogne within months of acquiring his estate at Wilton, near Salisbury.³⁰ Military service was a fundamental obligation for these great landowning families, whose loyalty would be tested again under the Stuarts: there were crucial engagements near Devizes and Bath during the Civil War.³¹ Marching towards London in 1685 Monmouth's rebel army was blocked at the Wiltshire border and attacked at Norton St Philip; it was blocked again at Frome before being forced back to final defeat at Bridgwater.³²

The military outlook of the leading gentry families pervaded the politics of the county even in peacetime, with the lord lieutenant (from the 1550s usually the Earl of Pembroke) ultimately responsible for law and order as well as military preparedness. Administration was through the hundreds and boroughs grouped geographically into six divisions, each led by a local magnate. The greater gentry in each division served the Crown as justices of the peace, enforcing both the statutes of the realm and the instructions of the Privy Council. In this role they were required to oversee much of the economic activity of the county, especially the conduct of markets and fairs, and the relationship between masters and apprentices, and to enforce the regulations for the manufacture of cloth. Each year one

²⁸ Fuller *Worthies*, 447. Fuller's reference is presumably to John Selden's *Titles of Honor* (London, 1614).

²⁹ Harrison, WJ 'Walter Hungerford (1503-1540)' *ODNB*; Davids, RL 'Sir John Seymour (1473/4-1536)' *HoP* 1509-58; Beer, BL 'Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset (1500-1552)' *ODNB*; Baker, TFT 'Sir Henry Long (by 1487-1556)' *HoP* 1509-58.

³⁰ Baker, TFT 'Sir Edward Baynton (by 1495-1544)' *HoP* 1509-58; Baker 'Sir Henry Long'; Beer 'Edward Seymour'; Bernard, GW 'Thomas Seymour (1509-1549)' *ODNB*; Sil, NP 'William Herbert (1506/7-1570)' *ODNB*.

³¹ See Chapter 4.1.

³² Harris, T 'James Scott, Duke of Monmouth (1649-85)' *ODNB*.

magistrate was appointed sheriff for the county, responsible for ensuring that the high constables and bailiffs of the hundreds and the petty officials of the parishes carried out the orders of the justices, detaining suspects as required. The sheriff and his officials empanelled jurors for Quarter Sessions and Assizes, managed the county jail at Salisbury, delivered and accounted for Crown revenues to the Exchequer receiver for the county, and organized parliamentary elections, for which the candidates themselves were drawn almost exclusively from gentry families.³³

Throughout the early modern period, the administration and political economy of the county was thus dominated by the greater gentry, who manoeuvred constantly for the rewards of service. The intrusion of new arrivals, such as the Herberts from Glamorgan who soon rivalled the Seymours, or the Danvers family from Oxfordshire who challenged the influence of the Longs, could create tensions with their established neighbours that lasted for generations.³⁴ Such rivalries were conducted through networks of mutual interest bonding families across the county into a web of patron-client relationships. In the Elizabethan era, one of the best documented examples is that between the Seymours, whose seat was near Marlborough in the northeast of the county, and their former stewards, the Thynnes, at Longleat in the west. The alliance between these families, largely in opposition to the Herbert (Pembroke) influence, persisted to the end of the study period, with Seymour and Herbert taking opposite sides in the Civil War.³⁵ A similar rivalry emerged between the Hungerford and Bayntun families after the Bayntuns moved from the Salisbury area to Bromham in the early 1500s. Fanned by dramatic fluctuations in fortune during the Tudor era, it ignited into a feud during the Civil War, despite both being in the Parliamentary camp.³⁶

The political aspects of such rivalries among the Wiltshire magnates have received some scholarly attention, but their social and economic impact also deserves investigation. As Robert Ashton has noted, the rewards of office-holding could be prodigious, but acquiring offices was an expensive business, since pleading for favours – especially from the Crown – could involve costly gifts to intermediaries, and exploiting the benefits of office-holding meant distributing at least some of the income to reward the relatives, allies and other

³³ Hurstfield, J 'County Government c1530- c1660' *VCH Wilts* vol 5, 80-110 *passim*.

³⁴ Wall, A 'Faction in Local Politics, 1580-1620: Struggles for Supremacy in Wiltshire', *WAM* 72-3 (1980), 119-33 gives several examples of such feuds.

³⁵ Smith, DL 'William Seymour, 1st Marquess of Hertford (1587-1660)' *ODNB*; Smith, DL 'Philip Herbert, 4th Earl of Pembroke (1584-1650)' *ODNB*.

³⁶ Wroughton, J 'Sir Edward Hungerford (1596-1648)' *ODNB*; Wall, A 'Bayntun Family (*per* 1508-1716)' *ODNB*.

clients who helped them meet their obligations to the Crown and manage their estates. The magnates were frequently expected to raise troops for the army, and equip them with horses, arms and armour. They supported large households and numerous guests. They needed reliable men to look after their horses, to serve as stewards and bailiffs for their manors, to farm their demesnes. Above all they had to find houses and livings for their sons, and husbands for their daughters, often among their client neighbours, all with an eye to extending the family's interests and influence in and beyond the county.³⁷

The income receivable from their lands and manors was thus of crucial concern to the greater gentry, and since their local revenues came from rents, agricultural products and manorial dues, almost all were involved with the cloth manufactory, as landlords of clothiers, weavers and fullers, as producers of wool, as owners of fulling mills. The surplus food they grew was sold at the farm gate or at markets where many buyers must have earned their coin from their own involvement in the cloth trade. Many gentry families had sons, nephews or cousins directly engaged in the trade as merchants or clothiers, and less favoured kin as journeymen or labourers. The result was that, directly or indirectly, almost all the gentry in Wiltshire had an interest in the woollen cloth trade, and were exposed to its periods of growth and decline.

This was especially true of west Wiltshire, which as early as 1530 had emerged as one of the most productive of the West Country clothing districts.³⁸ The low-lying areas between the Frome and Avon had many advantages for cloth-making. The abbeys and priories that owned much of this land had built numerous water-powered fulling mills, making the heavy investment in cutting leats and ponds to manage the water flow and drive the vast wooden mallets that pounded the woven broadcloths in soapy water until they had thickened or 'fulled' to their required condition. These mills were powered by chalk streams springing from the Salisbury Plain, a vast natural reservoir that rarely dried up. Fuller's earth, used for scouring the cloths, was dug from the hillsides close to the River Frome.³⁹ Good quality wool was produced locally, from flocks grazed on the downlands or on lowland pastures, and more could be bought at the Cotswold markets of Tetbury and Cirencester or at Abingdon in Berkshire; some came from as far as Herefordshire and the Midlands. The large

³⁷ Ashton, R *Reformation and Revolution* (London, 1984) 56-8, 63-65.

³⁸ Carus-Wilson, E 'The Woollen Industry before 1550' *VCH Wilts* vol 5 (London, 1959) 115-47.

³⁹ There were substantial deposits in west Wiltshire at Iford and Avoncliff; and others in east Somerset at South Stoke, near Freshford, and Whatley, near Frome and Beckington: *VCH Wilts* vol 11 'Westwood'; Somerset Mineral Resources map at www.bgs.ac.uk.

quantities of olive oil used in manufacture could be imported from France and Spain through Bristol, Weymouth or London.⁴⁰

The clothiers who exploited these resources most successfully had developed a way of working that economic historians describe as the 'domestic system', or 'putting-out system'. They did not manufacture cloth themselves, but commissioned it from men and women working from their own homes. In Coleman's words, 'the basic processes of manufacture fitted in remarkably well with the family structure: children carded the wool; women spun it into yarn; men wove the fabric.'⁴¹ The clothier's role was to provide the wool, to collect the cloth, to organize the fulling and finishing, and to arrange the sale of the finished cloths: whether in a small or large way, he was the entrepreneur who put up the capital and took the risk. 'At one end [of the scale] was the small quasi-independent weaver, struggling, often in debt to the wool or yarn merchant who supplied his raw material; at the other end was the rich clothier, operating on a large scale, putting out wool to be carded and spun in the local villages, supplying yarn to the weavers, and seeing the cloth fulling and sheared, prior to sending it for sale in London.'⁴² For some, perhaps most, clothiers, this was a part-time occupation: they also had farms or small-holdings to manage, animals to tend, other trades to attend to. In the same way, their rural workers – weavers and spinners, fullers and shearmen – had their own plots to cultivate and might have competing opportunities to earn money, especially at harvest time. For the biggest operators, however, cloth-making in this dual economy was a complex business requiring close management of a widely-dispersed workforce of scores or even hundreds of men, women and children.⁴³

There were major barriers to succeeding in this business. For the west Wiltshire clothiers, first amongst these was the relentless drive of the London merchants to control the white broadcloth trade and maintain the highest possible price for their products, by enforcing strict quality standards on their suppliers. Exploiting a series of charters granted by the Crown, the Company of Merchant Adventurers of London gained such an ascendancy over the merchants of the West Country ports of Bristol, Exeter, Lyme and Weymouth that the Wiltshire clothiers were obliged to sell almost all their cloth in the City, either through the

⁴⁰ Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* 2-4; Carus-Wilson *Woollen Industry* 138-141. For an alternative view, arguing the primary importance of labour, see Thirsk, J 'Industries in the Countryside' in *The Rural Economy of England* (London, 1984) 217-33.

⁴¹ Coleman *Industry in Tudor and Stuart England* 27.

⁴² Coleman *Industry in Tudor and Stuart England* 27-8.

⁴³ See Chapter 2.2.

weekly market at Blackwell Hall, in Basinghall Street by the Guildhall, or direct to the merchants' warehouses.⁴⁴ At first both merchants and clothiers operated in a similar way to the gentry: by building deep and lasting alliances, often cemented by marriage. During the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI, some of the west Wiltshire clothiers built close business and family ties with their merchant customers; members of the Long family became London merchants themselves.⁴⁵ During the Elizabethan era, however, this strategy was modified. The loss of Calais in 1558, and the suspension of trade at Antwerp in 1564, revealed the scale of risk to which individual merchants were exposed. For several decades the west Wiltshire clothiers seem to have preferred to spread the risk of merchant default by selling to a range of customers, and by dealing with them at arm's length. When James I brought an end to war with Spain, the county's parliamentarians united against the Merchant Adventurers' monopoly in a campaign for free trade which reinvigorated the South West ports;⁴⁶ and by the time the Company recovered its authority under Charles I, many clothiers were producing coloured cloth, which could be sold in any market, as well as white cloth.⁴⁷ By the Interregnum, the Adventurers' monopoly had become virtually irrelevant and the Company's charter was eventually cancelled in 1689.⁴⁸

Economic historians tend to downplay the significance of the Wiltshire broadcloth trade after 1550. There has been far more research on the overseas merchants of the City than on their country suppliers of white broadcloth. The grand narrative of Tudor and Stuart trading history is that during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, London's overseas merchants became increasingly focused on long distance trade in the Atlantic, Mediterranean and Far East, where the market for white broadcloth was negligible. Even historians of the woollen trade have accepted this intense focus on the growth of export markets, concluding that many of the Wiltshire broadcloth producers must have been left behind by events, or abandoned their trade. In 1943 GD Ramsay wrote that 'not one of the clothiers whose activities lay at the base of the Wiltshire woollen industry during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries could be considered worthy of mention in any text-

⁴⁴ Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* 21-2; Mann, J de L 'Textile Industries since 1550' *VCH Wilts* vol 4 (London, 1959) 151.

⁴⁵ See Chapter 2.2.

⁴⁶ Friis, *A Cockayne's Project and the Cloth Trade* (London, 1927) chapter 3.

⁴⁷ Mann *Cloth Industry* chapter 1.

⁴⁸ 'Merchant Adventurers' *Britannica*.

book of English history during the period.⁴⁹ In this he followed directly in the line of Thomas Fuller and John Aubrey.

Thus while dozens of London merchants have been subject to close scrutiny, the country clothiers have mostly remained anonymous. Yet as Leland had noticed in 1542, the leading west Wiltshire clothiers were very wealthy men; and their prosperity did not suddenly disappear. In fact it was maintained or grew throughout the sixteenth century, as Wiltshire gained an increasing share of a mature if volatile overseas market. Ramsay himself noted, drawing on the pioneering research of Astrid Friis in Denmark in the 1920s,⁵⁰ that Wiltshire's share of London's total cloth exports rose from less than a quarter at the start of Elizabeth's reign to over half in 1606.⁵¹ In practice then, the London merchants and indeed the growth of overseas trade were dependent on the west Wiltshire clothiers by the start of the seventeenth century; and it is likely that the west Wiltshire cloth manufactory mirrored the Company of Merchant Adventurers of London in undergoing a process of concentration at this time, with the leading clothiers taking an ever greater share of the output. Friis calculated that by 1606 just twenty-six London merchants had over 50 per cent of the Merchant Adventurers' exports;⁵² and there can be little doubt that an even smaller number of clothiers became dominant in the west Wiltshire industry. Some can be traced as direct descendants of Leland's clothiers, most notably Edward Horton of Bradford and Bath, whose full estate was valued at almost £20,000 – a sum probably greater than was held by any of the Henrician clothiers.⁵³ Yet even that was dwarfed by the huge fortunes made during the Interregnum by John Ashe of Freshford and his son-in-law Paul Methuen of Bradford.⁵⁴

The purpose of the current study is to investigate the impact of capital generation by both gentry and clothiers on the society around them. The clothiers are only part of the picture, although the trade in woollen cloth was central to the process of social and economic change. Most of the Wiltshire gentry were also involved, if only as landlords and wool-

⁴⁹ Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry*, 138.

⁵⁰ Friis *Cockayne's Project*.

⁵¹ Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* 69, 71.

⁵² Friis *Cockayne's Project* 80.

⁵³ BL Add Ms 15561 f 79: the exact figure, recorded in 1611, was £19,882 4s 10d. The value of William Stumpe's estate at his death in 1550 is unknown, but his eldest son and heir had only £1,000 in plate and household goods in 1563, and his lands in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire had been leased for just 700 marks: Baker *James Stumpe*.

⁵⁴ Ashe's estate in 1657 has been estimated at over £60,000 including lands: Wroughton, J 'John Ashe (1597-1659)' *ODNB*. Methuen was said to have been worth about the same amount: Rogers, KH 'Paul Methuen, 1613-67)' *ODNB*.

growers, and some were further engaged in extracting value from the producers at source, as surveyors and tax gatherers on behalf of the Crown. Old John Bonham, as receiver for the Duchy of Lancaster,⁵⁵ was just one of several men able to advance his family fortunes in this way. Yeoman farmers produced both wool and food for sale to customers whose incomes derived from trade. All of these activities had the effect of importing capital from London to the countryside; and not just financial capital. Through regular and profitable contact with the metropolis west Wiltshire also gained social and cultural capital in the form of contacts, prestige, influence, information, legal know-how and material goods not commonly available in the countryside. Even John Flower, a clothier of the middle rank, could call on a great merchant such as William Lock for an introduction to the Lord Privy Seal – and used napkins at his dinner table to protect fine clothes he had probably bought in London.⁵⁶

3 West Wiltshire and the Bulkington vale

To explore the social impact of these substantial inflows of capital, the study has focused on the triangle formed by Bradford-on-Avon, Frome and Devizes. This area of about 150 square miles, known geographically as the south Avon Vales,⁵⁷ is characterised by undulating clay lowlands surrounded by chalk downs and divided by a ridge of limestone and sandstone running from Heywood in the south to Seend in the north.⁵⁸ The main watercourses, which powered at least thirty fulling mills, are the Rivers Frome and Biss and the Semington, Summerham and Bulkington Brooks. The principal settlements included in the study are Bradford, Trowbridge, Melksham, Devizes, West Lavington and Westbury in Wiltshire, and Frome, Beckington and Freshford in east Somerset.⁵⁹

At a larger scale, the study has examined the village of Bulkington, close to John Flower's home in Worton.⁶⁰ This small community of about 200 residents,⁶¹ with three open fields and a fulling mill supporting a dual economy of agriculture and cloth-making, was probably typical enough to serve as a barometer of social change in rural west Wiltshire. The village comprised about forty houses and cottages clustered along a lane leading from Keevil towards Seend and Poulshot, just north of Bulkington Brook. The total area of the tithing

⁵⁵ *Valor Ecclesiasticus tempus Henricus VIII* ed Caley, J, vol 2(London, 1814) 117.

⁵⁶ WRO P1/1Reg/112.

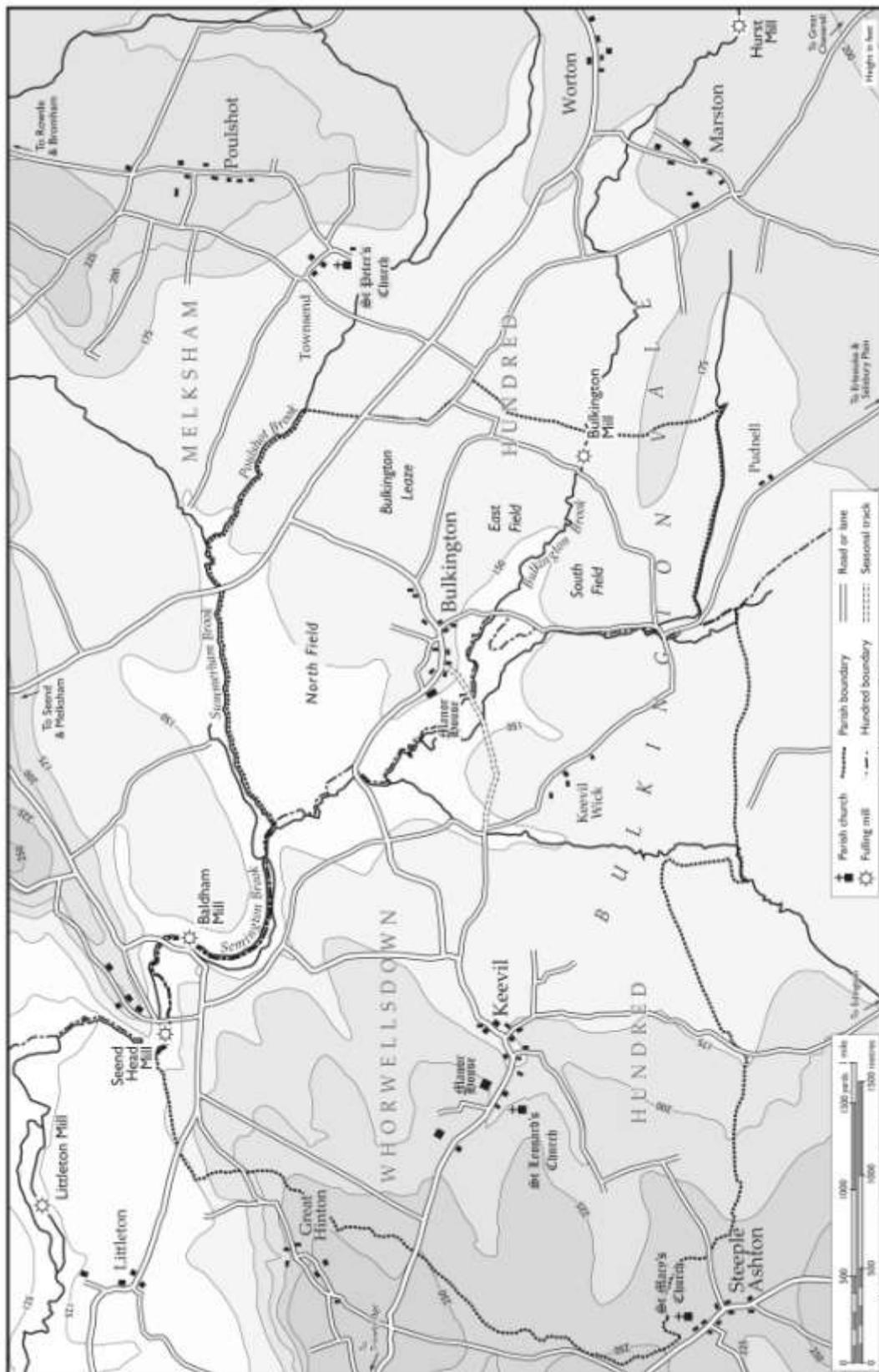
⁵⁷ Description of Avon Vales 'character area 117' at www.naturalengland.org.uk.

⁵⁸ Wiltshire Mineral Resources: map at mapapps.bgs.ac.uk.

⁵⁹ See Map 1.

⁶⁰ See Map 2.

⁶¹ The population grew to about 300 by 1680: see Appendix 4.



Map 2 **Bulkington vale**. This low-lying area surrounded by hills was home to several villages and five fulling mills. To the south, an area of marshland (now drained) lay between Bulkington village and Salisbury Plain. Cartography by Giles Darkes. ©John Gaisford 2015.

was nearly 1,000 acres, including the common pastures of Bulkington Leaze and a horse drove.⁶² Fiscally and militarily, Bulkington was in Melksham hundred, while Keevil was in Whorwellsdown; but Bulkington's residents were parishioners of St Leonard's, Keevil, in the Diocese of Salisbury (Sarum). Topographically the village was in a wide clay vale, with the small town of Steeple Ashton, four other villages and a scattering of hamlets within easy walking distance. Five fulling mills were in operation here along just four miles of the Bulkington and Semington Brooks.⁶³ Records of these settlements and mills have been drawn on where necessary to shed light on developments in Bulkington itself.

Over the study period from 1530 to 1680, Bulkington's population was exposed to powerful political and economic influences, which make it of particular interest. In 1536 – the year of the Flower robbery – it was surrounded by estates of national and regional significance: to the north and east, the Bromham estates of Edward Bayntun and the jointure estates of the queens of England whom he served as steward in Wiltshire; to the southeast, the West Lavington estates of the Dauntsey family, who held the important office of aulnager for Wiltshire and Somerset;⁶⁴ to the south the Priory of Edington and the Erlestoke estates of the Countess of Salisbury; to the west the Abbess of Romsey's manor of Steeple Ashton.⁶⁵ The three manors of Bulkington itself were held by Edward Bayntun, the Priory of Edington and the Earl of Arundel. Rents from some lands within the tithing went to support the clothier Thomas Horton's chantry in Bradford and a chantry at Market Lavington, founded by Bayntun's ancestor, Peter de la Mare.⁶⁶ The fulling mill on Bulkington Brook, a tributary of the Avon, was leased by the Abbess of Romsey to William Baylie, the son and heir of Thomas Baylie of Trowbridge, noted by Leland for expanding his business outside the town.⁶⁷

⁶² *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Keevil'; 'Keevil: Manors'. Bulkington Leaze was probably at least 100 acres in area; the horse drove was smaller, perhaps 50 acres (sizes estimated from modern Ordnance Survey maps).

⁶³ See Map 2.

⁶⁴ In 1539 Ambrose Dauntsey (d 1545) of West Lavington was the aulnager responsible for ensuring that cloths met the official requirements for length and weight and for collecting the subsidy of 4d per cloth: Brett, CJ (ed) *The Manors of Norton St Philip and Hinton Charterhouse, 1535-1691* SRS 93 (Taunton, 2007) 25. His younger brother William, Mercer and alderman of London, endowed a school and almshouse in West Lavington: Wright, S 'William Dauntsey (c1480-1543)' *ODNB*.

⁶⁵ See Maps 2 & 3.

⁶⁶ *VCH Wiltshire* vol 10 'Market Lavington: Manors and Other Estates'.

⁶⁷ Toulmin Smith *Itinerary* vol 1, 136 refers to Baylie's second son Christopher, who was making cloth at Stowford on the Frome. The elder son William was based at Keevil and held the fulling mill at Bulkington: see Chapter 2.3.

In the 1530s, then, monastic, magnate and local commercial interests were firmly in control of Bulkington; but after the Dissolution of the Monasteries, major changes occurred in both the political and the economic setting. Edington Priory surrendered to the Crown, and in 1560 its manor of Bulkington was sold to a local gentleman, George Worth, whose son would become the village's only resident lord.⁶⁸ At the same time, London interests acquired property in Bulkington. In 1560 Richard Lambert, a London merchant specializing in the Muscovy and Spanish trades, bought Arundel's manor. In 1572 Sir Francis Walsingham leased the Bayntun manor, then in 1587 bought and sold the freehold to his brother-in-law, the Treasury official Sir William Dodington.⁶⁹ These transactions may all reflect the strength of the cloth-making economy, which grew steadily in west Wiltshire during the Elizabethan and early Stuart era, generating income in Bulkington for wool-growers as well as weavers.

Demand for wool was strong throughout most of this period, and grain prices were also generally good. Some Bulkington yeomen became wealthy enough to increase their holdings and even lend significant sums at interest. During the Civil War, however, the village was caught up in a struggle around Devizes, as Parliament and the Crown contested control of the roads to Bristol and the South West,⁷⁰ and during the Interregnum cloth exports were constrained by Cromwell's war with Spain. First wool and then grain prices fell back. The lords of Bulkington faced difficult economic conditions, and by 1680 they had sold much of their village land to yeoman freeholders.⁷¹ In this sense, Bulkington's history appears to conform to Aubrey's portrait of the decline of feudal Wiltshire; and it reflects the political as well as the economic aspects of this profound social change, which was experienced across west Wiltshire.

Throughout the period powerful national figures were active in the region, and local men rose in their service. After the Dissolution many of the lands of Edington Priory (including those in Bulkington) passed first to Thomas Seymour, and after his attainder to William Paulet, the Lord Treasurer, or the Crown. Longleat was granted to John Thynne, who as steward to the Lord Protector and later to the Crown became a dominant force politically and economically. Henry Brounker of Erlestoke, immediately to the south of Bulkington, and the London lawyer Laurence Hyde both served the Seymours and became part of

⁶⁸ See Chapters 2.1 and 3.3.

⁶⁹ See Appendix 3.

⁷⁰ See Chapter 4.4.

⁷¹ See Chapter 5.4.

Thynne's network. Brounker acquired a substantial estate at Melksham;⁷² his nephew Thomas Smythe of Corsham became famous as Customer Smythe, farmer of customs on all imports into London from 1570, and father of Sir Thomas Smythe, one of the greatest of the Jacobean Merchant Adventurers and a major figure in the government of London.⁷³ Lawrence Hyde's family reached even greater eminence. In 1593 his son Henry married Mary Langford of Trowbridge, whose grandfather Alexander had been known to Leland as 'Alexander'; their politician son Edward went into exile with Charles II and became Lord Clarendon at the Restoration.⁷⁴

Dynastic networks and alliances, built in the mid-sixteenth century, largely determined the loyalties of the county leaders during the constitutional crisis a century later. The Seymours, Brounkers and Hydes, and the senior branch of the Long family, Seymours' old allies, all joined the King's forces.⁷⁵ Most of the clothiers and gentry of west Wiltshire however supported Parliament; and their opposition to the Crown, coinciding with a relative decline in the importance of the Wiltshire cloth trade to the national economy, resulted in a major loss of influence after the Restoration.⁷⁶ By the time of Clarendon's downfall in 1667, Wiltshire's political influence had faded. Many of the greater gentry moved to London, leaving their country estates to be managed by stewards. In 1681 the Lambert family sold their manor of Keevil and Bulkington to a kinsman of their steward.⁷⁷ The Lambert lands in Bulkington had already been sold to their tenants, thus completing the cycle expressed by Aubrey as putting the 'government' of this part of west Wiltshire 'into the hands of the common people.'⁷⁸

4 Historiography of Wiltshire, the rural economy and the cloth trade

John Aubrey became the founding father of Wiltshire history by compiling detailed notes for two works: a survey of antiquities, arranged by hundred, entitled *An Essay towards the Description of the Northern Division of Wiltshire*, which he put aside after drafting the 'Preface' in 1670; and a thematic account entitled *The Natural History of Wiltshire*, which

⁷² See Chapter 2.1 and 2.3.

⁷³ See Chapter 3.1.

⁷⁴ See Chapters 4.1 and 5.1.

⁷⁵ See Chapter 4.1.

⁷⁶ See Chapter 5.3.

⁷⁷ See Chapter 6.5.

⁷⁸ Aubrey *Wiltshire* 9.

he submitted to the Royal Society in 1675 but continued adding to until 1691.⁷⁹ Few of his insights have influenced historians more than his distinction in the *Natural History* between the chalk and the cheese country in Wiltshire:

In North Wiltshire and like the vale of Gloucestershire (a dirty clayey country) ... is but little tillage or hard labour, they only milk the cows and make cheese....On the downs, sc. the south part... 'tis all upon tillage, and...the shepherds labour hard.⁸⁰

He suggested a link between these economies and the attitudes of the people, the dairy farmers with time on their hands 'more apt to be fanatics' and prone to malice and litigation, the shepherd too busy to 'contemplate of religion'.⁸¹ These stereotypes have proved extraordinarily resilient,⁸² but Aubrey did not relate them to the other great economy of Wiltshire: the production of woollen cloth.

It was Daniel Defoe, travelling in the early eighteenth century, who placed this foundation stone for social and economic historians. Viewing Wiltshire in an explicitly regional context, he substituted a west/east divide for Aubrey's north/south, and located the heart of the cloth industry in the towns and villages of the clay vales of the west:

This low, flat country contains part of the three counties of Somerset, Wilts, and Gloucester, and that the extent of it may be the easier understood by those who know anything of the situation of the country, it reaches from Cirencester in the north, to Sherborne on the edge of Dorsetshire south, and from the Devizes east, to Bristol west, which may take in about fifty miles in length where longest, and twenty in breadth where narrowest.

In this extent of country, we have the following market towns, which are principally employed in the clothing trade, that is to say, in that part of it, which I am now speaking of; namely, fine medley, or mix'd cloths, such as are usually worn in England by the better sort of people; and, also, exported in great quantities'.⁸³

Defoe names Frome, Warminster, Trowbridge and Bradford among the principal clothing towns and reports on the social and economic order:

These towns are interspers'd with a very great number of villages, I had almost said, innumerable villages, hamlets, and scattered houses, in which, generally speaking,

⁷⁹ Aubrey eventually gave manuscripts of both to the Ashmolean Museum, which are now in the Bodleian Library: Powell, *A John Aubrey and his Friends* rev edn (London, 1988) 271-5.

⁸⁰ Aubrey *Natural History* 11.

⁸¹ *ibid* 11.

⁸² They recur in more sophisticated form in Underdown, D Revel, *Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England 1603-1660* Oxford 1985. For a critical response see Morrill J, 'The Ecology of Allegiance in the English Revolution', *Journal of British Studies* 26.4 (1987) 451-67.

⁸³ Defoe *Tour* vol 1 279.

the spinning work of all this manufacture is performed by the poor people; the master clothiers, who generally live in the greater towns, sending out the wool weekly to their houses, by their servants and horses, and at the same time bringing back the yarn that they have spun and finished, which then is fitted for the loom.⁸⁴

Although Leland, nearly 200 years earlier, had drawn attention to the wealth of the clothiers, and the fine stone houses they had built, Defoe's consciousness of the contrasts of poverty and wealth, of countryside and town, is quite new. Defoe portrays the region as an economic rather than a social hierarchy, where the most important agents are vigorous entrepreneurs whose undertakings generate the wealth of the whole community; he reports that 'many of the great families, who now pass for gentry in those counties, have been originally raised from, and built up by this truly noble manufacture.'⁸⁵ His is a far more trenchant portrait of the economic life of the county than Aubrey had offered; yet it was Aubrey's vision rather than Defoe's that would inspire a renewal of historical writing on Wiltshire in the nineteenth century.

What became a nationwide surge in antiquarian interest funded by wealthy landowners, some of whom had made their fortunes from trade and manufacture,⁸⁶ was first seen in Wiltshire in 1801 with the publication of the first two volumes of John Britton's *Beauties of Wiltshire*,⁸⁷ giving detailed accounts of the grand houses of the county and their treasures. Next came two massive undertakings funded by Sir Richard Colt Hoare of Stourhead, *The Ancient History of Wiltshire* and *The History of Modern Wiltshire*,⁸⁸ which in many ways fulfilled Aubrey's original vision for a survey of the county, being arranged by hundreds and containing entries for every parish. Hoare's great project was industrial in scale, the product of a huge personal investment and many contributors, who drew for the first time on detailed study of charters and deeds. This methodological advance was complemented by Sir Thomas Phillipp's comprehensive *Monumental Inscriptions of the County of Wilton* (1822), which transcribed all the legible inscriptions in most of the churches of the county.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Defoe *Tour* vol 1 280.

⁸⁵ Defoe *Tour* vol 1 281.

⁸⁶ This and the following paragraph are based on Rogers, KH & Crowley, D 'Wiltshire' in Currie, CRJ *A Guide to English County Histories* (Stroud, 1997) 411-22.

⁸⁷ Britton J *The Beauties of Wiltshire, Displayed in Statistical, Historical, and Descriptive Sketches* (London, 1801).

⁸⁸ Hoare RC & Cunnington W *The Ancient History of Wiltshire* 2 vols (London, 1812-19); Hoare, RC et al, *The History of Modern Wiltshire* 6 vols (London, 1822-44).

⁸⁹ Sherlock, P (ed) *Monumental Inscriptions of Wiltshire: an edition, in facsimile, of Monumental Inscriptions in the County of Wilton, 1822* WRS 53 (Devizes, 2000).

In 1853 John Britton, then aged 81, addressed the inaugural meeting of the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society in Devizes. In return for £150 raised by public donations, he had endowed the society with his library and collection of wills, which subsequently found a permanent home as part of the Devizes Museum. The Society established a learned journal, the *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine* (WAM), of which more than a hundred volumes have appeared since that date, and in 1862 published an edition of Aubrey's *Description of the Northern Division* with extensive additions by Canon John Jackson,⁹⁰ who had been curate of Farleigh Hungerford and subsequently rector of Leigh Delamere, close to Aubrey's birthplace; by 1862 Jackson was also an advisory archivist to the Marquess of Bath at Longleat.⁹¹ Independently, two further county history publications were established before the end of the century. *Wiltshire Notes & Queries* (WNQ), devoted to antiquarian and genealogical enquiries, was published quarterly from 1893 to 1916, and the Wiltshire Record Society published three volumes between 1896 and 1902. Histories were published of several clothing towns,⁹² as well as selections from the archives of Wiltshire and Devizes.⁹³ Around 1914 Albert Richardson, the vicar of Keevil, completed a typescript account of the history of Keevil and Bulkington.⁹⁴ The prime focus of all these efforts was on recovering the history of the county, and in particular of its leading families, parishes and boroughs. They were largely unconnected to the academic study of British and European history.

In the late nineteenth century, however, university historians had begun to publish groundbreaking studies on economic and social themes. George Unwin, a professor at Manchester University and a pioneer of commercial history, gave an influential account of the early modern cloth industry in his *Industrial Organization in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (1904) and in 1927 contributed a key text on the Merchant Adventurers Company to the first issue of the *Economic History Review*.⁹⁵ In London, RH Tawney's studies *The*

⁹⁰ Aubrey, J *Wiltshire: The Topographical Collections of John Aubrey, FRS, AD 1659-70* ed Jackson, JE (Devizes, 1862).

⁹¹ Goodwin, G & Rundle, P 'John Edward Jackson (1805-91)' *ODNB*.

⁹² Jones, WH *Bradford-on-Avon* (Bradford-on-Avon, 1907); Daniell, JJ *The History of Chippenham* (Bath, 1894); Bodman, J A *Concise History of Trowbridge* (Bristol 1814); Daniell JJ, *The History of Warminster* (Warminster, 1879).

⁹³ Cunnington, BH *Records of the County of Wiltshire: being extracts from the Quarter Sessions Great Rolls of the Seventeenth Century* (Devizes, 1932) and *Some Annals of the Borough of Devizes 1555-1791* (Devizes, 1925); Waylen, J & Gillman, D *The Annals of the Royal and Ancient Borough of Devizes* (Devizes, 1908).

⁹⁴ Richardson, AT 'The Annals of Keevil and Bulkington', unpublished typescript, c1914: BL Add Ms 42048. A copy is held at the History Centre, Chippenham.

⁹⁵ Unwin, G 'The Merchant Adventurers in the Age of Elizabeth' *Economic History Review* 1.1 (1927) 35-64.

Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century (1912) and *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (1926) were even more influential, sparking enduring debates about the end of feudalism, the development of capitalist forms of agriculture, and the cultural, economic and social causes of the Civil War. Tawney's theories were powerfully opposed by Hugh Trevor-Roper,⁹⁶ but inspired a deeper investigation of rural history.⁹⁷ Soon historians were investigating from many different angles all the main strands of these arguments: land tenure, inheritance, agriculture, religion, social mobility, commerce, the growth of London and the relationship between the counties and the capital. For the purposes of the current study, all these themes are significant. A notable debate was opened in 1976 by the Marxist historian Robert Brenner,⁹⁸ who argued that the English gentry had exploited weaknesses in land tenure to expropriate peasant lands for enclosure, a view opposed by Richard Hoyle amongst others.⁹⁹

In 1943 GD Ramsay produced his classic monograph, *The Wiltshire Woollen Industry in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, which has subsequently been cited by most historians of the national economy. Ramsay's innovative research on documents in the Wiltshire Record Office allowed him to build on Unwin's work and that of Astrid Friis¹⁰⁰ to give a seamless portrait of the cloth trade from producer to retailer. Subsequently Ramsay produced editions of Tudor tax lists for Wiltshire and the ledgers of the Ishams, a family of London merchants who bought cloth from country suppliers to sell in Antwerp.¹⁰¹ His example showed how valuably local history could connect with national history, and when the University of London entered a collaboration with the Wiltshire County, Swindon Borough and Salisbury City Councils to commission the *Victoria History of the County of Wiltshire*,¹⁰² Ramsay was co-opted on to the supervising committee along with TS Ashton, an expert on domestic and international trade, and HJ Habakkuk, a specialist in finance and landownership after the Interregnum. These scholars were all seeking to explain in detail how the early modern economy had operated, and were leading contributors to academic

⁹⁶ Trevor-Roper, H 'The Gentry, 1540-1640' *EcHR Supplement* (1953).

⁹⁷ Thirsk J 'The British Agricultural History Society and The Agrarian History of England and Wales: New Projects in the 1950s' *AHR* 50.2 (2002) 155-63.

⁹⁸ Brenner, R 'Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe' *P&P* 70 (1976) 30-75.

⁹⁹ Hoyle, RW 'Tenure and the Land Market in Early Modern England: or a Late Contribution to the Brenner Debate' *EcHR* 43 (1990) 1-20; Aston, TH & Philpin, CHE (eds) *The Brenner Debate: Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe* (Cambridge, 1985).

¹⁰⁰ Friis *Cockayne's Project*.

¹⁰¹ Ramsay, DD *John Isham, Mercer and Merchant Adventurer: Two Account Books of a London Merchant in the Reign of Elizabeth I* Northamptonshire Record Society 21 (Gateshead, 1962).

¹⁰² Nineteen volumes published by March 2015.

debates far more in the tradition of Defoe than that of Aubrey. *VCH Wiltshire* brought the techniques of contemporary academic research to bear upon local history. Volume 4, published in 1959, made an exceptional contribution to the study of agrarian change, with chapters on economic history, agriculture, industry, transport, finance and population by economic historians including Eleanora Carus-Wilson, Julia de Lacy Mann and Eric Kerridge. Kerridge's contribution on 'Agriculture, 1500-1793' reopened the line of enquiry first proposed by Aubrey and mapped the boundaries of the cheese country – largely conforming to the flood-plain of the Avon and its tributaries in the north and west – and the chalk country of the south and east.¹⁰³

A similar thematic approach was taken by another monumental work, *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, which began publication in 1967. Volumes IV and V, covering the early modern period, were edited by Joan Thirsk, who had succeeded WG Hoskins as Reader in Economic History at Oxford, and included several chapters by Thirsk herself. A core concept was that the rural economy could best be studied by reference to the farming methods practised in particular geographical landscapes, and that these produced corresponding social and cultural characteristics wherever they were found. Other authors including Alan Everitt and John Chartres (marketing), Christopher Clay (landlords and estate management) and Peter Bowden (agricultural prices) provided a mass of new information gleaned from detailed study of contemporary documents such as probate inventories, retrieved by researchers from the county archives. In 1969 Kerridge summarized the ongoing debates in agrarian history in his *Agrarian Problems in the Sixteenth Century and After*,¹⁰⁴ but his proposal of an agricultural revolution in the early modern period¹⁰⁵ was dismissed by other historians, with Mark Overton a leading proponent of the view now more generally accepted that the really significant changes in English agriculture took place after 1750.¹⁰⁶ Detailed investigations of individual villages in different regions of England by David Hey, Margaret Spufford, Keith Wrightson and David Levine, Henry French and Richard Hoyle, Pamela Sharpe and others have tested such generalizations,¹⁰⁷ and revealed the emergence of a 'middling sort' of parish gentry as an

¹⁰³ *VCH Wilts* vol 4, 43.

¹⁰⁴ Kerridge, E *Agrarian Problems in the Sixteenth Century and After* (London, 1969).

¹⁰⁵ Kerridge, E *The Agricultural Revolution* (London, 1967).

¹⁰⁶ Overton, M *Agricultural Revolution in England: the Transformation of the Agrarian Economy, 1500-1850* (Cambridge, 1996).

¹⁰⁷ Hey, D *An English Rural Community: Myddle under the Tudors and Stuarts* (Leicester, 1974); Spufford, M *Contrasting Communities: English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1974); Wrightson, K and Levine, D *Poverty and Piety: Terling 1525-1700* (2nd edn

important characteristic of the seventeenth century.¹⁰⁸ Hoyle has also worked extensively on manorial custom, the nature and distribution of different forms of tenure and the involvement of tenants in the process of enclosure and other improvements.¹⁰⁹ Applying database technology to the study of agrarian capitalism, Leigh Shaw-Taylor has mapped changes in rural occupations and in farm sizes since the Middle Ages.¹¹⁰ John Oldland and Craig Muldrew have written recently on the economics of cloth-making, Oldland challenging previous assessments of the size of the later medieval sheep-flock and Muldrew arguing the importance to rural economies of earnings from wool-spinning.¹¹¹ Charles Phythian-Adams has developed the concept of cultural provinces, stressing the importance of lineage and social relationships within a physically-defined landscape, and drawing attention to the north-south connections between the Gloucestershire Cotswolds, west Wiltshire and the Dorset Downs and coast, which have often been overlooked in favour of the east-west links between London and Somerset.¹¹²

Meanwhile other scholars had been investigating the social and economic history of London, and the political influence of the merchants. FJ Fisher had worked with Tawney; over a forty-year career from the 1930s he helped focus attention on London's emergence as a driving force of the national economy and its impact on the provinces.¹¹³ In 1966, he edited the commercial papers of Lionel Cranfield, a merchant who bought cloth from many west Wiltshire suppliers before becoming Lord Treasurer under James I.¹¹⁴ Valerie Pearl's 1961 study of London aldermen – many of them merchants – and their role in the Civil War was also influential, as was Barry Supple's analysis of the economic crises of the early

Oxford, 1995); French, HR & Hoyle, RW *The Character of English Rural Society: Earl's Colne, 1500-1750* (Manchester, 2007); Sharpe, P *Reproducing Colyton, 1540-1840* (Exeter, 2002).

¹⁰⁸ French, HR *The Middle Sort of People in Provincial England, 1600-1750* (Oxford, 2007).

¹⁰⁹ Hoyle 'Tenure and the Land Market'; Hoyle, RW (ed), *Custom, Improvement and the Landscape in Early Modern Britain* (Farnham, 2011).

¹¹⁰ Shaw-Taylor, L 'The Rise of Agrarian Capitalism and the Decline of Family Farming in England' *ECHR* 65.1 (2012) 26-60; Keibek, AJ & Shaw-Taylor, L 'Early Modern Rural By-Employment: a Re-examination of the Probate Inventory Evidence' *AHR* 61 (2013) 244-81.

¹¹¹ Oldland, J 'Wool and Cloth Production in Late Medieval and Early Tudor England' *ECHR* 67.1 (2014) 25-47; Muldrew, C 'Th'ancient Distaff and "Whirling Spindle": Measuring the Contribution of Spinning to Household Incomes and the National Economy in England, 1500-1770' *ECHR* 65.2 (2012) 498-526.

¹¹² Phythian-Adams, C (ed) *Societies, Cultures and Kinship: Cultural Provinces and English Local History* (Leicester and London, 1993); and see Map 3.

¹¹³ Fisher, FJ *London and the English Economy 1500-1700* ed Corfield, PJ and Harte, NB (London, 1990).

¹¹⁴ *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Right Honourable Lord Sackville of Knowle* vol 2: *Letters Relating to Lionel Cranfield's Business Overseas* ed Fisher, FJ (London, 1966).

Stuarts;¹¹⁵ and these themes were further developed in 1993 by Robert Brenner, who deepened the study of the long-distance trading companies and drew attention to the political radicalism of some trans-Atlantic merchants.¹¹⁶ The focus of these three historians was on the developments leading to the Great Rebellion, but similar attention was given to earlier periods in a study of the Mercers' Company by Anne Sutton,¹¹⁷ of the City of London by Stephen Rappaport¹¹⁸ and of Elizabethan merchants' religious outlook by David Hickman;¹¹⁹ the business practices of seventeenth-century merchants have been studied by Richard Grassby.¹²⁰ A further strand of enquiry was the involvement of the Crown in the commercial activity of London, raising revenue through taxation and rewarding service with patronage. Early studies in this area were made by the American scholars FC Dietz in 1921¹²¹ and WC Richardson in the 1950s,¹²² and placed in the wider context of the development of Tudor government by GR Elton.¹²³ Notable amongst later scholars of Elizabethan and early Stuart government finance have been Robert Ashton¹²⁴ and more recently Richard Hoyle,¹²⁵ while a major survey of economic and social change over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including the role of government in finance, trade and industry, was published in 1984 by Christopher Clay.¹²⁶

West Country studies published since the 1950s have tended to focus either on the cloth trade or on politics. Julia de Lacy Mann, Ken Ponting and Ken Rogers have all provided studies of the West Country cloth trade, extending Ramsay's findings with research in Somerset, Gloucestershire and Devon.¹²⁷ Buchanan Sharp investigated the involvement of

¹¹⁵ Pearl V *London and the Outbreak of the Puritan Revolution: City Government And National Politics, 1625-43* (Oxford, 1961); Supple B, *Commercial Crisis and Change in England 1600-1642*, (Cambridge, 1959).

¹¹⁶ Brenner R, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict and London's Overseas Traders 1550-1653* (Cambridge, 1993).

¹¹⁷ Sutton AF, *The Mercery of London: Trade, Goods and People, 1130-1578* (Aldershot, 1988).

¹¹⁸ Rappaport, S *Worlds within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth Century London* (Cambridge, 1989).

¹¹⁹ Hickman, DJ 'The Religious Allegiance of London's Ruling Elite, 1520-1603' unpublished PhD thesis (University of London, 1995).

¹²⁰ Grassby, R *The Business Community of Seventeenth Century England* (Cambridge, 1996); *Kinship and Capitalism* (Cambridge, 2001).

¹²¹ Dietz, FC *English Government Finance, 1485-1558* (Urbana, Illinois, 1921).

¹²² Richardson, WC *Tudor Chamber Administration, 1485-1547* (Baton Rouge, 1952).

¹²³ Elton, GR *England under the Tudors* (London, 1955; 3rd edn 1991).

¹²⁴ Ashton, R *The City and the Court* (Cambridge, 1979).

¹²⁵ Hoyle, RW 'Taxation and the Mid-Tudor Crisis' *EcHR* 51.4 (1998) 649-75; Hoyle, RW (ed) *The Estates of the English Crown, 1558-1640* (Cambridge, 1992).

¹²⁶ Clay, C *Economic Expansion and Social Change, England, 1500-1700* 2 vols (Cambridge, 1984).

¹²⁷ Mann *Cloth Industry*; Ponting, KG *The Woollen Industry in South West England* (Bath, 1971); Rogers, KH *Warp and Weft: the Somerset and Wiltshire Woollen Industry* (Buckingham, 1986).

landless cloth-workers in food riots and protests against forest clearances.¹²⁸ David Underdown brought a specialist knowledge of the West Country to bear on Civil War politics in his study of the Long and Rump Parliaments,¹²⁹ and reignited the debate on culture and the environment with an account of seventeenth-century social and political behaviour in the chalk and cheese countries of Wiltshire and Dorset.¹³⁰ David Sacks' account of Bristol's early modern history related the city not only to the region and the capital, but to its trading partners on both sides of the Atlantic.¹³¹ Joseph Bettey has written on West Country agriculture, and edited a valuable selection of farming inventories;¹³² Ken Rogers has published a history of Trowbridge;¹³³ Colin Brett has written on the cloth purchases in Wiltshire and Somerset of the London merchant Thomas Kytson,¹³⁴ and produced a manorial history of Norton St Philip in the Frome valley.¹³⁵ In 1990, Martin Ingram's study of the ecclesiastical courts at Salisbury included a case study of the parish of Keevil, including the tithing of Bulkington.¹³⁶ Wiltshire and neighbouring Berkshire have been studied most recently by medievalists, but while John Hare ended his 2011 study of Wiltshire around 1530,¹³⁷ Margaret Yates extended her account of West Berkshire's economic development through to 1600, intentionally crossing a conventional medieval-early modern divide.¹³⁸ The *VCH Wiltshire* team continued to work on the hundreds and parishes whose history has not yet been written until funding was suspended in 2013.

Some of the ways in which rural society changed over the period, and which may have been accelerated by contact with the metropolis, are suggested by studies of architecture and of the nature and distribution of material culture. The architectural historian Kimberley Skelton, for example, has shown how changes in the lifestyle of the gentry, identified from written texts by social historians such as Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, can be confirmed

¹²⁸ Sharp, B *In Contempt of All Authority: Rural Artisans and Riot in the West of England, 1586-1660* (Berkeley, 1980).

¹²⁹ Underdown, D *Pride's Purge: Politics in the Puritan Revolution* (Oxford, 1971).

¹³⁰ Underdown *Revel*.

¹³¹ Sacks, D *The Widening Gate: Bristol and the Atlantic Economy 1450-1700* (Oxford, 1992).

¹³² Bettey, JH *The Suppression of the Monasteries in the West Country* (Gloucester, 1989); *Rural Life in Wessex, 1500-1900* (2nd edn, Gloucester, 1997); *Wiltshire Farming in the Seventeenth Century* WRS 57 (Devizes, 2005).

¹³³ Rogers, KH *The Book of Trowbridge* (Buckingham, 1984).

¹³⁴ Brett, C 'Thomas Kytson and Somerset Clothmen, 1529-1539' *SANHS* 143 (Taunton, 2001) 29-56; Brett, CJ 'Thomas Kytson and Wiltshire Clothmen, 1529-1539' *WAM* 97 (2004) 35-62.

¹³⁵ Brett *Norton St Philip*.

¹³⁶ Ingram, M *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage 1570-1640* (Cambridge, 1990).

¹³⁷ Hare, JN *A Prospering Society: Wiltshire in the Later Middle Ages* (Hertford, 2011).

¹³⁸ Yates, M *Town and Countryside in Western Berkshire c1327-1600* (Woodbridge, 2007).

by the study of buildings.¹³⁹ In this area there have been considerable advances. Pevsner's guides to church and élite architecture have been supplemented with studies of vernacular buildings in Wiltshire by Pamela Slocombe and in east Somerset by Roger Leech and by the Somerset and South Avon Vernacular Building Research Group.¹⁴⁰ Mark Overton, Jane Whittle and others have traced the distribution of household goods in Cornwall and Kent,¹⁴¹ while Tara Hamling has studied the decorative features found in gentry and 'middling' households.¹⁴² Such studies provide valuable insights for an attempt to see the social and economic history of the west Wiltshire cloth district in the context of London and its business community, with which it was so inextricably tied.

5 Research questions, sources, methodology and thesis structure

After so much historical endeavour, what value is there in a deeper study of west Wiltshire? Regional studies, even for areas smaller than a county, can contribute to the larger narrative of economic and social change in early modern England by revealing the variation within national trends, and are especially important for centres of economic dynamism. How does such dynamism arise, and what impact can it have? Christopher Hill wrote in *The Century of Revolution* that the most difficult task is not just to uncover the events of a place in time, hard as that may be, but 'to *explain* what happened.'¹⁴³ But revealing the events must be a large part of this study, since Wiltshire's history in the early modern period has been written authoritatively only in the fragmented form resulting from the editorial organization of *VCH Wiltshire*: the thematic approach of the early volumes, and the hundred and parish approach followed thereafter. So the first task of the current study is to provide a coherent narrative of the political, social and economic history of Wiltshire in the Tudor and Stuart eras. The subsequent and more demanding task is to explain how this history was influenced in different sectors of society by the capital flows generated by the cloth trade, landowner revenues and the patronage and financial levies of the Crown. In

¹³⁹ Heal, F & Holmes, C *The Gentry in England, 1500-1700* (London, 1994).

¹⁴⁰ Pevsner, N & Cherry, B *Wiltshire* (London, 1975); Pevsner, N & Foyle A *Somerset: North and Bristol* (London, 2011); Slocombe, P *Wiltshire Farmhouses and Cottages, 1500-1850* (Devizes, 1988); Penoyre, J, Dallimore, J & Austin, C *The Vernacular Buildings of Batcombe* (Glastonbury, 1988).

¹⁴¹ Overton, M, Whittle, J, Dean, D & Hann A, *Production and Consumption in English Households, 1600-1750* (London, 2004).

¹⁴² Hamling, T *Decorating the Godly Household: Religious Art in Post-Reformation Britain* (London, 2010).

¹⁴³ Hill, C *The Century of Revolution, 1603-1714* (London, 1996; pb ed, London, 2002) 1.

this endeavour the geographical/anthropological notions of the cultural province, the *pays*, the neighbourhood and the lineage,¹⁴⁴ have allowed me to approach the great enduring themes of social mobility and economic growth using the methods available to a scholar working alone.

Among the questions this study seeks to answer are: who were the dominant Wiltshire clothiers, and how did they interact with the gentry? How far-reaching were their economic and social relationships in the region and beyond? How significant were their dealings in London, Bristol and South West ports such as Weymouth? What evidence is there of metropolitan cultural forms being transmitted into the countryside? How persistent were dynastic networks in commerce, landowning and government? How open was this society to vertical and geographical mobility? Was Ramsay right to claim that ‘there is no lack of evidence to demonstrate how fluid was society in Tudor Wiltshire, how ill-marked were the divisions between the classes and how individuals were continually passing from one into another’?¹⁴⁵ Did the economic interests of those engaged in wool production and the cloth trade influence their political and religious allegiance? How can we reconcile the emergence of ‘principal inhabitants’ among the long-established populations of the villages with the longevity of great landowning dynasties such as the Seymours, Bayntuns, Longs and Hungerfords? What happened to the lesser gentry in the seventeenth century? Can we confirm the shift in political power described by Aubrey, from the ancient gentry to the common people? Did many successful clothiers ‘rise into the gentry’, as suggested by Defoe and frequently asserted in *VCH Wiltshire*?

The research methodology has been determined by the available resources. The editions of *ODNB* and *HoP* provide between them so much information about Wiltshire’s leading landowners throughout the study period that I have relied on these publications, consulted online,¹⁴⁶ for the bulk of my research into the county gentry, supplementing them with the full-length biographies that are available for some figures who achieved national prominence, such as William Paulet, Lionel Cranfield and of course Aubrey himself.¹⁴⁷ Other figures such as Protector Seymour, William Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke and William Seymour, Marquess of Hertford, bulk large in narrative accounts of some of the most

¹⁴⁴ Phythian-Adams *Societies, Culture and Kinship* 19.

¹⁴⁵ Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* xxi.

¹⁴⁶ www.oxforddnb.com; www.historyofparliamentonline.org.

¹⁴⁷ Loades, D *The Life and Career of William Paulet* (Aldershot, 2008); Prestwich, M *Cranfield: Politics and Profits under the Early Stuarts* (Oxford, 1966); Powell Aubrey.

dramatic periods in English history. The magnates of the county could thus be studied adequately through secondary sources, allowing the prime focus of archival research to be on the resident gentry and clothiers of west Wiltshire, and on individual yeoman families of Bulkington and the surrounding area.

The main sources used in the primary research were parish registers; manorial records, surveys and rentals; heralds' visitations; family papers; wills, probate inventories and inquisitions post mortem; tax assessments; indentures and feet of fines; state papers and court documents, including records of Quarter Sessions; maps; architectural and archaeological surveys, illustrations and photographs; merchants' ledgers and port books; and the records of livery companies, inns of court and the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. They are all listed in the bibliography under the separate headings of manuscript sources, printed primary sources and online sources. These conventional categories identify the form in which the sources can be consulted, but dividing and ordering them by form rather than by content has the disadvantage of obscuring the range of data available. It is therefore useful at this point to consider how the content of the surviving documents has determined the approach and evolution of the thesis.

The study of social change in any era would ideally begin by establishing basic demographic data for the chosen area: the size of population at the beginning and end of the period; its distribution by age, gender and location; the social structure by wealth and occupation. But for early modern west Wiltshire such 'quantitative' analysis is impossible, because no surviving sources of population data are sufficiently comprehensive. Parish registers could in theory provide age, gender and location data, but few survive from earlier than 1560 and most are intermittent. As Wrigley and Schofield noted of parish records in general, 'breaks in registration, or periods when registration was seriously defective, occur in almost all registers.'¹⁴⁸ Tax assessments give broad indications of the distribution of wealth, but cannot be compared over time, because many of the manuscripts are damaged and fragmentary. Even the most detailed of the survivals are limited in scope: they list only those individuals required to pay, and give no information about occupations. George Ramsay, who worked extensively on the Tudor Exchequer subsidy rolls, noted that 'I have not found any Wiltshire roll which indicated the occupations of the tax payers;¹⁴⁹ and no alternative source has come to light. The records that provide the most comprehensive data

¹⁴⁸ Wrigley, EA and Schofield, RS *The Population History of England, 1541-1871* (Cambridge, 1989) 4.

¹⁴⁹ Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* 155.

for other areas of the country – the 1524/5 subsidy,¹⁵⁰ which levied taxes on wages as well as on lands and goods, the diocesan surveys of 1563 and 1603,¹⁵¹ and the Hearth Taxes of the 1660s,¹⁵² raised on dwellings with two chimneys or more – are all frustratingly incomplete for Wiltshire.

Nor is it possible to extract worthwhile estimates of either demographic or economic data for west Wiltshire from published national studies drawing on documentary sources, such as Wrigley and Schofield on the English population,¹⁵³ or Phelps Brown and Hopkins on price and wage inflation.¹⁵⁴ While these sources are frequently used for macro-economic studies, the data from which they are aggregated are much too sparse to support local conclusions. Consequently the current study was undertaken by methods which social scientists describe as ‘qualitative’ and economists and historians as ‘micro’: by close investigation of individuals and small communities for which some detailed and reliable information can be found, and thence by extrapolation to the wider society. This approach is possible in west Wiltshire because there are many published and unpublished documentary sources for tracing local kinship, landholding and commercial networks.

The micro-study approach is, of course, always open to challenge. Are the individuals and the local communities studied sufficiently representative or revealing of a wider society to be worthy of notice? Have enough records survived to make the study viable? As already noted, the village of Bulkington chosen for this study was only a small settlement; but it was probably typical of many rural communities in the cloth-making district of west Wiltshire.¹⁵⁵ The village was near the centre of the cloth district, and had its own fulling mill; it was far enough from the main towns of west Wiltshire to be part of the rural environment, not the satellite of a commercial centre.¹⁵⁶ As for records, a firm platform for the investigation was demonstrated by three earlier accounts of Keevil parish, of which

¹⁵⁰ Sheail, J (compiler) and Hoyle, RW (ed) *The Regional Distribution of Wealth in England as Indicated in the 1524/25 Lay Subsidy Returns* List & Index Society Special Series 28-9 (Kew, 1998).

¹⁵¹ Dyer, A & Palliser, DM *The Diocesan Population Returns for 1563 and 1603* (Oxford, 2005).

¹⁵² See Chapter 5.3. Transcriptions of the 1662 Hearth Tax assessments for Wiltshire, by Lorelei Williams and Sally Thompson, are held by the Centre for Hearth Tax Research at the University of Roehampton.

¹⁵³ Wrigley & Schofield *Population History*.

¹⁵⁴ Phelps Brown, EH & Hopkins, SV ‘Seven Centuries of the Prices of Consumables, Compared with Builders’ Wage Rates’ *Economica* 23 (1956) 296-314.

¹⁵⁵ Simplified maps showing the extent of the clothing district can be found in *VCH Wiltshire* vol 4, 116 and Mann *Cloth Industry* x.

¹⁵⁶ See Map 1.

Bulkington was a tithing – the documentary history compiled by AT Richardson;¹⁵⁷ Ken Rogers' parish history in *VCH Wiltshire*;¹⁵⁸ and Martin Ingram's case study in his survey of the ecclesiastical courts in Wiltshire from 1580 to 1640.¹⁵⁹ Both Rogers and Ingram provide fuller accounts of Keevil than of Bulkington, but their work identified many important sources for social and economic change in Bulkington. These three studies show that a fair if unremarkable range of manuscript resources have survived. The parish registers date from 1559 and have been fully and accurately transcribed.¹⁶⁰ Manorial records are more fragmentary, but two records survive for one manor court in the reign of Mary,¹⁶¹ and there is an unbroken series of Court Books for a second manor from 1602 to 1679.¹⁶² The Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre holds a substantial collection of papers belonging to the Lambert family, lords of the manor of Keevil and Bulkington for over a century from 1560; the working papers of John Goodall, who studied Bulkington and Keevil for an uncompleted history of the Lambert family;¹⁶³ and lesser collections for the Gaysford family of Bulkington.¹⁶⁴ Thus a micro-study of Bulkington has both foundations and context, and can complement an existing base of knowledge.

Nonetheless, there are notable gaps in the documentary record. No churchwardens' records survive for St Leonard's, the parish church in Keevil, nor any court books for the manor owned by George Worthe and his successors. It is possible however to illuminate the study of Bulkington with records from neighbouring villages and hamlets, referred to collectively as Bulkington vale. This term, though not in everyday use, describes a topographical unity which is easily recognised locally, since Bulkington and its nearest neighbours – Poulshot, Worton and Marston – all lie in the same lowland basin, surrounded and overlooked by the higher ground on which Steeple Ashton, Keevil, Seend, Potterne, Erlestoke and Edington all stand.¹⁶⁵ These settlements are within easy walking distance from Bulkington, and many family connections, marriage contracts and commercial transactions were made or enacted in and around the vale. Among the most valuable records surviving for the vale are a rental of the manor of Seend dated 1603,¹⁶⁶ several

¹⁵⁷ Richardson 'Annals'.

¹⁵⁸ Rogers 'Keevil'.

¹⁵⁹ Ingram *Ecclesiastical Courts*.

¹⁶⁰ WRO PR Keevil.

¹⁶¹ See Chapter 3.3.

¹⁶² WRO 288/1-4.

¹⁶³ WRO 1976.

¹⁶⁴ WRO 445, 840, 2972.

¹⁶⁵ See Maps 1 & 2.

¹⁶⁶ WRO 873/13

surveys of the manor of Steeple Ashton,¹⁶⁷ and an almost continuous set of vestry minutes and churchwardens' accounts for St Mary's, Steeple Ashton from 1542 to 1648.¹⁶⁸

In producing the micro-study the first task was to build a dataset of all the lords and tenants of Bulkington who could be identified between 1530 and 1680, linking them to their manors,¹⁶⁹ and where possible to their landholdings, including acquisitions and disposals. This dataset was compiled from the Lambert court books noted above, supplemented by a survey of one manor in 1564,¹⁷⁰ a Crown grant of a second manor in 1587,¹⁷¹ and the conveyance of a third in 1627;¹⁷² from fifteen Tudor and Stuart subsidy assessments;¹⁷³ and from the 1648 levy for the war in Ireland.¹⁷⁴ The resulting dataset identified most of the manorial tenants, including freeholders, over the study period. Where possible, tenancy was distinguished from residency, since there appear to have been numerous residents who were not manorial tenants. An attempt was then made to estimate the population of Bulkington over the study period,¹⁷⁵ and the distribution of wealth. For the latter purpose an important discovery was a Hearth Tax exemption certificate for 1670 which lists more than twenty Bulkington tenants receiving alms.¹⁷⁶

The next step was to match the tenants' list against the Parish Registers and against a list of eighty Bulkington testators whose wills were proved during the study period by the Diocese of Sarum and are now preserved at the Wiltshire History Centre. The majority but not all of these wills were made by tenants, whose occupations included gentleman (1), yeoman (17), husbandman (12), clothier (1), weaver (11), fuller (1), tailor (1) and carpenter (1). Several families emerged from this comparison as among the leading residents of the village. A further search for wills proved by the Prerogative Court of Canterbury revealed another

¹⁶⁷ WRO 1494/93 (1550); TNA E 134/25&26ELIZ/MICH4 (1583); WRO 947/1236 (1604); WRO 947/958 (1630).

¹⁶⁸ WRO PR/Steeple Ashton St Mary/730/97.

¹⁶⁹ There were three manors in Bulkington in 1530, two of which merged in 1627: see Appendix 4.

¹⁷⁰ TNA SP 15/12 ff 43-8.

¹⁷¹ TNA CP 43/19 m 17.

¹⁷² WRO 1976/4/29.

¹⁷³ TNA E179/198/178 (1535), E179/197/230 (1545), E179/197/209 (1545), E179/197/239 (1547), E179/198/256a (1550), E179/198/265 (1552), E179/195/275 (1559), E179/198/294 (1576), E179/259/21 (1587), E179/198/317 (1594), E179/198/327 (1598), E179/198/336a (1600), WRO X4/7 (1610 & 1626), TNA E179/199/408 (1642).

¹⁷⁴ Hurley, B *Wiltshire Protestation Returns, 1641-2, and Taxation Records for the Warminster Division, 1648* (Devizes, 1997).

¹⁷⁵ See Appendix 4.

¹⁷⁶ TNA E179/348.

clothier and one additional testator who could be linked to Bulkington.¹⁷⁷ Of these eighty-one wills, forty-five were read, including all fourteen with cloth-making occupations and one of a manorial lord. Three avenues of enquiry were then developed. First, marriage partners, overseers and witnesses were identified, which demonstrated that throughout the study period most of the important relationships developed by Bulkington testators were within the limited geographical area of the village and the vale. Second, the economic activities of the testators were discerned from the chattels they bequeathed, and from their inventoried goods, showing that the village had a mixed agricultural and cloth-making economy. Third, evidence was gathered of the evolving material and intellectual culture of the villagers, as the range of goods increased, the ownership of books became more widespread, and more testators and witnesses signed the wills rather than making marks.

After the first stage of the primary research, the scope of the thesis was extended to the wider economic area of west Wiltshire, with the focus directed increasingly on cloth-making as it became ever more apparent that the cloth economy was the main driver of change over time. The approach to sources, however, remained the same. First, key individuals were identified from the parish histories in *VCH Wiltshire*, and from manorial records, surveys and rentals. Since the abbeys of Romsey, Glastonbury and Amesbury held large estates in west Wiltshire and east Somerset at the start of the study period, the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* provided a valuable benchmark of monastic landholdings and officials.¹⁷⁸ Calendars and indexes of Wiltshire feet of fines were also read to identify the most active purchasers and disposers of property in the area.¹⁷⁹ Then the wills of many of these individuals were traced, mostly at the Wiltshire History Centre or The National Archives, and read for evidence of kinship groups and social networks, economic activity and material and intellectual culture. For west Wiltshire and east Somerset more than 230 wills, inventories and inquisitions post mortem were read; and pedigrees were researched or compiled for about ninety of the most economically active families, in many cases with the help of the Heralds' Visitations.¹⁸⁰ About twenty London-based merchants who dealt extensively with west Wiltshire suppliers were also researched in this way. In addition, the

¹⁷⁷ TNA PROB 11/90/42 Will of William Longe, Clothier, 1592 and TNA PROB 11/335/192 Will of John Gaisford, Gentleman, of Southwick, 1671: see Pedigree.

¹⁷⁸ Caley, J & Hunter, J (eds) *Valor Ecclesiasticus temp. Henr. VIII* 6 vols (London, 1810-83).

¹⁷⁹ Use of feet of fines was constrained by the fact that many 'conveyances' appear to have been conditional or temporary. Some were made for raising mortgages, others when appointing trustees for marriage settlements or during the minority of an heir, and did not result in an actual transfer of property.

¹⁸⁰ See bibliography: Printed Primary Sources – Heralds' Visitations.

published admissions records of Oxford and Cambridge and of the Inns of Court were checked to establish the educational attainment of these individuals.¹⁸¹ The social composition of the commission of the peace was researched through the published records of Wiltshire Quarter Sessions.¹⁸²

Primary research was conducted into the surviving buildings that can still be identified with some of these individuals: not only churches and manor houses, but also smaller domestic buildings and commercial infrastructure such as fulling mills and stone bridges built for waggons, carts and pack-horses. The folders of the Wiltshire Buildings Record held at the History Centre contain many useful photographs and plans of individual buildings, together with written reports on their history and construction. Johan Blaeu's map of *Wiltonia*,¹⁸³ reprinted in 2000 by Wiltshire County Council Education and Libraries, provides an indispensable overview of the topography and the hundred boundaries so critical to early modern life; and Andrews and Dury's *Topographical Map of Wiltshire*,¹⁸⁴ at the scale of two inches to one mile, identifies numerous locations less easily discovered on modern Ordnance Survey maps. The earliest detailed maps of Bulkington were made by Jacob Sturge in 1771 and 1778, when the pattern of land-ownership was much changed even from 1680; but they show the lanes, bridges, watercourses and the outlines of the open fields with great exactness.¹⁸⁵

The main focus of documentary research was local: whether conducted in Wiltshire, Somerset and Gloucestershire or in London it was focused on Bulkington itself; on the villages of the vale; and on other settlements within the wider area of west Wiltshire and east Somerset, most notably Bromham, Bradford, Freshford, Beckington and Frome. Supplementary research on the domestic and overseas cloth trade was conducted in London, at the National Archives, British Library and the Institute of Historical Research.

¹⁸¹ Venn, J and Venn, JA (eds) *Alumni Cantabrigienses* 10 vols (Cambridge, 1922-53) accessed online at venn.lib.cam.ac.uk; Foster, J (ed) *Alumni Oxonienses, 1500-1714* 4 vols (Oxford, 1891) accessed online at BHO; Foster, J (ed) *Register of Admissions to Gray's Inn, 1521-1889* 2 vols (London, 1889); Baildon, WP (ed), *Records of the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn: the Black Books* vols 1-3 (London, 1896); Inner Temple Admissions Database at [ww.innertemple.org.uk/archive/itad](http://www.innertemple.org.uk/archive/itad); Sturgess, HAC (ed) *Register of Admissions to the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple* 3 vols (London, 1949).

¹⁸² Johnson, HC (ed) *Minutes of Proceedings in Session, 1563 and 1574-1592* WRS 4 (Devizes, 1949); Slocombe, I (ed) *Wiltshire Quarter Sessions Order Book, 1642-54* WRS 67 (Chippenham, 2014)

¹⁸³ From Blaeu, J *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum sive Atlas Novus* (Amsterdam, 1648). See Map 4.

¹⁸⁴ Andrews, J & Dury, A *Topographical Map of Wiltshire* (London, 1773). A complete set is held at the Wiltshire History Centre.

¹⁸⁵ WRO 1553/102 & 103.

Earlier researchers, notably Ramsay and Mann,¹⁸⁶ had focused intensively on references to the cloth industry found in the *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII*,¹⁸⁷ *State Papers Domestic*,¹⁸⁸ the *Acts of the Privy Council*,¹⁸⁹ and the *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum*.¹⁹⁰ Their published works had identified so many of the key documents that for this study it was usually necessary to go beyond printed sources only when these had omitted certain details: for example to establish the names of clothiers signing petitions at times of trade crisis or controversy – details that could shed light on how local businessmen co-operated or competed with one another. Similarly, this study relies on the well-known works of Benbow,¹⁹¹ Beaven,¹⁹² and RG Lang,¹⁹³ and the admissions and other records of London livery companies,¹⁹⁴ for biographical details of many London citizens. Stow's *Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster*¹⁹⁵ and the anonymous woodcut map of London c.1560¹⁹⁶ were invaluable for identifying locations within the capital.

Throughout the research four key assumptions have been made that are fundamental to the findings and the conclusion. The first is that the purchase of land and property usually indicates an increase in wealth and their retention implies continuing prosperity.¹⁹⁷ A similar assumption is made about the construction or improvement of houses: in the

¹⁸⁶ Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* Appendix IV 'A Note on Sources' usefully summarizes the extent of his research at the National Archives, and records the difficulties he faced accessing material in Wiltshire at that time: 'Access to the Wiltshire county records was only obtained after much delay and difficulty, for the Wiltshire standing joint committee has made practically no provision for their perusal by local historians.' As a consequence he accessed only the Calne Corporation Minute Book, 1565-1814; the Devizes Quarter Sessions great rolls and minute books; and the inventories of the goods of persons domiciled within the Diocese of Sarum.

¹⁸⁷ *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic: Henry VIII* ed Brewer, JS, 28 vols (London, 1862-1932): accessed via British History Online.

¹⁸⁸ *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, 1547-1704* ed Green, MAE et al, 92 vols (London, 1856-1924).

¹⁸⁹ *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, new series ed Dasent, JR, 46 vols (London, 1890-1964).

¹⁹⁰ *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-60* ed Firth, CH & Rait, RS, 3 vols (London, 1911).

¹⁹¹ Benbow, RM 'Notes to Index of London Citizens involved in City Government, 1558-1603', 2 vols, unpublished typescript (1992).

¹⁹² Beaven, AB *The Aldermen of the City of London, temp. Henry III to [1912]* 2 vols (London, 1908-13) accessed via British History Online.

¹⁹³ Lang, RG *Two Tudor Subsidy Rolls for the City of London, 1541 & 1582* London Record Society 29 (London, 1993): accessed via British History Online.

¹⁹⁴ Most importantly Boyd, PA *Roll of the Drapers' Company of London* (Croydon, 1934); GL 1592A Grocers' Company Admissions, 1345-1669, and Alphabet Book; Sutton AF, *The Mercery of London: Trade, Goods and People, 1130-1578* (Aldershot, 1988).

¹⁹⁵ Strype, J (ed) *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster...by John Stow...corrected, improved and very much enlarged* (London, 1720) accessed via www.hrionline.ac.uk/strype.

¹⁹⁶ Published online as the Map of Early Modern London by the University of Victoria, Canada at mapoflondon.uvic.ca.

¹⁹⁷ Property was sometimes acquired reluctantly by forfeit, following default of a loan or interest repayment, and in such cases the default might cause the lender a significant cash flow problem. But the value of the forfeited property could greatly exceed the outstanding debt.

architectural historian Maurice Howard's words, 'the building or refurbishment of houses is...the most telling way of measuring changes in general prosperity and the desire to emulate perceived peer groups.'¹⁹⁸ The third assumption is that among gentry and clothiers alike inferences of commercial or social advantage can be drawn from the choice of marriage partners. Throughout the study period, parents encouraged or directed their children to marry for material benefit, and testators warned that bequests would be reduced in the event of an unapproved alliance.¹⁹⁹ The fourth is that despite the well-known limitations of probate inventories in not listing debts owed by the deceased, or their freehold and copyhold lands,²⁰⁰ the assets recorded nonetheless provide the best indication available of an individual's standard of living and some basis for comparison between individuals and generations.

Using these assumptions, the study draws upon the evidence of both primary and secondary sources to test and build upon the existing historiography by examining society in early modern Wiltshire over the span of 150 years. The object has been to reconstruct social, commercial and political networks at both regional and local level, amongst landowners and clothiers, weavers and villagers, and so far as possible to trace the transmission of wealth, opportunity and ambition that drove or influenced social change over the period. By adhering to a strict chronology, supported by the close analysis of documentary evidence, the study attempts to explain the nature and direction of social and economic change, and also to identify the rate and phases of change. The period of research, 1530-1680, has been determined by four important documents. For the decade from 1530 there is a full ledger of purchases from west Wiltshire clothiers by the London Mercer Thomas Kytson.²⁰¹ In 1535 Thomas Cromwell ordered commissioners in west Wiltshire to value the possessions of the monasteries, including the Priory of Edington and its manor of Bulkington; their accounts are set out in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*.²⁰² The study

¹⁹⁸ Howard, M *The Building of Elizabethan and Jacobean England* (London, 2007) 3.

¹⁹⁹ See Bonfield, L 'Marriage, Property and the Affective Family' *Law & History Review* 312 (1983) 303 for the power of the patriarch to influence his son's marriage: 'the father controls familial wealth until he chooses to distribute it...this plenary economic power must have enabled fathers who so desired to exercise considerable influence over fundamental questions regarding the marriage and vocation of their offspring.' Stone, L *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (Oxford, 1965) 596-7, 599, 611-2 argues that from 1550-c1645 sons and daughters generally had to go along with their parents' wishes, although they gradually gained a right of veto.

²⁰⁰ These and other problems are set out in Spufford, M 'The Limitations of the Probate Inventory' in Chartres, J and Hey, D (eds) *English Rural Society, 1500-1800: Essays in Honour of Joan Thirsk* (Cambridge, 1990) 139-74.

²⁰¹ CUL Hengrave Hall Deposit 78 (2).

²⁰² *Valor* vol 2, 140-2.

ends around 1680, when the sale of the Lambert manor of Keevil and Bulkington closed an unbroken series of court books,²⁰³ and the inventory of Alderman Henry Cornish, a Blackwell Hall factor, lists the stocks he was holding for suppliers in west Wiltshire, providing a benchmark for the cloth manufactory at the end of the research period.²⁰⁴

The structure of the thesis is chronological, an approach reflecting the importance of Crown policy in influencing the phases of change. A key factor in the cloth trade was that throughout the early modern period the sovereign's foreign policy frequently influenced commercial conditions, affecting access to the great markets of Germany and the Low Countries, and the safety of shipping in the North Sea and the Channel and along the Atlantic coasts of France and Spain. The methods used to raise money or repay debts for the Crown, including debasement of the currency and the imposition of various forms of taxation, could also weigh heavily on clothiers and merchants. Since the purpose and direction of such policies changed with each sovereign, it proved useful as well as convenient to match the chapters to reigns, with most chapters ending at the death of a sovereign.

Following this first chapter, then, which has set out the main objectives of the study, Chapter 2 explores the radical changes in Wiltshire society after the Dissolution, during the later years of Henry VIII and the reign of Edward VI. Chapter 3 covers the reigns of Mary and Elizabeth, when the Privy Council took steps to regulate the cloth trade, reinforcing the privileges of the London merchants, and the Antwerp market was closed. Chapter 4 covers the reigns of James I and Charles I, and charts the reaction in Wiltshire to a crisis in the market for white broadcloth triggered by war in central Europe. Chapter 5 deals with the policies of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, and the first decade of the Restoration of Charles II, up to the date of Aubrey's 'Preface'. Chapter 6 looks forward to 1680 and back over the entire study period, assessing the nature of social and economic change; finally a short Conclusion presents the key findings of the research and relates these back to the historiography. Chapters 2 to 5 each follow a similar internal structure, focusing first on national affairs and the City of London, then on developments in west Wiltshire and in the village of Bulkington, before highlighting some of the key social, economic and cultural changes discerned in each era. Though episodic, this modular structure yields a kind of historical grid which permits comparisons to be made between different social groups, both

²⁰³ WRO 288/1-4.

²⁰⁴ TNA E 178/6737.

within each reign and also backwards and forwards in time. It is intended to provide a micro-history within a regional history linked to national history, permitting change to be observed and understood at a series of different scales, each of which can shed light upon the other. For the current study, this approach emerged from purely practical considerations, but the theoretical basis for a similar methodology, described by the cultural historian Jacques Revel as 'jeux d'échelles', has been usefully summarised by the Italian scholar Filippo de Vivo.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁵ De Vivo, F 'Prospect or Refuge? History on the Large Scale' *Cultural and Social History* 7.3 (2010) 387-97.

Chapter 2 Reformation, 1530-53

John Leland's notes of four journeys through Wiltshire in the early 1540s record a society that had changed dramatically in the previous decade, part of whose structure had been permanently uprooted by the destruction of the monasteries, and which remained highly volatile. It is necessary to look back into the 1530s to establish a benchmark for assessing the larger changes which are the subject of this thesis. The purpose of the present chapter is to attempt that task and describe the changes in west Wiltshire society during the Reformation, from the Dissolution of the Monasteries to the accession of Mary Tudor. The chapter consists of four sections. The first deals with the Wiltshire magnates and the fall of the monasteries; the second with the west Wiltshire clothiers; the third with developments in Bulkington. The final section summarizes social change over these two transforming decades.

This was a period of extraordinary growth in the exports from London of west Wiltshire's white broadcloth, in which two powerful forces were at work simultaneously which have most commonly been studied in isolation: the transfer of lands from monastic to lay ownership, and the surge of economic growth in the countryside and in London. Even where the two strands have been discussed together, Wiltshire historians have tended to present this period as the end of something older, rather than the start of something new. *VCH Wiltshire* covers both strands, but discusses them in two separate volumes, each time as a coda to the medieval period. The new owners of monastic lands are noted in volume 3 at the end of a history of each religious house, with no attempt to summarize the overall outcome; volume 4's account of trade and industry takes 1550 rather than 1530 as the start of the modern period. A description in volume 5 of county government in the early modern era, which might be expected to cover the transition, takes a nominal starting date of c1530 but in fact says almost nothing of government before 1550.¹ GD Ramsay starts his account of the woollen trade in 1500, but makes few references to the social upheaval.² This chapter by contrast combines these separate strands of research and highlights the implications of a viewpoint that takes the period as the start of something new, rather than the end of the old. In particular it seeks to identify the broad pattern of the social structure before the Dissolution and to identify how this changed. What was the structure in the 1530s? How much had already changed by the time of Leland's first journey c 1542? Who

¹ Pugh, RB & Crittall, E (eds) 'Religious Houses' in *VCH Wilts* vol 3 (1956); Carus-Wilson, E 'The Woollen Industry Before 1550' in *VCH Wilts* vol 4 (1959); Hurstfield 'County Government'.

² Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry*.

had benefited from the sale of monastic lands? What was the impact in west Wiltshire of the expansion of overseas trade from London? Who were the clothiers of this era, and how did they respond to the surge in demand? How did they relate to the local gentry, and how did they operate in the towns and villages? To what extent and how widely did the profits of trade flow from the city to the countryside? What were the visible signs of social change? These questions locate the chapter within the broad debates about economic development and social mobility in the early Tudor era.

1 Magnates and monasteries

The features of the pre-Dissolution west Wiltshire landscape have no eye-witness comparable to Leland, but their outline can still be discerned through the fragmentary evidence of surviving documents and the researches of modern historians. These indicate that in the 1530s the major landowners in west Wiltshire were mostly absentees. Great nobles such as William Fitzalan, 11th Earl of Arundel, and Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury, may never have visited their large estates in Wiltshire from their seats in Sussex and Berkshire, nor is it likely that Elizabeth Ryprose, Abbess of Romsey near Southampton,³ was personally known to many of the tenants of her manor of Steeple Ashton. Even the resident magnates John Seymour, Edward Bayntun, Walter Hungerford and Henry Long must have been frequently absent at Court, in London, or on military campaigns. For all these great landowners, as for the Crown, which also held valuable estates in west Wiltshire, local authority was wielded on a day-to-day basis by the stewards who presided over their courts and the bailiffs who collected their rents. For the tenants it was these officials, together with the mayors and merchants of the towns and the lesser gentry and clothiers of the countryside, who held the real economic power in the community.

Towns as well as villages were held by the great landowners. The manor of Bradford-on-Avon was a possession of the Abbey of Shaftesbury;⁴ the manor of Trowbridge was held by the Duchy of Lancaster;⁵ and that of Westbury by William, Lord Stourton.⁶ The manor of Devizes, together with those of several north Wiltshire towns including Chippenham and Marlborough, had been held by Catherine of Aragon as part of her jointure from Henry VIII

³ *VCH Hants* vol 2 'Abbey of Romsey: Abbesses of Romsey'.

⁴ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Bradford: Manors'.

⁵ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Trowbridge: Manors'.

⁶ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Westbury: Manors'.

and passed subsequently to each of Henry's queens, with the possible exception of Jane Seymour.⁷

In the 1530s, then, the social landscape of west Wiltshire conformed to Aubrey's image of 'a nest of boxes', where tenants held their land 'of the lords of the Manor, who held of a superior lord, who perhaps held of another superior lord or duke, who held of the king.'⁸ But the reality was far from the neat arrangement suggested by Aubrey's image. Many rural manors in west Wiltshire were discontinuous, their messuages and tenements scattered across villages and hamlets and their arable lands a plethora of small strips in open fields. A large landowner with many manors was obliged by law to administer each according to 'the custom of the manor', which had evolved over long periods and varied for example in terms of the right of widows to inherit the lands of a deceased husband, the heriots chargeable on the death of a tenant and the entry fines due from a successor, or the right of tenants to common pasture, timber and firewood. Such complexity could in practice only be managed by local officials: stewards and bailiffs, woodwards and haywards, who knew the customs, lands and tenants and could defend the landowner's interests when negotiating disputes. The result in the largest estates was a parallel 'nest of boxes' in which a high steward, perhaps appointed for a county or a group of counties, presided over a number of local stewards and bailiffs, who might in turn call on similar officials in individual manors. Many such offices were passed down by inheritance, as of right, and might in practice be delegated to deputies by the leading resident gentry such as Bayntun and Long, who acted as high stewards for a number of distant landowners, lay and religious.⁹

This administrative structure, despite the problems which might arise from so much delegation and the tendency of local officials to turn a blind eye and be influenced by gifts, proved crucial to the Crown when Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell embarked on the sequestration of monastic property in the 1530s. This huge undertaking was carefully prepared. After Henry's divorce from Catherine and marriage to Anne Boleyn in 1533, an Act of Supremacy was passed in November 1534, making Henry the head of the English church.¹⁰ In 1535 a commission was ordered to identify the costs and revenues of all religious houses: its result, the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1536, identified not only the possessions of the houses and the income receivable each year, but the names and fees of

⁷ *VCH Wilts* vol 10 'Borough of Devizes: Castle and Lordship to c1550'.

⁸ Aubrey *Wiltshire* 7.

⁹ Baker *Sir Edward Baynton and Sir Henry Long* lists some but perhaps not all of their stewardships.

¹⁰ 26^o Henry VIII c 1.

their stewards, bailiffs, auditors and receivers.¹¹ From the *Valor* we know that when Henry, Anne and Cromwell stayed at Bromham Hall that summer,¹² their host Edward Bayntun was the steward not only of the Crown lands in Wiltshire, but also of the monasteries of Lacock and Bradenstoke nearby, and of Malmesbury Abbey in the north of the county.¹³ Henry Long of Wraxall performed similar duties for Stanley Abbey and Kington St Michael Priory near Chippenham, and of Edington and Monkton Farleigh Priors.¹⁴ They were well-placed to know which estates might be available and who to contact when the Court of Augmentations was established in 1536 to administer and dispose of the religious houses as they were surrendered to the Crown.¹⁵

The heads of most of the religious houses granted annuities to such men, hoping that they would influence Cromwell or the King on their behalf. By the time of surrender, both Edward and his son Andrew Bayntun were on the payroll of Lacock, and Walter Hungerford, Henry Long and Andrew Bayntun on that of Edington.¹⁶ While some did intercede on behalf of individuals,¹⁷ they tried to gain personally from the proceeds of Dissolution. Of these men, however, only Bayntun would benefit significantly, because the others faced strong competition. Henry's revolution coincided with the sudden downfall of Queen Anne and her replacement in June 1536 by Jane Seymour of Wolf Hall, with dramatic consequences for north and west Wiltshire. Most of the smaller houses surrendered that year went to Queen Jane's brother Edward Seymour, even the Priory of Monkton Farleigh, just two miles from Henry Long's seat at Wraxall;¹⁸ and Seymour was also favoured with a grant of the borough of Trowbridge.¹⁹ Seventeen months into her marriage, Queen Jane died shortly after giving birth to a royal son, the future Edward VI, but the Seymour family were by then firmly established at the heart of the royal establishment. Prince Edward's birth triggered an era of rapid change in Wiltshire that would persist well beyond his lifetime largely

¹¹ Savine, A 'English Monasteries on the Eve of the Dissolution', in Vinogradoff, P (ed) *Oxford Studies in Social and Legal History* vol 1 (Oxford 1909) 4. The commissioners appointed to survey properties within the Sarum Deanery of Potterne, which covered most of west Wiltshire except Warminster, Westbury and Bromham, were John and Edward Seymour, Edmond Mompesson, John Crualey and William Button: *Valor* vol 2, 69 & Appendix (map of Sarum and Winton dioceses).

¹² Merriman, RB *The Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell* (Oxford 1968) vol 1 nos. 114, 122.

¹³ *Valor* vol 2, 117, 125, 122; Baker 'Sir Edward Bayntun'.

¹⁴ *Valor* vol 2, 115, 117, 142, 144.

¹⁵ Savine *English Monasteries* p 260; Richardson, AT *History of the Court of Augmentations 1536-1554* (Baton Rouge 1961) 2.

¹⁶ *L&P Henry VIII* vol 16 (1540-1) no. 91.

¹⁷ Long for example sought permission from Cromwell for the Rector of Edington to take walks outside the house, to which he had been confined by order of the commissioners: Baker 'Sir Henry Long'.

¹⁸ *L&P Henry VIII* vol 10 (1536) 526.

¹⁹ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Trowbridge: Manors' cites TNA DL 42/22 f 146b.

because his uncles Edward and Thomas Seymour seized the opportunity to extend their Wiltshire estates and embed their own servants in the new organizations of Crown finance. Their local influence was further magnified by the downfall of two of the wealthiest landowners in the county: Walter Hungerford and the Countess of Salisbury.

Cromwell had recruited Hungerford by 1533; in 1536 he attended parliament as Baron Hungerford of Heytesbury.²⁰ With an historic seat at Farleigh Castle on the Frome, Hungerford coveted the neighbouring lands of Hinton Priory, a Carthusian monastery whose manors included the manors of Lullington and Beckington on the west bank of the Frome – both noted broadcloth centres – and Longleat near Warminster, which all lay between Farleigh and his Heytesbury estates in the Wylve valley.²¹ But Hungerford's closeness to Cromwell proved his undoing. Shortly before his patron was arrested in May 1540, in the wake of the Anne of Cleves fiasco, Hungerford faced a barrage of accusations including witchcraft and buggery and was convicted of both charges, and also of treason by employing as his chaplain William Burde, a chantry priest at Bradford, who was said to have denied the royal supremacy.²² Hungerford and Cromwell were executed at the Tower on the same day, 28 July 1540.²³ Meanwhile the Plantagenet Countess of Salisbury, whose vast estates across England included the Wiltshire manors of Erlestoke and Wilton near Salisbury,²⁴ had been in the Tower since November 1539. Mother of the outlawed Cardinal Reginald Pole, she was accused of aiding and abetting his efforts to oppose Henry VIII and executed in spring 1541.²⁵ The lands of both Hungerford and the Countess passed to the Crown to be administered by the Office of General Surveyors.²⁶

The larger monastic properties in Wiltshire and Somerset were dissolved in 1539 and again Edward Seymour, now the Earl of Hertford,²⁷ took many of the most valuable spoils, including Amesbury Priory near Salisbury and Glastonbury Abbey in Somerset.²⁸ This time however the beneficiaries also included his servants, most importantly John Thynne, a

²⁰ Ashton, DJ 'Walter, Baron Hungerford of Heytesbury (1503–1540)' *ODNB*.

²¹ Merriman *Thomas Cromwell* vol 2 no. 318.

²² Burde escaped execution but was deprived of his living. *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Bradford: Churches'.

²³ Ashton 'Walter Hungerford'.

²⁴ Pierce, H *Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury 1473-1541* (Cardiff, 2003) 188.

²⁵ Pierce, H 'Margaret Pole, suo jure Countess of Salisbury (1473–1541)' *ODNB*.

²⁶ The Office became the Court of General Surveyors in 1542. Richardson *Chamber Administration* 250n, 388.

²⁷ Elevated in 1537: Beer, BL 'Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset (1500-52)' *ODNB*.

²⁸ *VCH Wilts* vol 3 'Abbey, later Priory, of Amesbury'; *VCH Som* vol 2 'Abbey of Glastonbury'. Amesbury's revenues in 1535 had been valued at nearly £596, Glastonbury's at more than £3,642: Savine *English Monasteries* 284, 285.

Shropshire-born Londoner who had been steward of Seymour's household since 1536 and now acquired the manors of Longleat, Lullington and Beckington that Hungerford had wanted.²⁹ Another servant, the Crown auditor Matthew Colthurst who was employed by Seymour by 1539, acquired Hinton Priory.³⁰ In this way most of the Frome valley came into Seymour's sphere of influence. Edward Bayntun, a Seymour ally, acquired many of the lands of Stanley Abbey, expanding his own estates northwards from Bromham as far as Chippenham while adding lands in Berkshire and Somerset.³¹

Henry Long was in no position to resist the Seymours. Bayntun's friend John Bonham told Leland that the Longs owed their rise to the patronage of the Hungerford family,³² which after the summer of 1540 cannot have helped their cause, and Henry was evidently hampered by a lack of cash despite making several land sales during the 1530s: in 1539 he had vainly begged Cromwell to help him become farmer of the Hinton lands.³³ His son and heir Robert did acquire a 21-year lease of the house, site and rectory lands of Kington St Michael Priory in 1538, perhaps with the help of his uncle Richard, a gentleman of the Privy Chamber,³⁴ who secured the reversion of the lease the following year, but these were of comparatively small value.³⁵ The Longs' Wraxall estate was now surrounded by those of Edward Seymour and his allies to the southwest, north and east, while Thomas Seymour acquired the possessions of Edington Priory to the south, including its manor of Steeple Ashton and the hundred of Whorwellsdown, plus the Melksham properties formerly owned by Amesbury Priory.³⁶ Other allies extended Thomas's influence. In 1539 his old acquaintance William Sharnington, a groom of the Privy Chamber, bought from Augustations the reversion of the manor of Seend in Melksham hundred and was given custody of the property of Lacock Abbey, just to the north, which he bought the following

²⁹ Baker, TFT 'John Thynne (1512/3-80)' *HoP 1509-1558*; *L&P Henry VIII* vol 16 (1540-1) no. 947/57.

³⁰ Virgoe, R 'Sir Matthew Colthurst (by 1517-59)' *HoP 1509-1558*.

³¹ WRO 473/243.

³² Toulmin Smith *Itinerary* vol 1, 134.

³³ *L&P Henry VIII* vol 14 pt 1 (1539) no. 636: 'I am so charged, that without the King's favour, I must give over my house and get into some corner.'

³⁴ Coros, DF & Hawkyard, ADK 'Sir Richard Long (by 1494-1546)' *HoP 1509-58*.

³⁵ *L & P Henry VIII*, vol 13 pt 1 (1538) no. 1309/44. The grant to Richard states that Robert's lease cost 100s per year for the house and site and £6 13s 4d for the rectory lands.

³⁶ TNA E 328/250.

year.³⁷ In 1540 Thomas Seymour leased to Henry Brounker, bailiff of Steeple Ashton, the manor and hundred of Melksham for the term of twenty-one years.³⁸

This was the territorial disposition through which Leland travelled on his second journey in 1542: a society now dominated by the Seymours, but one in which Bayntun remained a prominent figure (he also kept enviable lodgings at Whitehall)³⁹ despite his earlier close connection to Queen Catherine Howard.⁴⁰ Now a new queen was about to enter the picture and if anything intensify the Wiltshire influence at Court. In 1543 the ageing Henry married his last wife, Katherine Parr, a widow who had been hoping to marry Thomas Seymour,⁴¹ and this unwelcome union created a tight affinity of interest between the Seymours and the Parrs. The Queen's jointure lands included the manors of Devizes, Marlborough and Chippenham – the latter a new addition from the attained Hungerford estate – as well as numerous others across twenty counties of England. Her household soon included allies of the Seymours, including William Sharington⁴² and Edward Bayntun, though the latter was demoted to first lord of the Queen's bedchamber in favour of Edmund Walsingham.⁴³ One man whose appointment may have been less pleasing to the Seymours was her chancellor, Thomas Arundell of Shaftesbury, who was a large landowner in Dorset and in 1544 acquired the manor and castle of Wardour in southwest Wiltshire.⁴⁴ Arundell had royal connections of his own and was an important official, receiver for the Duchy of Cornwall and for the Court of Augmentations in Dorset, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall;⁴⁵ but Edward Seymour's servant Matthew Colthurst was auditor for Augmentations in the same counties and could if necessary report on Arundell's activities.⁴⁶ More damaging to Seymour interests in the long run, the Queen's younger sister Anne Parr

³⁷ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Melksham: Manors'; Swales, RJW 'William Sharington (c1495-1553)' *HoP* 1553-1558.

³⁸ TNA E 211/75.

³⁹ Starkey, D 'A Reply: Tudor Government: The Facts' *Historical Journal* 31.4 (1988) 926 quotes William Paget, secretary of the Privy Council, referring in 1545 to 'the lodging over the gate, where Mr Baynton lay, which I much want.'

⁴⁰ Baker 'Sir Edward Baynton'. Bayntun was related to Catherine Howard through his second wife Isabel, the daughter of Ralph Leigh and a half-sister of the Queen. The numerous errors in the pedigree of Leigh in *Vis Surrey 1530, 1572 and 1623* p 20 are corrected in *Wilts N&Q* vol 8, 473-5.

⁴¹ James, SE 'Katherine Parr, Queen of England and Ireland' *ODNB*.

⁴² Swales 'William Sharington'.

⁴³ James, SE *Kateryn Parr: The Making of a Queen* (Aldershot, 1999) 146.

⁴⁴ *VCH Wilts* vol 13 'Donhead St Mary: Manors and Other Estates'.

⁴⁵ Miller, H 'Sir Thomas Arundell (c1502-1552)' *HoP* 1509-1558.

⁴⁶ Virgoe 'Matthew Colthurst'.

had recently married the soldier-courtier William Herbert, who would soon emerge as a very serious rival in Wiltshire.⁴⁷

By the time of Leland's third journey through the county in 1545 the picture had again changed significantly. In February 1544, Herbert had been granted the lands of the valuable abbey of Wilton, near Salisbury, where he would establish his seat.⁴⁸ In the summer Henry led his armies to besiege Boulogne, with Herbert, Arundell, Bayntun and Long all prominent in the campaign.⁴⁹ The Queen was declared Regent and Edward Seymour, Lieutenant of England, joined Henry to direct the capture of the town.⁵⁰ Thomas Seymour, now Master of the Ordnance, took part in the storming of the walls, and was rewarded by promotion to Admiral.⁵¹ All returned safely save Bayntun, who died in France after the siege, where he had been left to arrange troop transport back to England.⁵² This provided a new opportunity for Thomas Seymour. Bayntun's heir Andrew was inexperienced and heavily indebted: recruited by Seymour as a servant, in 1546 he agreed to swap his inheritance – including the great house at Bromham – for Seymour's new estates around Steeple Ashton. This transaction was never completed and would be eventually be cancelled,⁵³ but it appears that Thomas Seymour did for a while take possession of Bromham Hall, where amongst his possessions were portraits of Katherine Parr and her mother.⁵⁴ Andrew Bayntun would later attend parliament as the MP for seats within Thomas Seymour's gift at Marlborough and at Horsham.⁵⁵

The King's death in January the next year brought the Seymours to the height of their influence, but also triggered a fatal power struggle between the two brothers. While Edward dominated the council as the new king's senior uncle, Thomas Seymour was only grudgingly admitted to the rewards of power. In February, Edward Seymour was declared Lord Protector of the Realm, Governor of the King's Person and Lord Treasurer, and honoured with the new title of Duke of Somerset. His closest ally was also rewarded: William Paulet, Lord Great Master of the Household, with a seat at Basing in Hampshire and

⁴⁷ Sil, NP 'William Herbert (1506/7-1570)' *ODNB*.

⁴⁸ Sil *William Herbert*. Savine *English Monasteries* 285 shows that Wilton Abbey's revenues were valued in 1535 at over £674, making it the second most valuable monastery in the county, after Malmesbury.

⁴⁹ *HoP 1559-1558* biographies as cited above.

⁵⁰ Beer 'Edward Seymour'.

⁵¹ Davids, RL & Hawkyard, ADK 'Sir Thomas Seymour (by 1509-1549)' *HoP 1509-1558*.

⁵² *L&P Henry VIII* vol 19 pt 2 (1544) no. 415.

⁵³ Davids & Hawkyard 'Thomas Seymour'.

⁵⁴ Longleat House TH/VOL/II f 10.

⁵⁵ Swales, RJW 'Sir Andrew Baynton (1515/16-1564)' *HoP 1509-1588*.

family connections across Wiltshire and Somerset, became Earl of Winchester.⁵⁶ By contrast, Thomas Seymour was distanced from the centre of power: appointed Lord Admiral, a post that would frequently take him out of London, granted the castle of Sudeley in Gloucestershire, well away from the Protector's seat at Wolf Hall, and raised to the peerage as Baron Seymour of Sudeley. Within weeks, however, he shocked both his brother and the King by secretly marrying the dowager Queen. The Protector was ruthless in response: Katherine was excluded from any involvement in the regency, deprived of jewels given by Henry VIII and denied the precedence demanded by her new husband. When Katherine died in August 1548, soon after giving birth to a daughter, Thomas Seymour conceived dangerous plans that would bring him to the block: the overthrow of his brother, perhaps even the abduction of the King and Princess Elizabeth. By 17 January 1549 the Lord Admiral was under arrest; his attainder and execution followed in March.⁵⁷

Among the most damaging of the allegations against him was that made by William Sharington, who had been MP for Bramber – a seat in the Lord Admiral's gift – in 1547.⁵⁸ The energetic Sharington had married Grace Paget, an alderman's widow, engaged in overseas trade and bought several more properties in Wiltshire including a lease of the demesne of Heytesbury in the Wylve valley, owned formerly by Walter Hungerford. By 1548 he would own fourteen manors in the county,⁵⁹ including Seend and Woodrow in Melksham.⁶⁰ He had also become involved in the Crown's financial affairs. During Henry VIII's lifetime, while in the service of Katherine Parr, he had been appointed under-treasurer of the mint at Bristol Castle, of which Edward Seymour was constable;⁶¹ in 1547 he worked on an audit of the Tower mint.⁶² These activities provided a new kind of opportunity. Arrested soon after Thomas Seymour, Sharington admitted to having defrauded the Treasury of thousands of pounds and claimed to have been blackmailed into giving much of his gains to the Lord Admiral, who was using them to fund an armed band in preparation for an uprising against the Protector. Sharington was sentenced to death and

⁵⁶ Ford, LL 'William Paulet (1474-5?-1572)' *ODNB*.

⁵⁷ Bernard, GW 'Thomas Seymour (1509-1549)' *ODNB*; Bernard, GW 'The Downfall of Sir Thomas Seymour' in Bernard, GW (ed) *The Tudor Nobility* (Manchester 1992) 228; McLean, J *Life of Sir Thomas Seymour* (London 1869) 55-73.

⁵⁸ Swales 'William Sharington'.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

⁶⁰ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Melksham: Manors'.

⁶¹ Virgoe, R 'John Young (by 1519-89)' *HoP 1509-1558*.

⁶² Lehmborg, SE *Sir Walter Mildmay and the Tudor Government* (Austin, 1964) 18.

attainted, but reprieved after giving evidence against Seymour.⁶³ Perhaps he had been informing the Protector or Paulet throughout this murky episode.

In October 1549, the Protector himself was overthrown, following a year of discontent in London and armed rebellions in the South West and East Anglia. It would be another three years before he was attainted and executed, but the era of Seymour ascendancy was over. John Dudley, Earl of Warwick, took control of the Council for the remainder of Edward VI's short reign.⁶⁴ In November Sherington was pardoned for his offences and in January his possessions were restored on payment of £12,867.⁶⁵ The same month, William Paulet was advanced as Earl of Wiltshire and in February he was appointed Lord Treasurer, a role left vacant by Protector Somerset's arrest,⁶⁶ and granted part of Thomas Seymour's attainted estate, the former Edington Priory and its lands in Edington and Bratton, plus the manor house and demesnes of Steeple Ashton.⁶⁷ William Herbert also benefited, created Earl of Pembroke in 1551 and acquiring a 21-year lease of the manor of Bradford-on-Avon; after Somerset's execution in 1552 Herbert received a large grant of the Protector's attainted lands in north Wiltshire.⁶⁸

The remarkable turnaround in Sherington's fortunes forms part of a larger story: the increasing control exerted in Wiltshire by the Crown's financial officers, and the growing involvement of the Paulet family. Since 1536, the Court of Augmentations' responsibilities for administering the surrendered estates of the religious houses had brought its senior officials – the auditors and receivers – into direct contact with the stewards and bailiffs handling these affairs locally, and thus created a centralized bureaucracy. The receiver for Augmentations in Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Bristol and his home county of Hampshire was none other than Richard Paulet,⁶⁹ brother of William Paulet, who in 1539 probably dealt directly with the Steeple Ashton bailiff Henry Brounker in the period between the surrender of Edington Priory and the grant of its possessions to Thomas Seymour and would do so again after Seymour's execution. In 1546 Richard Paulet's brother-in-law Richard Pecksall, a neighbour in Hampshire, acquired from Augmentations the Priory of Bradenstoke and its

⁶³ Swales 'William Sherington'.

⁶⁴ Mackie, JD *The Earlier Tudors, 1485-1558* (Oxford, 1952) 491-2.

⁶⁵ Swales 'William Sherington'.

⁶⁶ Loades, D *The Life and Career of William Paulet* (Aldershot, 2008) 95-7.

⁶⁷ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Edington: Manors and Lesser Estates', citing *Cal Pat Edward VI 1548-9* no. 376. The Crown retained the manor of Steeple Ashton: *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Steeple Ashton: Manors'.

⁶⁸ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Bradford-on-Avon: Manors' citing TNA LR 2/269, 1551; Sil 'William Herbert'.

⁶⁹ Richardson *Augmentations* 49, 281. From 1 January 1547 Paulet's responsibilities changed slightly, exchanging Bristol for the Isle of Wight.

lands which had been leased to Henry Long before the Dissolution.⁷⁰ In 1547 the Court of Augmentations and the Court of General Surveyors were merged and in 1550 came under the overall control of the new Lord Treasurer, William Paulet.⁷¹

Throughout the period 1535-50 there was close engagement between the officials of these two courts and the greater Wiltshire gentry, much of it mediated by London-based professionals such as Edward Seymour's steward John Thynne⁷² and the young attorney-surveyor Lawrence Hyde.⁷³ The local officials and these Londoners took the opportunity to buy land where they could. In the 1540s, following the second wave of grants of former monastic properties, local officials could profit from the resale of extraneous parcels of land unwanted by the grantee. In 1544, Henry Brounker and John Perte, an Augmentations official, bought property in Berkshire from William Sharington which had formerly been owned by Amesbury Priory and granted to Edward Seymour.⁷⁴ Such piecemeal activities may have been trivial by comparison with the great transactions of the nobility, but they nonetheless indicate that local men like Brounker were able to use their connections within the Crown financial departments to gain new opportunities. In 1547, Brounker was appointed to the Wiltshire commission of the peace;⁷⁵ as a 'particular receiver' in 1548 he recorded the lands and revenues of part of the dowager queen's manor of Marlborough.⁷⁶ Both appointments were clear indications that he had broadened his contacts and won trust at the highest levels in the Privy Council.

In 1545 John Thynne was surveyor of Crown lands in Wiltshire, and with Lawrence Hyde was appointed commissioner for the survey of Wiltshire chantries in 1548;⁷⁷ both men bought and sold land in Somerset; on at least one occasion Hyde sold to Hugh Paulet, who sold onwards at a profit.⁷⁸ In 1550, Thynne's servant Laurence Hyde was commissioned by the court to survey the new Crown lands in Steeple Ashton, and recorded Brounker's fees

⁷⁰ *L&P Henry VIII* vol 21 pt 2 (1546-7) no. 332/25; *VCH Hants* vol 4 'Sherborne St John: Manors'; *VCH Wilts* vol 3 'Priory of Bradenstoke'.

⁷¹ Ford 'William Paulet'; Richardson *Chamber Administration* 433.

⁷² Baker 'John Thynne'.

⁷³ Fudge, NM 'Lawrence Hyde I (d 1590)' *HoP 1558-1603*. Hyde's birth date is unknown, but he was probably still in his twenties at this time.

⁷⁴ Baker 'John Thynne'.

⁷⁵ *Cal Pat Edward VI* vol 1, 91.

⁷⁶ WRO 9/19/871. The survey is undated, but probably took place soon after the Queen's death on 5 September 1548, when the property reverted to the Crown.

⁷⁷ Booth, M 'Sir John Thynne of Longleat (1513 or 1515-80)' *HoP 1558-1603*; Fudge, NM 'Laurence Hyde (d 1590)' *HoP 1558-1603*; Jackson, JE 'Wiltshire Chantry Furniture' *WAM* 22 (1885) 329.

⁷⁸ Woodward, GH (ed) *Calendar of Somerset Chantry Grants, 1548-1603* SRS 77 (Taunton, 1982) no. 13.

and perquisites as well as the lands he had acquired in the manor.⁷⁹ By 1552, Richard Paulet had died, but was replaced by his younger brother Chidioc Paulet of Basing, Hampshire.⁸⁰ On Christmas Day the same year Brounker was granted for £640 the Manor of Erlestoke where his family had lived for generations, and which had formerly been owned by the Countess of Salisbury.⁸¹ In that year too, Matthew Colthurst, the former Protector's servant, acquired Wardour Castle after the attainder and execution of Thomas Arundell.⁸² William Sharington continued his remarkable career, becoming sheriff of Wiltshire in 1552. On 5 March 1553, shortly before his death, Sharington bought the manor of Steeple Ashton, including the freehold of the fulling mills at Keevil and Bulkington.⁸³

The rise of these men, as servants first of the Seymours and subsequently of the Crown, created a lasting shift in the social structure of west Wiltshire, as will be evidenced throughout the current study. The descendants of Hyde, Brounker, Thynne and Sharington maintained close links with the Seymours and Paulets for generations, strengthening their ties with each other well into the early Stuart era. Their continuing ascendancy can largely be attributed to the conciliatory policy of William Paulet, who in 1552 and again in 1553 as the newly ennobled Marquess of Winchester gave his support to the badly-wounded Seymour family and entreated John Thynne to assist the Protector's widow and her under-age son.⁸⁴ The effect of Paulet's policy was to tie the interests of the most powerful network in west Wiltshire very tightly to those of the Crown, which itself became and remained one of the largest landowners in the area, retaining the strategic manor of Steeple Ashton as well as the Queen's dower lands in Devizes and elsewhere. The policy also engendered a century-long rivalry between the Seymour and Herbert families that would be played out at Court, in competition for the lord-lieutenancy of Wiltshire, and eventually in the Civil War.⁸⁵ An early indication of this rivalry came in 1551, when William Herbert was granted a twenty-one year lease of the Crown manor of Bradford, a valuable possession in the former Seymour heartland.⁸⁶

⁷⁹ WRO 1494/93.

⁸⁰ Richardson *Augmentations* 281; TNA PROB 11/35/54 Will of Richard Poulet, 6 February 1552.

⁸¹ *Cal Pat Edward VI* vol 4 (1550-53) 408.

⁸² Virgoe 'Matthew Colthurst'.

⁸³ *Cal Pat Edward VI* vol 18, 164. The Keevil fulling mill was at Baldham.

⁸⁴ Longleat House TH/VOL/II f 27.

⁸⁵ See Chapters 3.1 and 4.1.

⁸⁶ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Bradford: Manors'.

2 Clothiers and merchants

On his third journey through Wiltshire, in 1545, John Leland rode south from Oxford to Ramsbury, where he joined the Bristol road for a few miles before turning south at Marlborough to join the Barnstaple road through the Vale of Pewsey. He visited Devizes, then rode on again 'to Steeple Ashton 6 miles by champain, but fruitful ground and good wood plenty in some places.'⁸⁷ He does not say which villages he passed, but judging from this description he may have ridden through Poulshot, Bulkington and Keevil rather than via the steep sandstone ridge at Seend. Of Steeple Ashton he notes:

It standeth much by clothiers. There is in it a very fair church, builded in the mind of men now living. The spired steeple of stone is very fair and high, and of that it is called Steeple Ashton. Robert Long clothier builded the north aisle, Waltar Lucas clothier builded the south aisle of their proper costs.⁸⁸

This is the only time that Leland mentions the clothier branch of the Long family. He does not connect Robert Long, who had died in 1501 with the church still unfinished,⁸⁹ to his kinsman Sir Henry Long of Wraxall and he is silent on the current generation of four brothers, who had extended from their home base at Semington (a tithing of Steeple Ashton) to become probably the most dynamic clothier family in west Wiltshire.⁹⁰ Yet In 1545 Thomas Long of Trowbridge was the second highest taxpayer in the clothing area, assessed at £8,⁹¹ just £2 less than Thomas Horton, styled 'gentleman' in Westwood and Iford, and twice as much as Thomas Seymour's bailiff Henry Brounker in Melksham.⁹² Thomas Long's elder brother Robert was a Mercer in London, who traded at Antwerp; his younger brothers Henry and William were clothiers at Westbury and Beckington.⁹³ In 1538 their kinsman, another William, held a fulling mill at Potterne where he also leased the

⁸⁷ Toulmin Smith *Itinerary* vol 3, 79- 82.

⁸⁸ *ibid* 83.

⁸⁹ TNA PROB 11/13/90 Robert Longe of Steeple Ashton.

⁹⁰ The precise relationship of Robert Long (d 1501), patron of the north aisle of St Mary's, Steeple Ashton, to the four brothers discussed in this paragraph is not certain; possibly they were his great-nephews. Ramsay *Woollen Industry* (1943) 3n, followed by *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Trowbridge' and vol 8 'Steeple Ashton', thought Thomas was Robert Long's son; but his father was probably Henry Long of Semington, whose 1536 will names all four brothers: TNA PROB 11/25/457.

⁹¹ The assessment was at the rate of 10d in the £ on the value of moveables: Ramsay, *GD Two Sixteenth Century Tax Lists 1545 and 1576* WRS 10 (Devizes 1954) xiii-xiv. Thus Thomas Long's moveable property was valued at £192.

⁹² Ramsay *Taxation Lists* 33, 4, 15.

⁹³ Robert Long sent cloths to the Sinksen mart as early as 1535: De Smedt, *O De Engelse Nation te Antwerpen* (Antwerp 1954) vol 2, 429; Henry Long held the fulling mill at Brook by 1539, *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Westbury: Mills' citing TNA REQ 2/101/39; William Long was in Beckington by 1548 and probably earlier: TNA WARD 2/58/215/17.

manor house, Blount's Court.⁹⁴ These Longs had greatly expanded the business of the previous generation and were in the forefront of an economic boom which had spread throughout the southern Avon Vales, with far-reaching consequences for the social structure of west Wiltshire.

By the time of Leland's journeys, this boom had been running for half a century, and had already made a considerable impact by the 1520s, when Thomas Long was a child.⁹⁵ Of five Wiltshire clothiers singled out for a forced loan to the Crown in 1522, three were in the Avon Vales: Thomas Baylie of Trowbridge, Thomas Barksdale of Keevil and John Whitaker of Westbury, each of whom was charged £50.⁹⁶ The lay subsidy returns of 1524/5 show that while the greatest concentration of wealth in the county was in Salisbury, assessed at £405, the west Wiltshire clothing area was significant. The combined assessment for the hundreds of Bradford (£72), Devizes (£54), Potterne (£43), Melksham (£46), Whorwellsdown (£112) and Westbury (£89) reached £416.⁹⁷ In the core area of Whorwellsdown and Melksham hundreds, the tithings of Trowbridge (£42) and Melksham town (£31) were the main contributors, with Steeple Ashton (£21), Keevil (£15), Edington (£10) and Bulkington (£8) also important.⁹⁸ Although many of the leading clothiers were assessed in the towns where they were normally resident, much of their business was conducted at fulling mills in the countryside. Such was the demand for west Wiltshire broadcloth that the town mills could not provide enough capacity: as early as 1519 John Whitaker built a new mill at Edington on a stream flowing north from the Plain past Bulkington and Keevil.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ WRO CC/Bishoprick/266/1 Rental of Potterne, 1538. For the relationship of William Long of Potterne to Thomas Long of Trowbridge, son of Henry of Semington, see WRO 947/2190 tab 3.

⁹⁵ Thomas Long's birth date is unknown, but can be estimated as around 1509 by working back from the year of Robert Long's freedom as a Mercer, 1533. If Robert was then about 26, as Rappaport *Worlds within Worlds* 322 states was usual, then he was born around 1507; his younger brother Thomas was perhaps born a couple of years later.

⁹⁶ *L&P Henry VIII* vol 3 (1519-23) no. 2483. John Whitaker is named there as 'John of Baith', but can be identified with reasonable certainty as the John Whiteacre alias Bathe of All Saints, Westbury whose will was proved 10 February 1531: TNA PROB 11/24/17.

⁹⁷ See Map 4.

⁹⁸ Sheail & Hoyle *Regional Distribution of Wealth* 382-9. The figures cited are for the first survey, rounded to the nearest pound. The figures for Potterne, the southern division of Potterne and Cannings hundred, have been extracted from the table on 383 and include West (Bishop's) Lavington.

⁹⁹ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Edington: Mills'. The 'Whitaker of Westbury' who built this mill can be identified as the John Whiteacre also Bathe, mentioned above, by the 1538 will of his son Richard Bathe, alias Wheatacre, Clothier of Edington: TNA PROB 11/27/299. The stream on which the mill was built formed the border between Westbury and Edington parishes; the family had property in both.

Historians of the woollen trade have characterized the Henrician and Edwardian era as one in which the Company of Merchant Adventurers of London seized the initiative from those of the outports including Southampton and Bristol, the most important for medieval Wiltshire, and monopolized the trade in white broadcloth to its main market in the Low Countries via the great entrepôt of Antwerp.¹⁰⁰ The strong upward trend of cloth exports and the growth in London's share has been tabulated by Carus-Wilson and Coleman¹⁰¹ and by Fisher,¹⁰² and Bisson has shown how a small clique of wealthy merchants, chiefly Mercers, came to exert an oligarchic control over the Company itself.¹⁰³ Cloth exports from London grew steadily at first, from an average of 53,660 for the three years 1521-3 to 66,049 in 1530-2, before accelerating to 102,660 in 1539-41 and a staggering 132,767 in 1550,¹⁰⁴ which could not have been achieved without strenuous effort throughout the main production areas of the West Country, East Anglia and Yorkshire.

Yet little consideration has been given to how the clothiers managed to supply this steep surge in demand, how much wealth they accumulated, and how this affected the local economy and society. For scholars of the cloth trade, the main point of interest has been how the manufacture was conducted: where the clothiers bought their wool and other necessities; how they organized their workforce; how they transported their products to market. Case studies have been made of William Stumpe of Malmesbury (d 1552) and John Winchcombe of Newbury, but both operated outside west Wiltshire.¹⁰⁵ Even Ramsay and Carus-Wilson, who discussed several of the leading Trowbridge and Bradford clothiers in the period up to 1550, followed Leland in highlighting Thomas Baylie (d 1543) and Thomas Horton (d 1530), rather than the generation that came to prominence in the 1540s boom.¹⁰⁶

Ramsay portrays these decades as a 'golden age' of cloth-making, when wealthy clothiers 'slept on the newly-introduced luxury of feather beds, loaded their tables with tankards,

¹⁰⁰ For a typical summary see Brenner *Merchants* 6.

¹⁰¹ Carus-Wilson, E M and Coleman, O *England's Export Trade 1275-1547* (Oxford 1963) 115-9.

¹⁰² Fisher, FJ 'Commercial Trends and Policy in Sixteenth Century England' *EcHR* 10.2 (1940) 82.

¹⁰³ Bisson, DR *The Merchant Adventurers of London: The Company and the Crown 1474-1564* (Newark, London & Toronto 1993) 4-5.

¹⁰⁴ Fisher 'Commercial Trends' 82; for a comparable series compiled by Ralph Davis see Appendix 1.

¹⁰⁵ Baker, TFT 'William Stumpe of Malmesbury (by 1498-1552)' *HOP*; Jackson, C 'Boom-time Freaks or Heroic Industrial Pioneers? Clothing Entrepreneurs in Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Century Berkshire' *Textile History* 39.2 (2008) 145-171.

¹⁰⁶ Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* chapter 2; Carus-Wilson 'Woollen Industry before 1550'.

goblets and silver plate,¹⁰⁷ and thought that they were tempted to sell up when the market turned after 1550: 'The Dissolution of the Monasteries, which threw so much land upon the market, may have encouraged the richer clothier to...live at ease upon his rents.'¹⁰⁸ He gives the impression that supply was readily increased to meet demand, that free-flowing profits were lavished on luxuries or reinvested in monastic land, and that successful clothiers were quick to settle for an easier life. As this study will demonstrate, however, it is much more likely that the surge in demand was not easily met, that William Stumpe, Thomas Horton and Thomas Baylie were exceptional in acquiring monastic land directly from the Crown, and that the most successful clothiers had a very long-term outlook that involved growing and securing their valuable businesses so that they could be passed on to future generations.

A petition to the King from the mayor and common council of Bristol around 1530 complains bitterly about the social effects of the country clothiers' activity, suggesting that there was already fierce competition to supply the growing market:

The husbandmen and other imperfect persons in the science of clothmaking dwelling in villages in the country fell and began to make cloth of the wools of their own growing and engrossed other wools amongst their neighbours in such wise that the clothiers of your said town could get no wool but at unreasonable prices, the said clothiers were of necessity compelled to leave their occupying and to forsake the said town seeking work abroad.¹⁰⁹

As this petition implies, the most critical resources for making white broadcloth were not the skilled workers of the towns – the shearmen and the dyers – but the fulling mills, the wool, and the yarn-producing and weaving workforce of the countryside.

It is extremely difficult to calculate the size of this rural workforce, except in the most general terms. Ramsay estimated that in the 1540s Wiltshire produced nearly 25 per cent of London's exports,¹¹⁰ or some 28,000 cloths a year, of which perhaps 12,000 were made in west Wiltshire and east Somerset.¹¹¹ Since each cloth required about 80 lbs of wool,¹¹² some 960,000 lbs were consumed there as yarn each year. To produce this locally a

¹⁰⁷ Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* 42.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid* 66.

¹⁰⁹ Vanes, J (ed) *Documents Illustrating the Overseas Trade of Bristol in the Sixteenth Century* BRS 31 (Bristol, 1979) 29.

¹¹⁰ Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* 65.

¹¹¹ This calculation assumes that west Wiltshire produced about 40 per cent of the Wiltshire total, and may be conservative. See also Chapter 6.2 and 6.3.

¹¹² Mann *Cloth Industry* 318.

minimum of 4,000 spinners would be required, working 240 days per year,¹¹³ spinning at the rate of 1 lb per person per day.¹¹⁴ Since the population of west Wiltshire was perhaps less than 25,000 at that date,¹¹⁵ about half of them women and girls, this might suggest that one-third of working-age females worked full-time at spinning. But women had many other tasks to perform, especially in the villages, where the majority of the population still lived. While Leland's testimony makes clear that in the early 1540s cloth-making was the main activity in many of the towns, his comments on the villages rarely mention it, except when noting occasional clusters of fulling mills and clothiers' houses.¹¹⁶ He records that much of the countryside was fertile and well-cultivated, suggesting that agriculture was the main occupation. It is likely therefore that outside the towns much of the spinning was done as part-time work. Furthermore west Wiltshire may not have produced all of its own annual requirement: supplies of yarn were probably imported by staplers from other parts of Wiltshire and beyond. Thus all that can safely be said in terms of the local spinning work-force is that the majority of women and girls, perhaps 10,000 or more, probably made yarn at least in their spare time. It is easier to estimate the number of weavers needed in the 1540s to produce 12,000 cloths. Since the maximum output per loom seems to have been about 20 cloths per year,¹¹⁷ there must have been at least 600 broad- looms in west Wiltshire and at least 1,200 weavers and 600 boys to help them spool the yarn: about 1,800 in all, or one in seven of the male population. While many of these would have been crowded into the towns, the rest were distributed across the fifty or more rural parishes, many of which would therefore have had a dozen or more resident weavers. To these numbers must be added perhaps two hundred clothiers who commissioned the spinners and weavers, supplied them with wool and bought the finished cloths. Thus the total cloth-making work-force of west Wiltshire in the 1540s was perhaps in excess of 12,000 men, women and children, or half the population, many of them working part-time.

¹¹³ Munro, JH *Textiles, Towns and Trade* (Aldershot, 1994) 17.

¹¹⁴ Mann *Cloth Industry* 318.

¹¹⁵ Wrigley, EA and Schofield, RS *The Population History of England, 1541-1871* (Cambridge, 1989) 621 gives the county population as 193,828 in 1811, 2.04% of the national total. Applying the same percentage to their national estimate for 1541 (*ibid* 531-3) yields a county figure of 56,586, of which perhaps 40 per cent or 22,634 at the most lived in west Wiltshire. The calculation is fraught with problems, but the conclusion may nonetheless be sound. See also Chapter 6.2 and 6.3.

¹¹⁶ Leland records, for example, that in a valley about two miles from Frome (presumably at Lullington or Beckington) 'dwell certain good clothiers having fair houses and tucking mills.' Leland vol 3, 98.

¹¹⁷ Hale, M A *Discourse Touching Provision for the Poor* (London, 1683) 15-17 states that a 32-yard coarse broadcloth could be woven in three weeks. Wiltshire cloths were normally 24-26 yards long after fulling, and probably took about two weeks to weave.

This large work-force, and the dramatic expansion of cloth-making, was led by a small number of clothiers working together in close-knit family groups, working in distinct geographical areas. On the Frome, Clevelods, Baylies, Hortons and Langfords; on the Semington and Bulkington Brooks, Longs and Baylies; on the Biss in Westbury and Trowbridge, Longs and Langfords; and on the streams under the Plain in the south, Whitakers and Adlams. In each area there were other successful clothiers, but they had to compete or co-operate with these increasingly powerful and dynamic entrepreneurs. As we shall see, by the late 1540s the profits accumulated by the Longs in particular placed them in a position of such dominance that they could become territorial as well as commercial magnates, on a par with all but the greatest of the resident landowners. But their lands were purchased mainly from the gentry, not from the Crown; and there is little to support Ramsay's notion that these ambitious men were seduced from their trade by a life at ease on their rents.

The journals of Thomas Kytson provide the most detailed account we have of the clothiers in west Wiltshire and east Somerset during the 1530s. Kytson was one of the greatest London merchants, perhaps the second wealthiest by 1525,¹¹⁸ who according to Colin Brett's figures accounted for 3 per cent of the entire cloth exports from the capital in this period.¹¹⁹ He bought from clothiers all over the West Country, but his most important single supplier was John Clevelod of Beckington on the Frome, who sold him 3,340 cloths over the decade. A group of Westbury clothiers led by Richard Batt and including several Whitakers and Adlams sold 3,023, and clothiers at Farleigh Hungerford, downstream from Beckington, sold a total of 1,417 cloths.¹²⁰ Kytson must have been a very important customer for these men, but as demand in Antwerp strengthened, so did their bargaining position. By the mid 1530s, Kytson was evidently facing competition for their wares, and began contracting to take all the cloth many of them could produce.¹²¹ In April 1535 he shipped 539 shortcloths to the Sinksen Mart at Antwerp, a figure exceeded by only three other merchants.¹²² The

¹¹⁸ Oldland J 'The Wealth of the Trades in Early Tudor London' *London Journal* 31.2 (2006) p 133 bases this calculation on the 1525 assessment for goods and 1526 subsidy on lands.

¹¹⁹ Brett 'Somerset Clothmen' 31, tab 1.

¹²⁰ *ibid* 32, tab 2. The four Farleigh clothiers were Roger Blackden and his widow, William Blackden and Maurice Llewellyn.

¹²¹ CUL Hengrave Hall Deposit 78 (2) 'Thomas Kytson's Boke of Remembraunce' f 140r (Geoffrey Whitaker 1535); f 175v (William Blackden 1537).

¹²² John Sadler, Rowland Hill and Richard Wilson: De Smedt, *Engelse Nation* vol 2, 427-9.

total shipped by all the Merchant Adventurers was 13,340 of which Kytson's share was 4 per cent. He may have sold around 2,000 cloths per year at the peak of his operations.¹²³

Kytson's decision to seek 'buy-out' agreements with the clothiers reveals their strong position as suppliers, but also the problem they faced in meeting increased demand. Very few could match John Clevelod's output of up to 500 cloths a year for the simple reason that there was insufficient fulling capacity in the west Wiltshire area. This constraint, of which Ramsay says little,¹²⁴ cannot be ignored following the more recent studies of John H Munro, who concluded that 'early modern English mills...required about twenty hours to scour and full a standard-sized good quality woollen cloth.'¹²⁵ Clevelod may well have struggled to produce his peak output of 528 in 1533-4,¹²⁶ even though he had his own fulling mill.¹²⁷ If we accept Munro's maximum of 240 days' work per year,¹²⁸ after Sundays, feast days and the inevitable stoppage time for repairs and floods, and an average of ten hours per day throughout the year, even four fulling stocks would only yield 9,600 hours – just long enough to full 480 cloths. If Clevelod had only two stocks, as did many of the smaller mills, he would have had to seek additional capacity elsewhere; perhaps further downstream where his kinsman Thomas Baylie – married to an Agnes Clevelod – held four fulling stocks under one roof at Stowford.¹²⁹

Mills were expensive to construct: Leland noted that two new mills at Malmesbury had cost the abbot 700 marks (£466 13s 4d), but were 'wonderfully necessary'.¹³⁰ A good mill-site required a large area of land on a watercourse with constant flow throughout the year, clean water for rinsing, and a current fast enough to shift floods quickly in periods of heavy

¹²³ Welch C, rev Archer, I 'Sir Thomas Kitson (1485-1540)' *ODNB* gives 625 as Kytson's peak annual export, in 1534-5, but this may represent shipments to only one fair.

¹²⁴ Ramsay seems to have considered that the constraint on output was the number of looms available, crediting William Stumpe of Malmesbury of accelerating the town's output to 3,000 cloths per year by installing looms and weavers in the monastic buildings (*Wiltshire Woollen Industry* 32).

¹²⁵ Munro *Textiles* 19. Chapter 1, 'Textile Technology in the Middle Ages', first published in Strayer, JR *et al* (eds) *The Dictionary of the Middle Ages* (New York, 1988), gives a detailed account of the cloth production process. For a seventeenth-century account see Petty, W 'Of Making Cloth with Sheep's Wool' in Birch, T *The History of the Royal Society* (London, 1756) vol 1, 55-65.

¹²⁶ Brett 'Somerset Clothmen' 32.

¹²⁷ Bequeathed to his wife Agnes and daughter Marie: TNA PROB 11/27/194 Will of John Clevelod, Clothman probated 8 February 1538. This may have been Clifford's Mill at Beckington.

¹²⁸ Munro *Textiles* 17.

¹²⁹ *Vis Wilts 1565* 3 gives Agnes's surname as Cleveland, but the identification is likely; *L&P Henry VIII* vol 14 pt 1 (1539) 419.

¹³⁰ Toulmin Smith *Itinerary* vol 1, 129.

rainfall.¹³¹ Leats of a hundred yards or so had to be dug to divert the millstream from the main river, and dams or ponds created and provided with sluice-gates, to control the force of water driving the wheel or wheels mounted on the side of or inside the mill house. This was usually a two-storey building. Each wheel turned the heavy timber shaft with its tappet wheel which lifted the fulling stocks: pairs of massive oak hammers which rose and fell to churn the cloths at up to forty times a minute.¹³² With large forces involved the smaller parts such as the wheel paddles were especially prone to breakage, while the submerged timbers – the sluice-gates and the planks lining the wheel-pit – were subject to rot.

Given the large investment of both time and money involved in building new mills, it is unsurprising that clothiers seem rarely to have attempted this; and John Whitaker's construction at Edington in 1519 seems all the more ambitious. But additional capacity was essential if supply was to meet such a fast-increasing demand. Some was created by adding stocks at smaller mills or converting under-utilised grist mills, but fulling remained the bottleneck in the production process. In 1526 Alexander Langford, a leading Trowbridge clothier,¹³³ took a major step to improve his own position by leasing three mills, two of them probably fulling mills, from Thomas and Elizabeth Gore.¹³⁴ Other successful clothiers took similar decisive steps, creating local monopolies over the fulling infrastructure. This solution to the capacity problem gave competitive advantage to the larger clothiers, guaranteeing access to a scarce resource and over time giving them a measure of control over their smaller rivals. In the mid-1530s the London merchants were lobbying for better regulation of cloth production, which was almost certainly in the interests of the larger west Wiltshire clothiers whose cloth was generally of good quality.¹³⁵ In 1536 a bill sponsored by Richard Gresham and other Merchant Adventurers was enacted into statute requiring all cloths to have their maker's mark woven into them and have two lead seals attached: one by the clothier certifying the length of the cloth when wet;¹³⁶ the other by a county aulnager confirming that the cloth met the standard width of one and three-quarter

¹³¹ Willoughby, RWH 'Watermills in West Wiltshire' *WAM* 64 (1969) 71-99.

¹³² Munro *Textiles* 19.

¹³³ In 1536 Langford and Thomas Baylie bought the entire wool clip of the Seymour estates: *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Marquis of Bath vol 4: The Seymour Papers, 1532-1686* (London, 1980) 328.

¹³⁴ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Trowbridge: Mills'.

¹³⁵ Colin Brett has calculated that fewer than eighty out of nearly 13,000 cloths exported by Kytson were found to be faulty by the end customer: about 0.6%. Brett 'Somerset Clothmen' 39; Brett 'Wiltshire Clothmen' 50.

¹³⁶ Cloth shrank by about one-third when fulling, so to achieve the required length of twenty-four to twenty-six yards after fulling, the weaver had to make at least a thirty-six yard cloth. Mann *Cloth Industry* 326.

yards and that the duty demanded for inspecting each cloth had been paid.¹³⁷ This statute put the mill owner in a controlling position, since it was at the fulling mill that cloths were measured when wet, and where the seals were attached.¹³⁸ The following year William Baylie of Keevil and his cousin Marion Baylie signed long leases on the mills at Bulkington and Baldham with the Abbess of Romsey.¹³⁹

The leading Wiltshire clothiers had little reason for concern about the increasing power of London, at least while the market was growing. The merchants of the capital paid in ready money, unlike those of Bristol,¹⁴⁰ and there were many more of them, not only Merchant Adventurers exporting to Antwerp but also Italian and German merchants buying direct from the producers, and Drapers and Cloth-workers buying white cloth to dye and finish in London. While demand outstripped supply, the clothier could be sure of selling at a good price in the capital whether he sold privately to his preferred customers or in the weekly open market at Blackwell Hall.¹⁴¹ The clothiers must also have been aware of the wider opportunities for raising capital in London, which the gentry were already exploiting. The Wiltshire Feet of Fines for the early years of Henry VIII show ample evidence of financial dealings between the wool-producing gentry and London merchants. In 1522 Henry Long of Wraxall sold or mortgaged messuages and lands in his manor of Semington in Steeple Ashton (where his clothier kinsmen were his tenants) for £200 to the Mercers William Dauntsey, Robert Pakington and others.¹⁴² These were men well known in the cloth trade. William Dauntsey came from a wealthy gentry family in West Lavington, beyond Edington; his elder brother Ambrose was the substantial landowner who by 1535 was aulnager for Wiltshire and Somerset.¹⁴³ Even Robert Pakington had Wiltshire connections, if indirect: his home town of Kidderminster in Worcestershire was part-owned by the Priory of Maiden Bradley, close to Frome, and had drawn on its expertise in fulling cloth.¹⁴⁴ In 1535 his

¹³⁷ 'Act for the True Making of Cloth' 27^o Henry VIII c 12 & 13, *Statutes of the Realm* vol 3, 544-5. Gresham's role is highlighted by Ramsay: *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* 53.

¹³⁸ John Clevelod's will bequeathed not only his mill but his 'sigillum pannorum voc le oynage': TNA PROB 11/27/194 .

¹³⁹ WRO 1494/93.

¹⁴⁰ Sacks, DH *The Widening Gate: Bristol and the Atlantic Economy 1450-1700* (Berkeley 1991) 75.

¹⁴¹ Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* 26.

¹⁴² *WN&Q* vol 2, 564.

¹⁴³ *Vis Wilts 1565* 14; *Valor* vol 1, 156-7; Chapter 1.2.

¹⁴⁴ Burton, JR *A History of Kidderminster* (London, 1890) 171.

brother John, a circuit judge, would receive an annuity from Maiden Bradley in the hope that he could assist the priory in some way.¹⁴⁵

William Dauntsey was probably the key connection between west Wiltshire and the City. Active at Antwerp and Calais since the 1490s, he was dealing in London property with Robert Pakington and his brother Humphrey Pakington by the early 1520s, and in 1526 was elected warden of the Mercers Company alongside Thomas Kytson. He was of the same generation as his fellow Mercer William Lock,¹⁴⁶ to whom Thomas Long's brother Robert was apprenticed at about that time: perhaps it was Dauntsey who provided the contact. By 1533, when Robert Long was made free of the Mercers, Dauntsey was one of the most wealthy and experienced merchants in London, if not quite in Kytson's league. All these men were together at the Sinksen mart in 1535: William Dauntsey, Thomas Kytson, William Lock, Robert and Humphrey Pakington and Robert Long, who shipped 283 shortcloths,¹⁴⁷ perhaps supplied by his relatives since they provided none to Thomas Kytson.¹⁴⁸ The Pakingtons sold longcloths, the speciality of their home county of Worcestershire, as well as shortcloths. Long's former master William Lock however sold only the narrower and shorter kerseys, as did another powerful family of merchants: Richard, John and William Gresham. These last three shipped a total of 6,541 kerseys – a huge quantity, representing 40 per cent of all the kerseys sent by the London merchants.¹⁴⁹

In London the Greshams and other great merchants had begun to exert considerable commercial influence through leadership of their companies and the City government, and through their access to the Crown and Privy Council. A formal hierarchy had been developed to govern the native London trade, though their authority in Antwerp was still challenged by the Hanse and outport merchants.¹⁵⁰ In Wiltshire, by contrast, the commercial landscape in the year that Henry VIII visited Bromham was still recognisably that of the 1520s, with numerous small and medium-sized businesses and just a scattering of bigger players. But the new generation of clothiers was initiating major change. In 1530

¹⁴⁵ *L&P Henry VIII* vol 16 (1540-1) no. 91. Another deed of 1532 links Thomas Cromwell, Edward Bayntun, Thomas Kytson and Robert Pakington: Collins, F (ed) *Feet of Fines of the Tudor Period [Yorks] part 1: 1486-1571* (Worksop, 1887) 58-73, accessed through BHO.

¹⁴⁶ The man who introduced John Flower to Thomas Cromwell in 1536: see Chapter 1.1.

¹⁴⁷ De Smedt *Engelse Natie* vol 2, 427-9.

¹⁴⁸ Thomas Long of Trowbridge sold 3 cloths in 1536-7, his sole transaction with Kytson: Brett 'Wiltshire Clothiers' 39. But Long's younger brothers Henry and William may not yet have been active as clothiers.

¹⁴⁹ De Smedt *Engelse Natie* 427-9.

¹⁵⁰ Bisson *Merchant Adventurers* 5, 20.

Thomas Horton II had inherited his uncle's operation at Bradford and his manor house at Westwood.¹⁵¹ His leasehold mill nearby at Iford had four fulling stocks,¹⁵² so he was well-placed to meet demand for his own cloths, but by combining with other clothiers he could also influence the development of the market. Having married a clothier's daughter – Margery Barksdale of Keevil – he encouraged his own children to do likewise, and so created a remarkable commercial network. His daughter Maud married Christopher Baylie, their neighbour at Stowford; his son William married Baylie's sister Joan; his daughter Alice married Thomas Yerbury, Thomas Long's brother-in-law; his daughter Mary married Henry Long, younger brother of Thomas; and his daughter Agnes married Henry Winchcombe, son and heir of John Winchcombe of Newbury in Berkshire, the greatest kersey clothier in the country.¹⁵³

By dominating the fulling capacity of the lower Frome and Bradford, this network could also exert a powerful influence over the marketing of cloths in London, and the regulation of their trade.¹⁵⁴ The 1536 statute had confirmed fulling mills as the organizational and fiscal hubs of the cloth trade. A man like Horton, making frequent visits to London, could trade in cloths brought to his mills by lesser clothiers and weavers, who would benefit from quicker payment and avoid the cost and risks involved in travelling to and from London. The greater the quantity Horton could offer his customers and the more revenue generated by the cloth trade for the Crown, the more influence he could hope to wield. He was already a substantial figure locally, with estates across west and north Wiltshire, and he continued to invest. In 1543 he bought the freehold of Iford Manor and its mill, former possessions of Hinton Priory, when they were acquired from the Court of Augmentations by John Williams, a receiver for the office of general surveyors.¹⁵⁵ In 1549, shortly before his death, he bought back the lands of his uncle's Bradford chantry, including a house and yardland in Keevil held by his kinsman William Lucas.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ *VCH Wilts* vol 11 'Westwood: Manors'.

¹⁵² *VCH Wilts* vol 11 'Westwood: Mills'.

¹⁵³ This network was first identified in Kite, E 'Horton Wills' *WNQ* vol 4 (1902-4) 170.

¹⁵⁴ Zell, M 'Parliament, the Textile Industry and the Mid-Tudor Crisis' in Carlton, C (ed) *State, Sovereigns and Society in Early Modern England: Essays in Honour of AJ Slavin* (Stroud, 1998) 71-84 argues that the clothiers became sufficiently powerful during these decades to prevent parliament from doing anything more than confirm existing practice.

¹⁵⁵ *VCH Wilts* vol 11 'Westwood: Manors'; Richardson *Augmentations* 224.

¹⁵⁶ *Cal Pat Edward VI* (1548-9) 249; *VCH Wilts* vol 11 'Hullavington: Manors and Other Estates'; Kite 'Horton Wills' 166-8.

Horton's enterprise was mirrored by his kinsman Thomas Long in Trowbridge. When assessments were made for the 1545 benevolence, after the King's expensive capture of Boulogne, Long had reached an eminence similar to Horton's.¹⁵⁷ In that same year he made two spectacular purchases from William, Lord Stourton: first, for an undisclosed price, the manors of West Ashton and Hilperton and lands in Steeple Ashton, Bulkington and Whaddon; second, for £1,254 and in partnership with his brothers William and Henry, the manor of Poulshot and lands in Worton, Marston and Potterne and other more distant manors and lands at Maddington on the Salisbury Plain.¹⁵⁸ The Longs were also active in Westbury: by 1539 Henry had secured capacity by leasing a fulling mill at Brook,¹⁵⁹ and in 1550 he bought a messuage and lands at Heywood and Hawkeridge from Andrew Bayntun for eighty marks, while Thomas bought lands at Westbury and at Bratton from John Arundell for £400.¹⁶⁰ At the accession of Mary Tudor, the estates of the clothier branch of the Long family were on a scale formerly associated only with the greater gentry.

To raise such vast sums the Longs may have borrowed from their Mercer brother Robert, who had developed valuable City connections. Around 1535 Robert had made a good marriage to Cicely Copinger, widow of a prominent Fishmonger;¹⁶¹ a few years later, presumably with Long's approval, her daughter Thomasine Copinger married the Mercer John Duckett.¹⁶² Robert's career as a merchant was successful enough for him to take a coat of arms in 1545 and make long-term investments in Somerset: he spent £783 that year on the manor of Stratton-le-Fosse in the Mendips, including the reversion and rents of the Crown leases of two coal mines and the advowson of the rectory.¹⁶³ In 1546 the family position in west Wiltshire was further strengthened after John Duckett died:¹⁶⁴ the widowed Thomasine married Christopher Dauntsey, a cousin of William Dauntsey, who had himself become free of the Mercers in 1545 and owned substantial properties in Trowbridge, Seend and Melksham.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁷ Ramsay *Taxation Lists* 33.

¹⁵⁸ *WN&Q* vol 3, 234.

¹⁵⁹ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Westbury: Mills' citing TNA REQ 2/101/39.

¹⁶⁰ *WN&Q* vol 3, 460, 461.

¹⁶¹ Cecily had been widowed c1534: TNA PROB 11/25/168: Will of John Copynger, Fishmonger, 1534.

¹⁶² Thomasine was widowed in 1545: Clay, JW (ed) *North Country Wills: 1383-1558* Surtees Society 116 (Durham, 1908) 290; TNA PROB 11/31/26.

¹⁶³ *L&P Henry VIII* vol 20 pt 2 (1545) no. 57.

¹⁶⁴ TNA PROB 11/31/26.

¹⁶⁵ Christopher Dauntsey was almost certainly the son and heir of John Dauntsey of Trowbridge, who was active in the property market during the 1530s: WRO 12B/4812, but whose will has not been traced. His presumed widow Edith was assessed at only 20s in 1545: Ramsay *Two Taxation Lists* 33,

These decisive investments were echoed by other clothiers of the Frome, the Biss and the streams under the Plain. Alexander Langford acquired Freshford Mill at the Dissolution and his younger son Edward married the heiress of William Long, the tenant there;¹⁶⁶ by 1543 Alexander had acquired Clifford's Mill near Beckington;¹⁶⁷ in 1544 he and his elder son Alexander II bought the freehold of the Trowbridge mills they had previously leased from the Gores.¹⁶⁸ In 1546, John Adlam of Dilton Mill near Westbury acquired for £222 16s 8d the manor of Westbury Leigh,¹⁶⁹ becoming landlord to his ally John Whitaker, the tenant of Leigh Mill,¹⁷⁰ and perhaps also the New Mill at Edington.¹⁷¹ By the end of Edward VI's reign, much of the fulling capacity of west Wiltshire had been engrossed by a small group of clothier families, giving them a powerful advantage over weaker competitors: the large-scale production required by the greatest London merchants.

The advantages such acquisitions brought to these prosperous clothiers vastly outweighed the profits they could make from fulling. Even forty years later, a medium grade cloth could be fulled for 2s 8d,¹⁷² suggesting a maximum annual revenue of less than £70 for a four-stock mill, before deducting the cost of repairs, wages and materials. For smaller mills the profit may have been no more than £20, the valuation of a fulling mill at Westbury in 1533.¹⁷³ By comparison, the sale of 1,000 cloths per year at about £4 each might yield £600 or more.¹⁷⁴ But there was another important motive for acquiring manors and lands in the 1540s: the surge in cloth production was putting pressure on wool supplies. In a single decade the price of wool doubled in England, threatening the profit margin on cloth but

indicating that Christopher had already inherited the manor of Trowbridge Dauntsey, surveyed in 1552: WRO 1875/6.

¹⁶⁶ Oliver, VL 'Alexander Langford' & 'Edward Langford' *WNQ* vol 4 (1902-4) 324; Mowl, T 'Historical Background' in *Cotswold Archaeology Freshford Mill: Archaeological Evaluation* (July, 2005) 11; Carus-Wilson 'Woollen Industry' cites IPM of Alexander Langford TNA C 142/72/82.

¹⁶⁷ Rogers, KH *Wiltshire and Somerset Woollen Mills* (Edington, 1976) 184 citing WRO 455.

¹⁶⁸ *WN&Q* vol 3, 232.

¹⁶⁹ Carus-Wilson 'Woollen Industry' section vii.

¹⁷⁰ *Henry VIII* vol 20.1 (1545) no. 846.52 (Grants in May).

¹⁷¹ He was perhaps the grandson of John Whitaker of Westbury, whose will was proved in 1531: TNA PROB 11/24/17.

¹⁷² Rogers, KH *Warp & Weft: The Somerset and Wiltshire Woollen Industry* (Buckingham, 1986) 27.

¹⁷³ Conyers, A (ed) *Wiltshire Extents for Debts Edward I - Elizabeth I* WRS 28 (Devizes, 1973) no. 78: mill owned by Robert Leversage of Frome Selwood.

¹⁷⁴ This assumes an average profit of 15 per cent; in good years it might be higher. The profitability of cloth-making is examined in more detail in Chapter 3.2 and Appendix 3.

giving a huge boost to the incomes of sheep farmers.¹⁷⁵ The wealthier clothiers had every incentive to acquire pasture on which to graze their own flocks, and with these investments they did so.¹⁷⁶ Cloth exports from London continued to rise to ever more dizzying heights, helped by the Crown's deliberate debasement of the coinage from 1543 onwards to fund military campaigns in France and Scotland. By reducing the silver content of minted coins, the Crown extracted bullion to pay for arms and armour, but weakened the exchange value of the pound, making English cloth cheaper and more profitable for the merchants in Antwerp and so fuelling the export boom.¹⁷⁷

A peak was reached in 1550, with 132,767 cloths exported in a single year – almost double the quantity of 1525.¹⁷⁸ If Ramsay was correct in stating that Wiltshire cloths accounted for about 25 per cent of the total in these decades,¹⁷⁹ then output from the county had risen from roughly 18,000 to 33,000 cloths, of which west Wiltshire might have produced half – a figure just credible given that there were some thirty fulling mills in the area by 1540.¹⁸⁰ That year Robert and Thomas Long bought a lease from the Mercers' Company of a London tenement called the Three Tuns, part of the Saracen's Head, beside the Guildhall gatehouse and close to Blackwell Hall.¹⁸¹ This may have been purely for the rental income, or they may have needed more secure storage space for deliveries from the countryside. In the event it is more likely to have been used for storing overstocks, for in 1551 the new Northumberland government, faced with huge debts to German bankers, authorised Thomas Gresham to orchestrate a revaluation on the Antwerp exchange. Cloth sales collapsed as prices rose sharply.¹⁸² In 1552 cloth exports from London sank to 84,968, around the average for the 1530s. In the midst of the crisis the Steelyard was closed by government order, the Common Council of the City of London ordered that all cloths must be sold in the open market at Blackwell Hall, and a new *Act for the Making of Woollen Cloth* was enacted into statute: three measures designed to enforce a trading monopoly for the

¹⁷⁵ Bowden, PJ *The Wool Trade in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1971) 5, 6, 219. The price fluctuated during the decade, but for the peak year of 1550, Bowden shows a price index of 281 against 112 for 1539.

¹⁷⁶ Richard Hoyle has argued that there was also a tax advantage in owning land rather than moveable assets: Hoyle *Taxation and the Mid-Tudor Crisis* 654.

¹⁷⁷ Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* 66.

¹⁷⁸ The average for the three years 1524-6 was 72,910: Fisher 'Commercial Trends' 82

¹⁷⁹ Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* 65. No source is provided for this statement.

¹⁸⁰ Identified with reference to *VCH Wilts* and Rogers *Woollen Mills*.

¹⁸¹ Sutton *Mercers* 374.

¹⁸² Blanchard, I 'Thomas Gresham (c1518-1579)' *ODNB* attributes the sharp rise in the value of sterling – from 16 to 22 Flemish shillings to the pound – to a temporary scarcity of silver rather than Gresham's acumen.

Merchant Adventurers and tighter regulation of manufacture in return for financial assistance to the Crown.¹⁸³ The Hanse and the merchants of the English outports had been routed by the London merchants, who would take all the benefit when trade recovered from 1553, the last year of Edward VI's short reign.¹⁸⁴

By then Robert Long was dead and buried,¹⁸⁵ but the pre-eminence of the Longs and their allies amongst the west Wiltshire clothiers was solidly established, and would persist at least through the next two reigns. Their dynastic connections with other leading clothier families, especially the Hortons and Langfords, would be further extended over the decades, creating a regional manufacturing bloc far more significant than the better-known enterprises of William Stumpe and John Winchcombe. The next section of this chapter turns from the regional to the local, to examine how the activity of this dominant group of clothiers was experienced at village level, in the study area of Bulkington.

3 Lords and tenants of Bulkington vale

The destruction of the great landowners, the enforcement of Crown financial control and the surge in cloth production each had its impact on the small village of Bulkington, which was subject to a range of competing magnate and clothier influences. On the eve of the Dissolution, most of the tenants held their lands of three great landowners – Edington Priory, Edward Bayntun and William Fitzalan, 11th Earl of Arundel – although Bayntun's tenants paid their rent to the chantry and almshouses at Market Lavington, at the bequest of his ancestor Lord St Amand.¹⁸⁶ The fulling mill was held of the Abbess of Romsey through her manor of Steeple Ashton.¹⁸⁷ Bulkington lay close to the geographical centre of the Longs' clothing activities; the clothier John Flower, whose story opened this thesis, lived at Worton, the next village to the east, and William Baylie, son of Leland's 'Old' Thomas Baylie, in Keevil to the west. Ecclesiastically, the villagers belonged to the parish of Keevil,

¹⁸³ Zell 'Parliament' 82.

¹⁸⁴ Fisher 'Commercial Trends' 108-9.

¹⁸⁵ TNA PROB 11/35/78 Robert Longe, Mercer of London, proved 20 February 1552.

¹⁸⁶ Richard Beauchamp, 6th Baron St Amand (1453-1508). Ledward, KH (ed) *Calendar of the Close Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office: Henry VII* vol 2 (London,1963) 347.

¹⁸⁷ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Keevil: Mills'.

in the diocese of Salisbury,¹⁸⁸ but fiscally and militarily they were separate: Keevil was in Whorwellsdown hundred, Bulkington in Melksham.¹⁸⁹

Few documents survive from this period to help visualise the village or to identify more than the leading inhabitants among a population of about 150.¹⁹⁰ The earliest will of a Bulkington resident dates from 1556,¹⁹¹ the parish register from 1560. But something can be gleaned from the 1524 subsidy schedule, the *Valor* of 1536, a muster roll of 1539 and the taxation list of 1545; and a recent archaeological study at the heart of the village also provides some clues. According to this, early modern Bulkington consisted of a row of houses along the lane from Keevil, which still curves along a low ridge in otherwise flat land; a manor house stood at the western end, south of the lane, where Manor Farm stands today. A glazed roof-tile suggesting 'a dwelling house of fairly high status' may be the only remnant of a sixteenth-century house. Homes on the north side of the lane were timber-framed and thatched, on a row of crofts divided by ditches, with the houses and yards facing south and the gardens behind bounded by a back lane.¹⁹² An earlier dig confirmed that the underlying geology at the manor site is Kimmeridge Clay, and noted that three excavations all encountered standing water:¹⁹³ unsurprising since the village is crossed by three streams, all flowing into Semington Brook. From the back lane, a track probably led north through the open field to Seend. Further east a track forked south beside a preaching cross to a small settlement at Keevil Wick, then to Erlestoke and Edington Priory under the Plain; another led to Bulkington Mill and beyond to Marston and Worton. Much of the land south and east of Bulkington was marsh, or pasture for sheep, cattle and horses.¹⁹⁴

Somewhere as yet undiscovered was the parochial chapel of St Andrew's, perhaps used mainly in the winter or during floods. The great tithes of Bulkington (levied on the open field crops) belonged to the rectory of Keevil, though they were probably leased out with the glebe lands; the small tithes (on other produce, livestock and the profits from trade) to

¹⁸⁸ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Keevil: Churches'; CEED.

¹⁸⁹ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Hundred of Melksham'.

¹⁹⁰ See Appendix 4.

¹⁹¹ WRO P2/1Reg/101B Will of John Somner, Yeoman.

¹⁹² Bell, C and Durham, B 'Archaeological Excavations at Lawn Farm, Bulkington, 1994' *WAM* 90 (1997) 77-90.

¹⁹³ Borthwick, A 'Land at Bulkington, Archaeological Remains' (1993) 4. An unpublished report produced for GR Elliot, then owner of Manor Farm, held at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, Chippenham.

¹⁹⁴ Andrews & Dury *Wiltshire*; *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Keevil: Economic History'.

the associated vicarage.¹⁹⁵ The *Valor* of 1536 shows that the manor of Bulkington yielded a mere £12 13s 4d a year compared with the rectory of Keevil at £22 13s 4d,¹⁹⁶ but this was more than adequate to fund the church of Keevil with 73s 4d and pay chief rents of 37s to the Earl of Arundel, the Prior of Ivychurch and others. John Catcott of Edington served as the Prior's bailiff in Bulkington as well as Edington for 13s 4d a year; Sir Henry Long acted as the Prior's chief steward in Wiltshire for a fee of 40s.¹⁹⁷ The muster roll of 1539 confirms that Keevil was more significant at this time, fielding seven archers and twenty-five billmen to Bulkington's four archers and fourteen billmen; and in the 1545 tax list Keevil had thirteen individuals yielding a total of £14 1s against a mere £1 3s 4d for the three men liable for tax in Bulkington.¹⁹⁸ Analysis of the tax list shows that Keevil's wealth was largely due to the presence there of a group of wealthy clothiers headed by William Baylie.¹⁹⁹ William was assessed at £4, his aunt the Lady Baylie at 33s, her son Thomas Baylie of Baldham and their kinsman Robert Barksdale at 26s 8d each. The commercial and property interests of these two clothing families extended into Bulkington: in the muster roll, William Baylie and Robert Barksdale are both recorded in Bulkington, where they provided the harness for the tithing.²⁰⁰

The mill on Bulkington Brook probably fulled cloth for both of these men. Barksdale's father Thomas²⁰¹ was documented as early as 1505 working with at least eight weavers in Keevil.²⁰² Thomas Barksdale may have moved to west Wiltshire from Berkshire,²⁰³ he had been highly successful, since by 1525 he had settled lands in Bulkington and Bratton in Wiltshire and in Berkshire (including the Bear Inn at Reading), Somerset, Hampshire and Kensington, Middlesex, on his elder son.²⁰⁴ Robert seems to have been living in Bulkington at that time, since he was described as 'of Bulkington' in 1524 and may have been the tenant of the mill.²⁰⁵ In 1537, however, when the Abbess of Romsey was raising capital in anticipation of the surrender of her estates, it was William Baylie, not Barksdale, who

¹⁹⁵ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Keevil: Churches'.

¹⁹⁶ *Valor* vol 2, 141.

¹⁹⁷ *ibid* 141, 142.

¹⁹⁸ Ramsay *Two Taxation Lists* 15, 35.

¹⁹⁹ Leland's 'Old Bayle', who had died in 1543.

²⁰⁰ TNA SP 1/145.

²⁰¹ Rogers *Woollen Mills* 10.

²⁰² TNA CP 40/971/36d.

²⁰³ Perhaps related to the Barksdales noted by Margaret Yates as wealthy tanners in Speenhamland near Newbury: Yates *West Berkshire* 205.

²⁰⁴ WRO 212B/914.

²⁰⁵ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Keevil: Economic History' states that his father Thomas held the mill from 1502, citing TNA SC 2/208/6 m 13d.

secured a long-term lease of the Bulkington Mill at an annual rent of 28s 8d.²⁰⁶ Within six days Baylie had assigned it to his widowed aunt Marion Baylie, who with her son Thomas renewed her husband's lease on the Baldham Mill, downstream from Bulkington at Seend Head, and also held a third mill named Enock's, upstream at Hurst.²⁰⁷ With these transactions, Marion Baylie created a manufacturing bloc on the the Bulkington Brook, tied by kinship to the larger bloc of Christopher Baylie and Thomas Horton on the Frome.²⁰⁸

In May and June 1546 Marion's son Thomas may have been in London selling cloths to Thomas Gresham.²⁰⁹ It is probable, however, that both Thomas Baylie of Baldham and Robert Barksdale were sometimes represented by William Baylie, pardoned for outlawry that year after failing to repay a debt of £30 to another Keevil clothier, Roger Winslow;²¹⁰ or even by Thomas Horton, to whom they were all related.²¹¹ Thomas Baylie's uncle Christopher married Horton's sister Maud; his aunt Joan married Horton's brother William. Robert Barksdale's sister Margaret was Thomas Horton's wife and, through Horton, Barksdale was also related to Henry Long of Whaddon; and by 1552 the dynastic commercial network had spread even further, with Robert Barksdale's brother Thomas a tenant of the fulling mill at Seend Head, in a manor belonging to Robert Long's step-son Christopher Dauntsey.²¹²

The clothiers of Keevil and Bulkington had safeguarded their businesses against the dissolution of Edington Priory by taking long leases on the fulling mills, but the priory's other tenants had less hope of influencing the outcome, which they most likely awaited with some unease. As already noted, both Walter Hungerford and Thomas Seymour had the Edington Priory possessions in their sights and in the face of such powerful competition even the chief steward Sir Henry Long would be brushed aside. In May 1538, the rector of

²⁰⁶ Son of Thomas Baylie of Trowbridge, d 1543 – the 'Old Bayle' noted by Leland in 1545: *Vis Wilts* 1565, 2. For the date and assignment of the Bulkington Mill lease see WRO 1494/93, f 14d. Robert Barksdale may have suffered a setback in 1533, when he was forced into the Fleet Prison before a debt was cleared: *Conyers Extents for Debt* no. 19.

²⁰⁷ WRO 1494/93 Survey of Steeple Ashton 1550; TNA PROB 11/25/511 Will of William Bayly, 1536, in which the mill is spelt 'Heynockes'; *VCH Wilts* vol 10 'Great Cheverell: Economic History'. The Baylie family had held Baldham Mill since at least 1502: Carus-Wilson *Woollen Industry* fn 214 cites TNA SC 2/208/6. See also Map 2.

²⁰⁸ See Maps 1 & 2.

²⁰⁹ 'Gresham Day Book' nos. 182, 183, 321, 323. This identification can only be tentative because the name is not uncommon. There may have been another Thomas Baylie in Bath.

²¹⁰ *L&P HVIII* 1546 vol 21 pt 2 (1546) 244.

²¹¹ See Pedigrees.

²¹² WRO 1875/6: Rental of the Manors of Trowbridge Dauntsey and Seend Head and Seend Row.

Edington died. Hungerford wrote to Cromwell supporting the deputy rector Paul Bush, whose elder brother John was a tenant of the Priory at Dilton near Westbury.²¹³ Paul Bush was duly appointed. Soon afterwards – at Cromwell’s request– Hungerford replaced Long as chief steward of the priory lands, and John Bush became his steward for Whorwellsdown.²¹⁴ Paul Bush duly signed the surrender of the Priory on 31 March 1539 in return for a pension of £100 pa;²¹⁵ in May 1540 his brother John was granted the manor of Dilton.²¹⁶ But Hungerford and Cromwell went to their executions that July. A year later the rectory lands of Keevil and Bulkington were granted to the Cathedral of Winchester,²¹⁷ after its bishop Stephen Gardiner succeeded Cromwell as Lord Chancellor.²¹⁸ In June 1541 Thomas Seymour was granted most of the Wiltshire estates of Edington Priory and Romsey Abbey including Steeple Ashton and the manor and mill of Bulkington.²¹⁹

The outcome of all these transactions was an almost seamless transfer of the Edington lands from the Prior and the Abbess of Romsey to Thomas Seymour and – after his attainder – to the Crown, which at first scarcely affected the inhabitants of Bulkington. John Sumner, farmer of the demesne lands, had secured his position. On 10 December 1538, three months before the surrender, he had signed a forty-year lease of the capital mansion of Bulkington with its dovehouse and farm, formerly in the occupation of his father William Sumner deceased, for an annual rent of 46s 8d.²²⁰ At the same time Sumner leased the great tithes of Bulkington for twenty-six years at the annual rent of £10.²²¹ But change was on the way. When Seymour’s bailiff Henry Brounker acquired the manor and hundred of Melksham in 1541,²²² he not only became the most powerful figure permanently resident in the neighbourhood, but also became the owner of lands in Bulkington that had been a possession of Ivychurch Priory. He further expanded his estate in 1544, with lands between

²¹³ John Bush was described as ‘of Dilton’ in 1540: *L&P Henry VIII* vol 15 (1540) no. 613/48. Their father William had leased a farm and fulling mill there from Edington Priory: Bettey, JH ‘Paul Bush (1489/90-1558)’ *ODNB*.

²¹⁴ Bettey ‘Paul Bush’; *L&P Henry VIII* vol 13 pt 2 (1538) App 4, which indicates that Hungerford was also appointed steward of Hinton Priory.

²¹⁵ Jackson, JE ‘Edington Monastery’ *WAM* 20 (1883) 282-4.

²¹⁶ *L&P Henry VIII* vol 15 (1540) no. 613/48.

²¹⁷ *L&P Henry VIII* vol 16 (1540-1) no. 947/44.

²¹⁸ Armstrong, CDC ‘Stephen Gardiner (1495-1555)’ *ODNB*.

²¹⁹ *L&P Henry VIII* vol 16 (1540-1) no. 986/33.

²²⁰ TNA SC 6/HENVIII/3985 f A40.

²²¹ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 ‘Keevil: Churches’ cites TNA SC 6/HENVIII/3985 m 48.

²²² From Thomas Seymour: TNA E 211/75.

Seend and Steeple Ashton bought from Giles Gore.²²³ Brounker's ambition was on a large scale, but he proved a stabilising figure before and after the execution of his patron Thomas Seymour in 1549, retained as steward of Whorwellsdown by the Crown.²²⁴ In 1558 Paul Bush, then the first Bishop of Bristol, would appoint Brounker, 'my dear beloved friend', an executor of his will.²²⁵

By 1553, then, even a small village like Bulkington had directly experienced all the major changes in magnate and clothier influence that had occurred in west Wiltshire. While some of its lands were still owned by the Earl of Arundel, the Crown, represented by the Court of Augmentations and General Survey, had become a significant landowner through the attainder of Thomas Seymour and the confiscation of chantry lands. The Baylie family had acquired the fulling mill, linking it to a commercial network which included their cousins at Stowford and their kinsmen by marriage – the Hortons at Iford and Bradford, the Longs at Trowbridge, Whaddon and Potterne. Thus Bulkington, like the rest of the clothing area, had been drawn firmly into the national economy and into a political framework controlled ultimately by the Lord Treasurer, William Paulet.

4 Social and economic change, 1530-1553

By 1553 the social structure of west Wiltshire had changed profoundly from that of 1530. Most of the great feudal estates, both monastic and lay, were shattered by the Dissolution and the political feuding it unleashed. A few of the ancient lay estates survived unscathed into the early 1540s, notably those of Stourton and the Earl of Arundel, but the efforts of Thomas Seymour and Thomas Arundell to create new fiefdoms proved short-lived and at the end of Edward's reign much of the surrendered or confiscated land was in the hands of Paulet, now Marquess of Winchester, of William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, or of the Crown. Hungerford's heir, another Walter now in his twenties, had been kept on a tight rein, with only three of his father's Wiltshire manors restored in 1552;²²⁶ Edward Seymour, son of the Protector, was about fourteen and remained a ward of the King.²²⁷ But the

²²³ Fry, EA 'A Calendar of Feet of Fines for Wiltshire' *WNQ* vol 3, 233. Kite, E 'Place House, Melksham and its Owners' *WNQ* vol 4 (1902-4) 42 suggests that this comprised the manor of Melksham; but as noted above, Brounker had acquired the manor from Thomas Seymour in 1541.

²²⁴ WRO 1494/93.

²²⁵ Bishop Paul's will (TNA PROB 11/42A/23) is transcribed in *WNQ* 4 (1902-4), 104-7.

²²⁶ Harding, A 'Sir Walter Hungerford of Farleigh Hungerford (by 1529-1595/7)' *HoP* 1509-1558.

²²⁷ Doran, S 'Edward Seymour, 1st Earl of Hertford (1539?-1621)' *ODNB*.

Seymour stewards Thynne and Brounker, now Crown servants, had acquired large estates in less than a decade, as had William Sharington. Royal power had been emphatically asserted, replacing the diversified authority of feudal west Wiltshire with strong control from London.

Sharington, Thynne and Brounker had also benefited from the commercial developments of the 1530s and 1540s, and each put the proceeds to work in west Wiltshire. At Lacock Sharington converted the abbey buildings into a grand mansion,²²⁸ which was probably financed at least partly by his successful investments in trade. Thynne too made money in the City and spent it in Wiltshire. In August 1547 Seymour had sold him the manor of Frome Selwood, and from the Court of Augmentations Thynne bought two other manors close to Longleat;²²⁹ the same month he received special admission to the Mercers' Company and acquired for 100 marks a year the office of 'the common package and common packership' of London, including the packing for export of woollen cloths, calf skins, goat skins, pewter vessels and 'all manner of other merchandise'.²³⁰ In 1548 his status in the City was enhanced by marriage to Christian, the only daughter of Richard Gresham and sister of Thomas, now royal agent in Antwerp.²³¹ After the fall of his master, Edward Seymour, Thynne withdrew to Longleat and focused his formidable energies on building a mansion with which only Sharington's could compare.²³² Brounker was almost certainly involved in the woollen trade, if only as a grazier: he twice married daughters of Berkshire businessmen,²³³ and his sister Elizabeth married a clothier at Corsham.²³⁴ Like Sharington and Thynne he declared his eminence by building: his new manor house at Melksham had gardens and orchards extending from the market place to the churchyard.²³⁵

The careers and achievements of these men reveal the flow of capital and influence from the City to west Wiltshire, but also the importance of commercially advantageous marriage.

²²⁸ Swales 'William Sharington'.

²²⁹ Longleat House TH/BOOK/64/3 & 4.

²³⁰ Baker 'John Thynne'; Longleat House TH/BOOK/64/21.

²³¹ Baker 'John Thynne'.

²³² His first attempt would however be disrupted by fire in 1567: Baker 'John Thynne'.

²³³ His second wife, whom he married c1542, was Ursula, daughter of John Yate of Lyford, merchant of the staple: *Vis Berks 1566*, 33; *L&P Henry VIII* vol 17 (1542) no. 1154/89. His first wife, Elizabeth Braybrook of Abingdon, was the daughter of James Braybroke of Abingdon (d 1509), bailiff of Sandwich and receiver of Calais under Henry VII: *L&P Henry VIII* vol 1 (1509-14) 214. See also Kite 'Place House, Melksham' 244.

²³⁴ *Vis Wilts 1565* 8. Joan Brounker married John Smythe of Corsham; their son Thomas, who became the wealthy 'Customer' Smythe in Elizabeth's reign, is discussed in Chapter 3.1.

²³⁵ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Melksham: Manors'; Kite 'Place House, Melksham' illustrations facing 241 & 252.

In this period, when fortunes could be made inside a decade, ambitious men married to gain access to finance, resources and opportunity. The clothiers of west Wiltshire were no exception to this rule. It was typical for clothiers of the 1530s and 1540s to marry, and to encourage their sons to marry, the daughters of other clothiers, who could be relied upon to manage the business when their spouse was away, or if the clothier died while his heir was too young to inherit. These businesses were family enterprises on a substantial scale, demanding continuous commitment. Thomas Long, clothman, married the daughter of a clothier, as did his brother Henry, both Thomas Hortons and Thomas Baylie.²³⁶ The economic historian DC Coleman characterised the rich western clothiers as men who ‘levering themselves up in the social scale by the money based on this business, married into the landowning gentry’,²³⁷ but this was unusual in west Wiltshire during the reign of Henry VIII. The case of James Stumpe, son and heir of William Stumpe of Malmesbury, who married a daughter of Sir Edward Bayntun, and would later marry the widow of Sir Edward himself,²³⁸ was a rare example of social ambition among clothier families.

Unlike the magnates and their stewards, the new generation of clothiers invested their wealth in productive capacity rather than great houses, luxury and display. Given the dangers of involvement in religion, they chose not to follow their predecessors in lavishing money on their churches, as had Robert Long in Steeple Ashton. Thomas Horton’s uncle, also Thomas (d 1530), had built houses in Trowbridge and Bradford and enhanced Westwood Manor with an oriel and wainscot in his upstairs bedroom, as well as installing roundels of stained glass brought from Flanders; he had founded a chantry in Bradford and built a church house there as well as the church tower and perhaps the priest’s house at Westwood.²³⁹ His nephew and successor, Thomas Horton II, seems to have concentrated solely on his trade; at his death in London in 1549 he bequeathed £10 to the repair of the highways near Bradford – double the sum his uncle had left in 1530 for the making of Freshford Bridge.²⁴⁰ Christopher Baylie enlarged his house opposite the mill at Stowford, probably to create more space for production as well as accommodation.²⁴¹ Thomas Long kept the house in Semington where he was born, but in Trowbridge chose to rent from his

²³⁶ Joan, daughter of Laurence Yerbury of Batcombe, Somerset; WRO 947/2190 tab 2; TNA PROB 11/46/130 will of Thomas Longe Clothmaker of Trowbridge, 1563.

²³⁷ Coleman, DC *Industry in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1975) 28.

²³⁸ Toulmin Smith *Itinerary* vol, 132; Baker ‘James Stumpe’.

²³⁹ *VCH Wilts* vol 11 ‘Westwood’; Sutton, D *Westwood Manor, Wiltshire* (London, 2003) 11-16 discusses the architectural evidence.

²⁴⁰ No additional properties are identifiable from his 1549 will: TNA PROB 11/32/463.

²⁴¹ Bannister, NR and Bannister, DE *Historical Landscape Survey of Stowford Manor Farm* (1993) 41. English Heritage reference Stow/EH/093. A copy is held at the History Centre, Chippenham.

kinsman Horton.²⁴² Long's commercial priorities, like those of Thomas Horton II, are clear in his 1562 will: £3 6s 8d for repair of the highways in Trowbridge; £6 13s 4d for the stone bridge across the Avon at Staverton linking Trowbridge to Bradford and Melksham; £10 for the highway between Semington and Devizes.²⁴³ The business of clothmaking, so dependent on transport of heavy or bulky materials throughout the year, required continuous expenditure on roads and bridges, as well as the repair of mills.

The evidence of their wills suggests that even the wealthiest clothiers who bought land as well as fulling-mills spent their excess cash only on clothes, bedding, napery and plate – silver and gilt salts, candlesticks and spoons. The rest went into stocking their lands with animals and equipment. As their choice of marriage partners indicates, the clothing business remained their prime consideration and this not infrequently meant that an apt younger son received a very substantial inheritance. Thomas Baylie's younger son Christopher retained the valuable mill at Stowford; at Keevil his elder brother William probably directed the business of cloth-making and marketing, but tenanted the mills at Baldham and Bulkington and during the 1540s invested in land and property close to his youngest brother Walter's home at Devizes.²⁴⁴ In 1549 Thomas Horton left Westwood and Iford to his widow Margery, née Barksdale, and then to his elder son William, but bequeathed the house and mill in Bradford to his under-age younger son Edward.²⁴⁵

Margery's brother Robert Barksdale was a witness in London to Horton's will, and inherited £10. Robert's own inventory of 1558 gives some indication of the gap that had opened up between the greatest clothiers and those of the second rank. Barksdale, though reputed later to have been the 'head man' of Keevil,²⁴⁶ had far less disposable wealth than Horton: while his house had a hall, a parlour which seems to have been his own bedroom, and three other bedchambers, the only luxuries were three featherbeds. There were six flock-beds, each with its own coffer, two of which were presumably for his apprentices, to whom he owed £4 in all, two more for his 'maidens' and two for other servants. There was a kitchen, buttery, milk-house, bake-house and other workrooms, all sparsely equipped. In the fields, just seven and a half acres of wheat, seven kine and a

²⁴² TNA PROB 11/46/130.

²⁴³ *ibid.*

²⁴⁴ Baylie's brother Walter was mayor of Devizes in 1542/3: WRO 212B/2307. William and Walter bought property there and at Rowde and Bromham in 1545: WN&Q vol 2, 166. TNA PROB 11/43/124, the 1560 will of Walter Bayly, clothman of Devizes, mentions these lands.

²⁴⁵ TNA PROB 11/32/463.

²⁴⁶ Foxe, *J Actes and Monuments* (2nd edn, London, 1570) 2112, accessed online at www.johnfoxe.org

heifer, three calves, one brebis sheep and eight piglets. The total value before debts of nearly £10 was just £17 17s 4d. Barksdale's more valuable possessions had either been passed on or sold, leaving only the necessities for sleeping, preparing food and eating.²⁴⁷

Wills give an incomplete picture of the clothiers' assets, since there is no way of assessing the residual estate left after the bequests, but one clear theme emerges repeatedly from these and other surviving documents: by the reign of Edward VI the leading west Wiltshire clothiers such as Horton and Long had far surpassed their local rivals. Some were already describing themselves as gentlemen and their wives as ladies or dames.²⁴⁸ They were frequent visitors to London where they were on close terms with merchants of the highest rank, and notably with those of their own generation, both as suppliers and customers. They also left large sums on deposit with their merchant customers and provided the means for others to transfer cash to and from the countryside. The merchant Thomas Lodge was already a warden of the Grocers' Company when he witnessed the will of Thomas Horton in 1549.²⁴⁹ The Draper William Chester, Mayor of the Calais staple in 1552, made a cash payment of £200 to William Sharington's servant on behalf of William Long of Beckington in 1548,²⁵⁰ and would receive a bequest from Thomas Long in 1563.²⁵¹ The Mercer Robert Long was probably the best connected of them all: in 1552 he left bequests to his very loving friend Thomas Leigh who was already living in a 'great mansion in St Lawrence Jewry',²⁵² appointed his special good friend the alderman Rowland Hill²⁵³ an overseer to his will, and left 'my dear friend Lord Stephen [Gardiner], late Bishop of Winchester' and former Lord Chancellor of England, one hundred marks and a ring to the value of five angels.²⁵⁴ Long's step-son Christopher Dauntsey was already in the first rank of Merchant Adventurers,²⁵⁵ his three daughters were all married to Mercers and his nephew William Long III was apprenticed to one of them, the Wiltshire-born Henry Vyner.²⁵⁶

²⁴⁷ WRO P2/B/15. Robert Barksdale was perhaps a younger son of his wealthy father Thomas.

²⁴⁸ Marion Baylie is described as 'the lady Bayly' in 1545: Ramsay *Taxation Lists* 35; the widow of Thomas Horton as 'Dame' in 1543: TNA PROB 11/30/10 Will of Dame Mary Horton, 1544.

²⁴⁹ McConnell, A 'Sir Thomas Lodge (1509/10-1585)' *ODNB*; TNA PROB 11/32/463.

²⁵⁰ Alsop, JD 'Sir William Chester(1509-1595)' *ODNB*; TNA WARD 2/58/215/17xxxiii.

²⁵¹ TNA PROB 11/46/130.

²⁵² TNA PROB 11/35/78 Will of Robert Longe of London, 1552; Wright, S 'Sir Thomas Leigh (c1500-1571)' *ODNB*.

²⁵³ Archer, I 'Sir Rowland Hill (c1495-1561)' *ODNB*.

²⁵⁴ Armstrong 'Stephen Gardiner'. Gardiner was in the Tower when Robert Long wrote his will.

²⁵⁵ In 1547 he had replaced Thomas Gresham as royal agent at Antwerp: Willan, TS *Studies in Elizabethan Foreign Trade* (Manchester, 1959) 91.

²⁵⁶ All are mentioned in Robert Long's will. The apprentice William was presumably the son of William Long of Beckington, not 23 when his father died in 1558, after which he appears to have

Thus a new social order had emerged in west Wiltshire by the end of Edward's reign. In 1524 clothiers had acted as petty collectors in some of the west Wiltshire parishes,²⁵⁷ but few owned significant properties outside the towns; stewards and bailiffs were mainly local farmers, perhaps overseen by lawyers for the greater gentry. By 1553 a small élite from each of these two groups had taken control of most of the ancient estates, either by purchase or as servants of the Crown, the Marquess of Winchester or the Earl of Pembroke. Few of the clothiers or the resident gentry had gained directly from the sale of monastic lands, but they had profited greatly from the boom in cloth exports, the surge in wool prices and the resale of packets of confiscated lands.

Few merchants had made a lasting impact though the most successful, William Dauntsey, who died childless in 1543, left estates in Wiltshire to his elder brother Ambrose and a large sum for the establishment of a school and almshouses in West Lavington, to be administered by the Mercers.²⁵⁸ The clothiers with the most productive capacity in the countryside and the best connections in the capital, both in the City and at Westminster, had acquired substantial estates and were primed for further expansion. Among these men Thomas Long had emerged pre-eminent, with a network of merchant nephews in the City and a well-connected kinsman at Court: Richard Long, brother of Henry Long of Wraxall, a gentleman of the Privy Chamber who married Thomas Kytson's widow.²⁵⁹ The Long network was the group that had best exploited the dynamics of supply and demand, and their wealth and influence would increase in the second half of the century, despite the recovery of several ancient families.

returned to Beckington: WRO 947/2190 tab 2; Weaver, FW (ed) *Somerset Medieval Wills vol 3* SRS 21 (London, 1905) 217.

²⁵⁷ eg Richard Whitaker at Penleigh in Westbury, Henry Blackborrow at Edington and William Baylie at Keevil: TNA E 179/197/153.

²⁵⁸ TNA PROB 11/29/398 & 499 Wills of William Dautesey, 21 June and 30 November 1543. WRO 787/5 provides a useful transcript.

²⁵⁹ Coros & Hawkyard 'Sir Richard Long'.

Chapter 3 Recovery, 1553-1603

Evidence of social change in west Wiltshire during the reigns of Mary and Elizabeth can be found in records of the commission of the peace, the Church and the law courts. Quarter Sessions minutes have survived for much of the Elizabethan period,¹ as have registers for most parishes: administratively at least there was continuity and stability. The Court of Common Pleas in Westminster was increasingly used to record the conveyance of land, and contemporary abstracts of Wiltshire feet of fines provide summary notes of transactions which increased rapidly in number through the decades.² An increasing number of wills survive from both the Consistory Court of Salisbury and the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. Using these sources and the accounts of west Wiltshire parishes published in *VCH Wiltshire*, this chapter seeks to identify the sequence and nature of change in west Wiltshire in the second half of the sixteenth century, and to understand how this was influenced by fluctuating commercial conditions.

Such change must first be set in the context of political and international events, and of the macro-economy. Trade with the continent via Spanish-controlled Antwerp survived the political turmoil of the final years of Henry VIII and the reigns of Edward and Mary; but when England's struggles with Spain and Catholic France resumed under Elizabeth, disruption became inevitable.³ From Mary's reign onwards, companies of merchants backed by courtiers and politicians sought direct access to customers and suppliers as far afield as Russia, Morocco and the Levant; but the Low Countries and Germany remained by far the most important markets for England's overseas merchants.⁴ In 1563-4 a year-long ban on English merchants at Antwerp convinced both Merchant Adventurers and the Crown that arrangements must be made for a new staple at Emden in Protestant Germany;⁵ others were subsequently established at Hamburg, Stade and Middleburg.⁶ Antwerp was permanently closed to English merchants from 1576, after unpaid Spanish forces mutinied and sacked the town,⁷ and in 1585 trade with the Spanish-controlled

¹ Johnson *Sessions*.

² Fry 'Feet of Fines' covered the reigns in instalments in *WNQ* 4 (Mary) and *WNQ* 4-8 (Elizabeth from 1558-75). Fines for Elizabeth 1575-1603 are calendarised in TNA IND 1/17224-8. Just sixty-nine fines are recorded for the five years of Mary's reign; by 1575 there were seventy in a single year.

³ Ashton *Reformation* 85-6, 118, 123; Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* 65-6.

⁴ Fisher 'Commercial Trends' 103-7; Brenner *Merchants* 12-17.

⁵ Ashton *Reformation and Revolution* 85-7.

⁶ Black, JB *The Reign of Elizabeth* (Oxford, 1959) 239.

⁷ Ashton *Reformation and Revolution* 118.

territories was ended when an English expeditionary force joined the Dutch campaign for independence.⁸ After the Armada, a Catholic threat to the French channel ports brought English military campaigns in both Normandy and Brittany.⁹ Thus for most of Elizabeth's reign, Channel and North Sea trade was conducted in exceptionally hazardous conditions.

Apparently reflecting these problems, the Exchequer records of exports from London as reported by customs officials show the trade in broadcloths declining during the quarter century from 1550 to 1575, and recovering only slowly thereafter. 'The opening years of Elizabeth's reign found the cloth trade at a level some 30 per cent below the peak of the boom; a level which was not to be substantially exceeded until the next century. The great expansion of trade was over.'¹⁰ Thus in 1940 FJ Fisher summarised the key finding from his influential table of exports of woollen cloths from the port of London during the sixteenth century; and this finding has been accepted and repeated by many economic historians since then. In 1956, PJ Bowden restated Fisher's findings in even stronger terms: 'Cloth exports, which had practically trebled in volume during the first half of the century, fell during the third quarter, and became stabilized during the last quarter of the century at a level considerably lower than that which had obtained at the height of the 1550-1 boom.'¹¹

The conventional narrative for the cloth trade in Wiltshire is also one of decline followed by slow and painful recovery. Mann's account of the Wiltshire woollen trade after 1550 claimed that 'the repeated difficulties in the export trade [after 1550] ... did not make for the accumulation of large fortunes.'¹² Yet there are strong grounds for questioning how serious the problems were for the London merchants, and how far they were transmitted to the west Wiltshire clothiers. Fisher's figures omitted cloths exported free of customs duty;¹³ and he acknowledged that even at a national level the statistics may mislead: with the appreciation of sterling, 'the value of exports must have fallen less than their volume.'¹⁴

⁸ *ibid* 123-4.

⁹ *ibid* 125-7.

¹⁰ Fisher 'Commercial Trends' 103.

¹¹ Bowden, PJ 'Wool Supply and the Woollen Industry' *ECHR* 9.1 (1956) 52.

¹² Mann 'Textile Industries: Cloth, 1550-1640'.

¹³ See Appendix 1 for the adjusted figures, from Davis, R *English Overseas Trade, 1500-1700* (London, 1973) 52-3.

¹⁴ Fisher 'Commercial Trends' 104. It is worth noting that had Fisher expressed the statistics for 1550-52 as a triennial average (as he does for all other periods) the figure would have been 110,148, lower in fact than that for 1547-9; also that compared with this figure the 93,812 recorded for the opening years of Elizabeth's reign was 15 not 30 per cent lower; and that subsequently all except two of the thirteen triennial averages exceed 90,000 and four top 100,000 – a level only previously reached when the currency was devalued. See also Appendix 1.

Robert Brenner argued that ‘the so-called depressions of the late sixteenth century simply did not pose fundamental problems for the cloth export trade as is often implied,’¹⁵ because the Merchant Adventurers exploited the crises to force London’s foreign merchants out of the Steelyard. Within Ramsay’s account of the trade in Wiltshire there are also contrary indications. He suggests that the Wiltshire clothiers increased their market share of broadcloth exports from almost a quarter during the 1540s to one third during the 1590s,¹⁶ and if these ratios are applied to Ralph Davis’s adjusted figures for cloths exported from London they reveal not decline but a 32 per cent *increase* in Wiltshire’s output, from almost 28,000 to 37,000 cloths per year just for the export market.¹⁷ Ramsay’s estimate for the 1590s could actually be conservative, since by 1606 Wiltshire was credited by Friis with nearly 60 per cent of London’s exports, and over 45,000 cloths.¹⁸

During the Elizabethan period, moreover, there is little doubt that the home market grew significantly. According to Christopher Dyer, it had been larger than the export market even at the start of the century;¹⁹ and Stone notes an estimate of annual broadcloth production in the Elizabethan era of 200,000 cloths, when exports were running at about half that number.²⁰ DW Jones’s study of receipts at the Blackwell Hall cloth market in the Elizabethan period shows a steady rise in total receipts from fees for inspecting and storing cloths in the Hall, despite the decline in exports. In particular, Jones records a strong trend of increased yield on sales for London consumption from 1574 to 1585, after which the figures become unreliable because of corruption and evasion.²¹ It is reasonable to assume that this trend was at least partly caused by an increase in London’s population and would have continued after 1585. A similar trajectory is implied by Steve Broadberry’s estimates of Elizabethan wool production, which suggest that growth in cloth output in England grew strongly from a low in 1556 right through to 1578, hit a trough in the early 1580s, but then recovered to a new peak in 1604.²² Julia Mann’s view that ‘the export trade was much more important

¹⁵ Brenner *Merchants* 11-14.

¹⁶ Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* 65, 69.

¹⁷ See Appendix 1.

¹⁸ Both Ramsay and Mann accepted this spectacular growth in Wiltshire’s market share, although Mann raised some concerns about Friis’s calculations: Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* 71n; Mann ‘Textile Industries: Cloth 1550-1640’; Friis *Cockayne’s Project* 129-30 and appendix C.

¹⁹ Dyer, *C A Country Merchant, 1495-1520* (Oxford, 2012) 17 estimates the home market at no less than 160,000 cloths per annum when exports were around 100,000.

²⁰ Stone ‘Overseas Trade’ 45n, citing BL Lansdowne Ms 114/27 (undated).

²¹ Jones, DW ‘The Hallage Receipts for the London Cloth Markets, 1562-c1720’ *EcHR* 25.4 (1972) 568, 582-3.

²² From the database by Broadberry, S, Campbell, B, Klein, A, Overton, M & van Leeuwen, B underlying their working paper ‘British Economic Growth, 1270-1870’.

than that for the home market, and the prosperity of the Wiltshire industry depended upon it throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries,²³ was accepted by Clay,²⁴ but may be over-stated. Joe Bettey found that in 1585 woad was being grown on more than 300 acres in Wiltshire by major landowners, including the Marquess of Winchester at Edington,²⁵ perhaps reflecting a strong local demand for a dyestuff not typically used on Wiltshire's exported products.²⁶ The 1589 will of James Long of Monkton, a nephew of Edward Horton, includes a bequest of coloured medley cloth.²⁷ Thus the domestic market may have become much more important to the west Wiltshire clothiers than is currently accepted.

There are other grounds for questioning the narrative of trading difficulties in Elizabethan west Wiltshire. The most tangible are the large houses acquired, built or extended in the 1580s and 1590s by families engaged in commerce, several of which survive today, for example at Southwick, Keevil, Monkton and Corsham.²⁸ As will be shown later in this chapter, the feet of fines record purchases of manors and fulling mills throughout the period not only by west Wiltshire clothiers but by London merchants with no family connections in the area – prominent among them Richard Lambert, an overseas merchant who in 1560 acquired the Earl of Arundel's manor of Keevil and Bulkington and others in the Wyllye valley cloth district near Salisbury.²⁹ Perhaps the most remarkable sign of prosperity is the fortune accumulated by the Bradford clothier Edward Horton, who by 1603 had acquired manors and lands throughout west Wiltshire and whose total estate was assessed at £19,888 4s 10d.³⁰ All this evidence supports a narrative of boom rather than bust, and chimes closely with a contemporary complaint quoted by Fisher about a new breed of clothier 'who doth most harm of all other degrees in this land by purchasing land or leazes, or by maintaining his son in the Inns of Court like a gentleman or by buying offices for him.'

³¹ Edward Horton had no son, but he greatly advanced his nephews; as will be shown later

²³ Mann 'Textile Industries: Cloth, 1550-1640'.

²⁴ Clay *Economic Expansion* vol 2, 14-15.

²⁴ See section 3 below.

²⁵ Bettey *Wiltshire Farming* 280.

²⁶ For the wider context of the boom in woad production at this time see Hoyle, RW 'Woad in the 1580s: Alternative Agriculture in England and Ireland' in Hoyle, RW (ed) *People, Landscape and Alternative Agriculture: Essays for Joan Thirsk* (Exeter, 2004) 56-73.

²⁷ WRO P2/L/43.

²⁸ Owned by Christopher Baylie, Alice Lambert, Edward Long and Thomas Smythe respectively: see sections 1 & 2 below.

²⁹ See section 3 below.

³⁰ BL Add Ms 15561 f 79.

³¹ Fisher 'Commercial Trends' 110.

in the chapter, among his circle were other west Wiltshire clothiers who sent their sons to the Inns. These men rose to affluence at the very time when, according to the conventional narrative, conditions should have been discouraging.

The object of this chapter is to identify some of the prospering entrepreneurs, whether clothiers, merchants or gentry, and to consider their activity in the context of academic debate. How did they, their families and their tenants respond to changing circumstances in London's overseas trade? Were the gentry involved with the domestic and international markets? Were their economic interests aligned with or opposed to those of the clothiers? Historians regard the Elizabethan era as one of steep inflation, and a fast-rising population; key questions have been how these trends affected rural society.³² Did the population grow in west Wiltshire, and was immigration a significant factor? How did landowners and businessmen deal with rents and wages?³³ Historians have questioned whether English capitalism emerged from the industries of the countryside;³⁴ how did cloth production develop in the Avon Vales over this period? Did more villagers get drawn into cloth-making? What of those who concentrated on farming – how were they affected by the cloth economy? How were all these changes reflected in the material wealth of the community?

The next three sections of this chapter provide evidence from three different levels of society. The first looks at the great magnates, Arundel, Pembroke and Winchester, and their involvement with City merchants and Treasury officials. The second considers the west Wiltshire clothiers and gentry. The third investigates the community of Bulkington, where all three manors were sold between 1560 and 1562 in an economic upheaval more decisive even than that of the Dissolution, and one was sold again in the 1590s. The fourth and final section summarises the evidence of social change across west Wiltshire in the Marian and Elizabethan eras.

³² Clay *Economic Expansion* vol 1 chapters 1-3; Wrightson, K *Earthly Necessities* (London, 2002) chapters 5-6.

³³ Bowden, P J 'Agricultural Prices, Farm Profits and Rent' in Thirsk, J (ed) *The Agrarian History of England and Wales* vol 4 (Cambridge, 1967) 674-94; Clay *Economic Expansion* vol 1, 81-91; Wrightson *Earthly Necessities* 145-9.

³⁴ Clay *Economic Expansion* vol 2, 64-9.

1 Magnates, merchants and Treasury officials

The death of Edward VI in July 1553 generated a succession crisis with major implications for the magnates of Wiltshire. In London, the immediate impact was on the leaders of the Privy Council, forced to decide very quickly whether to accept the succession of the Catholic Princess Mary or to follow Northumberland in proclaiming her Protestant cousin Lady Jane Grey.³⁵ In this crisis William Herbert, 1st Earl of Pembroke, was a pivotal figure: his son and heir Henry had married Lady Jane's sister Katherine. Which way would he jump? Initially Pembroke supported Northumberland, but within days of Edward's death he switched sides to proclaim Mary in Cheapside. The new queen was uncertain of Pembroke's loyalty until he proved it by annulling his son's marriage and defending London against Thomas Wyatt in February 1554. Thereafter Pembroke's power and prestige were unchallenged. In November he rode to parliament with 200 horsemen in velvet coats and chains and sixty retainers in blue coats trimmed with velvet and a green dragon badge.³⁶ Pembroke and his son Henry would retain the new office of lord lieutenant of Wiltshire for the rest of the century.³⁷

Under Mary, Northumberland was executed and religious conservatives returned to leading offices of state. Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, was released from the Tower and appointed Lord Chancellor.³⁸ But there was no wholesale dismissal of Edward's councillors. William Paulet, 1st Marquess of Winchester, retained his post as Lord Treasurer.³⁹ Henry Fitzalan, 12th Earl of Arundel, was appointed Lord Steward and President of the Council. At the height of his career the following year he gave away the Queen at her marriage to Philip of Spain, lord of the Habsburg territories in the Netherlands.⁴⁰ With Pembroke, Winchester and Arundel all holding leading roles in the privy council, and the young Edward Seymour still a royal ward, dependent on financial support from John Thynne,⁴¹ Mary's interventions in Wiltshire were largely benign and stabilizing. The lands Andrew Bayntun had 'exchanged' with Thomas Seymour and lost through the Lord Admiral's attainder were returned to him

³⁵ Mackie *Earlier Tudors* 526-9.

³⁶ Sil 'William Herbert, 1st Earl of Pembroke'.

³⁷ This office, which controlled the armed forces of the county, was introduced by Warwick in 1551: Mackie *Earlier Tudors* 491. It was held by the Herberts until Edward Seymour's appointment on the death of Henry, 2nd Earl of Pembroke, in 1601. Doran 'Edward Seymour, 1st Earl of Hertford'.

³⁸ Mackie *Earlier Tudors* 530-1

³⁹ Ford 'William Paulet'.

⁴⁰ Lock, J 'Henry Fitzalan, 12th Earl of Arundel (1512–1580)' *ODNB*.

⁴¹ Doran 'Edward Seymour, 1st Earl of Hertford'.

by the Crown in 1554.⁴² The attained lands of Lord Hungerford and the Countess of Salisbury were restored to their heirs the same year;⁴³ although the Countess's manor of Erlestoke, granted in 1552 to her former tenant Henry Brounker, now bailiff for the Crown manor of Steeple Ashton and the hundred of Whorwellsdown, was not returned.⁴⁴

In 1555, many of these men took part in a great new venture, revealing the intimate connection between nobility and commerce in mid-sixteenth century England. That year, a group of London merchants and their patrons at court were granted 'a monopoly of trade with Russia and all lands "lying northwards, northeastwards or northwestwards", which had not been known or commonly frequented by English merchants.'⁴⁵ The list of subscribers to the Muscovy Company, which would attempt to outflank the German merchants to trade directly with Russia and, it was hoped, with Persia, was headed by Winchester, Arundel and Pembroke, the order of their precedence. In all there were seven peers, twenty knights including the young William Cecil, eleven aldermen and 145 merchants,⁴⁶ among them Thomas Gresham and two leading Mercers from west Wiltshire: Christopher Dauntsey of Trowbridge and Henry Vyner, son of a Castle Combe clothier, the step-son and son-in-law of the recently deceased Robert Long.⁴⁷ Also among the merchants was a young Wiltshireman who had recently been admitted to the freedom of the Haberdashers' Company, Henry Brounker's nephew Thomas Smythe, son of a Corsham clothier.⁴⁸

For the landowning magnates, investment in the Muscovy Company was a sideline, perhaps a patriotic duty, but not a primary concern. As the premier earl in England and one of the country's richest men, Arundel in particular had numerous other interests. At the peak of his career in 1556 he felt confident enough to exchange lands in Norfolk for Henry VIII's vast unfinished palace of Nonsuch in Surrey, and to embark on its completion. Then his fortunes went into serious decline. His only son and heir, Lord Maltravers, died in June that year, followed by a daughter in August 1557 and his wife in October. With Elizabeth's accession Arundel was displaced in precedence at the Privy Council by Robert Dudley, son

⁴² Swales, RJW 'Andrew Baynton (1515/6-64)' *HoP 1509-58*.

⁴³ Harding, A 'Sir Walter Hungerford (by 1527-95/97)' *HoP 1509-58*; Cross, C 'Henry Hastings, 3rd Earl of Huntingdon (1536?-1595)' *ODNB*.

⁴⁴ *CPR Edward VI (1550-3)* no. 408.

⁴⁵ Willan, TS *The Muscovy Merchants of 1555* (Manchester, 1953) 9.

⁴⁶ *ibid* 10.

⁴⁷ See Chapter 2.4.

⁴⁸ John Smythe, who married Joan Brounker, is said to have held the fulling mill at Weavern, on the By Brook south of Slaughterford: Lowe, LLS 'Mr Customer Smythe' unpublished B Litt thesis (Oxford, 1950) 4.

of his old rival Northumberland.⁴⁹ In the midst of these setbacks, his surviving daughter Jane and son-in-law John, Baron Lumley, now his heirs, moved into Nonsuch with Arundel and began to take charge of his business affairs.⁵⁰ One of their earliest actions was to arrange the conveyance of the Manor of Keevil and Bulkington along with other lands in Wiltshire to the London Grocer, Richard Lambert.⁵¹

Arundel's heirs had ample grounds for wanting to dispose of non-core manors in Wiltshire. The deeply indebted earl was still spending lavishly on the restoration of Nonsuch. Less obvious is why the Lincolnshire-born Lambert⁵² should have chosen to buy in Wiltshire, and how he could have afforded a large acquisition so early in his career. The answer seems to lie in a close connection to the Mercer Humphrey Pakington. Lambert, who had come to London with his brother John by the early 1540s, had been an apprentice of Edmund Style,⁵³ who was a neighbour of the Pakingtons in the Guildhall parish of St Michael Bassishaw.⁵⁴ Humphrey Pakington was an exceptionally experienced and well-connected man for the Lamberts to cultivate. His contacts extended in all directions, to his colleagues in the Mercers' Company, to the highest echelons of the law, and to Arundel himself. His brother Robert had married a daughter of the Lord Chief Justice, John Baldwin.⁵⁵ Humphrey Pakington had been Warden of the Calais Staple in 1543, when Arundel (then Lord Maltravers) was resident there as Deputy for the King.⁵⁶

Pakington also had a raft of daughters requiring suitable husbands. The eldest, Jane, married Humphrey Baskerfield, a Mercer from Pakington's home county of Worcestershire; a second, Letitia, married Roger Martyn, who would become Lord Mayor in 1567.⁵⁷ In 1543 a third, Anne, married Lambert's master Edmund Style,⁵⁸ so it was presumably with Style's encouragement that in 1549 John Lambert married a fourth daughter, Katherine,⁵⁹

⁴⁹ Lock *Henry Fitzalan, 12th earl of Arundel*.

⁵⁰ Barron, K 'John Lumley, 1st Baron Lumley (c1533–1609)' *ODNB*.

⁵¹ Fry 'Feet of Fines' *WNQ* 4, 405-6.

⁵² *Vis London 1568* 26.

⁵³ GL 1592A: Grocer's Company 'Alphabet Book of Freemen, 1345-1645'. Richard was made free in 1546, John in 1548.

⁵⁴ In the lay subsidy of 1541, Pakington was assessed at £500, Style at £60. Lang, RG *Two Tudor Subsidy Rolls for the City of London, 1541 & 1582* LRS 29 (London, 1993) 15-17.

⁵⁵ *Vis Worcs 1569* 103.

⁵⁶ Sutton *Mercery* 559; Lock 'Henry Fitzalan, 12th earl of Arundel'.

⁵⁷ Sutton *Mercery* 412.

⁵⁸ *Register of St Michael Bassishaw* 109. Fuidge, NM 'Henry Jackman c1551-?1606' *HoP 1558-1603* follows the Pakington pedigree in *Vis Worcs 1568* in stating that Ann married Humfrey Style, but this appears to be an error. Henry Jackman must have been Edward's son by a previous marriage.

⁵⁹ *Register of St Michael Bassishaw* 110.

and Richard Lambert married Alice Pakington in February 1552.⁶⁰ This marriage cemented his prospects. In 1553 Edmund Style was elected warden of the Grocers Company,⁶¹ and Lambert was soon making his own connections among the new generation of overseas traders. In March 1555 he invested with his fellow Grocers Thomas Lodge,⁶² Francis Bowyer and Edward Jackman in a voyage to Morocco.⁶³ For the next decade, Jackman would be Richard Lambert's business partner. Lambert rose quickly to prominence in the Grocers' Company, and was elected warden in 1560.⁶⁴ Even so, when he discovered that Arundel and Lumley were ready to sell their Wiltshire estates, he may have needed help from his father-in-law to raise the substantial purchase price. By an indenture dated 5 December 1560, he agreed to acquire for £3,170 the manors of Bulkington, Keevil, Boyton, Sherington, Codford and Orcheston St George, together with their freehold lands and the advowsons to their rectories.⁶⁵ The magnate-merchant relationship did not end there. In 1566, to raise £1,300 from Lambert and Jackman, the Earl and his heirs mortgaged property in Sussex, much closer to Arundel's core holdings.⁶⁶

While the Earl was clearly under pressure, Lambert and Jackman were prospering. In 1561 Jackman had bought an estate in Hornchurch, Essex,⁶⁷ and been elected alderman for Walbrook ward in the City;⁶⁸ in 1564 he joined the Pakington dynasty by marrying Anne,⁶⁹ newly widowed by the death of Edmund Style.⁷⁰ Humphrey Baskerfield died that year and his widow Jane was quickly married to the fast-rising Mercer Lionel Duckett, newly elected alderman for Aldersgate ward.⁷¹ In September 1564 both Duckett and Jackman became sheriffs of London,⁷² and the same year Richard Lambert was elected alderman of Billingsgate ward.⁷³ Since 'a fortune of £10,000 was the minimum requirement for eligibility' to become an alderman,⁷⁴ the Pakington circle's financial success was being very

⁶⁰ *ibid* 110.

⁶¹ Grantham, WW (ed) *List of the Wardens of the Grocers' Company from 1345 to 1907* (London, 1907) 19.

⁶² Lodge was an overseer of Thomas Horton's will in 1549: TNA PROB 11/2232/463.

⁶³ Willan *Elizabethan Foreign Trade* 102.

⁶⁴ Grantham *List* 20.

⁶⁵ WRO 1976/1/1.

⁶⁶ WSRO LAVINGTON/149/ff15r-16v.

⁶⁷ *VCH Essex* vol 7 'Hornchurch'.

⁶⁸ Beaven, AB *The Aldermen of the City of London, temp Henry III to [1912]* 2 vols (London, 1908-13) accessed online at BHO.

⁶⁹ *Register of St Michael Bassishaw* 112.

⁷⁰ Grocers' Company 'Alphabet Book'.

⁷¹ Appleby, JC 'Lionel Duckett, d 1587' *ODNB*.

⁷² Fuidge 'Henry Jackman'.

⁷³ Beaven *Aldermen*.

⁷⁴ Brenner *Merchants* 81n.

clearly demonstrated, at a time of economic crisis. In 1563 a trade war had broken out between England and Spain and in a devastating aftershock Thomas Lodge, Lord Mayor of London until November, was forced to declare himself bankrupt.⁷⁵ When English merchants were barred from the Antwerp market that December, Jackman was one of several English merchants whose stock was impounded there.⁷⁶ The winter season passed without any further exports until the Merchant Adventurers moved their trading staple to Emden. In July 1564 the Queen renewed the Charter of the Fellowship of Merchant Adventurers of England, confirming their privilege of the exclusive right to sell white cloths to Germany and the Low Countries and (in return for a substantial down payment) granting a licence to export 30,000 cloths per year free of subsidy.⁷⁷ The charter named the senior members of the company, including Roger Martyn and Edward Jackman; Richard Lambert and Henry Vyner were appointed to the ruling council of Assistants.⁷⁸

It would be hard to exaggerate the prominence of the Pakington network or the importance of the Merchant Adventurers to the economy of west Wiltshire. John Stow recorded that:

The number of merchants in London in the beginning of Queen Elizabeth, viz. when Alderman Lodge was mayor (which was Anno 1561), were in all 327. Whereof the Company of Mercers afforded 99. And these were the names of the chief, Sir Thomas Leigh, Sir Thomas Gresham, Mr Alderman Martin, Mr Alderman Baskerfield, Sir Rowland Hill, Vincent Randal, Lionel Duckett. Of the Grocers were 57. Whereof the chief were Sir John Lyon, Mr Alderman White, Mr Alderman Lodge, Lord Mayor, Mr Edward Jackman, Alderman. Of the Drapers 29. Whereof the chief were Sir William Chester, Mr Alderman Champion.⁷⁹

Of these thirteen 'chief' Mercers, Grocers and Drapers, all but Lyon, Randal and Champion can be shown to have had direct links with west Wiltshire, as customers, by marriage, or as beneficiaries, witnesses or overseers of wills.⁸⁰ Crown policy would make such ties ever

⁷⁵ Ramsay, GD *The City of London in International Politics at the Accession of Elizabeth Tudor* (Manchester, 1975) 59.

⁷⁶ Ramsay, GD *John Isham, Mercer and Merchant Adventurer: Two Account Books of a London Merchant in the Reign of Elizabeth I*, NRS vol 21 (Gateshead, 1962) lxxxiii.

⁷⁷ Ramsay *City of London* 56.

⁷⁸ *CPR Elizabeth I* vol 4 (1563-6) 178-9.

⁷⁹ Strype, J (ed) *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster...by John Stow...corrected, improved and very much enlarged* (London, 1720), Book 5, 291.

⁸⁰ Leigh as a 'very loving friend' of Robert Long, Mercer: TNA PROB 11/35/78; Gresham as a buyer of Wiltshire cloth: Mercers' Company 'Thomas Gresham Day Book', and through marriage of his sister Christian to John Thynne: Blanchard 'Thomas Gresham'; Martin, Baskerfield, Duckett and Jackman as brothers-in-law of Richard Lambert: TNA PROB 11/49/267; Hill as an apprentice of Thomas Kytson:

more valuable, by encouraging the wealthiest merchants. For William Cecil it was desirable for the export trade to pass into 'the hands of a fewer number of merchants, of those that be richer and that will deal and trade like merchants with their stocks and not with the exchange as all the young merchants do.'⁸¹

In the event, neither Lambert nor Jackman had long to live, but their brother-in-law Duckett would be increasingly favoured by the Crown. In 1566 Lambert was elected sheriff, but died in office and was buried at St Mary le Bow.⁸² What was perhaps his last cargo, 7 cwt of rice, was shipped to his widow Alice from Antwerp on the *Lion* of Lee, along with 6 cwt of sumach for his brother John and 650 lbs of pepper for Jackman.⁸³ Two years later Jackman too was dead. Their widows both remarried quickly and well: Alice Lambert to Clement Paston, a courtier and naval commander with a country seat at Oxnead in Norfolk,⁸⁴ and her sister Ann Jackman to James Bacon, Fishmonger, younger brother of Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal and brother-in-law of Thomas Gresham.⁸⁵ The rise in status of both widows is clear evidence of the value of their inheritance.

Lionel Duckett, an exceptionally energetic and enterprising businessman, would become lord mayor in 1572.⁸⁶ A founder member of the Muscovy Company, he traded with Spain during the reign of Philip and Mary, and in 1557 acquired from Christopher Dauntsey the patent to import hats from Spain and Portugal with his business partner, Henry Vyner.⁸⁷ During the 1560s Duckett helped Gresham free the Crown from its debts in Antwerp and became a frequent adviser to William Cecil. In 1567 he became master of the Mercers' Company for the first time, and succeeded Richard Lambert as alderman for Bassishaw Ward. He was governor of the Company of Mines Royal in 1568, and of the Muscovy Company in 1575. Duckett invested in new ventures right across the spectrum, from John Hawkins' slaving voyages to West Africa and the Caribbean to employing German experts to

Archer 'Rowland Hill', and as overseer of Robert Long will: TNA PROB 11/35/78; Lodge as a 'loving friend' of Lambert: TNA PROB 11/49/267, and as witness of Thomas Horton's 1549 will: TNA PROB 11/32/463; Chester as a beneficiary of Thomas Long: PROB 11/46/130.

⁸¹ Bisson *Merchant Adventurers* 98.

⁸² Strype *Survey Book* 3, 22.

⁸³ Dietz, B (ed) *The Port and Trade of Early Elizabethan London* LRS 8 (London, 1972) 3. Sumach is a plant used for tanning and dyeing.

⁸⁴ Loades, D 'Clement Paston c1515-1598' *ODNB*. Loades states that Alice predeceased Paston, but her memorial at Oxnead confirms she died there in January 1609.

⁸⁵ *Vis London 1568* 9; Tittler, R 'Sir Nicholas Bacon (1510-1579)' *ODNB*.

⁸⁶ Appleby 'Lionel Duckett'. Where not otherwise indicated, my summary of Duckett's business activities is based on this source.

⁸⁷ Willan *Muscovy Merchants* 91.

smelt copper in Cumberland and skilled cloth-workers from Armentières to make coloured medley cloths in Coventry. Some of these ventures ended in failure, but over a long career Duckett amassed a vast fortune and bought extensive estates throughout the country.⁸⁸

Lionel Duckett's partnership with Vyner confirms the tight connections between the city merchants and the woollen trade of west Wiltshire, and the continuing activity in London of the heirs of Robert Long.⁸⁹ Long had not been blessed with as many daughters as Humphry Pakington, but the four he did have all married Mercers.⁹⁰ His step-daughter Thomasine Copinger married Duckett's younger brother John, who died in 1545;⁹¹ their son Stephen would settle at Calne in north Wiltshire.⁹² Thomasine subsequently married Christopher Dauntsey,⁹³ who briefly replaced Thomas Gresham as the Crown agent in Antwerp at the beginning of Mary's reign;⁹⁴ but Dauntsey's lands in west Wiltshire would eventually pass to Stephen Duckett.⁹⁵ As for Long's other daughters, Magdalen married the Draper Roger Sadler, Martha married the Mercer William Meredith, and Mary married Henry Vyner. These marriages extended the commercial alliance between the dynamic trading dynasties of Pakington and Long, and deepened the City involvement with west Wiltshire.

Only one west Wiltshire entrepreneur of the Elizabethan era can stand comparison with Lionel Duckett: Thomas Smythe, the nephew of Henry Brounker.⁹⁶ Smythe's career developed in parallel to Duckett's, but in his case the key connection was with the Crown, or at least with the officials of the Treasury. He had started out conventionally, moving to London as an apprentice Haberdasher. About 1555 he gained his freedom and married the daughter of Andrew Judde, master of the Skinners Company, Mayor of the Staple of Calais that year, and former Lord Mayor of London.⁹⁷ In July 1558, just before the death of Queen Mary, Smythe followed Henry Brounker into Treasury employment by acquiring the office of Customer Inwards for the port of London, responsible for collecting the subsidy of tonnage and poundage on imports. This post brought him into contact with the leading officials at the Treasury: it was in the gift of Lord Treasurer Paulet,⁹⁸ who may have been

⁸⁸ Kerridge, E *Textile Manufactures in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 1985) 34.

⁸⁹ See Chapter 2.2.

⁹⁰ TNA PROB 11/35/78.

⁹¹ Clay *North Country Wills* 290.

⁹² *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Trowbridge: Manors'.

⁹³ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Trowbridge: Manors' states incorrectly that Dauntsey was her first husband.

⁹⁴ Ehrenburg, R, *Capital & Finance in the Age of the Renaissance* (London, 1928) 180-1.

⁹⁵ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Trowbridge: Manors'.

⁹⁶ This account is based on Dietz, B 'Thomas Smythe 1522-91' *ODNB*.

⁹⁷ In 1550: Slack, P 'Sir Andrew Judde (c1492-1558)' *ODNB*.

⁹⁸ Bisson *Merchant Adventurers* 69.

influenced by his chancellor of the exchequer, Walter Mildmay. By 1570, 'Customer' Smythe had access to sufficient funds to bid successfully for the farm of the subsidy, which he subsequently renewed three times before Mildmay died in 1589. During the eighteen years that Smythe held the farm, he is thought to have amassed as much as £50,000 in profit, yet still found time to invest and be an active participant with Duckett in the Company of Mines Royal and the Mineral and Battery Works. In 1575 Smythe bought the manor of Corsham in Wiltshire, close to his childhood home, and built a magnificent mansion there in the 1580s.⁹⁹

Mildmay's influence spread deep in west Wiltshire. In 1574 Smythe's cousin William Brouncker, who succeeded his father Henry in 1568,¹⁰⁰ entertained the Queen on her progress through the West Country: she rode from Lacock to Erlestoke on 28 August and stayed three nights, visiting John Thynne at Longleat on 2 September.¹⁰¹ Brouncker's younger brother Henry had become a courtier, and accompanied Philip Sidney – whose wife Frances, née Walsingham, was Mildmay's niece¹⁰² – on diplomatic missions abroad.¹⁰³ That the Brounckers had become important protégés of Mildmay can scarcely be doubted; and their advance reflects Mildmay's ambitions in west Wiltshire. In 1567 he had pressed his son and heir Anthony to marry Grace Sharrington, a co-heiress of Lacock, even without a marriage settlement;¹⁰⁴ in 1569, his daughter Martha married William Brouncker.¹⁰⁵ The chancellor's influence in west Wiltshire increased in 1576, when his brother-in-law Francis Walsingham, Secretary of State, was granted the hundred of Bradford and the reversion of the manor of Bradford-on-Avon, then held by Pembroke. In 1584, Walsingham settled the latter on his daughter Frances Sidney, Mildmay's niece.¹⁰⁶ In sophisticated financial and political circles, of both the country and the capital, property in the west Wiltshire cloth district was a highly desirable asset.

From being servants of Edward Bayntun and then Thomas Seymour, the Brounckers in a single generation had become related by marriage to Mildmays, Walsinghams, Sidneys and Herberts. By contrast their former patrons, the Seymours and their servants John Thynne

⁹⁹ Lowe 'Customer Smythe' 209-10.

¹⁰⁰ 'JCH' 'William Brouncker c1547-96' *HoP 1558-1603*.

¹⁰¹ Chambers, EK *The Elizabethan Stage* (Oxford, 1923) vol 4, 90.

¹⁰² Through his marriage to her aunt, Mary Walsingham: Ford, LL 'Sir Walter Mildmay (1520/1-89)' *ODNB*.

¹⁰³ 'JCH' 'Henry Brouncker c1550-1607' *HoP 1558-1603*.

¹⁰⁴ Pollock, LA 'Grace Mildmay c1552-1620' *ODNB*.

¹⁰⁵ Ford 'Sir Walter Mildmay'.

¹⁰⁶ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Bradford: Hundred', 'Bradford: Manors'.

and Laurence Hyde, were unable to benefit significantly under Elizabeth. Restored in 1559 to his father's inherited lands, Edward Seymour had recklessly married Katherine Grey, whose union with Pembroke's heir had been annulled. For more than a decade he was banished from the Court.¹⁰⁷ Hyde settled in south Wiltshire, leasing Wardour Castle for twenty-one years before buying the nearby manor of West Hatch.¹⁰⁸ Thynne, though regularly sitting as an MP, does not appear to have been involved in overseas trade, or significantly increased his lands in west Wiltshire, during Elizabeth's reign. When he died at Longleat in 1580, his great house not yet completed, his main possessions in the clothing area were still around Warminster and on the Somerset side of the county border.¹⁰⁹ But his widow Dorothy's jointure included Thynne's Manor of Kingswood, a small enclave of Wiltshire in the cloth-making district near Wotton-under-Edge in Gloucestershire. In the early 1590s her next husband Carew Raleigh, brother of Sir Walter,¹¹⁰ and her son Henry Thynne began issuing new leases on tenements there.¹¹¹ In the next reign Kingswood became a hub of innovation with a major impact on manufacturing in west Wiltshire.¹¹²

There can be little doubt that despite the conventional view that the Wiltshire woollen industry declined in the quarter-century from 1550 to 1575, it was generating large enough revenues to attract the interest of some of the wealthiest London investors: magnates, merchants and high-ranking government officials. Arundel's disposal, to fund his larger projects in the south-east, went against this in-coming trend, which grew even stronger after the death of Winchester in 1572. As chancellor of the exchequer, Walter Mildmay could see the wealth of the area both from the returns of his receivers in the clothing hundreds and from the accounts of his customs officials; his determination to secure a share of this for his own family and for his in-laws, the Walsinghams, Herberts and Sidneys, is a clear sign of the national importance of the region. The next sections of this chapter will consider how the economic benefits were shared within west Wiltshire, and explore the relationship between clothiers and gentry.

¹⁰⁷ Doran 'Edward Seymour, 1st Earl of Hertford'

¹⁰⁸ Fuidge 'Laurence Hyde'.

¹⁰⁹ Booth 'Sir John Thynne (1513 or 1515-80)'.

¹¹⁰ Booth, M 'Carew Raleigh (c1550-1626)' *HoP 1558-1603*.

¹¹¹ TNA IND 1/17225 ff 113, 117, 143.

¹¹² See Chapter 4.3.

2 West Wiltshire clothiers and resident gentry

Like the London merchants, the Wiltshire clothiers had to cope with the volatility of overseas trade during the reigns of Mary and Elizabeth. The wealthier men had diluted their risk by substantial investments in land following the Dissolution, but the lesser clothiers, weavers, spinners and other cloth-workers were heavily exposed to swings in demand from the overseas merchants. The boom years of the 1540s are likely to have brought many new workers into the trade; under Philip and Mary the government attempted to curtail the growth of manufacturing and improve the quality of output. The 1555 and 1557 Weavers' Acts sought to restrict weaving to the towns and keep the trade dispersed by prohibiting country clothiers from having more than one loom and weavers more than two.¹¹³ By the accession of Elizabeth, the Privy Council was worried that unemployment amongst cloth-workers might cause unrest, while the conversion of tillage to sheep pasture brought increased danger of dearth and dependence on imported grain, especially in London. Under these circumstances, the new Secretary of State William Cecil noted: 'It is to be thought that the diminution of clothing within this realm were profitable to the same for many causes.'¹¹⁴

Government regulation did nothing to prevent the accumulation of wealth and influence by the leading west Wiltshire clothiers. A 1552 Act had renewed the requirement for 'aulnagers' to be appointed throughout the country so that all cloths made for sale in London would first be checked locally for compliance with the required length, width and weight, and have a seal attached. A fee of 1/2d was charged per white cloth to pay for this inspection.¹¹⁵ In practice what happened in Wiltshire and Somerset (and no doubt elsewhere) is that the county aulnager, then John Dauntsey of West Lavington, 'let the seal farm unto clothiers that have mills in their own hands'¹¹⁶ and left them to check the cloths.¹¹⁷ This approach did not satisfy the Merchant Adventurers, who complained about defects of all kinds, from rips caused by stretching and botched repairs to shortage in

¹¹³ 2^o and 3^o Philip & Mary c 11 and 5^o Philip & Mary c 5.

¹¹⁴ Fisher 'Commercial Trends' 111. Cecil had been appointed Secretary of State in November 1558: MacCaffrey, WT, 'William Cecil, first Baron Burghley (1520/21–1598)' *ODNB*.

¹¹⁵ 5^o & 6^o Edward VI c 6. The fee was 1/2d per white cloth. The aulnager was also responsible for collecting the subsidy due to the Crown of 4d per cloth.

¹¹⁶ Tawney, RH & Power, E *Tudor Economic Documents* vol 3 (London, 1924) 190. This allegation, made in 1576, confirms what had almost certainly been a long-established practice.

¹¹⁷ Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* 52-3.

weight or length; in 1560 the London Court of Aldermen appointed their own aulnager and a team of five searchers.¹¹⁸ An Exchequer list of clothiers fined for offering 'defective' cloth in 1561-2 included many of the leading clothiers of west Wiltshire, including Edward Horton of Bradford, Henry Long II of Whaddon, Thomas Long¹¹⁹ and Humphrey Yerbury, both of Beckington, and Stephen Whitaker of Westbury.¹²⁰ Similar fines were levied year after year.¹²¹ Nonetheless, the Wiltshire clothiers challenged the London aulnage on the grounds that they had already paid for local inspection and continued to resist until 1591, when they finally succeeded in forcing the City to back down.¹²²

In the Elizabethan era the great Wiltshire clothiers became too powerful to be regulated. This was clearly demonstrated when in 1575 a clothier named Peter Blackborrow informed against several of the biggest operators including Edward Horton and Henry Long II for breaching the rules about cloth-making in the countryside and John Dauntsey for failing to conduct the aulnage properly in Wiltshire, Somerset and Gloucestershire.¹²³ Under the legislation, Blackborrow was entitled to substantial rewards if his information was correct, but when the Privy Council ordered the Wiltshire justices to investigate and to raise the reward money, no action was taken. A new act the following year exempted Wiltshire, Somerset and Gloucestershire from the regulations.¹²⁴

There were reasonable grounds for arguing that the London search was simply a way of extracting unnecessary fees. The Wiltshire clothiers had for decades operated their own quality control in the form of 'cloth marks' and seals which identified the grade and maker of the cloth¹²⁵ and these were recognised not only by the London merchants but by their customers on the continent. John Leake's *Treatise on the Cloth Industry* of 1577 was quite specific when answering the question 'Where and in what countries and places is false cloth most used to be made?' that the problems lay mainly with the producers of dyed cloths,

¹¹⁸ *ibid* 55.

¹¹⁹ Son of William Long of Beckington, d 1558.

¹²⁰ Ramsay, GD 'The Distribution of the Cloth Industry in 1561-2' *EHR* 57 (1942) 361-9.

¹²¹ Ramsay inferred that the cloth was faulty, but in most cases the Wiltshire 'defects' were not meeting regulated length or width or weight: the variance is often as little as 1-2lb in a 64lb cloth. See for example TNA E 159/361 m 333. Zell, M 'Exchequer Lists of Provincial Clothmakers Fined in London in the Sixteenth Century' *Bulletin of the IHR*, 54 (1981) 129-30 provides comprehensive references.

¹²² Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* 57.

¹²³ Tawney & Power *Tudor Economic Documents* vol 3, 190-1. Blackborrow also informed against Thomas Webb of Beckington in 1578: TNA E 134/20Eliz/East12; see Appendix 3.

¹²⁴ 18^o Elizabeth c 16.

¹²⁵ See Chapter 2.2.

especially kerseys, pointing the finger at Berkshire, Hampshire, Suffolk and Yorkshire, and vindicating the producers of western broadcloth:

1. The truest cloth that is made with in this realm is all sorts of fine cloth, specially such as be brought to the markets undressed. And the reason is that those cloths be either transported into the Low Countries, and dressed there, or else are sold to the Drapers of London, and other retailers, who see the wetting and dressing of them. For it is certain that neither any of the merchants nor retailers that buy of us in Flanders, nor yet the retailers at home, will commonly make any payments or give their bills before they have laid them in the water, and proved and perused their faults, and made abatements (if any such be found) to the uttermost.
2. And therefore for sorts Gloucester, Somerset, and Wiltshire whites, and also long Worcesters, together with Kentish cloth and generally all other sorts of fine cloths sold undressed, are little or nothing stretched or strained. And these buyers I best commend.¹²⁶

The larger clothiers might have more than one mark, as did John Long of Marston in the 1590s when he was selling broadcloth to the Grocer Philip Sheppard, whose journal sometimes notes whether he is purchasing mark J or mark R, or simply the 'green mark'.¹²⁷ Sheppard consistently records that the bargain is made on condition that the clothier will repair any faults discovered by the end customer 'on certificate of fault from beyond the seas'.¹²⁸ Such a certificate would be issued by a magistrate in the market, in the presence of both merchant and customer.

This commitment to quality control may have been a major factor in the buoyancy of the Wiltshire broadcloth industry during the reign of Elizabeth. However, the signs are that this success was also accompanied by continuing consolidation amongst the larger producers, and especially by the Baylie, Horton, Langford, Long and Yerbury families. The Hortons, Langfords and Yerburies concentrated their manufacturing on the Frome, Avon and Biss, drawing on labour at Beckington, Freshford, Trowbridge and Bradford; the Baylies were at Stowford on the Frome and at Baldham, Bulkington and Hurst on the Bulkington Brook. The Longs had developed three separate operations: one on the Frome at Beckington; another on the Biss at Westbury and Trowbridge; the third on the Semington Brook, at Littleton,

¹²⁶ 'Leake's Treatise on the Cloth Industry, with Proposals for the Reform of Abuses, 1577' in Tawney & Power *Tudor Economic Documents* vol 3, 216-7.

¹²⁷ KRO U269/1 AB6 Purchases from John Long of Marston eg 19 October 1593 and 6 August 1591; William Adlam, presumably of Crockerton, 7 January 1596.

¹²⁸ KRO U269/1 AB6 eg 6 August 1591; 19 October 1593; 1 October 1594. Most entries include a record of the supplier's warranty; occasionally it is made clear that faults must be certified by a magistrate, eg for John Smith of Keevil, on 5 February 1590.

Worton, Marston and Potterne. The economic power of the Longs continued to grow. In 1553 George, Lord Zouche conveyed to Thomas Long of Trowbridge the hundred of Calne with forty messuages, thirty cottages, a water mill and more than 1,300 acres including 400 acres of pasture and 240 acres of gorse and heather on which flocks could graze.¹²⁹ In 1554, Henry Long I bought from Andrew Bayntun the manor of Whaddon with its mansion house and fulling mill on the Semington Brook, just south of the Avon;¹³⁰ around the same time he also acquired the lease of Monkton, on the north bank of the Avon.¹³¹ A decayed timber bridge was soon rebuilt at Monkton, allowing work to be shifted between the two sites as required and re-opening the route from Whaddon to Bath and Bristol.¹³² In 1561 Thomas Long further extended his property at Westbury by acquiring the manors of Chapmanslade and Godsfield from Edward Bayntun II¹³³ and at Calne by purchasing a fulling mill and lands from William Whitaker.¹³⁴ Thomas died the following year, leaving a landed estate including nine manors, and bequests to numerous relatives and in-laws including Hortons and Yerburys. To his 'cousin' William Long of London, apprentice to the Mercer Henry Vyner, and to each of the three daughters of Robert Long he left one fine broadcloth of the mark of the 'red world'.¹³⁵

For most of Elizabeth's reign, however, the most powerful of the Wiltshire clothiers was unquestionably Edward Horton of Westwood. Nephew and heir of the Thomas Horton who expanded the dynasty in the 1540s, Edward Horton was thrust into prominence by the death of Thomas Long after the flu epidemic of 1557-9 had transformed the commercial landscape in west Wiltshire. A generation of clothiers disappeared in a few years: Henry Long of Whaddon and his wife Mary, née Horton; his brother William Long of Beckington; Christopher Baylie of Stowford; Walter Baylie of Devizes; Robert Barksdale and his wife Isabella of Keevil; Thomas Clevelod of Warminster; Robert Whitaker of Bishopstrow.¹³⁶ The

¹²⁹ Fry 'Feet of Fines' *WNQ* 4, 157.

¹³⁰ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Whaddon: Manor'; 'Broughton Gifford: Manors'. Whaddon House burnt down in 1835 but is recorded in a drawing of 1864: Dingley, T *History from Marble* Camden Society os vol 97 (London, 1867). Monkton House survives.

¹³¹ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Broughton Gifford'.

¹³² WRO 947/480 (reference from Pam Slocombe).

¹³³ Fry 'Feet of Fines' *WNQ* 4, 457.

¹³⁴ *ibid* 504.

¹³⁵ TNA PROB 11/46/126.

¹³⁶ Henry Long probate 17 November 1558: TNA PROB 11/41/326; Mary Long probate 15 Oct 1562: TNA PROB 11/45/256; William Long probate 28 September 1558: Weaver *Somerset Medieval Wills* 217; Christopher Baylie probate 13 November 1559: TNA PROB 11/42B/636; Walter Baylie probate 1 March 1560: TNA PROB 11/43/124; Robert Barksdale probate 19 April 1558: WRO P2/3Reg/93c; Isabella Barksdale probate 4 June 1559: P2/3Reg/172D; Thomas Clevelod probate 27 August 1558: PROB 11/40/422; Robert Whitaker probate 14 June 1559: TNA PROB 11/42B/298.

aulnager John Dauntsey was buried at West Lavington in 1559.¹³⁷ It is impossible to be sure that all or indeed any of these died of the epidemic, but the assumption that most did is hard to avoid. Clothiers travelling widely in the countryside, frequently visiting London and staying at crowded inns, would have been particularly exposed to infection. According to Stow, Thomas Clevelod was buried in June 1558 at St Mildred's, Bread Street, just off Cheapside,¹³⁸ one of the witnesses (and a beneficiary) of his will was the inn-keeper Adam Chatterton, perhaps his host at the Three Cups.¹³⁹

In the aftermath of the epidemic, an exceptional burden would fall on the survivors and on the next generation, several of whom were under-age or deemed unsuitable. When Henry Long I was dying in 1558, he clearly doubted the capacity of his eldest son Thomas, and left him only a house at Heywood near Westbury and the statutory one-third of his manor of Whaddon;¹⁴⁰ the remainder of Whaddon with its 500 acres was bequeathed to his second son, Henry Long II, who succeeded to the clothing business.¹⁴¹ When Thomas Long of Trowbridge died childless in 1562, he left most of his estates to his under-age nephew Edward, Henry's third son, who had already inherited Monkton from his father; but Thomas's widow Joan (née Yerbury) retained for life the business in Trowbridge and the lease of Hurst Mill, previously held by the Baylies of Bulkington,¹⁴² which presumably fulfilled the cloth produced by the Longs of Worton and Marston.¹⁴³ To fund the operation Thomas left Joan 1,800 marks in cash and 200 in plate, as well as all his household stuff and the lease of his house in Trowbridge. She would continue to run his business for more than twenty years.¹⁴⁴

In this desperate situation, Edward Horton of Westwood and the widowed Joan Long of Trowbridge in effect became patriarch and matriarch of a clothing empire: uncle and aunt of Henry Long II and Edward Long, and of Thomas Long of Beckington, Thomas Baylie II of

¹³⁷ Monument in West Lavington church.

¹³⁸ Strype *Survey Book 3*, 203.

¹³⁹ The identification of the inn kept by Chatterton is speculative. The Three Cups was located on Bread Street, opposite the Salter's Company to which another witness belonged. Stow described the Three Cups as 'very large, well built, and of a great trade for country waggons and carriers.' Strype *Survey Book 3*, 206.

¹⁴⁰ A minimum of one-third of lands held by knight's service had to pass to the next heir: Hurstfield, J *The Queen's Wards* (London, 1958) 14.

¹⁴¹ His widow Mary evidently shared her husband's view on her eldest son, leaving him only £60, on condition that 'he keep himself in honest demeanour and good behaviour and that he neither vex nor trouble my husband's executor nor overseers nor cause them to be vexed or troubled': TNA PROB 11/45/256.

¹⁴² *VCH Wilts* vol 10 'Great Cheverell: Mills'. Hurst Mill was also known as Enock's or Heynocke's Mill.

¹⁴³ By 1596 John Long of Marston held the lease of Hurst Mill: TNA PROB 11/89/360.

¹⁴⁴ Thomas Long will 1562: TNA PROB 11/46/126; Joan Long will 1584: TNA PROB 11/66/231.

Stowford, William Yerbury of Trowbridge and John Yerbury of Bradford.¹⁴⁵ Horton's importance must have been readily apparent to the leading London merchants. With his family controlling so many manors and fulling mills he could influence production across a valuable territory well-resourced with sheep pastures, spinners and weavers. This was probably a major factor in maintaining wages in west Wiltshire at a level which seems scarcely to have increased, if at all, throughout the Elizabethan period. The main cost beyond his control was that of wool, where any price increases could be mitigated by his own production and the leverage he could exert by buying in very large quantities.

At the same time Horton and his allies would benefit from any increase in the price of cloth that could be extracted from the London merchants; and this does appear to have risen from less than £4 per cloth in 1547, when the cheapest Wiltshire cloths bought by Thomas Gresham from Thomas Baylie were £36 13s 4d a pack,¹⁴⁶ to around £5 by 1594, when Richard Sheppard paid John Long of Marston £51 a pack, again for the cheapest cloth – an increase of nearly 40 per cent.¹⁴⁷ Since skilled labour and wool were the main cost elements, it is likely that the west Wiltshire clothiers' profit margins were at least maintained throughout the period, even if their buying power was curbed by a steady rise in consumer prices.¹⁴⁸

It was trading success rather than trading difficulty that eventually drew these families into gentry lifestyles: the business strategy of buying estates to secure resources of water power, wool and skilled labour led in turn to the need to exploit those estates effectively.¹⁴⁹ In each generation of the Baylie, Horton, Long and Yerbury families only a few sons needed to be trained up as clothiers; others (including eldest sons) had to manage the lands, which by the end of the century required legal training. A notable example of this dynastic strategy can be seen in the upbringing of Horton's nephews Henry Long II of Whaddon and

¹⁴⁵ See Pedigrees.

¹⁴⁶ Mercers' Company 'Thomas Gresham Day Book' no. 182.

¹⁴⁷ KRO U 269/1/AB1. Cloth prices are hard to compare, since there were great differences between coarse sorting cloths and fine broadcloths and several grades in between. The figures quoted are both from the lower end of the scale, presumably for coarse cloths. The high end shows a much greater increase, with Gresham paying William Long £50 for a pack of 10 fine Bath cloths in May 1547: 'Day Book' no. 1651, and Sheppard paying William Yerbury as much as £10 10s for a single fine cloth on 16 July 1591: KRO U269/1 AB6. The rise in cloth prices was attested by the Merchant Adventurers during the trade crisis of 1586-7: SP 12/195 f 59.

¹⁴⁸ Consumer prices in London may have risen by as much as 68 per cent between 1550 and 1600: Allen, RC 'The Great Divergence in European Wages and Prices from the Middle Ages to the First World War' *Explorations in Economic History* 38 (2001) 426.

¹⁴⁹ Another factor may have been the 1576 statute prohibiting clothiers from buying more than 20 acres of land, though this seems rarely if ever to have been enforced: 18^o Elizabeth c16.3; Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* 45-6.

his younger brother Edward Long of Monkton (perhaps Horton's godson, and certainly his principal heir). From the death of their other uncle Thomas Long in 1562, these boys were in the care of their mother Mary, née Horton, and Edward Horton's hand can be clearly seen in their development. Henry Long II would be a clothier throughout his life, providing advice as such to the Privy Council in 1577¹⁵⁰ and described as 'clothier' in his will of 1611.¹⁵¹ He married, presumably with Horton's encouragement, Alice May of Broughton Gifford, one of three daughters and co-heirs of a large estate north of Monkton. Of the two other daughters, one married Edward Horton himself, and the other married his nephew Jeremy Horton, son of Edward's elder brother William. These marriages would benefit the clothing business by providing secure and long-term access to sheep pastures in the Avon vale, and to the housing and skilled labour of Broughton Gifford village.¹⁵²

A different path was provided for Thomas Long's chosen heir Edward Long, who is usually described as 'gentleman' and makes no appearance in merchants' ledgers or lists from Blackwell Hall. By 1565 Edward married Anne Brounker, sister of William Brounker of Erlestoke,¹⁵³ who in 1569 married Martha, daughter of Walter Mildmay, Chancellor of the Exchequer.¹⁵⁴ In this way the clothier Hortons and Longs became linked by marriage not only to the Brounkers, whose steep rise in west Wiltshire had been achieved by aligning their interests to the Crown, but to their patrons in the Privy Council. Viewed another way, Walter Mildmay and his brother-in-law Francis Walsingham now had personal ties to two of the major suppliers of English exports. Edward Long had joined the west Wiltshire establishment. He was operating as a clothier in 1577¹⁵⁵ and perhaps as late as 1589;¹⁵⁶ but that year he also received a grant of arms.¹⁵⁷ In 1597 he acquired the manor of Rood Ashton for his own son and heir, Gifford,¹⁵⁸ who would become a JP during the next reign.

On the available evidence, it is impossible to suggest direct political influence accruing to Horton. Nonetheless, there are noteworthy aspects to this new connection to the Crown. First, it was achieved while another relative of Horton's, the Mercer William Burde, held the

¹⁵⁰ TNA SP 12/114 f 4.

¹⁵¹ TNA PROB 11/117/313.

¹⁵² *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Broughton Gifford: Manors'.

¹⁵³ *Vis Wilts* 1565 8.

¹⁵⁴ Ford 'Sir Walter Mildmay'.

¹⁵⁵ Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* 59.

¹⁵⁶ When his younger brother bequeathed him the wool of 'the sheep at Imber': WRO P2/11/43 (information from Pam Slocombe). In 1583, he had inherited the freehold of Hurst Mill in Great Cheverell from his aunt Joan, née Yerbury, widow of Thomas Long: TNA PROB 11/66/231.

¹⁵⁷ WRO 947/1866.

¹⁵⁸ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Steeple Ashton: Manors'.

office – under Mildmay – of Customer Outward at the port of London, responsible for controlling the export of cloth.¹⁵⁹ Burde was a close ally and sometimes business partner of Thomas Smythe, Customer Inward and cousin of William Brounker.¹⁶⁰ Second, from 1574 Francis Walsingham was benefiting directly from the export of white broadcloth, as grantee of licences to export many thousands of shortcloths.¹⁶¹ In 1576, as already shown, he secured a grant of the hundred of Bradford and the reversion of the manor of Bradford-on-Avon: Edward Horton's core territory. While it might be far-fetched to imagine Walsingham had the time to deal in detail with such investment, it is reasonable to conclude that others were attending to business for him. In 1582, Thomas St Barbe of Salisbury, a cousin of Walsingham's wife Ursula, made two purchases from clothiers friendly to Horton of land in west Wiltshire;¹⁶² Thomas's daughter Mary St Barbe had married Edward Langford, heir of the Trowbridge clothier Alexander Langford II.¹⁶³ In 1583 Edward Langford was listed as a retainer of Edward Seymour, who was returning to favour at Court,¹⁶⁴ and about ten years later his daughter and co-heiress Mary Langford married Laurence Hyde's son Henry.¹⁶⁵ All these developments suggest that by the last quarter of the sixteenth century the leading Wiltshire clothiers were as well-connected at Court and in the Privy Council as they had long been in the City.

Horton's reputation in Wiltshire must have grown with his political connections in London and the West Country, and his family's continuing commercial success. He continued to acquire lands in west Wiltshire at regular intervals, purchasing a Warminster manor from William Burde's son in 1577.¹⁶⁶ Horton was not one of the eleven Wiltshire clothiers that certified to the Council that year that the rising price of wool was the chief cause of the rise in the cloth price, although three of his nephews were signatories: Henry Long and John

¹⁵⁹ *Vis London 1568* 68. Burde's father Hugh of Bradford-on-Avon had married an Alice Horton, perhaps a sister of Edward's uncle Thomas Horton, d 1549. William Burde was appointed customer in 1560.

¹⁶⁰ Harley, J *The World of William Byrd: Musicians, Merchants and Magnates* (Farnham, 2010) 66-75.

¹⁶¹ Hutchinson, R *Elizabeth's Spymaster* (London, 2007) 246, citing TNA SP 46/16, states that in 1574 Walsingham was licensed to export 8,000 over four years, and a further 200,000 over the next eight years.

¹⁶² At Rowde from Thomas Baylie: TNA IND 1/17223 f 65 and at Keevil from John Jones: TNA IND 1/17224 f 74.

¹⁶³ Evans, J 'Clarendon's Grandparents' *N&Q* 22.1 (1975) 28. The marriage may have been around 1578, the date of a conveyance between Thomas St Barbe and Edward Langford, perhaps a marriage settlement: TNA IND 1/17224 f 31.

¹⁶⁴ Doran *Edward Seymour*. Langford is listed as a retainer of Seymour in 1583: Blatcher *Seymour Papers* 98.

¹⁶⁵ WJJ 'Henry Hyde (c1563-1634)' *HoP 1558-1603*.

¹⁶⁶ *VCH Wilts 'Warminster: Manors'*.

and Thomas Yerbury.¹⁶⁷ But there is no doubt of Horton's continuing personal activity in the trade on which his fortune had been founded. In 1579 the Privy Council reacted with concern to reports of a robbery planned 'upon the houses of Sir John Horner, knight, and Edward Horton, clothier',¹⁶⁸ confirming his occupation while linking him to one of east Somerset's leading gentlemen. In May 1587, when sales at Blackwell Hall were being closely monitored during a short-lived trade crisis in Germany,¹⁶⁹ Horton one week had the largest quantity of stock in the Wiltshire hall – 77 out of a total 177 cloths, double that of any other clothier.¹⁷⁰ If visible evidence of his family's growing wealth were needed, it could be found at Henry Long's manor house at Whaddon, significantly enlarged around 1575, the date carved over a fireplace there with the initials HM, for Henry and his wife Mary May.¹⁷¹

Horton's allies, the Langfords and Baylies, shared in this prosperity, and major assets rarely passed outside the clothing dynasties. The Langfords remained in business throughout the Elizabethan era, though like the Longs they needed only one branch of the family to maintain the trading operation. The clothing business was continued at Freshford by a younger son, Alexander III, and his son John, but Alexander Langford II and his elder son Edward sold their Trowbridge mills to the merchant William Reade in 1571.¹⁷² Even this sale was within the Horton alliance: Reade's wife Magdalen was a granddaughter of Thomas Baylie of Trowbridge and her brother Thomas Baylie of Devizes was three times mayor of the borough.¹⁷³ Magdalen's uncle Christopher Baylie I of Stowford accumulated enough wealth from clothing to acquire the moated manor house of Southwick shortly before he died in 1558;¹⁷⁴ when his elder son Thomas Baylie II, another nephew of Edward Horton, died ten years later¹⁷⁵ the Stowford house and four fulling mills under one roof passed to a second son Christopher,¹⁷⁶ but Thomas's infant daughter Rebecca was the sole heir to

¹⁶⁷ TNA SP 12/114 f 48. All eleven clothiers were from west Wiltshire, based in Warminster, Westbury, Trowbridge and Bradford, indicating the commercial primacy of the area at this date.

¹⁶⁸ *APC 1579-80* 116.

¹⁶⁹ Triggered by a failed attempt to move the Merchant Adventurer's staple from Emden to Hamburg. The final outcome was the establishment of staples at Emden and Middelburg, where trade was quickly re-established: Willan *Elizabethan Foreign Trade* 52.

¹⁷⁰ TNA SP 12/20 f 43. Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* 67 inferred that Horton was caught by the downturn, but this is a good indication of the scale of his business.

¹⁷¹ WRO 947/2190 tab 2, n 4.

¹⁷² Fry 'Feet of Fines' *WNQ* 7, 111.

¹⁷³ In 1585, part of 1588, and 1593: Cunnington *Annals of Devizes* vol 1, xviii. Their father was Walter Baylie of Devizes: TNA PROB 11/43/116.

¹⁷⁴ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'North Bradley: Manors'.

¹⁷⁵ WRO 947/1404/1.

¹⁷⁶ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Wingfield: Mills'.

Southwick.¹⁷⁷ Edward Horton bought her wardship in 1569 and betrothed her to his great-nephew Henry Long III. Rebecca was brought up at Southwick by her mother Maud (née Horton) and step-father Walter Bush¹⁷⁸ until at the age of 15 she entered her full estate and married Henry in 1583.¹⁷⁹ In such ways the productive assets of the great clothiers were carefully marshalled down the generations.¹⁸⁰

Another indicator of buoyant commercial conditions was the emergence of new and aggressive entrants to the business, notably the Michells of Calne and the Webbs of Beckington. John Michell of Calne had married Katherine, a daughter of Alexander Langford I of Trowbridge, and bought a manor with a fulling mill at Calstone in 1545.¹⁸¹ Only five years later, Thomas Long also bought a manor and mill there, almost twenty miles from his normal area of operation.¹⁸² The Michells were evidently effective competitors. In 1561 John Michell and his younger brother Edward bought more lands in the Calstone area and by the early 1570s John was buying pasture for 20 beasts and 100 sheep near Calne at Clyffe Pypard, selling lands at Trowbridge and Westbury,¹⁸³ and proposing to build a fulling mill with two racks of tenters at Quemerford.¹⁸⁴ In the 1570s a new element came into play, when Lionel Duckett acquired the Calstone manor previously held by the Longs, and settled it on his nephew Stephen Duckett.¹⁸⁵ John Michell borrowed £50 from Stephen, which he was temporarily unable to pay; an extent for debt levied by Duckett on John's heirs in 1579 showed that the Michells were by then tenants of a messuage, lands and mills at Calstone worth £63 6s 8d per annum.¹⁸⁶ Ten years later, the Michells again ran into trouble. In 1589 lands of John Michell II were seized by the Queen for unpaid debts; and in 1596 an appeal was made to the Privy Council on behalf of 'one John Michell, a poor gentleman prisoner in the Fleet' whose lands had been extended 'by Long, Webb and Cheltnam.'¹⁸⁷

¹⁷⁷ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Wingfield: Churches'.

¹⁷⁸ Son of John Bush of Dilton and nephew of Paul Bush, Bishop of Bristol: Kite, E 'Southwick Court and its Owners' *WAM* 2 (1899) 27. See Chapter 2.3.

¹⁷⁹ *WRO* 347/1404/1.

¹⁸⁰ See Pedigrees of Horton, Long and Baylie.

¹⁸¹ *VCH Wilts* vol 17 'Calstone Wellington: Manors and Other Estates'; also 'Mills'.

¹⁸² *VCH Wilts* vol 17 'Calstone Wellington: Manors and Other Estates'.

¹⁸³ Fry 'Feet of Fines' *WNQ* 6, 551 & *WNQ* 7, 283-4.

¹⁸⁴ *VCH Wilts* vol 17 'Calne: Mills, Trade and Industry'.

¹⁸⁵ *VCH Wilts* vol 17 'Calstone Wellington: Manors and Other Estates'.

¹⁸⁶ *Conyers Extents for Debt* 87.

¹⁸⁷ *APC* vol 26 (1596-7) 212.

Thomas Webb, clothier, a contemporary of William Long at Beckington in 1558,¹⁸⁸ also emulated Thomas Long's strategy by acquiring lands at Trowbridge, Westbury and Warminster during the 1570s.¹⁸⁹ By 1581 he was the highest-rated taxpayer in Beckington, assessed at £20 compared with £12 for Thomas Long (son of William d 1558) and Humphrey Yerbury, and served as High Collector for the east Somerset hundreds and liberties.¹⁹⁰ Webb had no son of his own, but his daughter Elizabeth married Robert Webb, from a clothier family at Kingswood in Gloucestershire.¹⁹¹ In the last years of the century, when Edward Horton was nearing the end of his career, Robert Webb set out on a very ambitious path. In 1589 he bought property near Kingswood, where his brother Benedict would build an important clothing business.¹⁹² In 1591 he confirmed his right to a coat of arms;¹⁹³ in 1593 he bought the lease of the aulnage for Wiltshire and Somerset from John Dauntsey.¹⁹⁴ By 1595 he had raised his sights still further. That year he teamed up with the Draper Thomas Hayes and Thomas Caesar, a follower of the nobleman-privateer George Clifford, 3rd Earl of Cumberland, to buy a half-share in the lease of the aulnage of new draperies throughout England.¹⁹⁵ In 1600 Webb and Caesar bid to lease from the Crown the right to export unlimited quantities of white cloths for a period of twenty-one years. Although this bid was rejected, the lease was granted to their patron Clifford in 1601.¹⁹⁶

Webb's activities show how a gifted and well-connected entrepreneur with an appetite for risk could use the cash generated from steady sales of cloth to fund ever more ambitious investments. But where Webb was attracted by the short-term opportunities of the City, Edward Horton remained local, building his fortune step-by-step over several decades. By the late 1590s, if not earlier, he had become a regional financier, making loans to landowners and merchants across west Wiltshire and east Somerset. Around 1598 he

¹⁸⁸ Webb, AJ *Two Tudor Subsidy Assessments for the County of Somerset: 1558 and 1581-2* SRS 88 (Taunton, 2002) 7.

¹⁸⁹ Fry 'Feet of Fines' *WNQ* 6, 406 & *WNQ* 8, 134.

¹⁹⁰ Webb *Tudor Subsidy Assessments* xviii, 47, 67.

¹⁹¹ TNA PROB 11/68/578 and 11/108/77, the wills of Thomas Webb (1585) and his widow Margaret (1608) confirm the marriage, which probably took place by 1570. Robert's first son, Thomas, was baptised in September 1571 and buried in 1600: Somerset Record Office, Beckington Parish Registers. In 1611, the year of his own death, Robert Webb wrote to his brother Benedict about the manor of Beckington during the wardship of Thomas's heir, another Robert: Birmingham City Archives MS 3549/146. The family is discussed further in Chapter 4.3.

¹⁹² *VCH Gloucs* vol 11 'Westonbirt with Lasborough: Manors and other estates'; Moir, E 'Benedict Webb, Clothier' *ECHR* 10.2 (1957) 258.

¹⁹³ Betham, W *The Baronetage of England* 5 vols (London, 1801-5) vol 4, 331.

¹⁹⁴ *CSPD Elizabeth, 1591-4* 312.

¹⁹⁵ ELCM 'Thomas Caesar (1561-1610)' *HoP 1558-1603*.

¹⁹⁶ *ibid.*

moved to Bath, where he died in 1603 with his plate in the safe-keeping of the mayor.¹⁹⁷ With a large estate of lands and capital investments, he had already passed the clothing business to the next generation, and it was divided once more into separate branches of his family. In Bradford and probably at Iford, John Yerbury had taken over;¹⁹⁸ in Trowbridge, William Yerbury;¹⁹⁹ Henry Long II was still in business at Whaddon. But the estate management would pass to other men: the next generation in the senior branches of the family, William Horton II of Iford and Henry Long III of Southwick, were both brought up as gentlemen.

It is likely in fact that Edward Horton and his elder brother William had divided their roles in a similar way much earlier. Despite living by the mill at Iford, William Horton was not called 'clothier' in his will, written in 1579,²⁰⁰ nor did he leave the conventional bequests to the poor of the neighbouring towns, or for the improvement of roads and bridges, as a clothier might. He provided a capital messuage and lands at Lullington on the Somerset side of the Frome for his two middle sons, and asked his brother Edward to bring up the youngest. Most indicative of his outlook, however, was his choice of trustees: his nephews Henry Long III of Whaddon and Thomas Long of Westbury, both described as gentlemen, were joined by James Dackombe, Esq of Stepleton near Blandford Forum in Dorset. James Dackombe was the father-in-law of William Horton's son and heir, also a William; this appointment signals that William II had married outside the Avon Vales, in gentry, not clothier circles.

Little is known of William Horton's relationship with Dackombe, but it reflects an emerging theme in Elizabethan west Wiltshire: commercially-advantageous marriage between clothier families of west Wiltshire and the gentry of the Dorset Downs and the Cranborne Chase. Similar connections were made when Christopher Baylie of Keevil married Jane Fillol of Knight Street in north Dorset,²⁰¹ and Thomas Baylie of Stowford married Maud Fillol of Woodlands, near Cranborne, Hampshire.²⁰² Such alliances presumably secured

¹⁹⁷ SAL MS/817/3 f 79 (Jackson Collection). The inventory of plate, coin and bonds came to £11,501 15s 5½d: BL Add Ms 15559 f 15r.

¹⁹⁸ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Bradford: Industry and trade; *VCH Wilts* vol 11 'Westwood: Mills'.

¹⁹⁹ TNA PROB 11/66/231: Joan Long left her kinsman William Yerbury 'the cloth marks which my husband and I have always used,' but set financial penalties, plus interest, for any delay in settling her estate.

²⁰⁰ TNA PROB 11/67/174.

²⁰¹ *Vis Dorset 1565* 15; *Vis Dorset 1623* Addenda 19.

²⁰² TNA C 142/270/143.

access to wool as demand for Wiltshire fleeces outstripped supply from the mid-century onwards. In 1577 a group of Wiltshire clothiers deposed that ‘the wool growing within this our Shire is not sufficient for the draping and working of the inhabitants of our said shire by twenty thousand tods at the least yearly.’²⁰³ As the export market stabilized the shortfall can only have grown, since from 1576 triennial averages of broadcloth exports never again sank below 95,000,²⁰⁴ while the domestic market must have continued to grow with the rising population.²⁰⁵ The success of the clothier magnates such as the Hortons and Longs in increasing their market share would have exhausted their local resources, driving them to seek new sources of supply.²⁰⁶ With wool prices rising, both wool-producing gentry and land-owning clothiers could profit from such marriages.

Links with the gentry around Blandford, a trading centre whose merchants used the ports of Weymouth and Poole, gave additional advantages. Thirty miles south of Westbury, Blandford was only slightly further than Bristol for the Wiltshire clothiers, and much better positioned for importing the oil and canvas they used in large quantities for processing wool and wrapping cloth packs. Horton’s connections with the area may have been promoted by the Baylies or by a new neighbour, Richard Trenchard from Wolfeton outside Dorchester, who in 1557 bought the manor of Cutteridge close to Iford.²⁰⁷ By the 1590s such contacts were blossoming in unforeseen ways. Richard Trenchard’s son William, noted by Lawrence Stone as one of the few ‘mere gentry’ to have taken a really serious interest in privateering,²⁰⁸ died in 1591,²⁰⁹ but a memorandum of 1595 records Edward Long and Henry Long III of Southwick jointly investing £65 in a voyage of the ‘good ship of Weymouth called the Dearing’ and commits them to share equally ‘whatever commodities, jewels, merchandise ... taken by the way at sea or in exchange of merchandise in trade or at the Islands...or elsewhere’.²¹⁰

William Horton’s marriage to Margaret Dackombe had also brought kinship with the Seymour auditor Laurence Hyde, then living at Wardour Castle, and other prominent

²⁰³ TNA SP 12/114/27. Cited in Bowden *Wool Trade* 58.

²⁰⁴ Fisher ‘Commercial Trends’ 82.

²⁰⁵ See introductory paragraphs above.

²⁰⁶ Bowden *Wool Trade* 94.

²⁰⁷ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 ‘North Bradley: Manors’.

²⁰⁸ Stone *Crisis* 366n, citing Andrews, KR ‘The Economic Aspects of Elizabethan Privateering’ unpublished DPhil thesis (University of London, 1951) 323.

²⁰⁹ TNA PROB 11/79/77.

²¹⁰ BL Add Ms 15561 f 48.

families of south Wiltshire²¹¹ but this was not enough to earn the family full respectability in the eyes of the Wiltshire establishment. No Hortons or Longs would sit on the bench in the Elizabethan era, and the only one to be returned as an MP in the Elizabethan era was forced to step down.²¹² Indeed it is likely that the greater gentry families remained aloof from the clothiers, even while benefiting from the rise in wool prices. Some no doubt resented the large acquisitions made by the Longs and Hortons, and the willingness of clothiers to assert their property rights. Clothier widows could be formidable: Walter Hungerford II was obliged to sue Margery Horton in a dispute over the ownership of Farleigh Manor,²¹³ which had belonged to his family for centuries. Early in Elizabeth's reign clothiers twice took the law into their own hands to assert property rights against the soldier and victualler Egion Wilson,²¹⁴ who claimed possession of the George Inn at Trowbridge and the manor house and demesnes of Hinton in Steeple Ashton. Wilson sued twice in Star Chamber, alleging riot and assault in Trowbridge involving both Alexander Langford I and Thomas Barksdale of Bulkington, and theft of several waggon-loads of hay from Hinton by William Horton I, again with the help of Barksdale and other clothiers, including Alexander Langford I and John and William Jones of Keevil.²¹⁵

Through the first part of Elizabeth's reign, the two leading magnates of west Wiltshire, Walter Hungerford and Edward Bayntun, faced a long struggle to retrieve the large land-holdings lost in the forties and fifties and there is scant evidence of any co-operation with clothiers, other than as landlords and tenants.²¹⁶ The traditional allies of the magnates were instead the London merchants, and Bayntun strengthened a long-standing relationship when he married Ann Pakington, the former wife of Edward Jackman and aunt of Edmund Lambert, the new lord of Keevil and Bulkington.²¹⁷ In 1577 Bayntun and his new wife granted Edmund Lambert, Anne's son John Jackman of Hornchurch, and their cousin Stephen Duckett of Middle Temple, the lease of a mead and two sheepdowns upon trust

²¹¹ *Vis Dorset 1623* Addenda 23-4.

²¹² Thomas Long II, at Westbury in 1571: Fuidge, NM 'Thomas Long of Semington (1539-93)' *HoP 1558-1603*.

²¹³ TNA C 3/88/14.

²¹⁴ Hawkyard, ADK 'Egion Wilson (by 1530-63/67)' *HoP 1558-1603*.

²¹⁵ TNA STAC 4/11/12; TNA STAC 5/W80/40.

²¹⁶ Edward Bayntun's step-mother Isabel had married James Stumpe, son of the Malmesbury clothier; but this seems to be a rare exception. Baker 'James Stumpe'.

²¹⁷ After his first wife Agnes Rees died in 1574: *Vis Wilts 1625* 4. Virgoe, R 'Edward Baynton (c1520-93)' *HoP 1558-1603* follows *Vis Worcs 1569* 120 in giving her first husband as Humphrey, rather than Edmund, Style, but this is mistaken: see 1563 will of her father Humphrey Pakington TNA PROB 11/38/216.

for the benefit of Anne.²¹⁸ After Anne died in 1578,²¹⁹ Lambert married his cousin Anne Jackman II, now Edward Bayntun's step-daughter.²²⁰ This marriage was a significant advantage for Lambert. Through Bayntun, he was now closely connected not only to the Bayntun family, but through them to another powerful family from northwest Wiltshire which was also expanding into the cloth district.

From the 1570s, John Danvers of Dauntsey near Malmesbury, a magnate with large estates in Cornwall, Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire and Yorkshire as well as Wiltshire,²²¹ was one of Pembroke's deputies as lord lieutenant of the county.²²² Around 1575 John's younger brother Henry moved to the manor of Baynton, just south of Bulkington,²²³ and after John Thynne's death in 1580 John Danvers became the senior justice for the Devizes division of central Wiltshire²²⁴ and a close ally of Edward Bayntun.²²⁵ From that time the four dominant families of west Wiltshire would be Danvers, Hungerford, Bayntun and Long; and the Danvers family would become increasingly influential in west Wiltshire for several decades, through to and beyond the Civil War. This development helped shape John Aubrey's attitude to the county. His paternal grandmother was a Danvers, a connection he would cherish, and he would describe several members of her family in *Brief Lives*.²²⁶

In 1575 Aubrey's great-grandfather Thomas Lyte sold the manor house at Easton Piercy to his neighbour Nicholas Snell of Kington St Michael,²²⁷ and built a new house nearby, where Aubrey would be born.²²⁸ Snell had been several times an MP and served as Recorder of Chippenham for the Earl of Pembroke;²²⁹ living near Bromham he had bought several properties from Andrew Bayntun²³⁰ and left bequests both to Pembroke and to Bayntun in

²¹⁸ WRO 473/80.

²¹⁹ Memorial at St Nicholas, Bromham.

²²⁰ *Vis Wilts* 1625 60. The marriage was probably in 1579, the date of a fine conveying Lambert's Wiltshire properties to her brother John Jackman and others: IND 1/17224 f 35.

²²¹ Hasler, PW & MN 'Sir John Danvers (1540-94)' *HoP* 1558-1603.

²²² Hurstfield 'County Government: the Justices of the Peace'.

²²³ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Edington: Manors and Lesser Estates'.

²²⁴ Hurstfield 'County Government: The Justices of the Peace'.

²²⁵ Bayntun left his 'very good friend Sir John Danvers' the gold ring with a turquoise which he had worn himself: TNA PROB 11/82/364. Bayntun's heir Henry married Danvers' daughter Lucy: 'JCH' 'Henry Bayntun (c1571-1616)' *HoP* 1558-1603.

²²⁶ Aubrey *Brief Lives* 77-81.

²²⁷ Aubrey *Wiltshire* 240, 443.

²²⁸ Powell *Aubrey* 28.

²²⁹ Bindoff, ST 'Nicholas Snell (d 1577)' *HoP* 1558-1603.

²³⁰ WRO 473/228/7e, Fry 'Feet of Fines' *WNQ* 4, 213.

his will.²³¹ But Snell also had numerous close connections with clothiers, to whom he doubtless supplied wool. His second wife Mary may have been born a Clevelod; his sister Frideswid had married Thomas Barksdale of Keevil; his daughter Cicely had married Thomas Baylie of Baldham Mill at Seend Head.²³² In 1562 Nicholas was named in the inquisition post mortem of George Worthe of Dauntsey, deceased,²³³ who two years earlier had bought the manor of Bulkington owned formerly by Edington Priory.²³⁴ Snell probably acquired the wardship of Worthe's infant son. Snell's second son Thomas married the widowed Elizabeth Worthe and took her and the child to live at Loxwell, in a property acquired by Nicholas Snell from Andrew Bayntun.²³⁵ In this small and tight-knit society, the middling gentry had by the 1580s become thoroughly integrated with the families of the more prosperous clothiers. Such relationships could provide both domestic and commercial benefits to both sides, in the form of political or economic influence, access to finance or legal know-how, and the increasingly valuable resources of pasture and wool.

This complex of relationships amply supports Charles Phythian-Adams's observation that in the early modern period it is 'the lineage, not the community, which perpetuates the local social structure,' not solely 'via the grid of inheritance,'²³⁶ but as threads in a social and commercial fabric that proved extremely durable over a large space and over long periods of time. The experience of many west Wiltshire lineages was that the pattern of inheritance rarely had the character of a grid. It was if anything the unpredictability of inheritance that made it so necessary for each generation to strengthen its web of contacts and to build on the opportunities they provided. Only in the larger and more successful lineages could long-term economic strategies be pursued over several generations, sustaining long periods of alliance and surviving short-term disputes.

By the last quarter of the sixteenth century the gentry were closely involved with clothier and merchant activities at all but the highest levels of Wiltshire society, and country and City interests interlocked. But while the economic interests of the three groups became aligned as merchants and clothiers themselves became large-scale landowners, they diverged from those of the smaller clothiers, weavers and spinners, especially at times of

²³¹ Bindoff 'Nicholas Snell'.

²³² *Vis Wilts* 1565 42.

²³³ TNA C 142/132/20.

²³⁴ *CPR* (1558–60), 465.

²³⁵ 1607 will of Thomas Snell of Loxwell in the parish of Chippenham: TNA PROB 11/110/468. A former property of Stanley Abbey, Loxwell had been acquired by Andrew Bayntun's father, Edward: *VCH Wilts* vol 3 'The Abbey of Stanley'.

²³⁶ Phythian-Adams *Societies, Cultures and Kinship* 19.

dearth and international crisis. Landless cloth-workers struggled to cope in these economic conditions, and local remedies were extremely limited and sometimes hostile. At the Epiphany sessions in 1579, George Burley and John Trew [Drew] were ordered to 'disburse and lay out such sums of money...for the purchasing of the house of correction and for making of such convenient rooms, providing of such stocks and stores and provisions for correction' in Devizes Castle as the JPs John Danvers, Edward Bayntun, William Brounker and Michael Ernely consider 'meet and convenient.'²³⁷ In 1586, when a fire at Bath was mistaken for a warning beacon, the Privy Council foresaw a 'dangerous consequence to the State' if order was not maintained in Bath and the Frome valley, and ordered the JPs to press the clothiers to continue employment.²³⁸ In December, with the Merchant Adventurers refusing to buy cloth for which there was no demand and the clothiers reluctant to make it, the Privy Council broke the Merchant Adventurers' monopoly in an attempt to stimulate sales.²³⁹

Fears of social upheaval surged in the last two decades of Elizabeth's reign, as the country went on a war footing and Wiltshire's strategic importance in guarding London against invasion from the west kept security high on the magistrates' agenda. The economic and political concerns of gentry and the larger clothiers had become tightly bound, as is evident from the list of Wiltshire contributors to a loan of £25 each collected for the Queen between March and July 1588. Four of the first ten to contribute were clothiers: Edward Horton of Westwood, John Long of Marston, Roger Blagden of Keevil and Edward Long of Monkton; and these were soon followed by Henry Long of Whaddon, John Flower of Worton and Geoffrey Whitaker of Edington. Horton, with John Danvers and Walter Hungerford, was among only five men to lend £50, a clear sign of his eminence in the county.²⁴⁰ Campaigns in France and Ireland during the 1590s brought a disorderly stream of soldiers to the south-western ports, and tensions were further raised when a sequence of bad harvests brought fears of riot.²⁴¹ In such dangerous times the clothiers' role in

²³⁷ Johnson *Sessions* 47.

²³⁸ *APC* vol 14 (1586-7) 93.

²³⁹ *ibid* 272-4. The crisis passed by the summer of 1587.

²⁴⁰ BL Stowe Ms 165 ff 29-30.

²⁴¹ Sharpe, J 'Social Strain and Social Dislocation, 1585-1603, in Guy, J (ed) *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and Culture in the Last Decade* (Cambridge, 1995) 192-7.

providing employment allied them tightly to the authorities,²⁴² and they were prompt in demonstrating their loyalty.²⁴³

3 Lords and tenants of Bulkington vale

Turning from the regional to the local level, it is clear that the small community of Bulkington was far from sheltered from the tide of national events, despite a brief respite at the start of Mary's reign, when the documentary record provides a glimpse of village life. In 1554 the Queen restored to Andrew Bayntun the manors he had granted to Thomas Seymour,²⁴⁴ and a court baron was held for his manor of Bulkington. It was attended by one free tenant, Thomas Iles, and seven jurors, presumably customary tenants. After some routine matters concerning repairs and encroachment, noted in Latin, a much more significant item was recorded in English. The homage presented that one of the jurors, John Sumner:

doth hold of the lord of this manor a close of several pasture containing one acre and two acres of arable land or pasture adjoining to the same, for the which he should pay yearly to the lord of this manor 6s 8d of rent being parcel of the lord's rent of assize and should sue to the court of this manor as other of the tenants here do, all which he refuseth to do nor hath paid nor sued to this Court this 16 years past [ie since 1538] but hath wrongfully embezzled the same from the lord of this manor and entitled the Queen therewith against all right. For the homage have known the said rent paid by the said Sumner and his predecessors.²⁴⁵

At a subsequent court held on 24 July 1557,²⁴⁶ which Sumner did not attend, a key witness William Stile of Hinton testified that he had been steward to the previous lords of the manor, Edward Bayntun and Henry Long.²⁴⁷ He stated that he had held a court at Bulkington in 1545 at which Sumner had 'confessed' to hold the premises at the will of these lords and that Stile had received the rent from him 'to the use of the said lords of this manor and hath paid the same rent to the chantry of Lavington by the space of six years.' We do not know the outcome of this presentment, but it reveals a fissure in the Bayntun manor during the reign of Mary. While the homage apparently believed that Bayntun had

²⁴² The customs figures for 1595-7 have not survived, but these years may have enjoyed the consistently strong exports seen in the rest of the decade: Fisher 'Commercial Trends' 53.

²⁴³ In 1601 Edward Horton and Edward Long each provided a fully-equipped horseman for the war in Ireland: *APC* vol 32 (1601-4) 279.

²⁴⁴ Swales 'Andrew Bayntun'.

²⁴⁵ WRO 84/35.

²⁴⁶ *ibid.*

²⁴⁷ Henry Long of Wraxall was until 1536 chief steward in Wiltshire for Edington Priory, which then held the Lavington Chantry and its lands: *VCH Wilts* vol 3 'House of Bonhommes - Edington'.

recovered the freehold of the chantry lands, Sumner's view was that Bayntun had no right to the rents payable by the tenants, because all chantries had been seized by the Crown in 1545 and 1547.²⁴⁸ Since Sumner was already a Crown tenant, as farmer of the former Edington demesnes in Bulkington, he could plausibly seek to retain his chantry rent.²⁴⁹

Such records, with other documentary evidence, can help build a reasonably robust picture of the tithing at the start of Elizabeth's reign. Key elements for such a picture are provided by the Keevil parish registers which start in 1559, and by a survey of the Edington manor in 1564,²⁵⁰ four years after it was granted by the Crown to George Worthe of Dauntsey,²⁵¹ a servant of the Danvers family.²⁵² From such data we can calculate that the tenants of the Bayntun manor occupied some 200 acres; those of the Edington manor purchased by George Worthe 333 acres; and those of Arundel's manor, now owned by Richard Lambert, about 300. With common pasture for sheep, cows and oxen in Bulkington Leaze, a horse drove and some verges and waste, the total area of the village was probably about 1,000 acres.²⁵³

Estimating the population of Bulkington in the period 1554-1603 is more difficult. Around 1914 the Reverend AT Richardson, then vicar of Keevil, analysed the parish registers (which do not distinguish between Keevil and Bulkington) and calculated an average total parish population of 820 for the years 1562-1612.²⁵⁴ For a number of reasons explained in Appendix 4, this estimate may be significantly too high, especially at the start of the period, when a figure closer to 400 may be more plausible. Certainly it seems likely that the population was at a low ebb in 1559. At least two clothiers, Robert Barksdale and Roger Winslow had probably been carried off by the flu epidemic; and seventeen Bulkington wills received probate in the three years 1558-60, compared with an average of just one or two per year in more normal times.²⁵⁵ In 1584, however, the Quarter Sessions minutes refer to the 'town of Keevil',²⁵⁶ indicating a significant settlement perhaps with many new arrivals. In the dearth year of 1597, there were fifty-nine burials at Keevil, more than four times the

²⁴⁸ In 1545 at least some of the chantry income had been received by Lady Isabella, widow of Edward Bayntun I: *WNQ* 3 (1902) 468. An attempt to dissolve the chantries that year was not fully effective and was renewed in 1547: Mackie *Earlier Tudors* 513.

²⁴⁹ See Chapter 2.3.

²⁵⁰ TNA SP 15/12 ff 43-8.

²⁵¹ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Keevil: Manors' citing *CPR Elizabeth* (1558-60) 465.

²⁵² Worthe was the first non-family beneficiary named in the 1552 will of Silvester Danvers (father of John): TNA PROB/11/35/180.

²⁵³ See also Appendix 4.

²⁵⁴ BL Add Ms 42048: 'Annals of Keevil and Bulkington' 276.

²⁵⁵ Calculated from the Wiltshire Wills Database (wills proved at Sarum), searching on Keevil parish.

²⁵⁶ Johnson *Sessions* 96.

average over the next to decades. But with natural increase boosted by in-migration the total for the parish may still have been 600 at the end of the century.

If Keevil rather than Bulkington was showing the demographic characteristics of a town, this might suggest a growing imbalance between the two tithings. The evidence of wills and inventories in Keevil parish confirms that by the second half of the sixteenth century, cloth-making was probably more developed in Keevil than in Bulkington. The Barksdales had left Keevil by 1560²⁵⁷ and Christopher Baylie III moved to Wingfield after 1582,²⁵⁸ but there were at least three clothiers operating at Keevil by 1590: Roger Blagden, William Jones and John Smith, who held Baldham Mill after Thomas Baylie.²⁵⁹ Jones in particular was a man of substance, styled gentleman in the Quarter Sessions records;²⁶⁰ he was living in the manor house of Edington when his son Sefton was admitted to Middle Temple in 1591.²⁶¹ All three clothiers are likely to have brought migrants to the parish. They probably kept their own looms and employed journeymen, or put work out to independent weavers; directly or indirectly they would have used the services of wool-cleaners, sorters, carders and spinners, as well as fullers, carpenters and labourers. Some of Keevil's independent weavers, such as Nicholas Adams,²⁶² and Thomas Humfreys²⁶³ may also have put out work. It seems likely that at this time the impact of the cloth trade was to bring new workers to the parish. The registers show that both birth-rate and population were growing rapidly from the 1580s onward, so Bulkington may have provided housing for some who could not find homes in Keevil.

Smaller than Keevil, Bulkington remained primarily a farming village: the 1576 tax list records eleven names, none of whom have been identified as clothiers.²⁶⁴ Most of the land was tenanted by yardlanders with holdings of twenty acres or more; it was in their interest

²⁵⁷ Thomas Barksdale 'of Potterne' acquired the mill at Seend Head by 1551: WRO 1875/6; his brother Robert of Keevil died in 1558: WRO P2/3Reg/93c, leaving a son John who died before 1561: WRO P2/4Reg/83c.

²⁵⁸ Following the death of his cousin Christopher Baylie II of Stowford in 1583: TNA C 2/Eliz/B24/8.

²⁵⁹ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Keevil: Economic History'. Roger Blagden and William Jones were among the highest rated tax-payers in Keevil in 1576: Ramsay *Taxation Lists* 140. John Smith is named in Philip Sheppard's ledgers in 1589: KRO U269/1 AB6.

²⁶⁰ Johnson *Sessions* 29, 39 & 96. The Jones family had been in Keevil since the start of the century as tenants of the Earl of Arundel: WRO 3532.2.2. Their lands had been excluded from the sale to Richard Lambert in 1560: WRO 1976/1/1.

²⁶¹ Sturgess, HAC (ed) *Register of Admissions to the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple* (London, 1949) vol 1, 14 February 1590/1; *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Edington: Manors and Lesser Estates'.

²⁶² WRO P2/A/54.

²⁶³ WRO P2/H/77.

²⁶⁴ Ramsay *Taxation Lists* 69.

to welcome poorer families and artisans, who could provide labour and pay rent.²⁶⁵ But Bulkington may well have become increasingly integrated into the cloth economy. The yeomen of the village were almost certainly increasing their wool production and processing through the Elizabethan period. In May 1572 the sixty-acre copyholder Thomas Flower wrote his will, leaving fifteen ewes and five lambs to his wife, and fifteen of his best sheep and five lambs to his daughter. Since he also had two sons, this might suggest a total flock of well over a hundred on the Flower lands.²⁶⁶ For such tenants, the county's wool shortage provided good opportunities to produce more locally. Others became weavers or spinners. Christopher Allway,²⁶⁷ who held a yardland in Bulkington in 1587,²⁶⁸ was a weaver; the widow Agnes Merritt, also a yardlander,²⁶⁹ in 1600 bequeathed a pair of cards (used for straightening the wool fibres before spinning), a 'turne' or spinning wheel and twenty-five pounds of lead weights – perhaps just enough to weigh the yarn produced from a tod of wool.²⁷⁰

Only one clothier can be identified with certainty in Bulkington during the Elizabethan era: William Long, who wrote a will in 1583 leaving 10s to the poor of the tithing.²⁷¹ But few of the Elizabethan documents record occupations and it is likely that there were others, including George Collins, described as 'of Bulkington' in 1586,²⁷² who held the fulling mill from the Crown's manor of Steeple Ashton by 1604.²⁷³ The Longs of Bulkington were new arrivals from the Potterne branch of the family. In 1580 William's kinsman John Long of Marston had leased a house and thirty-three acres in Bulkington from Edmund Lambert for the lives of three sons.²⁷⁴ While the Longs were now the greatest clothier influence on Bulkington, the evidence suggests that other outside networks also saw the opportunity to prosper in the Semington vale. In 1585 Thomas Sumner of Seend acquired the Littleton mill previously held by Walter Passion of Semington;²⁷⁵ George Collins of Bulkington was probably a kinsman, having married an Agnes Sumner at Keevil in 1580.²⁷⁶

²⁶⁵ Dyer, C 'Poverty and Its Relief in Late Medieval England' *P&P* 216 (2012) 76.

²⁶⁶ WRO P2/5Reg/152B.

²⁶⁷ WRO P2/A/53.

²⁶⁸ TNA C 66/1289 m 24.

²⁶⁹ TNA SP 15/12 f 45.

²⁷⁰ WRO P2/M/154. A tod weighed 28lb, of which a proportion would be lost when spinning.

²⁷¹ TNA PROB 11/90/42. The will was not proved until 1597.

²⁷² Johnson *Sessions* 113.

²⁷³ WRO 947/1236.

²⁷⁴ WRO 1976/4/33. For the pedigree of the Marston Longs see WRO 947/2190 tab 3.

²⁷⁵ TNA IND 1/17224. Either Sumner or Passion converted this for fulling: it was described as a grist mill in 1550: WRO 1494/93.

²⁷⁶ Keevil PR. See also Chapter 4.4.

In this relatively small area, where resources of pasture and fulling capacity were limited, many of the smaller producers, whether of wool or cloth, were most likely suppliers either to Collins or the Longs. Broadcloths could be fulled either at Collins' mill at Bulkington or at Enock's Mill at Hurst, now tenanted by John Long of Marston.²⁷⁷ Local men who sold their cloths to the Longs could avoid the time, cost and risk involved in transporting it to London, still a dangerous journey for a clothier travelling alone: in 1593 William Long of Bulkington was assaulted on the royal highway in Wollington, Berkshire, and robbed 'of diverse sums of money'.²⁷⁸ Neither Sumner, Collins nor any other Bulkington tenants appear in the journal of the Grocer Philip Sheppard, recording his broadcloth purchases from 1594-7,²⁷⁹ but this does include the names of John Long of Marston and his son Christopher,²⁸⁰ a taxpayer in Bulkington in 1598.²⁸¹ Perhaps Sumner and Collins were selling to different merchants or sending cloth by carrier to Blackwell Hall; alternatively much of the cloth produced in Bulkington and its neighbouring villages may have been marketed by the Longs, while the rest was sold in markets or to drapers in Devizes and Trowbridge.

For most of the Elizabethan era, the wealthier clothiers must have been considerably more influential than the lords of the manor, who were absent for three decades and of whose activity little evidence remains. The lordship of the Bayntun manor had changed hands soon after the court barons discussed at the start of this section, and was probably delegated to a steward. In 1562 Andrew Bayntun had sold the manor for £250 to Roger Earthe,²⁸² a servant of the Earl of Pembroke;²⁸³ and in 1572 the Crown had granted the associated chantry revenues to Francis Walsingham.²⁸⁴ But the late 1580s saw a renewed surge of manorial change. In 1587 Walsingham sold the chantry lease to William Dodington,²⁸⁵ his brother-in-law, an auditor at the Tower mint whose country seat was at Breamore in Hampshire, south of Salisbury.²⁸⁶ In 1598 Dodington also acquired Earthe's interest and thus reunited the old Bayntun manor with its revenues.²⁸⁷

²⁷⁷ TNA PROB 11/89/324.

²⁷⁸ *CPR Elizabeth I* (1595-6) no. 1059.

²⁷⁹ KRO U269/1 AB6.

²⁸⁰ KRO U269/1 AB6: in May 1590 he sold Sheppard 120 sorting cloths 'of his own making' in a single consignment worth over £500: an exceptionally large delivery.

²⁸¹ TNA E 179/198/327.

²⁸² WRO 1976/4/29.

²⁸³ WJJ 'Roger Earthe, d 1589' *HoP 1558-1603*.

²⁸⁴ TNA C 66/1289 m 27.

²⁸⁵ TNA CP 43/19 m 17.

²⁸⁶ Fuidge, NM 'William Dodington, d 1600' *HoP 1558-1603*.

²⁸⁷ CP 43/64 m 17; C 2/261/28.

Like Bayntun and his successors, the Lamberts were also absent from their manors of Keevil and Bulkington. The estate may have been overseen on a day-to-day basis by a trusted tenant, perhaps Richard Dalmer of Bulkington,²⁸⁸ whose brother George Dalmer of Bromham had been a beneficiary in Richard Lambert's will.²⁸⁹ The heir, Edmund Lambert, probably spent much of the year in London, and when he was in Wiltshire seems to have lived mainly at Boyton in the Wylve valley;²⁹⁰ his mother Alice, who held Keevil manor for life,²⁹¹ had married the courtier-admiral Clement Paston and lived in London and at Oxnead in Norfolk.²⁹² Edmund's younger brother Edward owned property in Keevil, but probably never lived there: an Emden merchant, he died unmarried at London in 1587.²⁹³ Yet change was underway in this manor too: sometime in the 1580s Alice Paston built a substantial new house in Keevil,²⁹⁴ and by 1602 had appointed a new steward,²⁹⁵ whose surviving court book reveals the day-to-day impact a lord could exert on the economic life of the manor.²⁹⁶

But the biggest change in Bulkington was the arrival of a resident lord in the form of George Worthe II, probably around 1590. His manor house and demesnes were still leased in 1588,²⁹⁷ when both he and Edmund Lambert may have been out of the county since neither contributed to the Armada loan in Wiltshire.²⁹⁸ Worthe first appears in the parish register in 1592, at the birth of his daughter Anne.²⁹⁹ Aged about 30, this young man was a native of the Avon Vales, who had been brought up in an educated household, although no record has been found of him either at university or inn of court. He was deeply embedded in the commercial culture of west Wiltshire. As already noted, when his father died in 1561 the infant George had become the ward of Nicholas Snell of Kington St Michael, a lawyer and MP.³⁰⁰ By the time George Worthe II reached adulthood he was secure in a family

²⁸⁸ WRO P2/D/85.

²⁸⁹ A freeholder of Edward Bayntun's manor at Bromham: BL Add Ms 37270 *passim*, George Dalmer was a beneficiary in Richard Lambert's will: TNA PROB 11/49/275; he names his brother in his own 1594 will: TNA PROB 11/85/141.

²⁹⁰ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Keevil: Manors'.

²⁹¹ TNA PROB 11/49/267: will of Richard Lambert.

²⁹² Loades, D 'Clement Paston, c1515-98' *ODNB*.

²⁹³ TNA PROB 11/70/4; WARD 7/22/18.

²⁹⁴ Historic England's listings database states that the house was built c1580 by Thomas Lambert, citing Pevsner, but if the date is correct the attribution must be wrong: the first Thomas to own the manor was Edmund's second son, b 1585, who did not succeed his father until 1619: Thrush, A & Lancaster, H 'Thomas Lambert, 1585-1638' *HoP* 1604-29. Alice Lambert was lady of the manor until 1608.

²⁹⁵ James Ley: see section 4 below.

²⁹⁶ WRO 288/1.

²⁹⁷ WRO 12/2.

²⁹⁸ BL Add Ms Stowe 165 ff 29-30.

²⁹⁹ Keevil PR.

³⁰⁰ Bindoff 'Nicholas Snell'.

network that extended widely in both gentry and clothier circles, and was strengthened by his own marriage around 1590 to Edith Baylie, a daughter of Christopher Baylie III, formerly of Keevil and now of Wingfield.³⁰¹ Worthe had influence and connections that would have been well understood and no doubt highly regarded by his neighbours and tenants in Bulkington, who had never experienced a resident lord before.

Thus the little that can be discerned of Bulkington in the late Tudor period confirms the general trend outlined in the previous sections of this chapter, of an economic buoyancy far removed from the conventional narrative of decline from a golden age of the cloth trade. The departing clothiers – the Baylies and Barksdales – had moved to better locations at Wingfield and Seend, rather than abandoning the trade. Their places had been taken by prosperous and well-informed local investors, the Longs of Potterne and George Collins, a kinsman of the Sumners of Bulkington and Seend. The new lords of the manor had both invested in the parish, Alice Lambert by building a new manor house in Keevil, George Worthe by taking up permanent residence. In the final section of the chapter we will consider further the motivation for these changes and whether the economic buoyancy can be detected in other aspects of west Wiltshire society.

4 Social and economic change, 1553-1603

Despite the scarcity of documentation for Bulkington, enough has survived for a picture to emerge of how a small community evolved in the wider ‘cultural’ context of west Wiltshire and the southern Avon Vales. In the context of studies already cited by Bowden, Fisher, Hoyle, Ramsay and Stone,³⁰² we can see how closely this small agrarian society was tied into the regional and national economy, because of the value of Wiltshire broadcloth to London’s merchants. Although Bulkington itself was not a major cloth producer, it was fully embedded in a regional economy dominated by cloth production, and its development was influenced by wealthy individuals engaged in this volatile but profitable market.

Even in such a commercially heated area, the change in ownership of all three manors in Bulkington to different owners in the early 1560s is remarkable, and signals a high demand for property in the cloth district. Arundel’s disposal of his Wiltshire manors was seen by Stone as a sensible piece of consolidation,³⁰³ but it can equally be regarded as a confident ‘upstream’ investment by a merchant seeking to capture value further up the supply chain,

³⁰¹ *Vis Wilts* 1623 39.

³⁰² Bowden ‘Agricultural Prices’, Fisher ‘Commercial Trends’, Hoyle *Estates*, Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry*, Stone *Crisis*. See section 1 above.

³⁰³ Stone *Crisis* 404-5.

by growing wool and increasing rental income. The transaction made sound economic sense to both parties. By selling lands in one of England's foremost cloth-producing areas, Arundel and his heirs could not only reduce their debt but concentrate their land-holdings in the equally prosperous south and east of the country; as Stone shows, Arundel's successor Lord Lumley would double his holding there after 1600.³⁰⁴ Lambert, one of the leaders of the generation opening new markets in Russia and the Mediterranean, could diversify his risk by investing in land which would provide an on-going income for his family, and country homes for his widow and his heirs. There is nothing to suggest that this was a reluctant purchase, or a forfeiture for unpaid debts.

George Worthe's purchase from the Crown was probably even more straightforward. There is no evidence of his participating directly in the cloth trade; indeed he sold two fulling mills in Trowbridge to Alexander Langford.³⁰⁵ But through his close relationship with the Danvers family and two advantageous marriages he could progress from being a tenant in Dauntsey to being a minor lord in Bulkington. This was a move within the Avon Vales to a community he would have understood well and which would have hardly have been challenging for his second wife, Elizabeth Bowser, whose father was a clothier at Tortworth in south Gloucestershire.³⁰⁶ Thirty years on, William Dodington's purchase of the third manor in Bulkington was probably just a financial investment. As Walsingham's brother-in-law, he perhaps had the opportunity to buy on beneficial terms, while as an officer of the Exchequer he would have been well aware of the wealth of the cloth district.

Much of the debate on how profitable non-resident land ownership was in the Elizabethan era has focused on the capacity of landlords to increase their yield. Although agricultural prices were rising and increasingly attractive for landlords willing to work their own demesnes, tenants' rents were harder to increase because of the protection enjoyed by copyholders and freeholders. Bowden and Hoyle have shown that where rent increases could not be imposed manorial lords could strengthen short-term revenues by converting to leaseholds, exploiting timber and other natural resources, creating new holdings from the waste and passing costs to their tenants.³⁰⁷ George Worthe issued several new leases when taking possession of the former Edington manor in 1560.³⁰⁸ There was apparently no

³⁰⁴ *ibid* 772.

³⁰⁵ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Trowbridge: Mills'. Worthe acquired the freehold of the mills by his first marriage, to the widow Elizabeth Gore, who had already leased them to Langford: see Chapter 2.2.

³⁰⁶ *Vis Gloucs 1623* 25; Smith, J *The Lives of the Berkeleys* ed McLain, J (Gloucester, 1883) vol 3, 214.

³⁰⁷ Bowden 'Agricultural Prices' 674-94; Hoyle *Estates* 418-424.

³⁰⁸ TNA SP 15/12 ff 36-41.

shortage of prosperous tenants in nearby parishes or further afield ready and willing to take up leases. Edmund Lambert pursued a similar policy at Keevil and Bulkington, including his lease to John Long of Marston, and the trend becomes even more marked in the court books of the Jacobean era.³⁰⁹

Even so, there were substantial risks for incoming lords when purchasing landed estates. As appears to have occurred with the Bayntun manor in Bulkington, cases of incomplete or defective title were commonplace, and especially when buying manors purchasers needed to be as sure as possible that they were acquiring all of the numerous rights required to exploit their new property to the full. Few properties were defined with sufficient detail to locate them geographically; more commonly deeds simply gave an approximate area and the name of a previous owner or tenant. This might be adequate for a local purchaser, but was far from satisfactory for a London investor whose origins might be in an entirely different part of the country. It was difficult to be certain that any conveyance would not be challenged by a third party, such as a widow or relative of the seller claiming a right of inheritance. Compounding these hazards was a new danger in the form of the Grocer William Tipper, who in 1582 was awarded a patent for discovering property or income belonging to but concealed from the Crown.³¹⁰ Tipper's targets soon included property in west Wiltshire. In 1590 he and his partner Robert Dawe secured a parcel of land in Devizes,³¹¹ and in 1592 they were granted the Manor of Staverton Wick, which had earlier been sold to Henry Vyner.³¹² Any manor that might include lands once donated to support monasteries or chantries would be at risk, though many seized by Tipper were subsequently sold back to the owners of the defective title, as appears to have occurred with Vyner.³¹³

Edmund Lambert's training at Lincoln's Inn would have alerted him to such dangers; it also introduced him to a career lawyer of high sophistication and large ambition who could assist his ambitions in Wiltshire, both professionally and socially. This was James Ley of Teffont Evias, whose father had been a soldier and retainer of William Herbert, 1st Earl of Pembroke, and had settled near Wilton about eight miles from Lambert's home at

³⁰⁹ See Chapter 4.3.

³¹⁰ Thirsk, J 'The Crown as Projector on its Own Estates, from Elizabeth I to Charles I' in Hoyle *Estates* 301-2.

³¹¹ *VCH Wilts* vol 10 'Devizes: Churches: Charities for the Poor and Highways'.

³¹² *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Trowbridge: Manors'.

³¹³ *ibid.*

Boyton.³¹⁴ James Ley was a fourth son, and highly ambitious. He had been educated at Cambridge, Oxford and Lincoln's Inn and at eighteen had bought the manor of Bremeridge at Westbury with his brother. By 1597 he was MP for Westbury, and steward of the Wiltshire estates of Charles Blount, 8th Baron Mountjoy, courtier and soldier, who was then disposing of his estates at Brook.³¹⁵ Lambert's relationship with Ley enabled both men to build and deepen their social and commercial networks in west Wiltshire and the whole cloth-producing region. In 1595 Lambert stood godfather to Ley's eldest son Henry, and in 1599 Lambert's wife Ann was godmother to Ley's second son James. That year Ley and the clothier William Jones, Lambert's tenant at Keevil, bought separate properties at Brook from Ley's patron Mountjoy; and in 1600 Jones stood godfather to Ley's daughter Artemisia.³¹⁶ By 1602, and perhaps during the 1590s, Ley was acting as Lambert's steward in Keevil and Bulkington, presiding over the manor court, negotiating the division of lands held in common, and issuing new leases.³¹⁷

By the end of the Elizabethan era, a new commercial élite had achieved a powerful influence in west Wiltshire. This generation had few connections to the aristocratic families, the Seymours and the Paulets; instead the Crown servants, the Brounkers and Mildmays, were joined by the commercial alliance of Lambert, Ley and Jones, and the 'broadcloth gentlemen' Henry Long III and Edward Long. Further evidence of this convergence is in the admissions registers of Lincoln's Inn and the Inner and Middle Temple. Between 1570 and 1600 the heirs of the most prosperous clothier and merchant families entered the Inns of Court alongside their grander neighbours. Within the Inns, at least, the clothiers' sons Sefton and Henry Jones, Henry Long and Nash Whitaker shared the same cultural milieu as William Dodington jr, Charles Danvers of Baynton, Edmund Lambert and James Ley.³¹⁸ While the local magnates – the Seymours, Hungerfords and Bayntuns – had retrieved most of their fortunes after the crises of the mid-century, the new élite had emerged among them and was now highly visible. While no clothier would build a house like Longleat,

³¹⁴ Prest, W 'Sir James Ley, 1st Earl of Marlborough' *ODNB*.

³¹⁵ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Westbury: Manors'; Maginn, C 'Charles Blount, 8th Baron Mountjoy and Earl of Devonshire (1563-1606)' *ODNB*.

³¹⁶ Skinner, RL 'The Ley Family of Teffont Evias and Westbury and the Earldom of Marlborough' *WAM* 91 (1998) 105.

³¹⁷ WRO 288/1.

³¹⁸ Sefton and Henry Jones, William Dodington and Charles Danvers were all at Middle Temple: Sturgess *Middle Temple Admissions* February 1590/1, February 1596/7, June 1591, October 1597; Henry Long, Nash Whitaker, Edmund Lambert and James Ley were at Lincoln's Inn: February 1581/2, April 1594, February 1573/4, February 1576/7: Baildon, WP (ed) *Records of the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn: the Black Books* vols 1 & 2 (London, 1896). Several other examples could be given.

marking the 'High Renaissance of Tudor architecture',³¹⁹ or even Lacock, their sons and the sons of merchants now owned many of the finest houses in west Wiltshire, wore satin doublets and fur-trimmed gowns, and spent lavishly on fine furniture, hangings and silver-gilt plate.³²⁰

There is no indication that the periodic crises emphasised by Ramsay had brought lasting problems for the great clothiers: no bankruptcies or fire-sales of property. With the exception of John Michell of Calne, the clothiers suffering extent for debts seem to have faced only temporary difficulties. In 1599 William Jones was prosperous enough to buy a substantial estate and mansion house at Brook, in addition to his lands at Keevil.³²¹ Probably the downturns only increased the leverage of those with ready money, particularly those clothiers and merchants who had significant rental income or had secured full payment for their trading. Sending a son to an Inn of Court did not indicate that a clothier was abandoning trade in difficult times for the comfortable life of the gentleman. It was part of dynastic business strategy. The greatest clothier families, who had acquired manorial estates to secure permanent access to fulling mills, wool supplies and workforce, had a pressing need for high-level expertise in property and inheritance law and estate management. Few clothier families seem ever to have abandoned the trade: the business of cloth-making simply passed to the aptest in the next generation, very often a son-in-law, or at worst a neighbour. The unmarried Thomas Clevelod of Warminster seems to have been the last clothier of his name, but his business was probably continued by his kinsmen, the Adlams of Crockerton.³²² Most of the leading clothiers of the last Elizabethan decade can be directly connected to their Elizabethan and indeed Henrician forebears, either by descent or as tenants or suppliers.

Further down the social scale, the villagers of Bulkington like those elsewhere in the clothing area were exposed to the ebbs and flows of the national and international economy, but the evidence suggests that more rather than fewer were drawn into the

³¹⁹ Summerson, *J Architecture in Britain 1530-80* (London, 1953) 31. Beckington Castle, a mansion house built by William Long before 1559: BL Add MS 39213, was perhaps the grandest house built by a clothier in the mid-Tudor era.

³²⁰ See for example the inventory of Henry Long III listing goods at Whaddon, Littleton* and Southwick in 1612: WRO 947/1673/2. [*Stony Littleton, Somerset: information from Pam Slocombe.]

³²¹ Fry, GS & Fry, *EA Abstracts of Wiltshire Inquisitiones Post Mortem, Charles I Index Library 23* (London, 1901) 31-4.

³²² TNA PROB 11/40/42: Thomas Clevelod forgave the debts of his uncle William Adlam of Crockerton, and left his godson Valentine Adlam £5. Clevelod may have owned the mill at Crockerton: *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Warminster: Industry and Trade'. Valentine Adlam held the lease of Bull Mill, Crockerton in 1600: Rogers, *Woollen Mills* 240.

trade, directly or indirectly, during the second half of the sixteenth century. There seem never to have been fewer than four clothiers operating from Keevil and Bulkington, and there were others close by in Poulshot, Marston and Worton, as well as in Edington. Each bought the products of several weavers, and if they in turn had one or two looms each then the demand for spinners must have been substantial, since a single loom required the product of at least five spinners.³²³ The wills of clothier widows suggest that loyal spinners were valued as much as weavers (though both were poorly paid): in 1585 Joan Long of Trowbridge left 5s to each wife working for her in the town,³²⁴ and in 1596 Amy Martyn of Steeple Ashton left as much as £12 to her weavers and spinners, suggesting perhaps a work-force of about fifty.³²⁵ Clothier wills also include bequests to the poor right across the region: former employees, now elderly and infirm, no doubt among them. Joan Long, whose business was evidently still substantial two decades after her husband's death, made donations of £3 each to the poor of Rode, Bradford, Norton St Philip's, Westbury and Devizes as well as £4 to the poor of Trowbridge. Amy Martyn gave £3 to the church stock of Steeple Ashton, for the benefit of the poor, and £3 to the poor of Bromham.

For the husbandmen of west Wiltshire, these decades probably brought rising incomes. Their surplus produce, whether food or wool, was in high demand and food prices rose while rents stayed still. In Bulkington however there is little evidence of conspicuous consumption on clothes or luxuries, and no tenant other than the clothier William Long registered a will at Canterbury.³²⁶ Profits were spent on stock or accumulated as cash. It seems that there was little social change, but a change in mental outlook may have occurred as tenants witnessed the spectacular expenditure of Alice Paston in the 1580s. Her new manor house at Keevil, even larger than the church, was only a second home, for a widow or an heir, but it dwarfed the medieval mansion owned by William Jones.³²⁷ The jurors attended a court baron presided over by a Lincoln's Inn lawyer. Nor was it only clothiers and merchants who had contact with the cities of London, Bristol and Salisbury. In January 1558, the visiting Merchant Taylor William Tawney told Devizes magistrates he had stayed overnight in Bulkington with the yeoman Edmund Gaysford.³²⁸ Many of the tenants may have travelled occasionally to the great fairs at St James' Priory in Bristol each January

³²³ Weavers needed 5-6lbs of yarn per day to weave a Wiltshire broadcloth of some thirty-six yards (before fulling) in two to three weeks. Spinners produced no more than 1lb per day: Mann *Cloth Industry* 318 & 326 (table L).

³²⁴ TNA PROB 11/66/231.

³²⁵ WRO P2/M/125.

³²⁶ TNA PROB 11/90/42.

³²⁷ Now known as Talboys: it is described in *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Keevil' and *HE* database.

³²⁸ Cunnington *Annals of Devizes* vol 1 pt 1, 27.

and July, attended in the 1590s by London merchants such as the Grocer Richard Sheppard.³²⁹ In the next generation several yardlanders in Bulkington would exploit their increased wealth to substantially enlarge their landholdings and their social status.

In west Wiltshire then, unlike the Berkshire described by Yates and Jackson,³³⁰ cloth production continued strongly throughout the Elizabethan era, led by the dominant clothiers; as in the Weald of Kent described by Zell, they had little reason to desert manufacturing 'for the life of a petty squire'.³³¹ The Berkshire clothiers may have followed a trend noted by Fisher in counties near London, and turned from manufacturing to food production for the fast-growing capital.³³² In west Wiltshire, both clothiers and gentry also raised livestock on a large scale: Henry Long grazed more than a hundred steers on the Avon meadows at Monkton in 1558 and from the 1580s William Brounker fattened rother beasts on pasture at Whaddon.³³³ But the most important drivers of social change were the continuing demand for broadcloth, the ambition of the great clothiers to dominate supply, and the determination of Crown officials and gentry to take a full share of their revenues.

³²⁹ Sheppard promised to make payments at Bristol to (amongst others) John Long, William Adlam and Mr Whitaker: KRO U269/1 AB6: 17 July 1590, 7 January 1596, 26 January 1597.

³³⁰ Yates *West Berkshire* 246; Jackson, CA 'The Berkshire Woollen Industry, 1500-1650' unpublished PhD thesis (University of Reading, 1993) 151-7.

³³¹ Zell *Weald* 225.

³³² Fisher, FJ 'London as an Engine of Economic Growth' in Corfield, P & Harte, NB (eds) *FJ Fisher: London and the English Economy* (London, 1990) 196.

³³³ BL Add Ms 11757; *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Whaddon'.

Chapter 4 Revolution, 1603-49

Much of the historiography of the early Stuart period has sought to explain the genesis of two huge changes in English society: the political revolutions of the 1640s and Interregnum, and the longer-term economic revolution that led the country to empire and industrial development. Since part of the latter change was the diversification of England's overseas trading economy away from its Tudor reliance on the export of undyed woollen cloth, it is unsurprising that Wiltshire's historians have set their accounts of early seventeenth-century change within this overarching framework. The period has attracted many leading scholars, and as a consequence the published research is much more extensive and vastly more detailed than for the Elizabethan era.

Barry Supple gave a full account of the series of economic crises that battered the cloth trade during the first four decades of the century,¹ developing the work of Fisher, Gould and Davis on London's overseas trade,² and contextualising Ramsay's and Mann's accounts of the Wiltshire industry.³ Joel Hurstfield and Stuart Bindoff traced the judicial and political activities of the resident gentry, complementing monographs for the same period on Somerset and Gloucestershire.⁴ Eric Kerridge researched agricultural history, the clearance of the royal forests near Frome and Melksham, and the rising trend in rent on the Pembroke and Seymour estates.⁵ For a deeper understanding of how these and other developments affected individuals in west Wiltshire society, we can also draw on studies by David Underdown and Martin Ingram of political and ecclesiastical pressures in the early Stuart era,⁶ by Paul Slack and Christopher Dyer on poverty and the operation of poor relief,⁷ and by Laurence Stone on social mobility.⁸

¹ Supple *Commercial Crisis*.

² Fisher, FJ 'London's Export Trade in the Early Seventeenth Century' *ECHR* 3.2 (1950) 151-61; Gould, JD 'The Trade Depression of the Early 1620s' *ECHR* 7.1 (1954) 81-90; Davis, R 'England and the Mediterranean, 1570-1670' in Fisher, FJ (ed) *Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1961) 117-37; Davis *English Overseas Trade*.

³ Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry*; Mann 'Textile Industries'; *Cloth Industry*.

⁴ Hurstfield 'County Government'; Bindoff 'Parliamentary History, 1629-60'; Barnes, TG *Somerset 1625-40: A County's Government during the Personal Rule* (London, 1961); Willcox, WB *Gloucestershire: A Study in Local Government, 1590-1640* (New Haven, 1940).

⁵ Kerridge, E 'Agriculture, 1500-1793' *VCH Wilts* vol 4 (London, 1959); *Textile Manufactures*; 'The Revolts in Wiltshire Against Charles I' *WAM* 57 (1958) 64-75; 'The Movement of Rent, 1540-1640' *ECHR* 6.1 (1953) 16-34.

⁶ Underdown *Revel*; Ingram *Church Courts*.

⁷ Slack, P *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1988); Dyer *Poverty and its Relief* 41-78.

⁸ Stone, L 'Social Mobility in England 1500-1700' *P&P* 33 (1966) 16-55.

The national economic narrative that underpins these works describes a decade of prosperity at the start of the century, following the peace with Spain in 1604, and sustained pressure for free trade from West Country MPs and merchants. Subsequently a series of international crises, the Thirty Years War in central Europe, and increasing competition from manufacturers in Holland brought a steady decline in exports of undyed broadcloth but growth in sales of dyed cloths – including the lighter, coloured textiles known as ‘new draperies’ – and an increased focus on long-distance trade with the Americas and the Far East.⁹ At the regional scale, Ramsay in 1943 described a decline in the Wiltshire broadcloth manufactory, which Supple confirmed in 1959. Supple’s chapter titles: ‘The recovery from stagnation, 1600-1614’, ‘The depression years, 1620-1624’, ‘Plague and politics, 1625-1632’, ‘The declining years, 1632-1642’ give a clear sense of the economic trajectory of the white broadcloth trade to which west Wiltshire was such an important supplier. ‘The employees themselves,’ wrote Supple, ‘especially in the western and eastern counties where both the reliance on textile earnings and the concentration of labour were at a maximum, were in most cases the unfortunate legatees of a decline in cloth exports.’¹⁰ The impact on the weavers and spinners was, he argued, intensified by ‘the speed with which, owing to the merchant’s failure to buy and the clothier’s willingness to let stocks run down, commercial dislocation rebounded upon the heads of the workers in the clothing industry.’¹¹

Just as Chapter 3, however, questioned whether the ‘stagnation’ of London’s overseas trade was necessarily matched by a parallel stagnation in west Wiltshire, this chapter will investigate how the decline in London’s exports of white broadcloth from 1614 to 1649 was experienced in the countryside. The existing historiography does provide some hints that the effect in Wiltshire may have been less severe than might be expected: Mann for example acknowledged that ‘the general picture of Wiltshire in the thirties is not that of a depressed area.’¹² Ralph Davis argued that ‘new Turkish and Indian markets for broadcloth, first tested with Suffolk cloth in the 1590s, were exploited more thoroughly as western broadcloth dyed in London became available in the 1620s and 1630s,’¹³ and that Wiltshire remained an important source of supply.¹⁴ Harland Taylor claimed that exports of lighter,

⁹ Hill *Century of Revolution* 36-41.

¹⁰ Supple *Commercial Change* 12.

¹¹ *ibid* 13.

¹² Mann ‘Textile Industries’.

¹³ Davis *Overseas Trade* 25.

¹⁴ *ibid* 121.

coloured cloths may have matched white cloths as early as 1620.¹⁵ Coloured cloths were not made exclusively for export: they were distributed throughout the country by retailers in the capital,¹⁶ while the metropolitan market itself must have become increasingly valuable as its population doubled during the early Stuart era.¹⁷ The question therefore is to what extent west Wiltshire benefited from this shift in demand. This chapter will draw on evidence from the clothing district between the River Frome and the Semington Brook to assess what changes can be discerned in the traditional white cloth area through Quarter Sessions records, land sales, wills, inventories and inquisitions post mortem.

The political narrative of these decades is not the prime focus of this study, but its main lines provide another important context for the chapter. The reign of James I brought peace with Spain and a resurgence of long-distance trade and colonization, but also widespread resentment of his favourites and a fierce rivalry between the Duke of Buckingham and the 3rd Earl of Pembroke. The decade of Charles I's personal rule had a crucial impact on Wiltshire society by causing the greater gentry who might otherwise have been mainly resident in London to take a more prominent role in local affairs. In the 1640s the alienation of the leading gentry and their resistance to Ship Money and other levies unapproved by Parliament led prominent individuals to choose between King and Parliament. With several leading families – Danvers, Hungerford, Long and others – divided amongst themselves, the war brought a profound and enduring challenge to local allegiances and economic fortunes. The evolution of economic and social development will be related to this political context.

The chapter will investigate the dynamics of change in west Wiltshire up to the King's execution. Among the questions it will seek to answer are: How did the owners of capital in west Wiltshire, whether clothiers, lawyers or farmers, respond to the changing circumstances of the early Stuart era? How if at all did the gentry access the opportunities of the domestic and international markets? Were their economic and political interests aligned with or opposed to those of the clothiers? How did the white broadcloth producers respond to growing demand for coloured cloth and competition from the new draperies? How were villagers affected by the crises in politics and international trade? How did economic life and patterns of landownership change over the period? How were all these factors reflected in the material culture of the community? As in previous chapters, these

¹⁵ Taylor, H 'Trade, Neutrality, and the "English Road", 1630-1648' *EcHR* 25.2 (1972) 237.

¹⁶ Lang, RG 'London's Aldermen in Business, 1600-25' *Guildhall Miscellany* 3.4 (1971) 243-6.

¹⁷ Chartres, J 'Road Carrying in England in the Seventeenth Century' *EcHR* 30.1 (1977) 78.

questions will be considered at different levels of society – among magnates and politicians; merchants and lawyers; clothiers and gentry; and in and around the village of Bulkington – before conclusions are reached in the final section of the chapter.

1 Magnates and politicians

When James I arrived in London in May 1603, Henry Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke, was twenty-three years old;¹⁸ his younger brother Philip just nineteen.¹⁹ Though temporarily displaced by the Seymours as the leading family of Wiltshire – the sexagenarian Edward Seymour, 1st Earl of Hertford had been appointed lord lieutenant in 1601²⁰ – the Herbert brothers became early favourites of the King, who visited Wilton frequently.²¹ ‘Gallant and handsome’ in Aubrey’s words,²² they both advanced rapidly under James, with the politically astute Pembroke building support not only at Court but in Parliament,²³ and Philip made Earl of Montgomery in 1605.²⁴ Although no soldier himself, Pembroke had close ties with men who had fought with Essex and Mountjoy in Ireland, most notably the Earl of Southampton, released from the Tower in 1603 after two years’ confinement for involvement in the Essex rebellion.²⁵ By 1611 Pembroke’s political influence was such that he was appointed to the Privy Council and in 1615, still only thirty-five, he was appointed Lord Chamberlain, an office he retained throughout James’ reign.²⁶

Prominent among the Wiltshire contingent of Pembroke’s extensive political network were the younger brothers of Charles Danvers, executed with Essex in 1601: Henry, a veteran of the Irish campaign who was created Lord President of Munster in 1607, and John Danvers. In 1609 John Danvers, then aged twenty-six, became a Pembroke kinsman by marrying the forty-year-old Magdalen Herbert. The widow of Richard Herbert of Montgomery, Magdalen was mother of ten children including Edward Herbert of Cherbury – a politician and soldier two years older than his new step-father Danvers - and the future religious poet George Herbert.²⁷ These were valuable connections for John Danvers. That same year he became

¹⁸ Stater, V ‘William Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke (1580-1630)’ *ODNB*.

¹⁹ Smith ‘Philip Herbert, 4th Earl of Pembroke’.

²⁰ Doran ‘Edward Seymour, 1st Earl of Hertford’.

²¹ Aubrey *Brief Lives* 145.

²² *ibid* 145.

²³ Stater ‘William Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke’.

²⁴ Smith ‘Philip Herbert, 4th Earl of Pembroke’.

²⁵ Honan, P ‘Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton (1573-1624)’ *ODNB*.

²⁶ Stater ‘William Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke’.

²⁷ Healy, S ‘Sir Edward Herbert (1582-1648) *HoP* 1604-29; Wilcox, H ‘George Herbert (1593-1633)’ *ODNB*.

MP for Arundel on the recommendation of Edward Herbert;²⁸ in 1614 he represented Montgomery Boroughs; and from 1621 he was MP for Oxford University,²⁹ of which Pembroke had become chancellor in 1617³⁰ and where Henry Danvers would found the Botanic Gardens in 1622.³¹

The Pembroke-Danvers circle was cosmopolitan and highly sophisticated. Pembroke himself had succeeded his mother Mary, Countess of Pembroke as the leading literary patron of the Jacobean court, a supporter and protector of poets and dramatists including Ben Jonson and Thomas Middleton.³² His ally Southampton had been brought up as a ward in Burleigh's household, received an MA from Cambridge at sixteen and was said by his tutor John Florio to have spoken Italian fluently.³³ Even the abrasive Montgomery, who claimed to have few interests beyond dogs and horses, would gain a reputation as a connoisseur of painting.³⁴ John Danvers had been educated at Padua, Winchester and Oxford, travelled in both France and Italy, and developed a taste for architecture and garden design.³⁵ Through Magdalen Herbert he became a friend of the poet and divine John Donne, who from 1615 was preacher at Lincoln's Inn, where Pembroke, Montgomery and Danvers were all members, and became Dean of St Paul's in 1621.³⁶

Pembroke's own career reached a high point that year, when Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford died and Pembroke was appointed lord lieutenant in his place.³⁷ Hertford's grandson and heir, William Seymour, was still in his early twenties and distrusted at Court following a rash first marriage to the King's cousin, Arbella Stuart; despite her early death he was in no position to rival Pembroke.³⁸ For a while Wiltshire's two leading families drew closer and Pembroke appointed the new earl's younger brother, Francis Seymour, a deputy lieutenant. As MP for Wiltshire from 1621 Francis would soon become a prominent member of the Commons, frequently aligning himself with the positions taken by Pembroke and Southampton in the Lords.³⁹

²⁸ Davidson, A & Coates, B 'Arundel Borough' *HoP 1604-29*.

²⁹ Davidson, A & Sgroi, R 'Sir John Danvers (c1585-1655)' *HoP 1604-29*.

³⁰ Stater 'William Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke'.

³¹ McGurk, JN 'Henry Danvers, Earl of Danby (1573-1644)' *ODNB*.

³² Stater 'William Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke'.

³³ Honan 'Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton'.

³⁴ Smith 'Philip Herbert, 4th Earl of Pembroke'.

³⁵ Davidson & Sgroi 'Sir John Danvers'.

³⁶ Ferris, JP 'John Donne (1572-1631)' *HoP 1604-29*.

³⁷ Stater 'William Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke'.

³⁸ Doran 'Edward Seymour, 1st Earl of Hertford'.

³⁹ Bowen, L 'Sir Francis Seymour (c1590-1664)' *HoP 1604-29*.

This group was generally identified as anti-Spanish in policy,⁴⁰ continuing the antipathy of earlier generations in the same families: the Mildmay, Walsingham and Sidney faction of the Elizabethan era.⁴¹ After the peace of 1604 their stance found expression in support for free trade from the outports, especially those from Southampton around to Bristol; for the colonisation of the West Indies and the North American seaboard; and for the associated 'triangular trades' in salt, fish, tobacco, wine and olive oil in which the south-west ports were increasingly engaged.⁴² Pembroke was a major investor in the Virginia Company, of which Montgomery, Southampton and John Danvers all became council members.⁴³ The first treasurer was the Merchant Adventurer Thomas Smythe, son of the Wiltshire-born Customer Smythe,⁴⁴ a council member of the Levant Company and governor of the East India Company; but in 1621 Smythe was ousted by the Pembroke-Southampton group. The subsequent battle for control of the company between the free-traders and Smythe's supporters ended with the loss of its charter in 1624, leaving the Company in the hands of the Crown and its shareholders bearing significant losses.⁴⁵

The struggle for control of the Virginia Company brought into sharp focus the hostility that had emerged between Pembroke's faction and the Duke of Buckingham, widely resented for his profligacy, venality and inept military adventurism.⁴⁶ The deaths of Southampton in 1624 and of James I in 1625 only intensified this rivalry until Charles I brokered an accommodation, elevating Pembroke to Lord Steward, promoting Montgomery to Lord Chamberlain and arranging a marriage between Buckingham's daughter and Montgomery's son and heir.⁴⁷ Yet the attack on Buckingham continued, led now by a new Wiltshire MP, Walter Long of Whaddon.⁴⁸ While Danvers and Francis Seymour held back, in 1628 Long repeatedly argued for Buckingham's impeachment. After the duke's assassination that August, he became one of the most outspoken MPs, attacking the Crown for abuse of parliamentary privileges, and opposing tannage and poundage. In March 1629 Long was

⁴⁰ Brenner *Merchants* 249.

⁴¹ Worden, B *The Sound of Virtue: Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia and Elizabethan Politics* (New Haven, 1996) xxii, 81-2, 116-7 and *passim*.

⁴² Andrews, KR *Ships, Money and Politics: Seafaring and Naval Enterprise in the Reign of Charles I* (Cambridge, 1991) 55.

⁴³ Stater 'William Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke'; Smith 'Philip Herbert, 4th Earl of Pembroke'; Honan 'Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton'; Davidson & Sgroi 'Sir John Danvers'.

⁴⁴ Morgan, B 'Sir Thomas Smythe (c1558-1625)' *ODNB*.

⁴⁵ Morgan 'Sir Thomas Smythe'.

⁴⁶ Ashton *Reformation* 248-55.

⁴⁷ Stater 'William Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke'.

⁴⁸ Lancaster, H & Healy, S 'Walter Long of Whaddon, 1592-1672' *HoP 1604-29: son of the lawyer, Henry Long of Southwick, discussed in Chapter 3.2*.

one of a group of MPs who held down the Speaker to prevent him adjourning the House, for which Long was punished with three years' imprisonment and a fine of 2,000 marks.⁴⁹

From 1630, when Pembroke died and Montgomery succeeded as the 4th Earl of Pembroke and lord lieutenant of Wiltshire, Somerset and Cornwall,⁵⁰ political life in west Wiltshire changed substantially. During the eleven years of Personal Rule, men who had formerly been MPs served instead as justices on the commission of the peace, required to assist in gathering the taxes they had opposed in Parliament. Powerful and influential figures who had been mainly resident in London were now a regular presence in the country. John Danvers, who following the death of his first wife had married the west Wiltshire heiress Elizabeth Dauntsey, set about improving her manor house at West Lavington, and built an Italianate garden in the grounds.⁵¹

During the tense 1630s Charles ruled without Parliament, levying taxes by royal privilege and issuing orders through his ministers and privy councillors to his officials in the countryside.⁵² This decade of monarchical rule, reinforced through the assertive high Anglicanism promoted by Archbishop Laud,⁵³ was the era in which John Aubrey grew up. Born in 1626, he lived at his grandparents' home in Easton Piercy until his parents moved to Broad Chalke near Salisbury.⁵⁴ He sketched the greatest Wiltshire family of these years with particular vividness in *Brief Lives*:

The Earls of Pembroke were the most popular peers in the west of England, but one might boldly say, in the whole kingdom...King Charles I did love Wilton above all places: and came thither every summer. It was he that did put Philip Earl of Pembroke upon making this magnificent garden and grotto, and to new-build that side of the house that fronts the garden with two stately pavilions at each end, all al Italiano.⁵⁵

By comparison, Aubrey has little to say about the Seymours or Thynnes, then living in relative retirement on their estates. William Seymour, 2nd Earl of Hertford, kept his distance from the Court throughout the 1630s; according to Clarendon 'he was so wholly given up to a country life, where he lived in splendour, that he had an aversion, even an unaptness, for

⁴⁹ Lancaster & Healy 'Walter Long of Whaddon'.

⁵⁰ Smith 'Philip Herbert, 4th Earl of Pembroke'.

⁵¹ Kelsey, S 'Sir John Danvers (1584-1655)' *ODNB*.

⁵² Ashton *Reformation* 271-4, 277-8.

⁵³ *ibid* 280-1.

⁵⁴ Fox 'John Aubrey'.

⁵⁵ Aubrey *Brief Lives* 144-5.

business.⁵⁶ In this period Hertford's closest friend was the soldier Robert Devereux, 3rd Earl of Essex, a Herbert kinsman through his mother Frances Walsingham,⁵⁷ who was similarly estranged from the Court and from whom Hertford leased the larger part of Essex House as his London home.⁵⁸ Thomas Thynne, by this time 'perhaps the wealthiest commoner in England'⁵⁹ was equally withdrawn from public life, though more circumspect in his relations with the Crown: during the 1630s he was able to exploit his role as an exchequer official to increase his estates, purchasing much of the royal forest of Selwood between Longleat and Frome.⁶⁰

The real work of governing west Wiltshire during the Personal Rule was left to the commission of the peace, led by John Danvers and Francis Seymour, who both now had strong economic interests in the area. Seymour had been educated at Trowbridge Grammar School,⁶¹ and at some stage came into the family manor of Trowbridge.⁶² Other leading figures on the commission in the 1630s were Edward Hungerford II, now the owner of Customer Smythe's mansion at Corsham,⁶³ Edward Bayntun of Bromham⁶⁴ and Thomas Lambert of Boyton and Keevil;⁶⁵ there was not a single clothier on the Wiltshire bench.⁶⁶ In the course of the 1630s the JPs turned increasingly against the Crown's fiscal demands, refusing en masse to make the necessary assessment for Ship Money in 1635 and obliging the sheriff to work through his high constables.⁶⁷ When Bayntun was appointed sheriff in 1638, however, he proved a high-handed and draconian tax-gatherer, seizing horses in lieu of payment not only from his old rival Hungerford but also from Francis Seymour;⁶⁸ even so his collectors raised less than half of the sum required.⁶⁹

By the time Charles was forced to recall Parliament in 1640, he was left with few loyal supporters and little support for a military campaign in Scotland. Of the eight Wiltshire MPs

⁵⁶ Hyde, E, Earl of Clarendon *History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England* ed Macray, WD, 6 vols (Oxford, 1958) vol 2, 528–9, cited in Smith 'William Seymour, 1st Marquess of Hertford'.

⁵⁷ Frances Walsingham married Essex in 1590, after the death of her first husband, Philip Sidney.

⁵⁸ Morrill, J 'Robert Devereux, 3rd Earl of Essex (1591-1646)' *ODNB*.

⁵⁹ Lancaster, H & Thrush, A 'Sir Thomas Thynne (c1577-1639)' *HoP 1604-29*.

⁶⁰ Lancaster & Thrush 'Sir Thomas Thynne'.

⁶¹ Bowen 'Sir Francis Seymour'.

⁶² *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Trowbridge: Manors'.

⁶³ Lancaster, H 'Sir Edward Hungerford (1596-1648)' *HoP 1604-29*.

⁶⁴ Lancaster, H & Thrush, A 'Sir Edward Bayntun (1593-1657)' *HoP 1604-29*.

⁶⁵ Lancaster, H & Thrush, A 'Thomas Lambert (1580-1638)' *HoP 1604-29*.

⁶⁶ TNA SP 16/212 ff 132-6.

⁶⁷ Hurstfield 'County Government'.

⁶⁸ Lancaster & Thrush 'Sir Edward Bayntun'.

⁶⁹ Bindoff *Parliamentary History, 1629-60*.

who supported the King in Parliament only the Seymour clients Robert Hyde⁷⁰ and James Thynne were of significant stature: twenty-one supported Parliament against the Crown.⁷¹ In 1641 Pembroke was dismissed as Lord Chamberlain,⁷² while Hertford rallied to the royal cause with his brother Francis Seymour, ennobled that year as Baron Trowbridge.⁷³ In 1642, with war imminent, Hertford joined Charles at York and was made lieutenant-general for the South West.⁷⁴ On the Parliamentary side his brother-in-law Essex accepted the post of captain-general of the armies⁷⁵ and Pembroke was once more appointed lord lieutenant, with Walter Long of Whaddon as one of his deputies.⁷⁶

Wiltshire's strategic importance was evident to both sides, with the royal strongholds of Devizes and Bath forming crucial staging posts between the Court at Oxford and its principal port of Bristol.⁷⁷ In west Wiltshire the pivotal events were the Royalist victory outside Devizes in July 1643⁷⁸ and Cromwell's successful siege of the town in September 1645; in July 1645, on their way to capture Bristol, Cromwell and William Waller trapped James Long of Draycot, a colonel of the King's cavalry, between Devizes and Steeple Ashton with his entire regiment of 300 horse.⁷⁹ James Thynne, who had abandoned Longleat to join the King at Oxford, was captured by Fairfax at Exeter in 1646 and obliged to compound for his estates at Goldsmiths' Hall in London in the sum of £3,696.⁸⁰ The Royalists were subdued or scattered. Hertford signed the surrender in 1646 and compounded with Parliament; after the King's execution he and his brother Francis were obliged to keep a low profile in the countryside,⁸¹ as was James Long.⁸² By 1649 Edward Hyde and Robert Long had both left England, in the service of Queen Henrietta and Prince Charles.⁸³

The bulk of the county gentry had supported Parliament, led at first by Pembroke, John Danvers (whose Royalist elder brother Henry, Lord Danby, died unmarried in January

⁷⁰ Lancaster, H 'Robert Hyde c1561-1642' *HoP* 1604-29.

⁷¹ Bindoff 'Parliamentary History, 1629-60'.

⁷² Smith 'Philip Herbert, 4th Earl of Pembroke'.

⁷³ Smith, DL 'Francis Seymour, 1st Baron Seymour of Trowbridge (1590?-1664)' *ODNB*.

⁷⁴ Smith 'William Seymour, 1st Marquess of Hertford'.

⁷⁵ Morrill 'Robert Devereux, 3rd Earl of Essex'.

⁷⁶ Bindoff 'Parliamentary History, 1629-60'.

⁷⁷ Pafford, JH *Accounts of the Parliamentary Garrisons of Great Chalfield and Malmesbury, 1645-6* WRS 2 (Devizes, 1940) 18-27.

⁷⁸ Battle of Roundway Down.

⁷⁹ Bindoff 'Parliamentary History, 1629-60'.

⁸⁰ Waylen, J 'The Wiltshire Compounders' *WAM* 23 (1889) 330-1.

⁸¹ Smith 'William Seymour, 1st Marquess of Hertford'; Smith 'Francis Seymour'.

⁸² Henning, BD 'Sir James Long (1616-92)' *HoP* 1660-90.

⁸³ Seaward, P 'Edward Hyde, 1st Earl of Clarendon (1609-74)' *ODNB*; Ferris, J 'Sir Robert Long (c1602-73)' *ODNB*.

1644⁸⁴), Edward Bayntun and Edward Hungerford.⁸⁵ By 1648, however, the Parliamentary group was badly depleted. Walter Long, who had been severely wounded at Edgehill, opposed the Army leaders, was expelled in Pride's Purge and joined the Royalists in exile.⁸⁶ Edward Hungerford, an uninspiring commander of Wiltshire's Parliamentary forces, died in 1648, to be succeeded by his Royalist half-brother Anthony of Black Bourton in Oxfordshire; Edward's widow Margaret would survive him at Corsham for nearly twenty years.⁸⁷ Edward Bayntun had refused to serve under Hungerford and left his great house at Bromham at the mercy of Royalist troops, who destroyed it in 1645; returning to Parliament that year he survived Pride's Purge in 1648.⁸⁸ Pembroke was much diminished and now carried little influence with the Army leaders. After the King's execution in 1649 and the abolition of the House of Lords he was appointed a member of the Council of State, but soon afterwards contracted the illness which would end his life in January 1650.⁸⁹ Of the early leaders only the sixty-six-year-old John Danvers remained: republican, regicide and elected member of the Council of State.⁹⁰

The period 1603-49 in Wiltshire can thus be characterised by the rise and relative decline of the Pembrokes. The national importance of the Herbert family reached its height in these decades, and their political reach within west Wiltshire, where the Thynnes as Crown stewards had been pre-eminent under Elizabeth, may have greatly increased when their kinsman John Danvers took up residence at West Lavington. Nonetheless, as will be seen in the next section, the Thynnes and Hungerfords remained significant forces in the cloth district, and arguably had a greater influence than the Pembrokes on its economic development. In these decades too west Wiltshire experienced commercial pressure from Somerset and Gloucestershire, in particular from the aristocratic Berkeley family, whose influence increased through association with the Duke of Buckingham.

2 Magnates, merchants and lawyers

Like the Muscovy Company of the 1550s, the Virginia Company was a joint-stock organisation in which the commercial management of the company was entrusted to the

⁸⁴ McGurk 'Henry Danvers, Earl of Danby'.

⁸⁵ Bindoff 'Parliamentary History, 1629-60'.

⁸⁶ Lancaster & Healy 'Sir Walter Long'.

⁸⁷ Lancaster 'Sir Edward Hungerford'.

⁸⁸ Lancaster & Thrush 'Sir Edward Bayntun'.

⁸⁹ Smith 'Philip Herbert, 4th Earl of Pembroke'.

⁹⁰ Bindoff 'Parliamentary History, 1629-60'.

governing council.⁹¹ This structure enabled the participation of a large number of investors, not only the merchants and ship-owners who would undertake the enterprise, but also nobility and gentry. Notable among the first subscribers, along with Pembroke, Montgomery, Southampton and John Danvers, were their future rival for control of the company, the Merchant Adventurer Thomas Smythe, and a substantial Gloucestershire contingent including members of the Berkeley family.⁹²

As Theodore Rabb succinctly put it: ‘everybody who was anybody was subscribing to the Virginia Company,’⁹³ so it is remarkable that there was no significant west Wiltshire cohort in the Virginia Company: no Thynnes, Bayntuns or Longs appear among the early shareholders.⁹⁴ Only Edward Hungerford I appears to have invested: in 1607 he was appointed to the council of the Company, but died the same year.⁹⁵ In fact the struggle for control of the Company between the Pembroke and Smythe factions during the 1620s coincided with commercial developments in Gloucestershire and west Wiltshire which reflected to some extent the patronage of the Marquess of Buckingham, several of whose clients had a considerable influence on the economic development of the western broadcloth manufactory.

Villiers had first been introduced to James I by Anthony Mildmay,⁹⁶ whose wife Grace (née Sharington) had grown up at Lacock in west Wiltshire and inherited substantial estates at Seend.⁹⁷ The Mildmay family were duly rewarded by the new favourite. In 1617, when Villiers was Earl of Buckingham, he persuaded the King to grant Anthony’s nephew Henry Mildmay the lucrative office of master of the Jewel House. Two years later Buckingham and the King provided financial support for Henry’s marriage to Susan Halliday, daughter and co-heiress of a wealthy Gloucestershire-born Mercer, William Halliday.⁹⁸ In 1620 William Halliday’s second daughter Margaret married the twenty-four-year-old Edward Hungerford

⁹¹ Parry, JH *The Age of Reconnaissance* (London, 1963) 216.

⁹² Bemiss, SM *The Three Charters of the Virginia Company of London* (Williamsburg, 1957) accessed online at www.gutenberg.org.

⁹³ Rabb, TK *Enterprise and Empire: Merchant and Gentry Investment in the Expansion of England, 1575-1630* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967) 224.

⁹⁴ An alphabetical list of shareholders around 1618 is published in Kingsbury, SM *The Records of the Virginia Company of London* vol 3 (Washington, 1933) 79-90.

⁹⁵ Rabb *Enterprise and Empire* 320; WJJ ‘Sir Edward Hungerford (by 1532-1607)’ *HoP 1558-1603*.

⁹⁶ Thrush, A ‘Sir Anthony Mildmay (c1594-1668)’ *ODNB*.

⁹⁷ Fudge, NM ‘Henry Sharington (c1518-81)’ *HoP 1558-1603*; *VCH Wilts* vol 7 ‘Melksham: Manors’.

⁹⁸ Thrush ‘Sir Anthony Mildmay’.

II (from the Gloucestershire branch of the family) who had succeeded his uncle in 1607 and come into large estates across north and west Wiltshire.⁹⁹

Buckingham's own connections in Gloucestershire deepened this magnate-merchant network. In 1617 his elder brother John Villiers had married Frances Coke, daughter of the former chief justice Edward Coke;¹⁰⁰ in 1622 her sister Elizabeth married Maurice Berkeley of Stoke Gifford in south Gloucestershire.¹⁰¹ The Berkeleys were not only prominent investors in the Virginia Company but active participants in its North American settlements. Maurice Berkeley's father Richard had established Berkeley Hundred in Virginia in 1619, in partnership with his steward, John Smyth of Nibley and the Middle Temple. This project ended disastrously in 1622, when the colonists were massacred; but in 1623 Maurice Berkeley invested in the company, and even in the 1630s John Smyth was attempting to rekindle the project.¹⁰²

For the West Country, however, the most significant achievement of this network may have been the promotion of new enterprise by Gloucestershire clothiers, not only around Wotton-under-Edge as noted in Chapter 3, but on Stroudwater, where several of Halliday's relatives were clothiers.¹⁰³ No ledgers have survived to show the detail of their commercial transactions, but William Halliday needed coloured cloth to sell in the Mediterranean as well as white broadcloth for the Low Countries and may have encouraged the Gloucestershire clothiers to develop the techniques of dyeing and dressing broadcloth, to compete with Berkshire and Kent, the main suppliers of coloured broadcloth at the start of the century.¹⁰⁴ Halliday was most certainly aware of the increasing demand for dyed broadcloth, and it was during his career as a merchant that the Stroudwater clothiers began producing the fine red broadcloths known as stammels, or scarlets.¹⁰⁵

In December 1614 the Eastland merchant Alderman Cockayne persuaded King James to suspend the privileges of the Merchant Adventurers in favour of a new company, the King's Merchant Adventurers, and to promote the sale of coloured cloth in Germany and the Low

⁹⁹ Lancaster 'Sir Edward Hungerford'; *Vis Gloucs* 90.

¹⁰⁰ Handley, S 'John Villiers, Viscount Purbeck (?1591-1658) *ODNB*.

¹⁰¹ Davidson, A 'Maurice Berkeley (1599-1664)' *HoP* 1604-29.

¹⁰² Warmington, A 'John Smyth (1567-1641)' *ODNB*.

¹⁰³ William Halliday's ancestry is uncertain, but he was certainly connected to the Hallidays of Rodborough in the Stroudwater area, who had been clothiers for at least a century: Perry, R 'The Gloucestershire Woollen Industry, 1100-1690' *TBGAS* 66 (Bristol, 1945) 79.

¹⁰⁴ *Supple Commercial Crisis* 260: combined sales from Kent and Reading grew from 7,384 in 1606 to 12,584 by 1628.

¹⁰⁵ In 1635 the Stroudwater clothiers stated that they had begun making stammels 'thirty years previously': Perry *Gloucestershire Woollen Industry* 103.

Countries. Major beneficiaries of this project would in theory be the shearmen and dyers of London, who would finish the white western broadcloth before it was exported: most western clothiers were not at that time equipped to supply coloured cloth, it was claimed, because 'the very few shearmen, rowers and dyers there were occupied in dyeing and dressing the cloth of country people';¹⁰⁶ in other words, for local consumption. However the King's Company was boycotted by London's leading merchants because there was little demand for coloured cloths from their customers in Germany, Holland, Flanders or Calais.¹⁰⁷ To protect its own cloth finishing industry, Holland prohibited all imports of dyed and dressed cloth from England, and sales to Germany also fell sharply.¹⁰⁸

By May 1615 both white and coloured broadcloths were piling up at Blackwell Hall: the King's Company merchants did not have sufficient capital to buy them all, but had relied on revenues from Holland and Germany to finance their purchases.¹⁰⁹ As the situation deteriorated, the western clothiers were forced to cut production. Even the grant of a free royal licence to export 30,000 undressed cloths, and an unlimited additional number under the Earl of Cumberland's licence at 2s 2d per cloth, could not reverse the Company's downward spiral.¹¹⁰ When the merchants began to force down the price paid to clothiers, production fell: Lord Treasurer Cranfield estimated that 16,000 fewer white cloths were produced in 1615 than in previous years.¹¹¹ By 1616 the game was up. From July to September there were no sales of white cloth in Blackwell Hall and no cloths exported, either white or dyed. In August the Gloucester clothiers claimed that the market price no longer delivered a profit to them,¹¹² while in Wiltshire 180 looms were said to have ceased work, putting 3,000 men and women out of work.¹¹³ On 1 Jan 1617 James finally restored the privileges of the old Merchant Adventurers and abandoned the attempt to force change on the market.¹¹⁴

The Cockayne experiment ended in failure, but it clarified rather than changed the underlying commercial trends, in particular the growing competition from Holland, the declining market for white undressed cloth, and the continuing influence of the free trade

¹⁰⁶ Friis *Cockayne's Project* 251.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid* 282.

¹⁰⁸ Friis *Cockayne's Project* 277, 290.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid* 273; *Supple Commercial Crisis* 47.

¹¹⁰ Friis *Cockayne's Project* 280. *Stone Crisis* 429-32 provides a useful account of the Earl of Cumberland's licence, which subsequently passed to the Duchess, and then Dukes, of Lennox.

¹¹¹ *ibid* 287.

¹¹² *ibid* 306.

¹¹³ *ibid* 343.

¹¹⁴ *ibid* 356.

lobby. Robert Middleton, MP for London, who in 1612 had dispatched by far the largest quantity of broadcloths of any Merchant Adventurer,¹¹⁵ had been scathing in his attacks on Cockayne, whom he accused of trying to capture this lucrative market under false pretences by promising the impossible,¹¹⁶ but many western MPs shared the view of Edwin Sandys that the Merchant Adventurers were a damaging monopoly, without which ‘the trade might well maintain many thousand merchants more.’¹¹⁷

The renewal of the Merchant Adventurers’ charter in 1617 was a major victory for the Company, but it proved only temporary. When a new crisis struck in 1620, soon after the outbreak of the Thirty Years War, bringing ‘the most acute breakdown of the English economy in the first half of the seventeenth century,’¹¹⁸ it was again the market in Germany and the Low Countries that broke down and triggered another powerful drive by the free traders in Parliament. Between 1620 and 1622 exports of white shortcloths to these markets fell by nearly 20 per cent from 48,235 to 38,969,¹¹⁹ suggesting a drop in Wiltshire alone of more than 5,000 cloths per year.¹²⁰ Following another campaign against the Merchant Adventurers in parliament, the Privy Council in July 1624 suspended their monopoly over exports of all textiles other than white broadcloth and permitted all merchants to trade freely everywhere, in all types of coloured cloth.¹²¹ The worst of the export crisis had passed by 1624, and although war with Spain from 1625 restricted the Flanders market for a further five years, exports to Germany and the Low Countries recovered to a peak of 43,070 in 1628, if well below the high point of 79,475 achieved in 1606.¹²² Sales of coloured broadcloths were also steadily increasing, even to Germany and Holland, totalling 16,798 in 1628, including 3,000 ‘Spanish cloths’— a new textile made by western clothiers, woven from dyed wool and finished in the countryside.¹²³

Throughout these crises, the King’s leading financial officials were all men with a direct knowledge of the western cloth producers, who were well aware of the local implications of central government policy. Julius Caesar, Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1606 to 1614,

¹¹⁵ Friis *Cockayne’s Project* 95-6. Middleton paid duty for 3,135 shortcloths, Thomas Smythe for 1,760, William Halliday for 1,195.

¹¹⁶ Ferris, JP & Healy, S ‘Robert Middleton (1563-1616)’ *HoP 1604-29*.

¹¹⁷ Thrush, A ‘Sir Edwin Sandys (1561-1629)’ *HoP 1604-29*.

¹¹⁸ *Supple Commercial Crisis* 52.

¹¹⁹ *ibid* 55.

¹²⁰ On the basis that Wiltshire at this time produced 60 per cent of the total: Mann *Cloth Industry* xiii.

¹²¹ *Supple Commercial Crisis* 70-1.

¹²² *ibid* 260. The figures given are for ‘cloths of assize’ as recorded in the London Port Book: see Appendix 1.

¹²³ *ibid* 260.

was the brother of Thomas Caesar, the former business partner of Robert Webb of Beckington.¹²⁴ Lionel Cranfield, Lord Treasurer from 1621 to 1624, was a former Merchant Adventurer who had traded in western broadcloths and northern kerseys; he had held the farm of licences to export unwrought cloth from 1604 to 1606 and the farm of customs from 1604 to 1611; and was surveyor general of customs from 1613 to 1619.¹²⁵ James Ley, Lord Treasurer from 1624 to 1628, had once been steward to Edmund Lambert at Keevil and Bulkington; during a long career at the Court of Wards he amassed large estates in west Wiltshire and Somerset, centred on Westbury.¹²⁶ In 1624 his son followed in his footsteps as one of two MPs for Westbury, along with Henry Mildmay.¹²⁷

Ley's story in fact shows his continuing confidence in the prosperity of west Wiltshire, and demonstrates the ties between the county establishment and commerce. His big break had come when he was steward of the Wiltshire estates of Charles Blount, 8th Baron Mountjoy, who in the winter of 1602 destroyed Tyrone's army at Kinsale. In 1603 a grateful James I made Mountjoy lord lieutenant of Ireland, a privy councillor and Earl of Devon;¹²⁸ and in August the following year Ley was appointed Chief Justice of the King's Bench in Ireland. Over the next few years, and especially after Blount died in 1606, Ley bought up much of his patron's Wiltshire property. In 1608 he was summoned back to London from Ireland and the following year succeeded in a bid to become Attorney of the Court of Wards. With the earnings and gratuities flowing from his lucrative appointment he continued to invest in property in and around Westbury.¹²⁹

Ley developed a very close relationship with the Long family, in both its clothier and its gentry branches. He made his country seat at Beckington in a house previously occupied by the clothier Thomas Long,¹³⁰ in 1613 he bought the manors of Westbury Stourton and Westbury Arundel from Edward Long of Rood Ashton and his son Gifford;¹³¹ by 1614, his second daughter Anne had married Walter Long of Draycot.¹³² At the Court of Wards Ley built a strong and mutually profitable relationship with a young Lincoln's Inn barrister

¹²⁴ Harding, A 'Julius Cesar (1558-1636)' *HoP 1558-1603*. See also Chapter 3.2.

¹²⁵ Davidson, A & Healy, S 'Sir Leonard Cranfield (1565-1645)' *HoP 1604-29*.

¹²⁶ Lancaster, H & Healy, S 'Sir James Ley (1550-1629)' *HoP 1604-29*.

¹²⁷ Lancaster, H 'Westbury' *HoP 1604-29*.

¹²⁸ Maginn 'Mountjoy'.

¹²⁹ Lancaster & Healy 'Sir James Ley'.

¹³⁰ Gomme, AH & Maguire, *A Design and Plan in the Country House* (London, 2008) 50. Thomas Long was the son of William Long of Beckington, discussed in Chapter 3.2.

¹³¹ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Westbury Manors'.

¹³² Lancaster, H 'Sir Walter Long of Draycot (1594-1637)' *HoP 1604-29*.

named Henry Sherfield and seems likely to have encouraged his marriage in 1616 to Rebecca, the widow of Henry Long of Southwick, whose son Walter would inherit both Southwick and Whaddon.¹³³ By 1621, Ley owned all the manors of Westbury,¹³⁴ and his legal career reached new heights: in January he was appointed Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench. That year, at the age of seventy, he married a seventeen-year-old niece of the Marquess of Buckingham, which caused a temporary rift with the Longs; in 1624 he was appointed Lord Treasurer of England and in 1626 Charles I created him Earl of Marlborough.¹³⁵ By then he had restored peace with the Longs and appointed Robert Long of Draycot as his secretary.¹³⁶ In the late 1620s Ley built a grand manor house at Heywood, between Westbury and Steeple Ashton, on land lately bought from Edward Long of Monkton.¹³⁷

At his death in 1629, Ley owned twenty-four manors in Wiltshire, Somerset and Devon,¹³⁸ but his great estate in west Wiltshire would prove short-lived. In 1638 his grandson James, 3rd Earl of Marlborough, inherited heavy debts, became the ward of John Danvers and sold most of the Westbury estates to Henry Danvers, Lord Danby;¹³⁹ Heywood House and Ley's ancestral seat at Teffont would later pass to the Somerset clothier John Ashe of Freshford.¹⁴⁰ As will be seen in the next section of this chapter, Ashe was one of the first – and most successful – of a new generation of clothiers who made dyed and dressed broadcloth in the Frome valley and west Wiltshire. By 1640 Ashe was MP for Westbury, and one of the most prominent supporters of Parliament in the western broadcloth region.¹⁴¹

In a 1966 essay, Lawrence Stone argued that: 'the [Stuart] merchants had little formal power, but their economic interests closely interlocked with those of the landed classes, thanks to the dependence of the price of land on the price of wool, in turn dependent on the cloth export trade.'¹⁴² The experience in Wiltshire during the first half of the seventeenth century requires this judgement to be more nuanced: the merchants and

¹³³ Lancaster, H & Healy S 'Sir Walter Long of Whaddon (1603-72)' *HoP* 1604-29.

¹³⁴ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Westbury: Manors'.

¹³⁵ Lancaster & Healy 'Sir James Ley'.

¹³⁶ Lancaster, H 'Robert Long (c1598-1673)' *HoP* 1604-29.

¹³⁷ Fry & Fry *Wiltshire IPMs* 232.

¹³⁸ Lancaster & Healy 'Sir James Ley'.

¹³⁹ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Westbury: Manors'.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid*; *VCH Wilts* vol 13 'Teffont Evias: Manor'.

¹⁴¹ Wroughton 'John Ashe'.

¹⁴² Stone 'Social Mobility' 52.

landowners may have had shared interests, but many of the Wiltshire gentry also had common interests with the cloth producers; while the greatest magnates were indifferent to both. For the Pembrokes, the rewards of high office greatly outweighed their revenues from wool or overseas trade.¹⁴³ The third earl made few contributions to Privy Council discussions of the Cockayne project.¹⁴⁴ He directly opposed some of the greatest London merchants in the battle over the Virginia Company, and carried his Danvers allies with him in what Brenner characterised as an ‘aristocratic colonizing’ enterprise,¹⁴⁵ whose objectives were quite distinct from commerce.

In west Wiltshire the greater gentry were more attuned to the clothiers who bought their wool and employed many of their tenants than to the merchants who bought the cloth. James Ley like Pembroke focused closely on the rewards of office, yet his involvement with the Long family also suggests a long-term expectation that the cloth business would be profitable. Edward Bayntun and Edward Hungerford were deeply engaged with the west Wiltshire cloth business. In 1609 Edward Hungerford acquired the fulling mill in his manor of Langham,¹⁴⁶ and in 1625 the manor of Iford,¹⁴⁷ both on the Frome close to his ancestral castle at Farleigh. Both Hungerford and Bayntun had substantial landholdings in the cloth-making town of Chippenham, and Bayntun also in Calne and Devizes as well as his core manor of Bromham. While Edward Hungerford was related by marriage to the London merchant establishment, many of his tenants around Corsham and Farleigh made cloth for the fulling mills of the Avon and the Frome: their ability to pay rent and to buy the wool grown on the Hungerford estates depended on the activity of the clothiers. In the next section of this chapter, we will examine more closely the responses of the clothiers and the resident gentry to the challenges of the embattled export trade and to the commercial pressures, not only from London, but from competitors in Somerset and Gloucestershire.

3 West Wiltshire clothiers and gentry

Published abstracts of numerous Wiltshire inquisitions post mortem from the reign of Charles I¹⁴⁸ make it relatively straightforward to identify the estates held by west Wiltshire

¹⁴³ Aubrey *Brief Lives* 144; Williams ‘Philip Herbert, 4th Earl of Pembroke’.

¹⁴⁴ Friis *Cockayne’s Project* 294.

¹⁴⁵ Brenner *Merchants* chapter 6.

¹⁴⁶ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 ‘North Bradley: Mills’.

¹⁴⁷ *VCH Wilts* vol 11 ‘Westwood: Manors’.

¹⁴⁸ Fry & Fry *Wiltshire IPMs*.

landowners, both gentry and clothiers, and to assess their development over time. When used in combination with other records, they can suggest the nature of an individual's impact on the economic and social development of the area. It is noticeable, for example, that the most important clusters of manufacturing in the west Wiltshire countryside during the early seventeenth century were close to the seats of magnates: around Westbury and Beckington, where Thynne and Ley were both considerable landowners; between Calne and Devizes, close to Bayntun's house at Bromham; and near Hungerford's houses at Farleigh Hungerford and Corsham. All these areas had sizeable populations of clothiers, weavers and spinners. No evidence has been found that these great landowners invested directly in the cloth trade, other than by purchasing fulling mills, but it is reasonable to infer that they encouraged the trade by granting entrepreneurs and productive workers leaseholds in their manors. In return they could expect improved and reliable rental income from their landholdings, enhanced fees from their courts and markets and – for those lords who kept their demesnes in hand – increased revenues from food produce and the annual wool clip.

Magnates with influence over the royal forests in west Wiltshire were particularly well-placed to profit from commercial growth. As Buchanan Sharp records, Sir Henry Bayntun was accused in 1606 of permitting twenty new cottages to be unlawfully erected near Chippenham, in Blackmore Forest. Five years later an Exchequer commission discovered that over 200 cottages had been built on royal demesne near Chippenham and Melksham. At Seend, Sir Francis Fane received annual rents of £21 13s 10d from just nine cottages. A decade later Thomas Thynne and Edmund Leversage were prosecuted for erecting sixty new cottages in Selwood Forest, between Warminster and Frome.¹⁴⁹

James Ley's activities, and those of his clients and neighbours, provide a similar insight into the commercial activity of the west Wiltshire gentry. In 1604, shortly before leaving for Ireland, Ley negotiated an agreement with Edmund Lambert's tenants for enclosing the Northwood at Keevil, and dividing it into separate pastures.¹⁵⁰ Demand for pasture was strong in this area. That same year John Greenhill, who in 1601 had bought the manor house and farm of Steeple Ashton from William Paulet, 4th Marquess of Winchester, was sued by the customary tenants for enclosing part of the common pastures without their consent. They alleged that if he succeeded in denying their grazing rights, his lands would be worth £100 more per year. Greenhill retorted that many of the tenants had improved their own lands by making enclosures in order to winter many more 'cattle' (sheep), and a

¹⁴⁹ Sharp *In Contempt* 161-3.

¹⁵⁰ WRO 288/1, courts held 7 September and 31 October 1604 and 14 March 1605.

witness on his behalf claimed that as much as 500 acres of arable had been enclosed within the past fifty years.¹⁵¹

As already noted, Ley's holdings in Westbury included several bought from the clothier branches of the Long family. To understand the commercial dynamics of this period, it is worth considering in some detail why they should have wanted to sell to him, and whether their decision was influenced by fears for the future of the cloth trade, as might be supposed from the conventional narrative of decline. The first major transaction took place in 1613, when Edward Long of Monkton agreed to sell Ley the manor of Westbury Arundell with its mill, which he had inherited from his uncle, Thomas Long of Trowbridge.¹⁵² This was when Alderman Cockayne was pushing his project forward, but it seems likely that any concerns Edward Long had about the short-term prospects for the cloth market were less pressing than family worries. In 1610 his elder brother, the clothier Henry Long of Whaddon, had died,¹⁵³ followed in 1612 by his lawyer son Henry Long of Southwick,¹⁵⁴ leaving large debts, his widow Rebecca and eight children.¹⁵⁵ In his late sixties, Edward faced a predicament in which he may have sought Ley's support as attorney at the Court of Wards, and gained it by the sale of the Westbury manor.

Other transactions followed, deepening and strengthening the relationship between the Longs and Ley. In 1616, the widowed Rebecca married Ley's protégé at the Court of Wards, Henry Sherfield of Winterbourne Earls near Salisbury, a lawyer who also grew woad and madder for cloth dyeing.¹⁵⁶ By 1618 William Long of Beckington had sold his father's mansion house to James Ley,¹⁵⁷ and moved to Stratton-on-the-Fosse in the Mendips north of Shepton Mallet,¹⁵⁸ a manor first purchased by his great-uncle Robert Long, Mercer.¹⁵⁹ William Long also sold Ley fulling mills at Beckington, Lullington and Netherton.¹⁶⁰ Ley's influence in the whole area between Westbury and Beckington became comparable to that of the Thynnes between Warminster and Frome.

¹⁵¹ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Steeple Ashton: Economic History'.

¹⁵² *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Westbury: Manors'. Thomas Long had purchased these lands in 1550.

¹⁵³ TNA PROB 11/117/405.

¹⁵⁴ TNA 11/119/630.

¹⁵⁵ WRO 947/1673/1; Lancaster & Healy 'Sir Walter Long' (which states incorrectly that his widow Rebecca was the daughter of Christopher Baylie; see Pedigree).

¹⁵⁶ Slack, P 'Henry Sherfield (1572-1634)' *ODNB*.

¹⁵⁷ Possibly as early as 1614 or 1615 : HRO 44M69/L40/16; WRO 967/14.

¹⁵⁸ Wroughton, J 'Lislebone Long (1613-1659)' *ODNB*.

¹⁵⁹ *L&P HVIII* vol 20.2, Grant of September 1545.

¹⁶⁰ Fry & Fry *Wiltshire IPMs* 234 .

Ley was certainly advancing, but the Longs' retreat was to some extent strategic. William Long's move to Stratton coincided with rising demand for the dyed cloth made nearby, where Shepton Mallet had emerged as a centre of production. This business required large quantities of fuel to heat the dye vats; Long's property in Stratton included coal mines that could supply that need.¹⁶¹ For his part, Edward Long had mixed landownership with trade throughout his life. As already noted, he had married a Brounker and established his son Gifford on an estate at Rood Ashton,¹⁶² but had maintained strong contacts in the cloth trade. Gifford had married a clothier's daughter, Anne Yew of Bradford,¹⁶³ and their son Edward married a daughter of the London merchant Isaac Jones:¹⁶⁴ a substantial businessman, whose exports would rise from 912 cloths in 1614 to 1,819 in 1620.¹⁶⁵ Thus the exit of these two branches of the Long family from cloth production at this time appears to have been precipitated not by fear of a trade downturn but by untimely deaths, and conducted in a way that gained the family influence without sacrificing their interests as coal-producers, wool-growers and landlords. Edward Long sold his Westbury manor and fulling mill in 1613 at a peak of the market, when he may have anticipated a squall over Cockayne, but not a long-term decline. In Devizes a new Wool Hall was built in 1615,¹⁶⁶ at the height of the Cockayne crisis: few then feared for the long-term health of the trade and none could foresee the crash of 1620.

With the Longs and Hortons both out of manufacturing by the second decade of the seventeenth century, a new group of clothiers including their Yerbury kinsmen succeeded them as the leading clothiers of west Wiltshire. The conventional narrative for the next three decades has been of decline throughout the region, reflecting the steady fall in export sales of white broadcloth, relieved only by the success of Spanish cloths and the competition they generated. Ramsay characterised the Wiltshire clothiers as deeply conservative, men who would change their ways 'only when...driven to desert the traditional broadcloth and to experiment with new types of cloth.'¹⁶⁷ Yet the activity of the Webb family of Beckington and their kinsmen at Kingswood and at Bromham gives strong grounds for modifying this narrative. As noted in Chapter 3.2, the Webbs were already

¹⁶¹ Underdown, D *Somerset in the Civil War and Interregnum* (Newton Abbot, 1973) 14 says this was one of the larger enterprises in the Mendips.

¹⁶² Lancaster, H 'Gifford Long (1576-1635)' *HoP* 1604-29.

¹⁶³ *ibid.* In 1592 her father John Yew was a partner of the clothier Richard Horne at the Trowle fulling mill at Bradford: Fry & Fry *Wiltshire IPMs* 169.

¹⁶⁴ WRO 947/905.

¹⁶⁵ Friis *Cockayne's Project* 96.

¹⁶⁶ *VCH Wilts* vol 10 'Devizes: Trade and Industry: Municipal Buildings'.

¹⁶⁷ Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* 99.

prominent well before James' reign; and from the start of the seventeenth century they were producing not only white broadcloth but new types of coloured cloth.

In 1685, John Aubrey jotted down *A Digression from Samuel Ashe of Langley Burrell Esq and James Ashe the son of John Ashe*, in which his informants acknowledged that 'Benedict Webb of [Taunton in] Somersetshire was the first that made medley cloths: before they were [only] blue, green etc (coloured cloths). Mr John Ashe of Freshford was the second that made medleys, who improved the art and got a great estate by it tempore Caroli primi.'¹⁶⁸ As Esther Moir first revealed, Benedict Webb was an exceptional entrepreneur, the son of a Kingswood clothier.¹⁶⁹ Apprenticed to a London linen draper, Webb was a factor in Rouen and Paris during the 1580s and made a close study of French cloth, which he thought 'far more curious and better than ours.'¹⁷⁰ Back in England by 1589 he married the daughter of a Taunton merchant¹⁷¹ and experimented there with the production of two types of dyed and finished cloth. One was a thin but hard-wearing 'perpetuana' or serge, usually dark blue. The other was a smooth, light-weight medley broadcloth in 'divers and sundry colours',¹⁷² which Webb created not by a combination of dyes but by blending dyed wool of different colours before spinning.¹⁷³ Well before the Cockayne project Webb's medley broadcloths were sold in Cheapside by the Mercer William Stone, who named them Spanish cloths.¹⁷⁴

Moir noted that Webb had a brother named Robert, but did not identify him as the clothier Robert Webb of Beckington,¹⁷⁵ nor did she note that the Berkeley steward, John Smyth of Nibley married their niece Mary Browning,¹⁷⁶ or that Benedict's granddaughter Elizabeth Joliffe later married the merchant Edward Ashe, brother of John Ashe of Freshford.¹⁷⁷ These

¹⁶⁸ Moir 'Benedict Webb' 256, citing Bodleian Library MS Aubrey 2 f 144. I have added the words in square brackets for clarification.

¹⁶⁹ Moir 'Benedict Webb' 256.

¹⁷⁰ Moir 'Benedict Webb' 256-7.

¹⁷¹ Thomas Trowbridge: Crisp, *FA Abstracts of Somersetshire Wills* (London, 1887-90) vol 1, 23.

¹⁷² Moir 'Benedict Webb' 257. For the identification of perpetuana as serge see Kerridge *Textile Manufactures* 118 and *OED*.

¹⁷³ Mann *Cloth Industry* xv.

¹⁷⁴ *ibid* xvii. Stone died in 1607: TNA PROB 11/110/269. The name 'Spanish cloths' has caused confusion because of the widespread assumption that they were always made with Spanish wool. This is incorrect, as both Ramsay and Mann point out: Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industries* 104, Mann *Cloth Industry* xiv-xvii. While Spanish wool was used in Somerset from c1606 and certainly imported in increasing quantities by the mid-seventeenth century, the name 'Spanish cloth' may at first have described not the wool used but the colour, quality and lightness of the cloth.

¹⁷⁵ This identification can be made from a 1597 document cited by Moir: TNA C 3/294/81.

¹⁷⁶ Warmington 'John Smyth'. Mary Browning's mother was Christian Webb, sister of Robert and Benedict: *Vis Gloucs* 1623 32.

¹⁷⁷ *Vis Staffs* 1614 145.

connections, however, highlight the importance of kinship to the way Webb's innovations spread south and east into the Frome valley and west Wiltshire. Geological factors may also have been relevant. The chalk downs of Wiltshire produced a harder water than the springs flowing from the limestone Mendips and Cotswolds, and the presence of chalk made it difficult to achieve an even colour in Wiltshire unless the water used for dyeing had first been boiled.¹⁷⁸ This may partly explain why Webb's innovations spread more quickly to the clothiers of the Frome, which rises in the Mendips, than to those of the Semington Brook, flowing from the chalk of Salisbury Plain.

When Robert Webb died in 1611, leaving an infant grandson as his only male heir,¹⁷⁹ his manor of Beckington with its mills there and at Lullington had already been leased to his nephew John Smyth of Nibley, who had married into the Webb family earlier the same year.¹⁸⁰ An extensive kinship group now linked the Webbs of Kingswood and Beckington not only with Smyth and the Berkeleys but also with another clothier branch of the Webb family in Edward Bayntun's manor of Bromham, with John Yerbury of Atworth,¹⁸¹ and with two important clothiers beyond the Salisbury Plain, Christopher Potticary of Stockton and John Bennet of Smallbrook, both in the Wylve Valley.¹⁸² All of these clothiers were probably marketing locally dyed cloth even before the Cockayne Project. Eric Kerridge concluded that Christopher Potticary was making coloured cloth at Stockton as early as 1614,¹⁸³ although this was probably 'say-dyed' (white broadcloth dyed after being fulled), not woven from pre-dyed wool.¹⁸⁴

The scale and extent of this commercial kinship was even greater than that of the Horton-Long-Yerbury network described in Chapter 3.2, and brought these Wiltshire clothiers into

¹⁷⁸ Mann *Cloth Industry* 10, citing Beckinsale, RP 'A Geographical Survey of the Textile Industries of Western England' unpublished PhD thesis (University of Oxford, 1949). Another factor may have been the difficulty of cleaning white cloths thoroughly before dyeing. Stephen Whitakers' mill was said to have been better for scouring than most, 'having a clear course from the spring head': Willoughby, RWH 'Watermills in West Wiltshire' *WAM* 64 (1969) 78. This may refer to Leigh Mill at Westbury Leigh rather than to Bitham mill at Bitham in Westbury, as suggested by Willoughby.

¹⁷⁹ TNA WARD 7/46/59.

¹⁸⁰ *Vis Gloucs* 1623 32.

¹⁸¹ Yerbury's wife was Joan Browning of Coaley, an aunt of John Smyth's second wife: *Vis Gloucs* 1623 32.

¹⁸² In 1612 Joan, daughter of William Webb of Bromham, married a son of John Bennet of Smallbrook. The trustees of her marriage settlement were Christopher Potticary, John Bennet, a Robert Webb of Chippenham and William Webb of Bromham: WRO 906/C.11.

¹⁸³ Kerridge *Textile Manufactures* 33.

¹⁸⁴ Many others may also have dyed some cloths for domestic sale both in London and Wiltshire. The 1552 *Act for the Making of Woollen Cloths*: 5^o & 6^o Edward VI c 6 makes clear that Wiltshire had long produced red and pale blue (plunket or azure) cloths. In 1584 Henry Long of Whaddon bought black and russet (puke) cloths for his father-in-law's funeral, perhaps dyed locally: WRO 947/1907.

commercial partnership with the magnate wool-growing and colonising interests discussed in the previous section of this chapter. By 1610 John Smyth was a Middle Temple lawyer, who by his own account spent six months of every year in London. Through his involvement with the Webbs he became an influential figure not only for the clothiers of Berkeley hundred but for those of the Avon Vales and Wylve, including tenants of the Bayntuns of Bromham and the Lamberts of Keevil – whose principal seat at Boyton was only two miles from the Potticarys at Stockton, and who also owned the Gloucestershire manor of Woodmancote, just across the valley from Smyth's at North Nibley.¹⁸⁵

With Webb's relatives active in the cloth business across south Gloucestershire and north and west Wiltshire, it was inevitable that by 1620 many others knew of his Spanish cloths and serges and sought to replicate them. It is likely, therefore, that the Somerset clothier Henry Davison, who had bought the Freshford mill from John Langford in 1612,¹⁸⁶ was aware of Webb's innovations, and it may have been his initiative that brought John Ashe to Freshford as his son-in-law and eventual successor.¹⁸⁷ Ashe's connections were with a different area from Webb's – the southern slopes of the Somerset Mendips – where there was a long tradition of making coloured cloth. He was brought up at Westcombe, southwest of Frome, where his father James was probably tenant of a fulling mill on the River Alham.¹⁸⁸ The Ashe family had been manufacturing a dyed blue cloth for some generations. As early as 1539, a Thomas Ashe of Batcombe (of which Westcombe was a tithing) had bought Toulouse woad from the Bristol merchant John Smythe, and supplied him with 'penny hews' at £3 10s per cloth.¹⁸⁹ James Ashe certainly made coloured cloth at Westcombe: in 1610 he ordered 12 cwt of woad from Henry Sherfield.¹⁹⁰ The Ashes would have been well aware of developments along the Frome.

Thus John Ashe's marriage to Elizabeth Davison in 1621 merged the dyeing techniques of the Batcombe clothiers with the weaving and fulling assets of the Frome valley. There were other advantages on both sides. Through Elizabeth's brother Henry Davison, Ashe became kin to several prominent west Wiltshire clothiers, including Henry Chivers of Quemerford

¹⁸⁵ Most of the Lambert lands in Woodmancote were sold c1610: Smith, J *The Lives of the Berkeleys* ed McLain, J, vol 3 (Gloucester, 1885) 388.

¹⁸⁶ Rogers *Woollen Mills* 195.

¹⁸⁷ Wroughton *John Ashe (1597-1659)*.

¹⁸⁸ Bodman, M. 'Mills along the Alham' *Somerset Industrial Archaeological Society Bulletin* 86 (2001) 16-25.

¹⁸⁹ Vanes, J *The Ledger of John Smythe, 1538-1550* BRS 28 (Bristol, 1974) 70-1.

¹⁹⁰ Bettey, JH *Wiltshire Farming in the Seventeenth Century* WRS 57 (Devizes, 2005) 283-4.

near Calne, John Wallis of Trowbridge and Thomas Hulbert of Corsham.¹⁹¹ John Ashe's brother Edward was already in London, an apprentice Draper who became free in 1624 and soon took on apprentices of his own.¹⁹² This gave John Ashe and his clothier allies direct access to both the domestic and overseas markets. Within six years of his marriage, in 1627, he bought the freehold of the Freshford Mill from his father-in-law.¹⁹³ Demand for Spanish cloths grew rapidly, though it must have taken some time to develop a successful range of colours and train dyers, spinners and weavers to produce them. The surviving ledger of Ashe's father, James Ashe of Westcombe, records that in 1628 the majority of the Spanish cloths he sent to London were white; but by 1631 most were in colours described as mussel, wheat, peach, columbine (dove grey), blackberry and beaver, and produced by about twenty different suppliers.¹⁹⁴ Barry Supple calculated that James Ashe despatched about £3,000 worth of Spanish cloth to London each year during the 1630s.¹⁹⁵

In Kingswood, meanwhile, Benedict Webb had run into difficulties. In 1610 he had made a contract to supply the London Draper George Mynne with 400 medley cloths each year. The contract was breached, then renewed in 1613 for a further seven years; but by then Webb was in fierce dispute with Mynne about the number of cloths he had rejected.¹⁹⁶ Webb had also embarked on large-scale production of rapeseed oil as a substitute for imported olive oil, growing the rape himself on land in the Forest of Dean, and had borrowed heavily from John Smyth of Nibley.¹⁹⁷ Webb and his creditors became increasingly overstretched, and by 1633 John Ashe had plainly outstripped them. That year Robert Webb's grandson and heir finally came into his estate at Beckington and in November sold it to John Ashe, together with the mills, for the large sum of £7,550.¹⁹⁸ This may have occurred soon after the death of Benjamin Webb of Kingswood,¹⁹⁹ and constituted a major advance for Ashe.

It is in this dynamic and competitive context that wrangling between merchants, clothiers and yarn-makers during the 1630s, described by Ramsay in the context of decline and stagnation, can best be understood. There had indeed been a decline after commercial crisis struck the London merchants in 1620. The slump in demand for white cloth had soon

¹⁹¹ *Vis Wilts* p 37. Henry Davison married Henry Chivers' sister Ann.

¹⁹² Records of London's Livery Companies Online.

¹⁹³ Rogers *Woollen Mills* 195.

¹⁹⁴ TNA C 107/20.

¹⁹⁵ Supple *Commercial Crisis* 151n.

¹⁹⁶ Moir 'Benedict Webb' 259.

¹⁹⁷ *ibid* 262-3.

¹⁹⁸ GRO D2700/NR/12/2.

¹⁹⁹ Benedict Webb is last heard of in the summer of 1631, still struggling with debt: GRO 12960/1.

been felt by clothiers north of Devizes, who cut their outgoings by ceasing to commission new cloth. In 1622 a petition to the justices at Quarter Sessions ‘by 800 persons and upwards’²⁰⁰ in Bayntun’s home parish of Bromham claimed that forty-four looms which had been working within the previous six months and employing some twenty people each ‘in weaving and spinning and spooling and other works’ now stood idle. Those who lacked work were now ‘miserably distressed and likely to perish if relief be not ministered.’ A similar petition from Rowde was addressed specifically to the local JPs Henry Bayntun and Robert Drew, a Devizes lawyer and kinsman of Thomas Lambert.²⁰¹ These men could scarcely have been unaware of the suffering – and the potential for unrest – on their doorsteps. No doubt they reminded the clothiers of their responsibilities; but early the next year a new petition to the justices claimed that ‘the clothiers at their will have made their works extreme hard, and abated wages what they please, and some of them make such their workfolks to do their household businesses, to trudge their errands, spool their chains, twist their list [selvage yarn], do every command without giving them food, drink or money for many days labour.’ And all this during a ‘great dearth of corn.’²⁰² This petition was minuted and signed by some of the leading gentry of the county, including Edward Bayntun, Laurence Hyde and Walter Long, and included in a report to the Privy Council.²⁰³

Within a year or two, a recovery in the market had brought many of these workers back into employment and exports rose strongly from 1625 onwards. The common interest between the justices and clothiers was restored. But their alliance was threatened at the end of the decade when the Flanders market was closed,²⁰⁴ and again during a controversy sparked by the royal commissioner Anthony Wither, who investigated the western cloth producers in 1631 at the behest of the Merchant Adventurers.²⁰⁵ His conclusions – supported by leading clothiers of the Wylde Valley and Westbury including Christopher Potticary, William and Christopher Brewer, William Adlam of Crockerton and William Whitaker of Westbury²⁰⁶ – were that the statutes were not being properly enforced: an implicit criticism of the local justices, who were responsible for appointing local searchers but in practice left much of the responsibility for quality control in the hands of the

²⁰⁰ WRO A1/110/1622/Easter f 250.

²⁰¹ WRO A1/110/1622/Easter f 249.

²⁰² WRO A1/110/1623/Easter f 243.

²⁰³ I am grateful to Richard Hoyle for an image of this document and a draft article on Stuart petitions in which it is discussed.

²⁰⁴ *Supple Commercial Crisis* 116.

²⁰⁵ This paragraph is based on the account in Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* 91-7.

²⁰⁶ TNA SP 16/408/24.

established clothiers,²⁰⁷ and did little to monitor their emerging rivals. In April 1632 Wither accused Edward Bayntun of impeding his enquiries and even of complicity in an assault by servants of Thomas Horne (a kinsman of Walter Long),²⁰⁸ during which Wither was thrown into the Avon and feared for his life.²⁰⁹ Wither also accused Thomas Hulbert of Corsham, kinsman of John Ashe and a close friend of Edward Hungerford,²¹⁰ of involvement in this outrage.²¹¹

Other criticisms levied by Wither and supported by his clothier allies was that quality was being undermined by the abuses of lesser clothiers who sought to pass off 'bad and slight cloths...at great prices by weaving into them the mark of these best reputed and known clothiers,' and by using poor quality yarn, much of which was probably dyed. They alleged that two-thirds of the yarn used in cloth was now made by 'market spinners' who adulterated the yarn by mixing wools of differing quality: a bundle of yarn weighing thirty pounds could contain wool from as many as eighty different suppliers.²¹² A brief entry in the Privy Council register for July 1633 notes that the JPs dismissed this allegation as having little merit: 'the market spinner spins not the false yarn, but the poorer sort of people who spin wool in their own houses...if the clothier be pressed to make good cloth, according to the law, he will forbear to buy false yarn.'²¹³ A complaint that the market spinners were inflating the price of yarn, and thus forcing clothiers to compromise on quality, was similarly dispatched: the justices considered that the 'white' clothiers who employed their own wool-sorters and spinners were simply trying to keep prices down and objected to others paying more in the market for coloured yarn dyed in the wool.²¹⁴

Little seems to have changed as a result of Wither's well-documented commission, but the picture of the Wiltshire manufactory that emerges from it does not support Ramsay's view of the large clothiers as defensive and reactive. On the contrary, it suggests a buoyant market in which many west Wiltshire clothiers had responded quickly to the demand for coloured cloth. In just fifteen years from the Cockayne experiment, when it was claimed

²⁰⁷ Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* 93.

²⁰⁸ Long's aunt Mary Horne was mentioned in his grandfather Henry's will: TNA PROB 11/117/405.

²⁰⁹ Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* 92.

²¹⁰ Monument to Hulbert and his brother, erected by Hungerford, in St Bartholomew's, Corsham.

²¹¹ TNA SP 16/216/33.

²¹² TNA SP 16/408/24. This undated document is held in a 1638 volume but appears to be earlier.

²¹³ TNA SP 16/243/23.

²¹⁴ Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* 91, 96-7. According to Mann 'Textile Industries: Cloth, 1550-1640', it was more difficult to spin dyed wool, which may partly explain the rise of specialist market spinners and their ability to charge higher prices.

that Wiltshire did not have the dyers and shearmen to supply finished cloths in volume,²¹⁵ the output of Spanish cloth and serge had expanded very dramatically if it could take up two-thirds of the yarn used in the county. Others still preferred say-dyeing because broadcloth produced in the traditional way could be sold either dyed or undyed. In 1631 Potticary told Secretary Nicholas that the Merchant Adventurers Hugh Perry and Richard Venn had continued to buy his white cloths even during the Flanders closure, and pointed out that he and six other white cloth producers were keeping 1,500 people in work.²¹⁶ Yet Potticary and his allies had improved their own dyeing techniques,²¹⁷ and the quality and range of colours they could offer was evidently competitive. In 1634 Ashe accused them of passing off their products as Spanish cloth,²¹⁸ which would hardly have been possible otherwise.

Coloured cloth was being made at Bromham too, where the weavers had petitioned the justices in the early 1620s. A dyehouse was operating there soon afterwards, and the inventory of Nathaniel Davys of Bromham, dated 13 June 1628,²¹⁹ is one of the earliest for a dyer in this part of west Wiltshire. Davys's stocks included 17lb of list yarn at 5d per lb and 3lb of dyed list at 1s, so dyeing more than doubled the value of the yarn.²²⁰ The dye house gear included eight vats and tubs, two furnaces and a stack of wood worth £26 13s 4d, his most valuable asset by far – his 4 cwt of woad was worth only £3.10s. Davys's debtors, probably clothiers, included William Chivers, Eleazer Webb and William Wilkins. From the lack of any dyestuff other than woad it seems they were producing only blue cloths, perhaps say-dyed broadcloth for local sale or the serge for which Devizes would be known in the coming decades.²²¹

In the context of these developments it becomes easier to see why Edward Bayntun was so hostile to Anthony Wither, and why John Danvers and Francis Seymour rejected his attacks on the market spinners. The magnate justices were not prepared to see growth stifled just when the market had begun to recover. As wool-growers all three were well aware of trading conditions and they had their own commercial interests at stake: in 1634 Bayntun

²¹⁵ Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* 129.

²¹⁶ TNA SP 16/191 f 67.

²¹⁷ By 1640 they were dyeing the cloth before fulling, which improved the durability of the colour: *CSPD Charles I, 1640* 188-9, 240.

²¹⁸ *CSPD Charles I, 1634-5* 24.

²¹⁹ WRO P3/D/72.

²²⁰ The coarser list yarn was used for the longitudinal warp threads at the edges, or 'lists' of the cloth, which were sometimes decorated to distinguish the type of cloth: *CSPD Charles I, 1640* 188-9, 210.

²²¹ Mann *Textile Industries*.

was grazing a thousand sheep on a single tenement in Bishop's Cannings.²²² As committed free traders supporting the West Country ports they had no interest in advancing the cause of the protectionist Merchant Adventurers of London. The magnates' interests were fully aligned with those of their cloth-producing tenants, and by balancing the competing interests they would have encouraged economic growth.

Some of their peers among the gentry were feeling the pressure of Charles I's steady increases in taxation. During the 1630s, certainly, some were more extended financially than they had been for generations. Walter Long of Whaddon was obliged to spend the decade in Shropshire, on the estates of his second wife.²²³ In his absence, there was a major concentration of magnate landholding. In 1634 Frances Walsingham's third husband, the Earl of Clanricard, sold the hundred and manor of Bradford to John Paulet, 5th Marquess of Winchester,²²⁴ and John Danvers bought the hundred and manor of Melksham from his kinsman William Brounker.²²⁵ In 1639 and 1640 James Ley, 3rd Earl of Marlborough sold most of his Westbury estates to Henry Danvers, Lord Danby; and at Danby's death in 1644 they too passed to John Danvers, who thus became even more influential in the cloth district.²²⁶ This select group of magnates, like most of the west Wiltshire gentry, supported Parliament in the Civil War, and most of the wealthier clothiers took the same position. John Ashe, elected MP for Westbury in 1640, became a militant supporter of Parliament and in March 1643 attempted to send guns and ammunition to London with a consignment of cloth.²²⁷ A notable exception was Edward Yerbury of the Seymour manor of Trowbridge, who served as the King's commissioner in the first years of the war, though he later claimed to have been forced to do so.²²⁸ His son William attended Francis Seymour at the Treaty of Uxbridge.²²⁹

These were hard years for both sides. The price of English wool fell sharply in 1640: Thomas Webb of Devizes reported that wool was selling in Wiltshire for as little as 18-19s a tod and might fall as low as a mark,²³⁰ less than half its 1638 level of 28s a tod.²³¹ Yet production of Spanish cloth continued on a significant scale: as late as April and May 1643, only two

²²² *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Bishops Cannings: Agriculture'

²²³ Lancaster & Healy 'Walter Long'.

²²⁴ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Bradford-on-Avon: Manors'.

²²⁵ WRO 212B/4847; *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Melksham: Manors'; see Pedigree of Brounker.

²²⁶ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Westbury: Manors'.

²²⁷ Heylin, P *Mercuricus Aulicus* (Oxford, 1643-5) 137: 16 March 1643.

²²⁸ Rogers, KH *The Civil War in and around Trowbridge and Steeple Ashton* (Trowbridge, 2008) 21-2.

²²⁹ Birch, T *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe, Esq* (London, 1742) vol 1, 57.

²³⁰ Lindley, K *The English Civil War and Revolution: a Sourcebook* (London, 1998) 44.

²³¹ WRO P2/W/396 Inventory of Christopher Wilkins, tailor of Bulkington.

months before the Royalist victories at Devizes and Bath, James Ashe of Westcombe took delivery of £300 worth of Segovia wool.²³² Soon afterwards, Royalist forces blockaded London and carriers for the western clothiers were repeatedly plundered; roads and bridges were damaged.²³³ The levies of the opposing garrisons fell heavily on the west Wiltshire population, and provoked resistance at Market Lavington in 1645. The houses of Edward Bayntun at Bromham and Bremhill, of Robert Drew at Southbroom,²³⁴ and of John Duckett at Calstone²³⁵ were all destroyed by Royalists during the war, and Longleat was raided on the orders of Edward Hungerford.²³⁶ Recovery was delayed by a poor harvest in 1646, followed by worse from 1647 to 1649, when sales of barley, malt and corn had to be regulated throughout the county.²³⁷ There can be little doubt that the people of west Wiltshire suffered severely during the decade.

Nonetheless, in terms of enduring social change it is hard to resist the conclusion that the greatest clothiers made significant advances in wealth and social status in the first half of the seventeenth century, as did the greatest magnates. Rather than struggling in the 'slow, irregular but inexorable decline [of the old draperies], punctuated at frequent intervals by savage depressions,'²³⁸ they were quick to profit from the demand for coloured cloth. Only a handful of leading clothiers left the trade: in 1650 many were direct successors of their forebears of the 1550s, operating from the same fulling mills. Those like Gifford Long of Rood Ashton, who did follow the Baylies, Hortons and Langfords out of manufacturing to concentrate on wool-growing and estate management may have benefited from their decision for a decade or more, until the 1640s brought commercial disruption and low wool prices. But the Yerburies and Ashes could thrive because of the speed of their response to changing market conditions, and the growth of the domestic market.

As with the dramatic surge in output of the 1540s discussed in Chapter 2.2, the driving force for change in the 1620s had come from men with very close contact with their customers, both in London and overseas, who married for commercial advantage, to secure long-term business relationships. Benedict Webb had married a merchant's daughter and

²³² TNA C 107/20.

²³³ Coates, B *The Impact of the Civil War on the Economy of London, 1642-50* (Aldershot, 2004) 110-7.

²³⁴ *VCH Wilts* vol 10 'The Borough of Devizes: Lesser Estates'.

²³⁵ *VCH Wilts* vol 5 'Parliamentary History'; Lancaster, H & Hunneyball, P 'John Duckett (c1580-1648)' *HoP* 1604-29.

²³⁶ Longleat House TH/VOL/LXXVII ff 58, 60.

²³⁷ Cooper, JP 'Social and Economic Policies under the Commonwealth' in Aylmer, JE (ed) *The Interregnum: The Quest for Settlement, 1646-1660* (London, 1972) 126.

²³⁸ *Clay Economic Expansion* vol 2, 121.

been a merchant in his own right, dealing mainly with France: during a trading impasse in 1606 he had been sent to Rouen by Robert Cecil to negotiate with the authorities there on behalf of the English merchants.²³⁹ His daughter Agnes married William Joliffe, a wool-merchant from Leek in Staffordshire, who in 1628 was with John Smyth of Nibley (Webb's nephew-in-law) a guarantor of Benedict's debts.²⁴⁰ In 1643 Edward Ashe married Joliffe's daughter Elizabeth; in 1647 and 1648 Joliffe sold Edward large quantities of wool for onward shipment to John Ashe in Beckington.²⁴¹

John Ashe himself secured his fulling mill by marriage, and through his brothers had an exceptional degree of contact with his customers: by 1630, Edward had been joined in business by their younger brother Jonathan, who traded with Paris and Antwerp as well as with London retailers, and imported oil and dyestuffs.²⁴² Surviving ledgers give detailed insight into their activities. From Somerset cloth was dispatched by carrier not only to London but to merchants in Blandford Forum, Salisbury, Dorchester and Bristol;²⁴³ in London Edward Ashe recorded deliveries from Freshford at the rate of two or even three per month.²⁴⁴ Edward's journals also record cash payments on behalf of Paul Methuen of Bradford, whom Aubrey would describe later as 'the greatest clothier of his time.'²⁴⁵ In the two years 1641-3 Methuen dispatched as many as 1,400 cloths to London, worth an estimated £26,000 at an average sale price of over £18.²⁴⁶ In the late 1640s he married John Ashe's daughter Grace.²⁴⁷

By Edward's marriage to Elizabeth Joliffe, John Ashe became a kinsman of his oldest and most successful rivals: not only of the Webbs but of their kinsmen the Yerburys, a relationship he acknowledged after the Civil War when interceding on behalf of the Royalist Edward Yerbury of Trowbridge.²⁴⁸ The Ashes and Yerburys became the pre-eminent figures of their generation in west Wiltshire. While the Trowbridge branch of Yerburys had ceased making cloth following two deaths in 1609 and 1611,²⁴⁹ the Bradford branch descending from Webb's kinsman John Yerbury of Atworth were still in business there and at

²³⁹ Moir 'Benedict Webb' 261.

²⁴⁰ GRO D9125/1/13881.

²⁴¹ TNA C 107/17.

²⁴² Wroughton 'John Ashe'.

²⁴³ TNA C 107/20.

²⁴⁴ TNA C 107/17.

²⁴⁵ Aubrey *Natural History* 113.

²⁴⁶ Rogers, KH 'Paul Methuen (1613-1667)' *ODNB*.

²⁴⁷ His first wife was Sarah Davison: Rogers 'Paul Methuen'.

²⁴⁸ Rogers *Civil War* 22.

²⁴⁹ Rogers *Book of Trowbridge* 45.

Bromham, Seend and Frome.²⁵⁰ But the Ashes were the most successful of all. In just three decades they had acquired substantial landed assets in west Wiltshire, including Wingfield manor and the Stowford fulling mills from the Baylie family,²⁵¹ Shaw House and farm at Melksham,²⁵² the manor of Fyfield, near Pewsey in the Marlborough Downs,²⁵³ and the old Hungerford manor of Heytesbury in the Wylve Valley.²⁵⁴

Like their predecessors of the Tudor era these early Stuart clothing magnates exploited the downturns to drive a hard bargain with the weavers and spinners they employed. In Seend during the lean years of the 1640s weavers were hungry even when they were in work.²⁵⁵ But the great clothiers cannot have been the only ones to benefit from making dyed cloth. Many must have shared in the benefits, because the manufacture of finished cloth – which sold at much higher prices than white broadcloth and kerseys²⁵⁶ – meant a greater share of cloth revenue flowed back into west Wiltshire and overall employment increased: in 1634 James and John Ashe assured the Privy Council that ‘by making [of Spanish cloth] the materials are improved to a higher value and more labour afforded poor people than by any other drapery ever invented.’²⁵⁷ Anthony Salerno has shown that surprisingly few cloth-workers chose emigration to the colonies as an escape from economic hardship, and virtually none from the Bromham area.²⁵⁸ In the next section of the chapter we will see how this revised narrative for early Stuart west Wiltshire, emphasising dynamism rather than decline, stands up to close examination of the single community of Bulkington, in the traditional white cloth area.

²⁵⁰ See Pedigree, and Chapter 5.3. TNA PROB 11/219/644 Thomas Yerbury of Bradford 1651; TNA PROB 11/210/166 William Yerbury of Bromham 1649; TNA PROB 11/196/526 William Wilkins of Seend 1646; TNA PROB 11/305/50 Richard Yerbury of Frome 1661.

²⁵¹ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 ‘Wingfield: Manors’. The conveyance excluded the mansion house at Wingfield.

²⁵² *VCH Wilts* vol 7 ‘Melksham: Manors’.

²⁵³ *VCH Wilts* vol 16 ‘Milton Lilbourne: Manors and Other Estates’.

²⁵⁴ Edward Ashe issued a lease there in 1651: WRO 101/122/1.

²⁵⁵ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 ‘Melksham: Trade and Industry’.

²⁵⁶ *Mann Cloth Industry* xv states that Spanish cloth sold at 26s to 28s per yard wholesale in the later 1630s, and that the retail price could be 30 per cent higher, at 35s per yard. In 1640 Jonathan Ashe gave Madame Moulart in Paris a credit of £169 15s 8d for six cloths returned, a wholesale price of about £28 6s per cloth: TNA C 107/20. But the price paid to the clothier was much lower. Edward Ashe paid Paul Methuen an average of £18 per cloth in 1641-3: Rogers ‘Paul Methuen’.

²⁵⁷ *CSPD Charles I, 1634-5* 24. Ashe’s claim is supported by Webb’s statement cited above that he took on 500 workers to make 400 cloths per year. Assuming an annual rate of production of about twenty broadcloths per loom, this suggests an average of twenty-five workers per loom, compared with the eighteen per loom employed for white broadcloth production at Bromham in 1622, where forty-four looms had supported 800 workers (see above).

²⁵⁸ Salerno, A ‘The Social Background of Seventeenth Century Emigration to America’ *Journal of British Studies* 19.1 (1979) 39. The situation in Essex appears to have been different, with many cloth-workers from Braintree and Bocking choosing to emigrate to New England. Emmison, FG *Early Essex Town Meetings* (Chichester, 1970) xii.

4 Lords and tenants of Bulkington vale

A court book for the Lambert manor of Keevil with Bulkington covering the period 1602-26 provides detailed evidence of social change in Bulkington during the first Stuart decades.²⁵⁹ Initiated by James Ley before he was sent to Ireland in 1604, and probably compiled by his deputy George Markes of Steeple Ashton, it is especially valuable in spanning two great crises in the cloth trade, from 1614 to 1616 and from 1620 to 1624, and in providing a benchmark against which other documents can be assessed. The Lambert manor at that time comprised nearly 40 per cent of the tithing, roughly the same as the manor of George Worthe, with the third manor of William Dodington a little over 20 per cent.²⁶⁰ The Lambert court book lists fifteen tenants in 1602; Dodington had nine in 1598; and while we have no contemporary data for Worthe, there had been fourteen tenants in 1564. Thus there were probably about forty tenants in Bulkington when James I came to the throne, suggesting a total population of about 200. Most tenants seem to have been farmers or labourers, with perhaps only one clothier and one fuller operating from the Bulkington mill, supported by their weavers and spinners.

Edmund Lambert was almost certainly not resident in Keevil, which perhaps became the home of his son Edward on his marriage to Dulsabelle Swayne of Tarrant Gunville, near Blandford Forum in Dorset, around 1608. Her father Richard Swayne was a Middle Temple barrister, and Recorder of Weymouth;²⁶¹ her grandfather John had made his fortune as a merchant in Blandford, shipping iron out of Poole to other south coast ports, and built up an estate of former monastic lands.²⁶² It is clear that Edmund, now in his fifties, was still deeply involved in the legal and commercial life of west Wiltshire and the West Country, both as a JP and as a landlord.²⁶³ In 1604 he headed a commission to survey the Crown estate of Steeple Ashton.²⁶⁴ The document settling a jointure estate on Edward and Dulsabelle in 1608 lists both Christopher and Jerome Potticary among Edmund's tenants at Boyton, with Jerome holding a watermill there.²⁶⁵ In the same year, John Smyth's survey of

²⁵⁹ WRO 288/1.

²⁶⁰ See Appendix 4.

²⁶¹ Hasler, PW 'Richard Swayne (c1566-c1636)' *HoP 1558-1603*.

²⁶² Tittler, R *Townspeople and Nation: English Urban Experiences, 1540-1640* (Stanford, 2001) 67.

²⁶³ Edmund Lambert and James Ley were both listed as justices in 1603: Merriman *Quarter Sessions WAM 21* (1883) 111.

²⁶⁴ WRO 947/1236.

²⁶⁵ TNA C 2/Jasl/L4/46.

the men of military age in Berkeley hundred showed that Lambert's manor of Woodmancote in Gloucestershire was mostly inhabited by cloth-makers, with no fewer than twenty-five weavers, ten fullers and four dyers in the tithing.²⁶⁶ The striking contrast between Woodmancote and Bulkington supports the notion that Bulkington's was primarily an agrarian economy, whose main asset was its pastures rather than a manufacturing workforce.

At Keevil, Lambert's policy was to exploit his demenses as intensively as possible, to enable more efficient use of the farmland, and to offer leaseholds for lives in place of copyholds for lives. On his behalf James Ley reached agreement in 1603 with the two freeholders and fifteen copyholders of Keevil who enjoyed the right to graze beasts in the Northwood each year from 15 April until St Thomas's Day (21 December). Each tenant received three acres of freehold land, with full rights to grub up the undergrowth and plant an enclosing hedge, in compensation for giving up grazing rights elsewhere. The lord of the manor took the rest, to be tenanted as he chose, and also retained ownership of all the trees of the Northwood.²⁶⁷ Leaseholds improved cash generation, at least in the short term, because the down payment on a lease could be significantly higher than the entry fine to a copyhold, although the annual rent might be the same. By 1612, when a list of manorial tenants was recorded on the inside cover and fly leaf of the court book, 28 leases had been granted, of which perhaps five at the most were in Bulkington.²⁶⁸

In 1609, with James Ley now a figure of national importance as Attorney of the Court of Wards, there was a significant change in Bulkington. Edmund Lambert died at Christmas 1608 and Giles Tooker of New Sarum was appointed steward of the Lambert manor. A Lincoln's Inn barrister with a reputation for 'hard dealing',²⁶⁹ Tooker also acquired Dodington's manor in Bulkington in 1609 for £440,²⁷⁰ aligning his interests closely with those of Edward and Dulsabelle Lambert. In 1611 however Edward died at Tarrant Gunville, leaving Dulsabelle as lady of the manor,²⁷¹ and the next year Tooker was elected Mayor of Salisbury.²⁷² George Markes resumed his role as steward, and in 1613 noted that the Bulkington tenants had agreed that 'the North Field be measured so that it may come to accompt for an inclosure to be had and to be equally and proportionably done by three

²⁶⁶ www.coaley.net/glos1608/index.php.

²⁶⁷ WRO 288/1, WRO 1976/4/63.

²⁶⁸ WRO 288/1.

²⁶⁹ Lancaster, H 'Giles Tooker (c1558-1623)' *HoP 1604-1629*.

²⁷⁰ WRO 1976/4/29.

²⁷¹ Fry & Fry *Wilts IPMs* 332.

²⁷² Lancaster 'Giles Tooker'.

measurers to be chosen one by each lord.²⁷³ Under Markes' stewardship, the Court Book records many surrenders and renewals of copyholds and especially of reversions in Bulkington, as a number of outsiders positioned themselves to acquire land held by widows or single women without named successors. There were frequent attendances by Richard Swayne himself and his nephew-in-law Hugh Grove,²⁷⁴ claiming reversions on behalf of the widowed Dulsabelle Lambert for her jointure lands and of her two infant daughters, the co-heirs to the Woodmancote manor. In 1618 Edward Lambert's brother Thomas Lambert – who had been educated at Oxford and the Middle Temple – inherited Boyton and the reversion of the Keevil manor, and began to take an active role.²⁷⁵

Thomas Lambert proved as vigorous as his father Edmund: he was a JP by 1625, and MP for Hindon in 1625 and 1626.²⁷⁶ He was also determined to develop the Keevil estate and in 1627, just two years after the trade depression ended, purchased the Tooker manor of Bulkington for £1,000: more than double what Giles Tooker had paid in 1609.²⁷⁷ The premium price was perhaps a measure of his ambition, but it also reflected the scale of entry fines that the Lamberts had begun to extract for new leases in Bulkington. In 1616, the widow Cecilia Harris and her son John surrendered their existing leasehold, sold half a virgate to a neighbour (perhaps her son-in-law) and paid the substantial fine of £170 to the Lady of the Manor for a new lease for three lives.²⁷⁸ This transaction was so exceptional at the time that its confirmation required a special session of the Court Baron: the only one held in twenty-five years without a corresponding session for Keevil. But the schedule of lands included in the new holding shows it was still made up of nearly thirty individual pieces of land, scattered throughout the three open fields of Bulkington.²⁷⁹ More value might be extracted if the tenants could be persuaded to enclose the North Field, the largest of the three, but this proposal had not yet succeeded, no doubt because of the obstacle presented by having to deal with three different landlords.

²⁷³ WRO 288/1, Bulkington homage April 1613.

²⁷⁴ Hugh Grove of Ferne, near Shaftesbury, was married to Richard Swayne's niece Eleanor: Hutchins, John *The History and Antiquities of the County of Dorset* (3rd edn, Westminster, 1861-70) vol 3, 453.

²⁷⁵ WRO 288/1. Thomas inherited the reversion after the death on 6 January 1618/9 of his mother Ann, née Jackman (memorial at Boyton church).

²⁷⁶ Lancaster, H & Thrush, A 'Thomas Lambert (1585-1638)' *HoP 1604-1629*.

²⁷⁷ WRO 1976/4/29.

²⁷⁸ WRO 288/1. This business was completed at the court of 20 December 1616.

²⁷⁹ *ibid.* A schedule of the moiety granted to Richard Mathew was recorded on 8 October 1616; the moiety retained by Cicely and John Harris on 20 December 1616.

While the Tooker manor, now with ten holdings, was already encumbered with eight long leases,²⁸⁰ Lambert was able to sell leases of two substantial enclosures;²⁸¹ but he seems to have over-extended himself over the next decade. In 1631 he recovered part of his investment by mortgaging the manor of Bulkington to William Whitaker of Shaftesbury, for £200,²⁸² and in 1637 granted a lease of two twenty-acre closes in Keevil for as much £650.²⁸³ But during the period of Charles I's Personal Rule Lambert's financial position weakened, as he entered into a series of bonds totalling more than £1,200, some in partnership with his brother-in-law William Dunche of Avebury and kinsman Ellis Swayne of Blandford, one with Christopher Potticary.²⁸⁴ After Thomas Lambert's death in 1638, the position deteriorated further, and in 1641 his successor Edmund Lambert II mortgaged the entire contents of Keevil Manor to two of his own tenants, Thomas Hancock of Keevil and John Gaysford of Bulkington.²⁸⁵ In 1643 Edmund was declared an outlaw in the City for failing to repay a debt and was obliged to take refuge in Rouen, where he requested mail to be sent in care of M. Biron, merchant.²⁸⁶ By December he was dead and an inventory was taken of his goods at Keevil.²⁸⁷ In 1648 a commission ordered by the solicitor general was sent there to assess his estate.²⁸⁸

The Lamberts' financial embarrassment may have been self-inflicted, but it was mirrored by the experience of George Worthe, lord of the other manor of Bulkington, who seems to have been in residence there through most of the early Stuart period. With just the one manor to his name, Worthe was less eminent than the Lamberts, but well-connected: his step-father Thomas Snell had served as a JP in 1604, when Edmund Lambert was also a justice.²⁸⁹ In the first decades of the century George Worthe developed a kinship network which suggests commercial interests spread right across the cloth centres of Wiltshire, Somerset and Gloucestershire. After the death in 1604 of his first wife Edith, a daughter of Christopher Baylie of Wingfield,²⁹⁰ he married the widow Anne Yerbury.²⁹¹ Anne was the

²⁸⁰ WRO 1976/4/29.

²⁸¹ WRO 1976/4/60.

²⁸² WRO 1976/1/1. Several times MP for Shaftesbury, William Whitaker was the grandson of the Westbury clothier, Stephen Whitaker (d 1576): Ferris, JP 'William Whitaker (c1580-1646)' *HoP* 1604-29.

²⁸³ WRO 288/3: lease to John Harris, 20 May 1637.

²⁸⁴ WRO 3535/2/2.

²⁸⁵ WRO 1976/4/28.

²⁸⁶ WRO 3535/2/2.

²⁸⁷ WRO 1976/1/8.

²⁸⁸ TNA E 134/23CHAS1/MICH3.

²⁸⁹ Merriman *Quarter Sessions WAM* 22 (1885) 218, 221.

²⁹⁰ *Vis Wilts* 1623 39.

daughter of Benjamin Cabell of Mells, near Frome in Somerset, and this marriage would have deepened any contact Worthe already had with the clothiers of eastern Somerset. A 1622 deed links George Worthe not only with Cabell, but also with Thomas Davison of Westcombe, clothier, probably a kinsman of the Henry Davison of Freshford who was just embarking on the production of Spanish cloths with his son-in-law John Ashe.²⁹² This association suggests that Worthe was supplying wool to the Batcombe clothiers, since there is no evidence of his involvement in cloth production at Bulkington or Keevil. Worthe was also connected with the clothmen and lawyers of Gloucestershire. His mother Elizabeth, who had been brought up at Tortworth and had clothier relatives there,²⁹³ was widowed again by 1607 when she gained probate of the will of her second husband Thomas Snell; he left his best gold brooch to her grandson Edward Worthe.²⁹⁴ Elizabeth, now probably in her sixties, may have helped find husbands for her Worthe granddaughters, since two of them married Gloucestershire men.

In 1611 Edward Worthe was admitted to the Inner Temple²⁹⁵ and his sister Elizabeth married Anthony Martyn, from a leading Steeple Ashton family of farmers and clothiers,²⁹⁶ whose younger brother Samuel would also become a lawyer, admitted to Barnard's Inn in 1620.²⁹⁷ Edward's younger sisters married lawyers and landowners from the Gloucestershire and Wiltshire gentry: men closely linked by these family and legal connections. In 1621 Anne became the second wife of William Sheppard of Horsley, near Stroud in Gloucestershire,²⁹⁸ whose father Philip was steward to Nathaniel Stephens, lord of the manor there and a JP who like Sir Edward Bayntun would be a determined opponent of the Withers Commission in the 1630s.²⁹⁹ The Sheppards were probably connections of Worthe's mother, since their families lived near each other. William had just commenced studies at Middle Temple at the unusually late age of twenty-five, and there he may have encountered Robert Nicholas of Roundway, close to Devizes, who was called to the bar at

²⁹¹ WRO 212/7/7. The date of the marriage was probably 1607, as this 1622 deed refers back to annuity of £40 payable from that year in lieu of dowry.

²⁹² See section 3 above.

²⁹³ *Vis Wilts 1623 39; Vic Gloucs 1623 25,150.*

²⁹⁴ TNA PROB 11/110/478.

²⁹⁵ Inner Temple Admissions Database.

²⁹⁶ WRO transcripts, Steeple Ashton. The marriage was celebrated at Wingfield, the bride's mother's parish. For Anthony Martin's immediate family see the will of his clothier father Anthony: TNA PROB 11/89/581.

²⁹⁷ Brooks, CW *The Admissions Registers of Barnard's Inn, 1620-1869* Selden Society 78 (London, 1995) xxx; WRO 1494/103.

²⁹⁸ Matthews, NL *William Sheppard, Cromwell's Law Reformer* (Cambridge, 1984) chapter 1 provides the fullest published account traced of the Sheppard family at this period.

²⁹⁹ Davidson, A & Coates, B 'Nathaniel Stephens (1589-1660)' *HoP 1604-1629*.

Inner Temple in 1621³⁰⁰ and married Margaret Worthe at Keevil in 1622.³⁰¹ A kinsman of the Worthe family, Nicholas had been admitted to Middle Temple in 1613,³⁰² before transferring to Inner Temple the following year with Edward Worthe as one of his bondsmen.³⁰³ Extending this legal network was George Worthe's most elevated connection, Charles Danvers of Baynton Manor, just three miles south of Bulkington. A grandson of Silvester Danvers whom Worthe's father had served in Dauntsey, Charles was a cousin of John Danvers and, from 1629, father-in-law of George Herbert.³⁰⁴ As a senior member of the Middle Temple and JP for Wiltshire Charles would certainly have been known to both Sheppard and Nicholas.³⁰⁵

Developing such connections was an expensive business for a man with five daughters. George Worthe may have had difficulty funding dowries for his younger daughters, since he borrowed against the future revenues of his estate. In May 1620, as the trade depression took hold, he settled his estate on Edward, his only son and heir apparent, in a deed which required Edward to pay his father £650 to provide £200 each for the portions of his three unmarried sisters and a further £50 for his step-sister Elizabeth Yerbury.³⁰⁶ But Edward died before this plan could be executed. Ownership of the estate reverted to George Worthe and in October 1620 he seems to have mortgaged it to Charles Danvers with the assistance of Samuel Martyn, now of Devizes.³⁰⁷ This transaction may have released the funds for the marriages of Anne to William Sheppard and Margaret to Robert Nicholas in 1621 and 1622 respectively, in the depths of the trading crisis.

In 1624 Worthe finalised the marriage of his youngest daughter Isabella to Francis Merewether of Market Lavington, from another long-established wool-growing family,³⁰⁸ by settling the entire estate of Bulkington except the manor house and demesne lands on Francis for £500 already paid, plus £540 to be shared between Worthe's sons-in-law and grandchildren; plus rent of £30 a year.³⁰⁹ Worthe may have used the down payment to

³⁰⁰ Orr, DA 'Robert Nicholas (1595-1667)' *ODNB*.

³⁰¹ WRO Keevil PR.

³⁰² Orr 'Robert Nicholas'.

³⁰³ Inner Temple Admissions Database.

³⁰⁴ MacNamara, FN *Memorials of the Danvers Family* (London, 1895) 534-5, 589.

³⁰⁵ Lancaster, H 'Charles Danvers (by 1580-1626)' *HoP 1604-29*.

³⁰⁶ WRO A1/200/1 m 32.

³⁰⁷ WRO 12/3: License to Alienate names Martyn and Edward Michell of Baynton as parties to this agreement, probably as attorneys for Worthe and Danvers respectively.

³⁰⁸ *VCH Wilts* vol 10 'Great Cheverell: Manors'. In 1614 Francis had inherited over 400 sheep from his brother Richard: WRO P2/M/252.

³⁰⁹ WRO 221A/27/7.

clear an obligation to his first wife's family: he was granted a quitclaim in 1626.³¹⁰ The secondary payments to be made by Merewether may have been intended to pacify Robert Nicholas, who had expected his own wife to be a co-heir to the Bulkington estate. By 1625 Nicholas had issued a writ in Star Chamber against George Worthe, accusing him of reneging on this commitment.³¹¹ If Nicholas's colleague and brother-in-law William Sheppard was also aggrieved, he found an effective solution when Francis Merewether died in 1627 after the birth of an only son.³¹² Within a year the young widow Isabella had remarried, this time to William's younger brother, Samuel Sheppard of Minchinhampton in Gloucestershire.³¹³ After Worthe's death in 1645,³¹⁴ therefore, Bulkington no longer had a resident lord.

Little evidence has been found to reveal Worthe's influence on his Bulkington tenants, but the indications are that he befriended some of his neighbours, serving as witness to their wills.³¹⁵ He was an active improver of his demesnes: Lambert's tenants presented several times that Worthe had enclosed common and waste land, and dug boundary ditches instead of planting hedges.³¹⁶ He seems to have supported Lambert's project of enclosure, since a lease by Edmund Lambert to Richard Long in 1641 referred to the exchange of the right to pasture eleven cows and a bull in Bulkington Leaze for a nine acre enclosure there;³¹⁷ the Leaze had formerly been held in common by tenants from both manors.³¹⁸ Like Edmund Lambert, Giles Tooker and Thomas Lambert, Worthe probably offered land to his more prosperous tenants on the rare occasions that leases fell in; but few tenants seem to have acquired land other than by custom of the manor: the Lambert tenants Richard Long, John Gaysford and Cecily Harris were exceptions.³¹⁹ By 1640 the opportunity to sell leases for high prices was largely over. Richard Long in 1641 paid only £100 for the property he had leased in 1598 for a £190 fine. This may reflect the weakness of Edmund Lambert's financial position: remarkably the new lease committed Lambert and his wife not to travel

³¹⁰ SRO DD\BR\lw/4.

³¹¹ TNA C 3/369/5.

³¹² WRO P2/M/323. Nicholas was a witness to Merewether's will.

³¹³ Matthews *William Sheppard* 13: Isabella married Samuel Sheppard at Horsley on 21 March 1628.

³¹⁴ WRO P2/W/483.

³¹⁵ P30/72 will of William Gaysford, Yeoman 1598; P2/H/268 will of William Harris of Bulkington, Yeoman 1610.

³¹⁶ WRO 288/1: September 1610, April 1616, October 1618, October 1624.

³¹⁷ WRO 1976/4/33.

³¹⁸ Worthe's tenants had common of pasture in 1564: TNA SP 15/12 ff 43-8.

³¹⁹ WRO 288/2: all three paid substantial sums to Lambert for leases to new grounds, but the fines for renewing existing copyholds were significantly lower.

above ten miles from their abode.³²⁰ It seems that the negotiating position of the tenants improved during the Personal Rule of the 1630s, while their lords' fortunes declined. In 1643 Edward Lambert died in debt; George Worthe in 1645 could only spare 10s for the poor of Bulkington and bequests of £5 or less to his daughters' children, though he insisted that at least £10 should be spent on his own funeral.³²¹

The most credible explanation for this shift in economic power is that the steady process of enclosure enabled tenants to increase the output from their lands without the need to acquire more, while benefitting from secure copyholds and long renewable leases. If this is the case, Bulkington had simply caught up with the situation in Steeple Ashton at the turn of the century, when John Greenhill's tenants had so sharply increased the value of their holdings.³²² From the evidence of their wills, Bulkington's tenant farmers produced four main staples: cows, pigs, sheep and grain, all of which would probably have been in growing demand during the 1630s as the cloth trade recovered, the population expanded locally and demand for cheese, bacon, beef and mutton increased. The indications are that the yeomen were generating a healthy surplus.

Bulkington vale has sometimes been portrayed as dairy country,³²³ but as Eric Kerridge first pointed out this was not dairy land in the early seventeenth century, but a mixed economy with cattle and sheep grazing together in the pastures and corn and barley grown in the open fields as well as beans for fodder and grass for hay and pasture.³²⁴ Almost every tenant had animals and the number was probably increasing with enclosure. Restrictions on the common pasture had meant that it was not possible for many tenants to keep enough kine to make cheese. Typically they were stinted to between four and six beasts for a yardland, which according to George Fussell was the minimum for making cheese for market.³²⁵ It is possible that some tenants with fewer cattle pooled resources, or hired

³²⁰ WRO 288.2

³²¹ WRO P2/W/483.

³²² See section 3 above.

³²³ Underwood *Revel* 7 treats the whole of northwest Wiltshire 'from Westbury across the plain to Chippenham, Calne and beyond' as 'the cheese country', overlooking the mixed farming area along the Corallian limestone ridge from Westbury to Hinton, which includes Steeple Ashton and Keevil.

³²⁴ Kerridge, EWJ 'The Agrarian Development of Wiltshire, 1540-1640' unpublished PhD thesis (University of London, 1951) 54 includes Bulkington and Keevil in 'an area of mixed farming the bounds of which were contracting as the cheese country took shape.'

³²⁵ Fussell, GE *The English Dairy Farmer 1500-1900* (London, 1966) 227, 282. One cow might yield about 6 pts of milk per day, enough to produce around 4 cwt of cheese over a season; but milk could not be kept long in warm weather, so several cows were needed to yield enough fresh milk for each batch of cheese-making.

pregnant animals for the milking season,³²⁶ but the evidence of Jacobean inventories suggests that only the larger tenants made significant quantities for sale. Richard Dalmer, with a hundred acres and eleven kine, had fifty cheeses on his rack in 1608.³²⁷ With mature cattle typically valued at about £2 per head, it is unsurprising that even some of the middling tenants kept only one or two, enough to produce milk and butter for the household, but not for a significant surplus.

John Harris, who in 1621 was already styled yeoman, had just one cow worth £2 in his inventory and no sheep; but he had four oxen and a plough to cultivate eleven and a half acres of wheat, nine of beans and three of meadow.³²⁸ We have to look to Roger Mathew, husbandman, to find a yardlander who fits the dairying profile: in 1611 his inventory included four kine and a weaning calf, five ewes and five hogs (young sheep), three pigs and 2 cwt of cheese. Mathew had only two acres of wheat, half an acre of barley, an acre of beans and three loads of hay – sufficient perhaps to have kept his animals going through the winter, but unlikely to have produced a marketable surplus of grain. His £35 in ready cash would most likely have come from the produce of his small mixed herd.³²⁹

As was seen in Keevil when the Northwood was enclosed, tenants in Bulkington were free to use their lands for arable or pasture as they preferred, and in this kind of farming even small parcels of land could be useful if carefully managed. In Bulkington hay meadows were especially valued, with numerous small enclosures created for this purpose beside the brooks.³³⁰ With a good supply of hay to supplement the beans, farmers could keep more animals over winter, while the fresh grass in spring meadows would bring the oxen back to good condition as well as bringing dairy cows back into milk and fattening young lambs. The land was productive and the tenants were well supplied with markets in Devizes, Lavington, and Warminster.³³¹ By spreading their risk across sheep, corn, dairy and poultry, or any combination that suited their holding, they could reduce their exposure to price fluctuations. So long as sufficient land could be held, the main determinants of which

³²⁶ A practice known as 'share milking': Wilson, AR *Forgotten Harvest: the Story of Cheesemaking in Wiltshire* (Calne, 1995) 53.

³²⁷ WRO P2/D/85.

³²⁸ WRO P2/H/350.

³²⁹ WRO P2/M/238.

³³⁰ Many such enclosures are shown in James Sartain's 1749 map of Keevil: WRO 1908/1.

³³¹ Aubrey *Natural History* 114-5.

families would prosper and which fall away would be, in Wrightson's words, 'the accidents of fertility and mortality, and differences of personality, aptitude and luck.'³³²

Some tenants relied on weaving to provide or supplement their income, but the evidence of wills suggests that in early Stuart Bulkington weavers were a minority of the inhabitants. They may not even have woven for the London market: in 1640 George Gaysford had only a narrow-loom in his workshop, along with twenty-five pounds of yarn, and four pounds of coarse yarn: enough to make a kersey but not a broadcloth. Yet his was a well-equipped shop: there were also three spinning wheels, a spooling-turn, two weigh-beams and a pair of shears, everything necessary to provide finished cloth to a local market. Gaysford also had four kine, two heifers and three yearlings, as well as two pigs, thirteen sheep and a mare, worth substantially more than his weaving implements and suggesting that cloth-making was not his primary activity.³³³ Of the other weavers identified in Bulkington in this period, two – John Flower in 1609 and Matthew Taylor in 1616 – had broadlooms,³³⁴ while Christopher Allway left a broadloom and a kersey loom.³³⁵ All these men belonged to established yardlander families and none seems likely to have been seriously affected by the Cockayne project in 1614 or the international trade down-turn of the 1620s.

The poor of Bulkington are not invisible in the court book. From the early 1600s there are occasional mentions of very small properties: John Prior, weaver, held a parcel at the lord's will just forty-eight feet long and twenty-eight feet wide, which was granted to his son at a yearly rent of 4d and a 10s fine.³³⁶ The Court Baron records a trickle of cottages built in Bulkington from 1611, when Thomas Harald was reported to have built on the lord's waste without the licence and four acres of land required by law;³³⁷ and the following year Thomas Phelps was ordered to evict one of his sub-tenants by Christmas.³³⁸ While the justices were required to prevent the building of new cottages without a licence, the evidence of the Lambert court baron suggests that the Bulkington tenants were far from hostile to an increase either in cottage building or sub-tenancy. In 1620, Richard Mathew was a juror at the Easter Quarter Sessions in Devizes when the Melksham Hundred Court presented to the justices that 'William Dalmer of Bulkington aforesaid weaver have taken in

³³² Wrightson *Earthly Necessities* 50.

³³³ WRO P2/G/290.

³³⁴ WRO P2/F/78 and P1/T/43.

³³⁵ WRO P2/A/53.

³³⁶ WRO 288/1: April 1610.

³³⁷ WRO 288/1: In September 1611 Thomas Harald built a cottage on the lord's waste, contravening *An Act against Erecting and Maintaining Cottages* 31^o Elizabeth c 7 (1588).

³³⁸ WRO 288/1: September 1611.

two inmates in his tenement in Bulkington.³³⁹ This fact had already been noted by the Court Baron in the hard year of 1615.³⁴⁰ Since William was either the son or a kinsman of Richard Dalmer, already noted as one of Bulkington's wealthiest tenants, the most likely conclusion is that neither court took action. The poor in Bulkington might be relatives of the better-off, or employees of the yardlanders or master weavers. No doubt there was a mixture of motives for providing them with homes – lodgers and cottagers might pay rent or provide labour – and the lord could afford to be tolerant, since the parish would ultimately be responsible for their support.³⁴¹ But the numbers were growing steadily. In 1624 alone six cottagers were presented for encroaching on the lord's waste.³⁴²

While the court book reveals more weavers (and by implication spinners) in Bulkington than have been identified through wills, it is probable that even by the first decades of the seventeenth century cloth-making in this area had become more concentrated in Seend, a mile or so to the north, where a riot broke out in 1614 when forty weavers tried to seize corn from the tithing man, John Sheppard.³⁴³ Keevil too was experiencing poverty, and was badly affected by the second trade crisis. In 1625 the justices gave permission for an almshouse at Keevil 'for poor people of the parish many of whom are now enforced to dwell in barns, outhouses and other unwholesome places and are often removed to their great discomfort.'³⁴⁴ At Devizes in 1626 the Common Council released £20 to the governor of the house of correction to provide work for the unemployed spinners of the borough, many of whom 'wander up and down begging in both town and country.'³⁴⁵ However, it appears that in Bulkington, the worst problems may have been contained by a combination of tolerance, charity and the mixed economy. In terms of mortality, at least, the years with the highest death rates were in 1609-10, and not as might be expected during the 1620s.³⁴⁶

Only one clothier, Richard Mathew, has been identified in Bulkington during the early Stuart era,³⁴⁷ though the 'fuller' Robert Collins may also have traded:³⁴⁸ his father George

³³⁹ WRO A1/110/1620 Easter.

³⁴⁰ WRO 288/1: October 1615.

³⁴¹ Dyer *Poverty and Its Relief* 75-8.

³⁴² WRO 288/1: October 1615. The offenders included Cicily Harold, widow of Thomas, presented for building without permission in 1611.

³⁴³ Bradby *Seend* 74.

³⁴⁴ Richardson 'Annals' 277. An almshouse with two chimneys is noted in the 1673 Hearth Tax exemptions for Keevil tithing: TNA E 179/348.

³⁴⁵ Cunnington *Annals of Devizes* 81.

³⁴⁶ WRO Keevil PR. Average burials for 1609-10 were eight per year, compared with an overall average of three for the early Stuart period.

³⁴⁷ WRO 1976/4/60.

³⁴⁸ *ibid.*

Collins of Seend had acquired the Bulkington fulling mill by 1604,³⁴⁹ and seems also to have held Baldham Mill, a moiety of Seend Head Mill, and Shawford Mill at Rode on the River Frome.³⁵⁰ The family's origins have not been traced, but George Collins perhaps entered the business by his marriage in 1580 to an Agnes Sumner,³⁵¹ whose relatives in Seend were by 1600 one of the leading clothing families on the Semington Brook.³⁵² At Baldham and Bulkington George Collins and his son probably fullled the cloth produced by Roger Blagden and other clothiers in Keevil,³⁵³ and by Mathew and the weavers of Bulkington; he may also have taken cloth from neighbouring Poulshot, where a dyer was in business during the 1630s.³⁵⁴ In 1626 Robert Collins acted as an intermediary to help resolve a dispute between Robert Blagden of Keevil and John Gaysford of Bulkington over an unpaid debt for which Blagden was the guarantor.³⁵⁵ In 1644 he was a witness to George Worthe's will.³⁵⁶ And like Worthe himself, Robert Collins probably maintained close connections with the cloth trade of east Somerset: in 1647 his sister Margery married William Whitchurch,³⁵⁷ from a merchant family prominent in Frome throughout the second half of the seventeenth century which will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Despite the problems facing the cloth trade, the first half of the seventeenth century provided opportunities for the tenants of Bulkington. In 1600 most tenants were described as husbandmen or weavers; there were very few yeomen and hardly any servants of either household or husbandry.³⁵⁸ Inventories reveal a consistent pattern of household furnishing, regardless of wealth or family size – cupboard, table, forms and one or two chairs in the hall; beds in the parlour, fire irons, cooking utensils, 'white house' equipment such as vats and presses for making butter and cheese. Of the tenants only Richard Dalmer had towels and napkins, pottingers and saucers.³⁵⁹ There must have been differences of quality in furniture, bedding and tableware, but in this farming community the more crucial distinction was in ownership of livestock, grain and cash. While some individuals had

³⁴⁹ WRO 947/1236.

³⁵⁰ WRO 1332/3/2/5/4: Baldham, Seend Head; Rogers *Woollen Mills* 185: Shawford.

³⁵¹ WRO Keevil PR.

³⁵² TNA PROB 11/91/87: the will of Thomas Sumner of Littleton shows he had acquired Passion's Mill there by 1597; his witnesses included Roger Blagden of Keevil.

³⁵³ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Keevil: Economic History': Hugh Bullen and William Harris have also been recorded as Keevil clothiers in this period. *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Keevil: Mills' notes John Crook of Keevil as a lessee of the mill from 1611.

³⁵⁴ WRO P2/P/395: will of Robert Purchase of Poulshot, shearman and dyer, probate 1641.

³⁵⁵ TNA C 2/CHAS1/B132/60.

³⁵⁶ WRO P2/W/483.

³⁵⁷ WRO Rowde PR; relationship confirmed by WRO P2/C/621.

³⁵⁸ WRO P2/D/85: Richard Dalmer the Elder names one male and female servant in his 1608 will.

³⁵⁹ *ibid.*

nothing but chickens, others had horses, oxen, kine and bullocks, sheep and pigs. Many had cheese and bacon in their lofts; most had corn, barley, beans and hay in barns or ricks. Early in the period a half-virgate holder might typically leave £50 in cash; a virgate holder £100. In 1611, the inventory of husbandman Roger Mathew had a total value of £58.18s.8d.³⁶⁰ Richard Dalmer in 1608 was appraised at £111.15s.8d;³⁶¹ in 1620 William Alway, weaver, at £58.17s.0d.³⁶² Yet by 1642, the yeoman John Gaysford's inventory was valued at as much as £606, despite his having already provided lands and houses for three sons – the kind of prosperity previously associated only with clothiers.³⁶³

It is not possible to assess with any certainty the growth of Gaysford's assets over the period, since no inventory survives for his father William, who died in 1598. But tentative conclusions can be drawn from William's will, which lists most of his chattels. In 1598 the Gaysford messuage was evidently more comfortable than many in Bulkington: the hall was already wainscoted, the family ate off pewter rather than wooden trenchers, and William's widow Joan was left a cup with a silver cover and a silver salt.³⁶⁴ But there is nothing to suggest an estate greater than Richard Dalmer's, so the implication is that John Gaysford may have been able to multiply his inherited assets several times in about four decades. In 1626 Robert Blagden accused Gaysford of being 'a hard and covetous person' whose custom was 'to keep and detain in his hands bonds and writings after they were paid and discharged,'³⁶⁵ but even allowing for sharp practice it is hard to believe his accumulation of capital was achieved mainly by money-lending. The inventory of 1641 shows debts and cash of only £156; interest at 10 per cent could only have generated about £15 per year. The bulk of Gaysford's assets lay in the lease of the 'sheephouse ground' bequeathed to his youngest sons Jonathan and Samuel, valued at £140, in oxen, kine and young beasts at £114, and all sorts of grain at £70. The value of butter and cheese in the white house was a mere £3. It was evidently the profits on the sale of wool, sheep and cattle that generated the surplus for money-lending and not the other way round.

³⁶⁰ WRO P2/M/238.

³⁶¹ WRO P2/D/85.

³⁶² WRO P2/A/120.

³⁶³ WRO P2/G/295.

³⁶⁴ WRO P30/72.

³⁶⁵ TNA C 2/CHAS1/B132/60.

Gaysford's other principal assets were literacy and fecundity. No books are recorded in his father's will, at a time when Richard Dalmer had 'a bible and two little books';³⁶⁶ but John Gaysford's inventory records 'the books' in the hall. If he could read, he was probably one of the first to learn from the Keevil parson Francis Greatrakes;³⁶⁷ alternatively the books may have been bought for his sons. The eldest, another John, was probably taught to read and perhaps even studied law in London, where someone of that name had a son baptised at St Bride's, Fleet Street in 1630.³⁶⁸ John II had married in 1629 and taken two copyholds on Henry and Rebecca Sherfield's manor at Southwick³⁶⁹ – a clear indication that the family had substantial surplus funds at the end of the decade most associated with economic depression, and perhaps also that land had become scarce in Bulkington. A second son William may have lived at the 'lower house' mentioned in John I's will;³⁷⁰ in 1638 John conveyed his leasehold in Keevil to his third son James as a marriage settlement.³⁷¹ John had three more sons by a second marriage, all still living with him in 1642, and each was provided with a living. Since no servants are mentioned in his will, the implication must be that John's sons had provided him with considerable support and enabled him to farm more land than his father could manage with only two sons.

Another inference that can reasonably be drawn is that the mixed agriculture practised by most Bulkington farmers proved economically profitable throughout the first four decades of the seventeenth century, and was enhanced by the process of enclosure. By comparison, the sheep-corn economy of the gentry, exemplified by Thomas Lambert, may have been more exposed to downturns in the wool price during the trade crises or simply to extravagance in expenditure. An inventory of Edmund Lambert II's property at Keevil in 1643 reached £354, of which a mere £50 related to the cattle and sheep in the home close. Much of the rest had been spent on comfortable chairs, plate, glassware and luxuries including books, landscape paintings and a chess set.³⁷²

³⁶⁶ WRO P2/D/85.

³⁶⁷ Greatrakes wrote most of the wills for his parishioners, but by 1630 about half of the parish yeomen and some husbandmen and craftsmen could sign their own names: Ingram *Church Courts* 115. In 1640 the weaver George Gaysford had 'one bible and two other books': WRO P2/G/290.

³⁶⁸ Register accessed online at ancestry.com. This church is close to several inns of court.

³⁶⁹ WRO 78/42.

³⁷⁰ WRO P2/G/295.

³⁷¹ WRO 288/2.

³⁷² WRO 3535/2/2.

A little is known of Bulkington's experiences of the Civil War. In 1641, following the death of the parson Stephen Greatrakes,³⁷³ the Royalist Edmund Lambert appointed Matthew Hynde as vicar of Keevil:³⁷⁴ perhaps a Laudian. During the years of warfare, Bulkington came under the control of the Royalist Devizes garrison, and made no payments towards the upkeep of the Parliamentary troops at Great Chalfield.³⁷⁵ In 1643 there were thirty-three burials in Keevil, well above the average of 13.6 for the previous decade.³⁷⁶ Of individual loyalties the only indications lie in a 1646 reference to Gawen Blagden of Keevil, deceased, 'who long distinguished himself in the service of Sir Edward Hungerford and Edmund Ludlow,'³⁷⁷ and a dispute the same year between Thomas Burgess of Studley, broadweaver,³⁷⁸ and John Gaysford II of Southwick, who accused Burgess at the Warminster Quarter Sessions of stealing his timber. Burgess denied the charge and gave evidence that during the war, while a soldier in the Chalfield garrison, he had been sent out in a party to capture Gaysford, then constable of Whorwellsdown hundred of which Southwick was part, and taken him to Chalfield where he was 'tied neck and heels':³⁷⁹ a form of torture also used in Somerset as a punishment for failing to contribute.³⁸⁰ Both Burgess and Gaysford may simply have fallen into line with local conditions, Studley being in the Parliamentary Hungerford's Westbury division and Southwick in the Royalist James Thynne's Warminster division.³⁸¹

Steeple Ashton and Keevil were within range of the Parliamentary garrison at Great Chalfield, and while Bulkington, Seend, Potterne and the Lavingtons were under Royalist control, they had been in John Danvers' division and are likely to have had Parliamentary leanings. So when Cromwell and Waller surrounded and captured the Royalist cavalry in the miry lanes between Potterne and Steeple Ashton in March 1645,³⁸² they may have been welcomed and assisted with local knowledge. In July the Devizes garrison attempted a secret assault on a house belonging to John Danvers in Market Lavington parish, but were

³⁷³ CCED. Stephen Greatrakes was the son and successor of Francis Greatrakes, d 1616.

³⁷⁴ His father Thomas Lambert I acquired a 21-year lease of the advowson from the Dean and Chapter of Winchester in 1636: Richardson 'Annals' 143.

³⁷⁵ Pafford, *Parliamentary Garrisons* 46, 63.

³⁷⁶ WRO Keevil PR.

³⁷⁷ Waylen 'Falstone Day Book' *WAM* 26 (1892) 387.

³⁷⁸ Possibly related to the Burgess family of Keevil: WRO Keevil PR.

³⁷⁹ Rogers *Civil War* 23.

³⁸⁰ Underdown *Somerset* 69

³⁸¹ Hurstfield 'County Government'. Though the divisions varied from time to time, Whorwellsdown Hundred (including Southwick) seems consistently to have been included with Warminster.

³⁸² Rogers *Civil War* 7-16.

driven off by its tenant, Mr Merewether, possibly George Worthe's son-in-law;³⁸³ in September Cromwell returned and the garrison fled Devizes.³⁸⁴ While ties of interest and loyalty may have influenced many, the war had intensified religious differences. In 1646, Matthew Hynde was replaced at Keevil by the presbyterian Thomas Ruty.³⁸⁵ In 1648 William Sumner knocked out the painted glass in Seend Church, clearly visible from Bulkington on the sandstone ridge.³⁸⁶

By 1649, Bulkington society had changed significantly. Following the death of Edmund Lambert, the Lambert manor was again being run by a steward, the lawyer Robert Beach,³⁸⁷ who had also become steward at Rebecca Sherfield's court at Southwick.³⁸⁸ The Worthe manor too was also run from a distance: Isabella's young son, Francis Merewether II, would be brought up in Gloucestershire with his step-father Samuel Sheppard.³⁸⁹ With so many tenants on long leases or secure copyholds, there was little for the steward to do other than lease out the demesne lands and gather the fines and heriots on renewal. This was perhaps not the rise of the common people that Aubrey would denounce in 1670,³⁹⁰ but the economic balance had certainly shifted in favour of the more prosperous tenants.

5 Social and economic change, 1603-1649

Some sense of the shape and scale of economic change in Wiltshire during this period can be inferred by comparing figures for England given by Thomas Wilson in 1600³⁹¹ with others provided by the Committee for Compounding during the 1640s. According to Wilson, the average yearly income of an earl was about £5,000 in 1600; knights were typically worth £1-2,000 a year, JPs about £500. Further down the scale, Wilson noted 'yeomen of meaner ability', able to keep six or more dairy cows and five or six draught horses as well as young

³⁸³ SAL Jackson Ms 817/6 f 78, citing the journal *Perfect Occurrences*. The house was probably Willoughby's in Easterton, which had been leased to a John Merewether in 1625. *VCH Wilts* vol 10 'Market Lavington: Manors and Other Estates'.

³⁸⁴ Rogers *Civil War* 21.

³⁸⁵ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Keevil: Churches'. Hynde returned in 1660: WRO Keevil PR (Marriage Index).

³⁸⁶ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Melksham: Protestant Non-Conformity'.

³⁸⁷ WRO 288/2.

³⁸⁸ WRO 78/42.

³⁸⁹ In 1649, at the age of 21, he sold Sheppard all his lands in Bulkington except the mansion house and demesne: *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Keevil: Manors'.

³⁹⁰ See Chapter 1.1.

³⁹¹ Fisher, FJ (ed) 'The State of England Anno Dom. 1600 by Thomas Wilson' *Camden Society Miscellany* 16 (London, 1936).

beasts and sheep, 'worth in all their substance and stock' between £300 and £500.³⁹² By comparison, in the 1640s the Wiltshire Royalists obliged to compound at Goldsmiths' Hall were assessed as follows: the Earl of Hertford at £4,000 a year, Francis Seymour at £1,850, James Thynne at £1,550, Henry Danvers, Earl of Danby, at £1,355, James Long at £357.³⁹³ Possibly some Royalists were assessed generously on the low side, but these figures still conform closely to Wilson's in 1600. According to Aubrey, however, the 4th Earl of Pembroke was worth far more than Hertford: £16,000 a year in landed revenue, and as much as £30,000 when all his offices were included. 'And as the revenue was great, so the greatness of his retinue, and hospitality were answerable. One hundred and twenty family uprising and down lying: whereof you may take out six or seven, and all the rest servants and retainers.'³⁹⁴

These figures suggest that a considerable difference in wealth had emerged between the Wiltshire's greatest aristocrat and those of the next rank, to which the Seymours and perhaps Hungerford and Bayntun belonged; and perhaps a lesser distinction between these 'ancient' magnates and the more recently enriched Thynne and Danvers families. By now the richest clothiers could more than match the middling gentry. In 1646 John Ashe calculated that he had spent nearly £11,000 of his own money in the Parliamentary cause,³⁹⁵ yet he remained a very wealthy man. By 1650 families such as the Longs of Draycot had probably been overtaken by their kinsmen at Rood Ashton, whose estate had been purchased with profits from the cloth trade. But the clothier Edward Yerbury, the King's commissioner in Trowbridge, compounded for a total fine of only £183 11s 11d after Paul Methuen and other neighbours certified his 'leniency and good neighbourhood' to them;³⁹⁶ even allowing for the mitigation this may have generated, the small fine suggests a sharp decline in his economic fortunes during the war.

Other sources suggest similar distinctions in cultural capital between the different echelons of Wiltshire society. Pembroke's famous art collection at Wilton, which even the connoisseur King Charles admired,³⁹⁷ was probably unparalleled in the county; by contrast in 1643 Edmund Lambert's inventory at Keevil revealed just three landscapes hanging by

³⁹² *ibid* 19-23.

³⁹³ Bindoff 'Parliamentary History, 1629-60'.

³⁹⁴ Aubrey *Brief Lives* 144.

³⁹⁵ Wroughton 'John Ashe'.

³⁹⁶ Mann 'Textile Industries since 1550: Cloth 1640-1790'.

³⁹⁷ Smith 'Philip Herbert, 4th Earl of Pembroke'.

the staircase and three pictures 'whereof two fancies' in the parlour.³⁹⁸ Similarly 'the magnificent garden and grotto' at Wilton would have greatly outshone even the Italianate garden at West Lavington, where according to Aubrey John Danvers placed several statues in the narrow, brick-lined stream.³⁹⁹ Wiltshire's principal literary associations in this period, with George Herbert, Ben Jonson and Philip Massinger, are all connected with the Pembrokes; even the poet Samuel Daniel, who counted Mountjoy and Hertford among his patrons, began his career attending on Mary Sidney at Wilton and ended it under the patronage of Lady Anne Clifford, by then the second wife of Philip, 4th Earl of Pembroke.⁴⁰⁰

Among gentry and clothier families alike, expenditure on luxuries was mainly on house improvements, furnishings and plate, and sometimes on guns and horses. There was a notable increase in sophistication across both groups. After purchasing Westwood in 1616, William Horton's son-in-law John Farewell built a great parlour over the hall, embellished with wainscot and a coved plasterwork ceiling with acanthus leaves and other floral motifs.⁴⁰¹ In 1621, as the trade depression deepened, the clothier Gifford Yerbury commissioned a new oak chair, carved with his initials, cloth mark and the date.⁴⁰² In 1643 Edmund Lambert's inventory at Keevil included looking glasses, French chairs, £15 worth of books, eight pistols and a birding piece as well as arms, drums and ensigns for the trained band.⁴⁰³ In 1647 and 1648 Edward Ashe in London imported Venetian glass for Lady Anne Beauchamp, tenant of the Marquess of Winchester at Edington Priory.⁴⁰⁴

Perhaps the most notable development in the period, however, was the emergence of a new group of wealthy yeomen, both local men and others who moved into the Steeple Ashton-Bulkington area from nearby, notably from the Warminster area. Few in 1600 could have matched Wilson's yeomen with £3-500 in 'substance and stock'; but in 1624 John Bennett, probably a kinsman of the Bennets of Smallbrook near Warminster, bought the manor house and farm of Steeple Ashton from Henry Greenhill, son of James Ley's steward, and in 1647 was prosperous enough to build a new house there with three gabled attics,

³⁹⁸ The fancies were probably small pictures of everyday life (information from Nigel Llewellyn). A set of early Stuart royal portraits, now in the Kings Room at Westwood, were moved there from Keevil Manor in 1910; but they were not included in Edmund Lambert's inventory.

³⁹⁹ Aubrey *Natural History* 86-7, 93.

⁴⁰⁰ Pitcher, J 'Samuel Daniel (1562/3-1619)' *ODNB*.

⁴⁰¹ Sutton *Westwood Manor* 20-1.

⁴⁰² Jones *Bradford-on-Avon* 199n.

⁴⁰³ WRO 3535/2/2.

⁴⁰⁴ TNA C 107/17.

the front faced with ashlar.⁴⁰⁵ In the late 1630s, George Worthe's kinsman Samuel Martyn, who had become registrar of the Charterhouse in London, built a new rough-stone farmhouse in West Ashton, with mullioned windows and ashlar quoins.⁴⁰⁶ These were both substantial dwellings, tiled with slate, and constructed of much more expensive materials than the typical thatched and timber-framed houses of the yardlanders. Few if any of the latter could have been worth even £300 in 1600; but under the early Stuarts some made substantial gains, even if they still lived frugally, investing almost exclusively in animals and equipment.

Change had also come in a widening of west Wiltshire's social and commercial hinterland, especially through its connections with Gloucestershire and Dorset. In the late 1630s, at the age of eleven or twelve, John Aubrey was dispatched from Easton Piercy to board at the grammar school in Blandford St Mary, then 'the most eminent school for the education of gentlemen in the West of England.'⁴⁰⁷ The multiple connections of the Horton, Lambert and Ashe families with the Swaynes of Blandford Forum and the Pitts of Weymouth, merchant families noted earlier in this study, reflect that in the first half of the seventeenth century the Dorset ports had become important conduits for goods shipped directly from France. As entrepôts for vessels passing up and down the Channel bound for London, Antwerp, Spain or the Mediterranean, they may have been busier than appears from the customs records.⁴⁰⁸ The bed sheets from Vitré (Brittany) and Normandy bequeathed by Henry Long II in 1610 could well have reached Whaddon by this route,⁴⁰⁹ along with wine, oil and dyestuffs.

Lawrence Stone characterised the social mobility of the period 1540-1640 as 'a seismic upheaval of unprecedented magnitude.'⁴¹⁰ In west Wiltshire, the real structural change was in the Tudor period; but in the early Stuart era the beneficiaries of the Tudor change entrenched their advantages. Beyond the disposal of Ley's and Brounker's estates, there were few great transfers of landownership to match those of the 1540s and 1560s that gave the Longs and Hortons such prominence, and brought the Lamberts and Ducketts into Wiltshire. But there was, in Stone's words, 'a striking rise in the material comforts of all

⁴⁰⁵ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Steeple Ashton: Manors'.

⁴⁰⁶ Now East Town Farm. WRO 1494/101; *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Steeple Ashton: Lesser Estates'.

⁴⁰⁷ Powell *Aubrey* 44.

⁴⁰⁸ Stephens, WB 'The Trade Fortunes of Poole, Weymouth and Lyme Regis, 1600-1640' *DANHS* 95 (Dorchester, 1973) 71-3.

⁴⁰⁹ TNA PROB 11/117/405.

⁴¹⁰ Stone 'Social Mobility' 16.

classes from the yeoman upwards, groups who benefited from rising agricultural prices, increased commercial activity, and increased demand for professional services.⁴¹¹

This growth in material wealth has been to a large extent concealed in the conventional narrative by the undoubted periodic suffering of journeyman weavers, spinners and the labouring poor, whose incomes remained at very low levels throughout the period and whose plight at times of trade depression and dearth was highlighted by Ramsay and Supple. Yet it is reasonable to assume that prosperity – and a fierce determination to protect it – lay behind the strong identification of most the west Wiltshire gentry and clothiers with the Parliamentary cause. In Clarendon's lofty phrase, these were the 'people of inferior degree, who by good husbandry, clothing and other thriving arts, had gotten very great fortunes' who led the Great Rebellion.⁴¹² During the Civil War, they retained control of much of the countryside despite the presence of Royalist garrisons at Devizes and Farleigh Castle. But they were not revolutionaries. After the war even a 'strict Puritan' like John Ashe became suspect to men with more radical ambitions: in 1649 his house at Freshford was plundered by Commonwealth troops.⁴¹³

The broadening and enriching experience of the wealthier echelon is exemplified in west Wiltshire by the career of John Horton, grandson of William Horton of Iford, who on the death of his brother Edward in 1605 became the unexpected heir of Edward Horton of Westwood.⁴¹⁴ Around 1612 John Horton married Jane Hannam of Wimborne near Poole in Dorset, daughter of a prominent barrister who had been MP for both Weymouth and Bristol.⁴¹⁵ That year Horton acquired a 544-acre estate at Elkstone, in the Gloucestershire Cotswolds near Cirencester, with common of pasture for 300 sheep,⁴¹⁶ and made his home there. Five years later he was appointed sheriff of Wiltshire,⁴¹⁷ and in 1622 he built a manor house at Broughton Gifford where he had acquired a moiety of the lordship.⁴¹⁸ This house was relatively modest considering his resources – an L-shaped three-gabled house built of rubble limestone – but the first floor parlour boasted a fine pedimented fireplace, carved with fish on volutes, cartouches and coats of arms.⁴¹⁹ Over the following years he gradually

⁴¹¹ *ibid* 26.

⁴¹² Clarendon *History of the Rebellion* Book 6 s 5, cited by Underdown *Somerset* 40.

⁴¹³ Underdown *Somerset* 264.

⁴¹⁴ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Broughton Gifford: Manors'.

⁴¹⁵ *Vis Gloucs* 1623 84-5; Hasler, PW 'Thomas Hannam (d 1593) *HoP* 1558-1603.

⁴¹⁶ GRO D2957/146/8.

⁴¹⁷ Jackson, JE 'Sheriffs of Wiltshire' *WAM* 3 (1857), 218.

⁴¹⁸ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Broughton Gifford: Manors'.

⁴¹⁹ HE listings database.

acquired full ownership of the Broughton manor, some 1,160 acres in all.⁴²⁰ Horton's close kinsmen included not only his cousin Walter Long of Whaddon⁴²¹ but also, through his mother-in-law,⁴²² Alexander Popham of Littlecote, five times MP for Bath,⁴²³ and John Pyne of Curry Mallet near Taunton, who served five times as MP for Poole.⁴²⁴ Both were appointed deputy lieutenants of Somerset by the Commons in 1642 and were among the most vigorous Parliamentarians in the county.⁴²⁵ Horton's son and heir Thomas would marry an heiress from Gloucester,⁴²⁶ extending the Horton network from the Severn to the English Channel.

Horton was perhaps an extreme (and extremely wealthy) example of his type, yet the evidence does seem to suggest that during the early Stuart era the focus of commercial life in west Wiltshire was no longer directed as exclusively at London as it had been under the Tudors. While lawyers and politicians were obliged to visit the capital frequently, clothiers no longer made the long journey to sell their produce: they sent it by carrier. By the 1630s and probably before there were regular and reliable services from Devizes to the Swan on Holborn Bridge, arriving every Thursday and departing on Fridays, and from elsewhere in Wiltshire to the Saracen's Head in Friday Street.⁴²⁷ The release of time previously occupied by travelling back and forth would have been substantial. It is likely that many clothiers employed factors to represent them in London, men who would receive their cloths from the carriers and take them for sale at Blackwell Hall.⁴²⁸ Some of these factors would have been sons or kinsmen of the clothiers.

Overall, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that with a few exceptions those families who were most prominent in the commercial life of west Wiltshire in 1600 had maintained or strengthened their position by 1649. The huge advantages created by the ownership of the key assets of fulling mills and pasture could sustain fortunes through the deepest trade depressions and through the shorter downturns resulting from bad harvests or outbreaks

⁴²⁰ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Broughton Gifford: Manors'; GRO D326/T141.

⁴²¹ See Pedigrees.

⁴²² Born Penelope Popham: Hasler 'Thomas Hannam'.

⁴²³ Wroughton, J 'Alexander Popham (1604/5-69)' *ODNB*.

⁴²⁴ Underdown, D 'John Pyne, 1600-78' *ODNB*.

⁴²⁵ Burke, J & Burke, JB *The Extinct and Dormant Baronetcies of England, Scotland and Ireland* (2nd edn, London, 1841) 230.

⁴²⁶ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Broughton Gifford: Manors'.

⁴²⁷ Taylor, John A *Carriers Cosmographie* (London, 1637) 10: the entry for Devizes is under V for Vies.

⁴²⁸ 'Mr Estcourt' sold cloths at Blackwell Hall for Henry Long of Whaddon as early as 1584: WRO 947/1707.

of plague. The Horton-Long-Yerbury kinship group remained prominent despite vigorous competition from the Ashes. On the Wiltshire side of the Frome a continuous thread of kinship tied the clothiers of 1649 with those of Leland's visits in the 1540s. Nonetheless a substantial change was imminent. The next and penultimate chapter will consider how the Interregnum and Restoration brought new waves of social and commercial development to the region.

Chapter 5 **Renewal, 1649-70**

Developments in Wiltshire during the two decades after the execution of Charles I have not attracted much attention from academic historians. David Underdown examined the activity of royalist conspirators and the Cromwellian political settlement¹ and *HoP 1660-90* provides useful data on some Interregnum MPs; but the *HoP* volumes for 1640-60 remain in preparation.² Until they are published, the *VCH Wiltshire* essays by Stuart Bindoff³ and Joel Hurstfield⁴ are the most detailed sources of information about parliamentary affairs and local government before the Restoration, supplemented by Peter Norrey's work on the early years of the Restoration regime in Dorset, Wiltshire and Somerset.⁵ The growth of non-conformity is well covered parish by parish in *VCH Wiltshire*, and amplified by the work of Henry Lancaster⁶ and Kay Taylor,⁷ while Donald Spaeth has considered the relationship between Anglican parsons and their parishioners under the late Stuarts.⁸ Joe Bettey⁹ has added substantially to Eric Kerridge's pioneering work on Wiltshire's agrarian economy.¹⁰ But while many of these authors allude to a bigger picture, drawing attention for example to the strength of non-conformity in the cloth district of west Wiltshire and of royalism in the Wylde valley, most have worked within narrow boundaries. None has attempted the integrated picture of west Wiltshire society in these decades for which Aubrey's brief 'Preface' to his fragmentary survey of the antiquities of north Wiltshire provides such an intriguing model.

This chapter therefore seeks to answer questions that cross the thematic divides of politics, commerce, agriculture and religion, and assess how west Wiltshire society changed during the Interregnum and the first decade of Restoration government. How influential were Wiltshire magnates and politicians in London in these years? How did the resident gentry cope with the shifts from commonwealth to protectorate to restored monarchy? Did

¹ Underdown, D *Royalist Conspiracy in England* (New Haven, 1960); and 'Settlement in the Counties, 1653-8' in Aylmer *The Interregnum* 165-82.

² I am grateful to the editors for access to draft entries for some Members, cited below.

³ Bindoff 'Parliamentary History, 1629-1660'.

⁴ Hurstfield, J 'County Government'.

⁵ Norrey, PJ 'The Restoration Regime in Action: the Relationship between Central Government and Local Government in Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire, 1660-78' *HJ* 31.4 (1988) 789-812.

⁶ Lancaster, H 'Nonconformity and Anglican dissent in Restoration Wiltshire, 1660-89' unpublished PhD thesis (University of Bristol, 1996).

⁷ Taylor, KS 'Society, Schism and Suffering: the First Seventy Years of Quakerism in Wiltshire' unpublished PhD thesis (University of the West of England, 2006).

⁸ Spaeth, DA *The Church in an Age of Danger: Parsons and Parishioners, 1660-1740* (Cambridge, 2000).

⁹ Bettey, JH *Wiltshire Farming in the Seventeenth Century* WRS 57 (Devizes, 2005).

¹⁰ Kerridge 'Agriculture'.

sequestration and continual taxation bring significant changes of land-ownership? How was the rural economy affected by almost constant warfare in the Channel and North Sea? Did London's recovery from the Civil Wars and the rapid growth of its population generate new opportunities in Wiltshire? How rapidly did innovations in cloth manufacture spread through the cloth district? Did the agrarian economy change as it did elsewhere in the country? Did poverty increase, and was Aubrey right to blame enclosures and an increase in pastoralism? In this chapter such questions will be considered within four sectors of society: first, the magnates and politicians in London; second, the west Wiltshire-born merchants and financiers in London; third, the clothiers and resident gentry in west Wiltshire; and fourth, the lords and tenants of Bulkington vale, where Aubrey himself became involved in the 1660s. The final section of the chapter will summarise the evidence of social and material change over the period.

1 Magnates and politicians in London

Wiltshire's influence on national affairs declined sharply during the Interregnum. Both John Danvers and Philip Herbert, 4th Earl of Pembroke, until his death in January 1650, were members of the first short-lived Council of State; and from December 1651 Philip Herbert, 5th Earl of Pembroke, served briefly as Lord President of the second Council.¹¹ But with politics dominated by war and fears of counter-revolution, none of these men had any significant impact. If anything the county was viewed with suspicion by the republican regime, even after Charles fled to France in September 1650. It had too many connections with the Crown. Hertford, former lieutenant-general of the king's forces in the South West, remained aloof from royalist conspiracies, but his son and heir Henry, Lord Beauchamp was arrested in April 1650 as a chief organizer of the Western Association and confined to the Tower.¹² Robert Long, uncle of the royalist commander James Long of Draycot, went to Paris with Charles, having served as his secretary since the court was in Oxford;¹³ so did his rival Edward Hyde, who would soon oust Long as a trusted advisor.¹⁴ Edward Nicholas, Secretary of State to Charles I who resumed that role for his son in 1654,¹⁵ also had strong Wiltshire connections. Both his and Hyde's estates in the county had been confiscated.¹⁶

¹¹ Kelsey 'Sir John Danvers'; Smith 'Philip Herbert, 4th Earl of Pembroke'.

¹² Smith 'William Seymour, 1st Marquess of Hertford'.

¹³ Ferris, J 'Robert Long (c1602-73)' *ODNB*.

¹⁴ Hutton, R *Charles II, King of England, Scotland and Ireland* (Oxford, 1989) 72-3.

¹⁵ *ibid* 91.

¹⁶ Baron, SA 'Sir Edward Nicholas (1593-1669)' *ODNB*. The two men were declared traitors in 1651.

In March 1655 the most serious attempt at insurrection against the Protectorate began in Salisbury, when Colonel John Penruddock and a troop of cavalry seized the sheriff and assize judges before riding southwest into Dorset and Devon.¹⁷ Cromwell dispatched his brother-in-law Major-General John Disbrowe to crush the rising, and Penruddock was soon captured and executed; but the stigma of this failed attempt remained firmly attached to the greater gentry, especially those along the Wylde valley from Salisbury to Warminster. In May, Disbrowe was given a commission to take direct control of all the western counties. He had already ordered deputies to compile lists of suspected royalists.¹⁸ In west Wiltshire, the Warminster area close to James Thynne's house at Longleat emerged as a potential focus of discontent, with as many as twenty-five malcontents identified in Warminster and the Deverills.¹⁹ Disbrowe's preference, like Cromwell's, was to gain the co-operation of the local gentry,²⁰ but the strongly parliamentary stance of the non-royalist Wiltshire gentry made this difficult. Many remained firmly opposed to a Protector and Council unable to accommodate a freely elected parliament. In the words of David Underdown, Cromwell's Protectorate was 'the first stage of a conservative reaction' after the confusion of the Commonwealth,²¹ but for the Wiltshire gentry that process could only be completed by the restoration of the monarchy. The constant grind of tax-raising and warfare, both in Europe and the Caribbean, had become intolerable.

In London, naval operations disrupted merchant activity and the social and economic cost to the capital was substantial. 'By 1653 London claimed to be so impoverished by "the great decay and interruption of trade both domestic and foreign" that a quarter of its inhabitants were too poor to be charged in the assessment.'²² As Protector, Cromwell terminated the first Dutch War (1652-4), only to mount an even larger offensive against Spain. A positive by-product of the Dutch war for the London merchants had been a substantial increase in the English war fleet and its capacity to support long-distance trade in the Mediterranean; merchants also profited from over a thousand captured prize ships.²³ But the Spanish war was deeply unpopular in the City. After the Battle of the Dunes in 1658 England acquired the port of Dunkirk, preventing its use by Dutch privateers and gaining a valuable cloth staple for Flanders. But there were far more serious commercial

¹⁷ Durston, C 'John Penruddock (1619-1655)' *ODNB*.

¹⁸ Roberts, SK 'Sir John Disbrowe (1608-1680)' *ODNB*.

¹⁹ BL Add Ms 34012 vol 2.

²⁰ Roberts 'Sir John Disbrowe'.

²¹ Underdown *Somerset* 175.

²² Cooper 'Commonwealth' 138.

²³ *ibid* 138.

disadvantages, not only in heavy losses of English shipping, but in gifting England's large trade with Spanish ports to the now-neutral Dutch.²⁴ With an embargo in Spain on the import of goods from England, London merchants were obliged to quit the Spanish trade or employ Dutch captains to transport their goods for them.²⁵

Thus the Wiltshire gentry and the London merchants were united in welcoming the return of Charles in July 1660. A 'troop of Spanish merchants, all in black velvet coats' were at Dover to greet the King, and the Levant, East India and Eastland Companies were all invited to nominate representatives to the new Council of Trade.²⁶ The elderly Hertford was also amongst the peers at Dover,²⁷ while Pembroke was permitted to make his peace with the King and appointed to the Council of Trade.²⁸ The Treasury was now controlled by men with long-standing connections to Wiltshire: Lord Treasurer Southampton, a close friend of Hyde who in 1659 had married one of Hertford's daughters,²⁹ and chancellor of the exchequer Ashley Cooper, MP for Wiltshire in the Convention Parliament, who had married Southampton's niece.³⁰ Hertford was appointed lord lieutenant of Wiltshire; when he died later the same year, the office passed to Southampton.³¹

Cooper had changed sides during the 1640s, first joining and then abandoning the King.³² His appointment to senior office reflected the government's need to secure the widest possible support, excluding only the most obdurate opponents. A proposal that he should be lord lieutenant, however, was scotched by opposition in the county,³³ where royalists had swept the board. James Thynne was chosen as sheriff to organize the crucial general election of 1661,³⁴ and even the clothing boroughs saw the value of promoting good relations with the Crown: Edward Bayntun IV, though willing to 'swim with the stream', was rejected by the voters of Calne and kept out of the House for fourteen years, despite marrying a niece of the royalist James Thynne in April 1661.³⁵ Edward Hyde's son Henry and

²⁴ Pincus, S 'England and the World in the 1650s' in Morrill, J (ed) *Revolution and Restoration* (London, 1992) 143; Ashton *Reformation and Revolution* 421; Farnell, JE 'The Navigation Act of 1651, the First Dutch War, and the London Merchant Community' *ECHR* 16.3 (1954) 453-4.

²⁵ Prestwich, M 'Diplomacy and Trade in the Protectorate' *JMH* 22.2 (1951) 110-11.

²⁶ *ibid* 119.

²⁷ Smith 'William Seymour, 1st Marquess of Hertford'.

²⁸ Smith 'Philip Herbert, 5th Earl of Pembroke'.

²⁹ Smith, DL 'Thomas Wriothesley, 4th Earl of Southampton (1608-1667)' *ODNB*.

³⁰ Harris, T 'Anthony Ashley Cooper, 1st Earl of Shaftesbury (1621-1683)' *ODNB*.

³¹ Sainty, J *List of Lieutenants of Counties of England and Wales 1660-1974* (London, 1979) 138.

³² Harris 'Anthony Ashley Cooper'.

³³ Hutton *Charles II* 139.

³⁴ Ferris, JP 'Sir James Thynne (c1605-1670)' *HoP 1660-1690*.

³⁵ Henning, BD 'Edward Bayntun (1618-79)' *HoP 1660-1690*. His father, Sir Edward, had died in 1657.

Charles Seymour, son of Francis, were elected MPs for Wiltshire.³⁶ The ancient Tudor alliance of the Seymour, Hyde and Thynne families thus re-established its grip on the county after more than a century of Pembroke hegemony. That same year Hyde was ennobled as the Earl of Clarendon following the marriage of his daughter Anne to the Duke of York.³⁷

The Restoration government moved swiftly to end the war with Spain,³⁸ then built a close alliance with France and Portugal.³⁹ In such an environment trade could begin to recover, helped by the swift passage of the Navigation Act of 1660, which renewed and extended the lapsed Commonwealth sanctions against Dutch shipping.⁴⁰ In the exchequer year 1662-3, exports of broadcloth from London reached 16,901 pieces, of which 5,440, nearly a third, went to Turkey, 3,905 to Germany and 2,400 to Poland. Spanish cloths were not far behind at 16,283, with their main markets Germany at 5,887, Flanders 3,968, Portugal 1,230 and France 1,178. Exports to Spain were mainly serges, with 31,522 shipped there and 14,942 to Portugal. By comparison the Dutch market had become relatively unimportant, taking only 1,380 shortcloths, 2,715 Spanish cloths and 2,090 kerseys: Dutch manufacturers now supplied most of the local needs. Total cloth exports in 1662-3 were still lower than in 1640 when 24,150 white shortcloths⁴¹ and 12,431 Spanish cloths were shipped;⁴² but the vital importance of the markets in Spain, Portugal and Turkey was clear. All three also provided valuable imports, including wool, oil and dyestuffs. A street jingle of 1663 drew the obvious commercial conclusion: 'Make wars with Dutchmen, peace with Spain. Then we shall have money and trade again.'⁴³

Within two years, the second Dutch War began, although Charles' provocation of the Dutch had more to do with ambitions in the Atlantic than in the Mediterranean. English attacks on Dutch trading posts in West Africa and the seizure of their American colony New Amsterdam led irrevocably to Dutch reprisals, and in June 1665 to the Battle of Lowestoft, where the English navy under the Duke of York, Prince Rupert and the Earl of Sandwich routed the Dutch fleet, sinking or capturing twenty-six ships for the loss of one.⁴⁴ But this

³⁶ Naylor, N 'Wiltshire' *HoP 1660-1690*.

³⁷ Seaward, P 'Edward Hyde, 1st Earl of Clarendon (1609-1674)' *ODNB*.

³⁸ Hutton *Charles II* 157-61.

³⁹ *ibid* 117.

⁴⁰ Davis *Overseas Trade* 36. The 1660 Act replaced the Navigation Ordinance of 1651.

⁴¹ Supple *Commercial Crisis* 265.

⁴² Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* 140.

⁴³ Farnell *Navigation Act* 454 cites Letwin, W *Sir Joshua Child: Merchant Economist* (Boston, 1959) 1.

⁴⁴ Hutton *Charles II* 217-22.

overwhelming victory was followed by a sequence of catastrophes which prevented any advantage being taken.

In July a surge in plague deaths brought trade to a stop: imports were embargoed and merchants closed their shops and left the city. On 16 August Pepys noted 'the streets empty of people, and very few upon the Change...two shops in three, if not more, generally shut up.'⁴⁵ The Great Plague raged for two months, but by 26 October had slowed: 'the Change pretty full and the town begins to be lively again' although 'the streets very empty and most shops shut.'⁴⁶ Perhaps 80,000 people died in the course of the epidemic,⁴⁷ and it was not until February 1666 that the Court returned to Whitehall.⁴⁸ Then in September the Great Fire plunged the City into even deeper crisis, destroying most of the houses, shops and churches within the walls and nearly all the commercial infrastructure including inns, warehouses, wharves, cranes, the customs house and the post office, as well as Blackwell Hall, more than forty company halls and vast quantities of goods.⁴⁹ The loss in cloth alone was reckoned at £25,000.⁵⁰ Soon after this disaster came a third heavy blow. In the second week of June the Dutch raided the naval anchorage of the Medway, capturing the flagship and sinking three other large warships before escaping to blockade the Thames estuary. This humiliation brought the war to a close, and in August a treaty was signed on Dutch terms.⁵¹

In view of all these setbacks, in particular the destruction caused by the Fire, it is remarkable that the customs figures for the exchequer year 1668-9 were an improvement on those of 1662-3, with 18,929 shortcloths, 15,595 Spanish cloths and 164,790 serges recorded in the customs ledgers.⁵² Merchants were no strangers to war and plague, whose effects were as transient as bad weather; but the loss of so many warehouses, storerooms, shops and wharves had been a challenge of a different magnitude, with many merchants going out of business.⁵³ Leadenhall market survived and was made available for clothiers

⁴⁵ Latham, R *The Shorter Pepys* (London, 1986) 516.

⁴⁶ *ibid* 546.

⁴⁷ Appleby, AB 'The Disappearance of Plague: A Continuing Puzzle' *EcHR* 33.2 (1980) 161.

⁴⁸ *CSPD Charles II, 1665-6* xv.

⁴⁹ Bell, WG *The Great Fire of London in 1666* (London, 1951) 223-4. The halls of the Drapers, Grocers, Haberdashers, Mercers and Merchant Taylors were all destroyed.

⁵⁰ *ibid* 217, 318: a contemporary thought this was good news for wool-growers and the poor.

⁵¹ Hutton *Charles II* 248-9.

⁵² BL Add Ms 36785.

⁵³ Bell *Great Fire* 212, 218.

every Thursday,⁵⁴ but accommodation for country clothiers must still have been scarce, so much of the business between clothiers and merchants was probably arranged by factors working on commission, receiving stock brought into town by carriers and arranging deals on the clothiers' behalf.⁵⁵ Yet such was the importance of cloth as the main export commodity that the trade had been rebuilt much faster than the infrastructure.

Politically, however, there had to be scapegoats for the failure of the war. Henry Brounker was one: younger brother of William Brounker, first president of the Royal Society, and descendant of the Brounkers of Erlestoke and Melksham, he was arraigned in the Commons in 1668 for a fault committed in 1665. Serving the Duke of York at the Battle of Lowestoft, he had ordered the sails to be eased while the Duke was sleeping, allowing the Dutch to escape during the night pursuit. For this offence he was dismissed from the House.⁵⁶ A far greater casualty was the Earl of Clarendon, dismissed from office, impeached for treason and forced into exile.⁵⁷ His downfall, following soon after the death of Southampton whom he succeeded as lord lieutenant,⁵⁸ ended the dominance of the Hyde faction in Wiltshire. With Ashley Cooper also temporarily out of favour,⁵⁹ Clarendon's replacement as lord lieutenant was Arthur Capel, the newly-made Earl of Essex, with impeccable royalist credentials.⁶⁰

Trade and military control of the county were only two of the many strands binding London and Wiltshire. The taxation system, whether exercised through the sheriff and high constables, the county committee or commission of the peace, or later through tax farmers was a third; the established church a fourth. The varying importance of these factors will be noted in later sections of this chapter. Before that, we must consider the political and commercial activity of some west Wiltshire merchants and gentry investors in London, still

⁵⁴ Bell *Great Fire* 215. The rebuilt Blackwell Hall opened in 1672: Bateman, N 'From Rags to Riches: Blackwell Hall and the Wool Cloth Trade, c1450-1790' *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 38.1 (2004) 9.

⁵⁵ Ramsay *Woollen Industry* 135-6; Mann *Cloth Industry* 68. Such arrangements were widespread even before the fire: in 1657 it was claimed that 'one half that are made do not come into the market to be sold': Smith, W *The Golden Fleece: wherein is related the riches of English wools...and the abuses of the aulnager etc* (London, 1657) 29.

⁵⁶ Hutton, R *The Restoration* (Oxford, 1985) 282, 285.

⁵⁷ *ibid* 276-84.

⁵⁸ Sainsbury *List of Lieutenants* 63, 138.

⁵⁹ Harris *Anthony Ashley Cooper*.

⁶⁰ Son of the royalist martyr Arthur Capel. His sister Mary's first husband had been Hertford's son Henry Seymour, Lord Beauchamp, head of the Western Association. McLain, M 'Henry Somerset, 1st Duke of Beaufort (1629-1700)' *ODNB*.

by far the most important conduit for trade.⁶¹ Despite the difficulties caused by hostilities in the North Sea and the Channel, the two decades of the Interregnum and Restoration saw intense commercial activity in the capital.

2 West Wiltshire merchants and financiers in London

The clothier John Ashe, his lawyer son James, and the merchant Edward Ashe had all been active in the Long Parliament: all survived Pride's Purge, and both John and James were re-elected to the Protectorate Parliaments of 1654 and 1656.⁶² Supporters of Cromwell, these men were conservative by nature. It was John Ashe, indeed, who proposed to Parliament in 1657 that Cromwell should govern 'according to the ancient constitution': in other words, accept the crown.⁶³ Edward Ashe also put political commitment before commercial responsibilities, declining to serve as warden of the Drapers' Company because of his parliamentary duties.⁶⁴ From 1650 to 1653, he was intensely involved as a commissioner for the sale of forfeited estates and as a member of the Navy committee. Edward's status as a leader of the Mediterranean trade can be gauged by his offer in 1653 to secure ships from Venice, Naples and Leghorn for an attack on Algiers to release captured seamen.⁶⁵ His parliamentary career ended with the dissolution of the Rump, but later in 1653 he was elected Alderman for Vintry ward.⁶⁶ For much of the decade Jonathan Ashe probably handled most of the day-to-day business affairs at their shop in Fenchurch Street.⁶⁷ A younger brother Joseph, who had been a merchant at Antwerp during the war years,⁶⁸ acquired and developed lands at Hull,⁶⁹ before settling at Cambridge Park in Twickenham.⁷⁰

The ledgers of Jonathan Ashe for the 1650s are mostly concerned with shipments to customers in Paris, a market he handled directly from London. To Paris he despatched Spanish cloths sent from Freshford by John Ashe and Paul Methuen, as well as cheap

⁶¹ In the financial year 1676-7 London still accounted for 72 per cent of England's customs revenues; Bristol for only 6 per cent and Weymouth 0.3 per cent: BL Add Ms 36785.

⁶² Barclay, A 'James Ashe (c1622-71)' *HoP 1640-60 draft*.

⁶³ Wroughton 'John Ashe'.

⁶⁴ Barclay, A 'Edward Ashe (1599-1656)' *HoP 1640-60 draft*.

⁶⁵ *ibid*; CSPD *Commonwealth, 1652-3* 82, 508-9.

⁶⁶ Woodhead, JR *Rulers of London, 1660-89* (London, 1966) accessed online at BHO.

⁶⁷ In 1665 he too was drawn into public affairs as a Common Councilman for Aldgate: Woodhead *Rulers of London*.

⁶⁸ Ferris, JP 'Sir Joseph Ashe 1617-86' *HoP 1660-1690*.

⁶⁹ *VCH Yorks vol 7 'Wawne: Manors and Other Estates'*.

⁷⁰ Bunch, M *Cambridge Park and its Owners, 1616-1835* (Twickenham, 1989).

northern cottons and bays bought from other suppliers;⁷¹ to Wiltshire Jonathan sent large quantities of oil and Spanish wool.⁷² The company's business connections had been extended by marriage alliances. Edward's wife Elizabeth, granddaughter of Benedict Webb,⁷³ was a cousin of the Levant merchant John Joliffe, who would later become governor of both the Muscovy and East India Companies.⁷⁴ Jonathan Ashe had in 1646 married Rebecca Leaver,⁷⁵ two of whose brothers were long-distance merchants: Thomas with the East India Company⁷⁶ and John in Barbados.⁷⁷ In such dangerous times marriage could also be a hedge against political uncertainty. In 1654 John Ashe's daughter Sarah married the Antwerp merchant John Shaw, an important financier for the Court in exile.⁷⁸ Joseph Ashe was a royalist too, and worked closely with Shaw. In 1651, he had been accused of communicating with the enemy, perhaps by writing to Shaw in Antwerp.⁷⁹ After the Restoration their commitment to the royalist cause would be rewarded.

The political prominence of the Ashe family ended with the Protectorate, but their commercial success continued, both in London and Wiltshire. In January 1659 John Ashe and his youngest brother Samuel returned to London as members for Heytesbury in Richard Cromwell's first parliament;⁸⁰ but soon afterwards John fell ill. He was buried at Beckington at the end of February.⁸¹ The following year John Joliffe was one of the leading City figures summoned to meet General Monck;⁸² but after the return of the King in May 1660 only Joseph Ashe and John Shaw could hope to profit from their involvement in politics. Recognition for services to the exiled Court came with a baronetcy for Ashe and a knighthood for Shaw in 1660, and in 1661 they were together granted the office of surveyor, collector and receiver of forfeits under the Navigation Act.⁸³ That year Joseph extended the family's interests in Wiltshire, by leasing the demesne estate of Downton, south of Salisbury, from the Bishop of Winchester, and in 1662 he acquired the farm of the

⁷¹ Some of these coarse cloths were probably used as wrappers for the finer products.

⁷² TNA C 107/18, ff 9-10 *et al.*

⁷³ Barclay 'Edward Ashe'.

⁷⁴ Ferris, JP 'John Joliffe (1630-80)' *HoP 1660-90*.

⁷⁵ Woodhead *Rulers of London*.

⁷⁶ Sainsbury, ED *A Calendar of the Court Minutes etc of the East India Company* vol 5: 1655-59 (Oxford, 1922) 213,326.

⁷⁷ Sanders, JM *Barbados Records: Wills and Administrations* (Houston, 1979) vol I: 1639-80, 220.

⁷⁸ Ferris, JP 'John Shaw 1615-80' *HoP 1660-1690*; Ferris *Joseph Ashe*.

⁷⁹ Ferris 'Joseph Ashe'.

⁸⁰ Barclay, A 'John Ashe (1597-1659)' *HoP draft 1640-60*; Henning, BD 'Samuel Ashe (c1630-1708)' *HoP 1660-90*.

⁸¹ Wroughton 'John Ashe'.

⁸² Ferris 'John Joliffe'.

⁸³ *Calendar of Treasury Books, 1660-67* ed Shaw, WA (London, 1904) 335, 724.

manor.⁸⁴ Jonathan Ashe continued in the cloth trade until May 1665,⁸⁵ when he died at Twickenham, where he had perhaps gone to stay with his brother in a vain attempt to escape the Plague. Joseph himself entered politics in 1670, when he was returned for Downton.⁸⁶

No other west Wiltshire commercial families sought such political influence in these decades, but several others conducted business in the City. The Yerburys of Bradford and Trowbridge each had a merchant representative. The William Yerbury, Dyer, whose will received probate in October 1665,⁸⁷ was a son of the clothier Thomas Yerbury of Bradford (d 1651). Probably a Plague victim, he wrote his will on 29 August, leaving £150 to 'the late outed ministers' and £10 to the reformist Anglican Richard Baxter of Kidderminster, whom he may have heard preaching at St Laurence Jewry the previous winter.⁸⁸ Bequests of mourning rings to the clothiers Robert Smyth of Frome (his uncle), Gifford Yerbury of Conock (his cousin) and Nathaniel Houlton of Trowbridge suggest at least the possibility that William Yerbury was a factor for clothiers in west Wiltshire, finding customers amongst the London merchants, finishing raw cloths as required and sending dyestuffs down to the countryside.⁸⁹ His cousin Richard Yerbury, Drysalter, from the royalist branch of the family based in Trowbridge,⁹⁰ may also have sold cloth in London. A Common Councillor of Bread Street by 1674, he was first noted at St Nicholas Cole Abbey in Queenhithe ward in 1661, presumably one of many royalists moving to the capital after the Restoration. By the late 1670s he was partner in a 'brazil' warehouse,⁹¹ stocking brazil-wood imported from the Caribbean;⁹² this produced a red dye used for colours on the spectrum from purple to orange to pink.⁹³

Other west Wiltshire merchants operating in London during these decades include the Haberdasher Thomas Ruty from Melksham, who became a City freeman in 1654 and a Common Councilman in 1681.⁹⁴ Ruty would have been known to many of the clothiers of

⁸⁴ *VCH Wilts* vol 11 'Downton: Manors'.

⁸⁵ He was however elected Common Councillor for Aldgate in 1664: Woodhead *Rulers of London*.

⁸⁶ Ferris 'Joseph Ashe'.

⁸⁷ TNA PROB 11/318/137.

⁸⁸ Keeble, NH 'Richard Baxter (1615-91)' *ODNB*.

⁸⁹ TNA PROB 11/318/137.

⁹⁰ Presumed to be the son of Edward Yerbury, the King's commissioner: Jones *Bradford* 200. A 1659 deed supports this identification: DRO 281M/T784.

⁹¹ Woodhead *Rulers of London*.

⁹² Zahedieh, N *The Capital and the Colonies: London and the Atlantic Economy, 1660-1700* (Cambridge, 2010) 227-8.

⁹³ *OED*.

⁹⁴ Woodhead *Rulers of London*.

the Semington vale, especially those who heard his kinsmen, Benjamin and William Ruty, preach at Seend: both were licensed in 1672, Benjamin as a Presbyterian, William as a Baptist.⁹⁵ James Whitchurch, Apothecary, was the son of Samuel Whitchurch of Frome, one of a prominent family of mercers, drapers and salters all serving the clothiers of the area.⁹⁶ Apprenticed in 1641, he was living in Walbrook by 1661 and a Common Councilman there by 1676.⁹⁷ His continuing involvement with the Frome valley and west Wiltshire is evidenced by a deed of 1681 leasing rectorial tithes throughout the area from the wealthy businessman Sir John Banks, a leading member of both the East India and Levant Companies.⁹⁸

This small sample could be extended and qualified by further research, but suggests that the west Wiltshire merchants active in London during these decades were drawn mainly from families already prominent in the countryside, typically with reformist or dissenting religious views. It also indicates that the days of west Wiltshire's dependence on trade with the Low Countries had passed: many of these merchants were engaged not just with Mediterranean but also with the East Indies and Americas, the long-distance trades driven more by imports than exports. Some came from clothier families, but others – like James Whitchurch – from merchant families in the country towns. Two more such men were John and Francis Eyles, sons of the Devizes merchant John Eyles; they moved to London after the Great Fire to operate in the southern triangular trade in slaves from West Africa and sugar from Barbados.⁹⁹ For this generation of west Wiltshire traders, cloth was far from an exclusive priority.

Both under the Protectorate and during the Restoration commercially-minded gentry from the Frome valley and west Wiltshire also found opportunities as lawyers and financiers in the capital. John Ashe's son-in-law John Shaw made himself indispensable to Clarendon and was part of a consortium which leased the farm of customs in 1662 and 1667.¹⁰⁰ From 1663 one of the Ashes' neighbours at Beckington, the fast-rising James Hayes of Lincoln's Inn, was involved in a series of land conveyances with the young Edward Hungerford of

⁹⁵ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Melksham: Protestant Nonconformity'.

⁹⁶ In 1690 William Whitchurch, Gentleman of Frome Selwood, left his wife Anne 'the shop now used in the saltery trade' and gave mourning rings to Richard Yerbury of London and William Brewer of Trowbridge: TNA PROB 11/404/191.

⁹⁷ Woodhead *Rulers of London*.

⁹⁸ WRO 212B/108.

⁹⁹ Grassby, R 'Sir John Eyles d 1703' and 'Sir Francis Eyles c1650-1715' *ODNB*.

¹⁰⁰ Ferris 'John Shaw'.

Farleigh Castle.¹⁰¹ Hayes married Hungerford's sister, the widowed Lady Falkland, and further enhanced his status in 1666 by becoming secretary to Prince Rupert.¹⁰² By 1670, after backing two French fur-traders to establish a trading post in Canada,¹⁰³ Hayes became secretary of the newly formed Hudson's Bay Company, with Prince Rupert as governor and Ashley Cooper a board member.¹⁰⁴

For the London élite, there were quicker ways of making a fortune than buying and selling cloth, but in the 1660s the trade still accounted for between half and two-thirds of London's exports by value.¹⁰⁵ Improving domestic manufacture to stimulate overseas trade was of key interest to all parts of educated society. When the Royal Society began meeting regularly soon after the Restoration, one of the first lectures given by Sir William Petty, on 27 November 1661, was 'Of Making Cloth with Sheep's Wool';¹⁰⁶ the following year he delivered 'An Apparatus to the History of the Common Practices of Dyeing'.¹⁰⁷ In December 1661 James Long of Draycot was admitted as a member; as was James Hayes in September the following year, and John Aubrey in January 1663.¹⁰⁸ These men, under their first president William Brounker,¹⁰⁹ were all from gentry families, but many of their wide-ranging experiments and researches were intended to improve the nation's trading competitiveness in the commercial struggle against the Dutch. Enhancing the quality of cloth (and thus the demand for wool) was in the interest of both merchants and gentry.

The Plague, the Fire and the Dutch blockade of the Thames produced a heart attack in the London merchant economy, and ended the commercial importance of the Ashe family there. John Ashe's son, the Antwerp merchant John Ashe of Teffont, may have suffered losses for in 1666 he sold the east aisle of Beckington church to James Hayes, 'the vault only excepted wherein the body of my father John Ashe now lyeth interred'.¹¹⁰ By the time Blackwell Hall reopened in 1671, the business of the west Wiltshire clothiers was largely being conducted not by family members but by independent factors working on

¹⁰¹ PWDRO 74/121/11(a-b); 69/M/2/120; 69/M/2/183; 234/14; 149/106.

¹⁰² Hannam, AA 'Sir James Hayes (1676-c1731)' *HoP 1690-1715*, a profile of his son, gives summary details of Haye senior's career.

¹⁰³ Nute, GL 'Medard Chouart de Grosseilliers' in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto, 2003-) accessed online.

¹⁰⁴ Roy, I 'Rupert, prince and count palatine (1619-82)' *ODNB*.

¹⁰⁵ Thirsk, J (ed) *The Restoration* (London, 1976) 143.

¹⁰⁶ Birch, T *The History of the Royal Society* (London, 1756) 55-65.

¹⁰⁷ Sprat, T *History of the Royal Society* ed. Cope, JI & Jones, HW (1667; rp St Louis, 1958) 284-301.

¹⁰⁸ Birch *Royal Society* 66, 111, 166.

¹⁰⁹ Kinsman of William Brounker of Erlestoke.

¹¹⁰ SRO DD\BR\bs/1. John Ashe II was the second son of John Ashe of Freshford.

commission, of whom the most notable would turn out to be a Haberdasher named Henry Cornish.¹¹¹ By the 1680s this man, probably a kinsman of Thomas Cornish of Frome who had been a partner of the clothier James Hayes,¹¹² would represent the majority of the clothiers of Fromewater, from Beckington and Westbury to Trowbridge and Bradford. His inventory of 1683, which provides an extensive list of his customers,¹¹³ will be discussed in the final chapter of this study, but for now we return to west Wiltshire in the 1650s and 1660s.

3 Gentry and clothiers in west Wiltshire

Following the execution of the King, west Wiltshire entered a period of relative stability. Resident gentry continued as JPs under the Commonwealth, but were required now to cooperate with parliamentary commissions such as that for the ejection of scandalous ministers and schoolmasters.¹¹⁴ With James Thynne keeping a low profile, Hungerford and Bayntun remained the dominant families, but the rivalry between them was reduced by time and distance. Edward Hungerford's widow Margaret remained at Corsham,¹¹⁵ and still held a string of estates across the clothing district: her jointure manors included Warminster as well as Rode, Iford and Rowley along the Frome.¹¹⁶ But the new lord of Farleigh Castle, her royalist brother-in-law Anthony Hungerford, lived mainly at Black Bourton in Oxfordshire and at Hungerford House in London.¹¹⁷ Edward Bayntun had moved to Avebury, from where he arranged the building of a new house to replace the ruined Bromham,¹¹⁸ this time at Spye on a forested ridge above the broad Avon vale. There he was visited in 1654 by his kinsman John Evelyn, who described 'a long single house of two low storeys, along the precipice of an incomparable prospect.' Despite this splendid position, Bayntun had chosen to build a house 'just like a long barn, and has not a window in the prospect side,'¹¹⁹ perhaps for protection from the brunt of the southwest gales.

¹¹¹ De Krey, GS 'Henry Cornish (d 1695)' *ODNB*.

¹¹² St John's, Frome 'Old Church Book'.

¹¹³ TNA E 178/6737.

¹¹⁴ Hurstfield 'County Government: Civil Affairs'.

¹¹⁵ TNA E 317/WILTS/315.

¹¹⁶ WRO 490/1532.

¹¹⁷ *VCH Oxfordshire* vol 15 'Black Bourton: Manors and Other Estates' states that in 1657 the manor house was bequeathed to his widow for life, so this was perhaps her normal country residence.

¹¹⁸ Lancaster & Thrush 'Sir Edward Bayntun'.

¹¹⁹ De Beer, ES *The Diary of John Evelyn* vol 3 (Oxford, 1955) 112. Bayntun was related to Evelyn's wife.

But the social balance in this part of Wiltshire had been significantly shifted during the 1640s and the trend would continue. During the 1650s estates accumulated by James Ley I were acquired by John Ashe. In 1652 he purchased the ancestral seat of Teffont Evias, near Wilton, which had been sequestered.¹²⁰ By 1656 he also acquired the reversion of the capital messuage of Heywood,¹²¹ built by the 1st Earl of Marlborough at the height of his career in the late 1620s.¹²² In 1657 Samuel Ashe, John's younger brother, bought the manor of Langley Burrell north of Chippenham and just five miles from John Aubrey's birthplace of Easton Piercy;¹²³ Samuel had apparently ended his direct involvement with cloth-making when he leased his fulling mills at Stowford in 1654.¹²⁴ Before John Ashe's death in 1659 his lands at Westbury, Melksham and Fyfield near Pewsey had passed to his elder son James; those at Teffont and Beckington were inherited by John, the Antwerp merchant.¹²⁵ By then the family was established right across the county, while Ashe's widow Elizabeth and his younger brother Benjamin remained at Freshford.¹²⁶

Aubrey's kinsman John Danvers also became one of the greatest landowners in west Wiltshire, inheriting estates at Westbury from his brother Lord Danby in 1644; but when Danvers died in 1655 the heirs to his Wiltshire properties were his daughters by Elizabeth Dauntsey, neither of whom lived in the county, and the five-year-old son of his third wife.¹²⁷ Edward Bayntun died two years after Danvers and was succeeded by his son, another Edward.¹²⁸ The passing of these magnates brought a symbolic end to the Caroline generation of resident grandees and to the era for which Aubrey's 'Preface' and his later *Brief Lives* were in many respects an elegy.

The 'Preface' in fact was prompted by this change of order. As Aubrey relates, the decision to embark on a survey of the antiquities of Wiltshire was taken at 'a meeting of gentlemen

¹²⁰ Barclay 'John Ashe'.

¹²¹ WRO 929/1. The reversion did not mature until 1670, after which Heywood became the home of John Ashe III: Henning, BD 'Thomas Wancklyn (d 1694) *HoP 1660-90*; Ferris, JP 'John Ashe (c1653-87)' *HoP 1660-90*.

¹²² Fry & Fry *Wiltshire IPMs* 232, 235.

¹²³ Henning 'Samuel Ashe'. The purchase followed a substantial inheritance from his mother, the widowed Grace Ashe of Westcombe: WRO 118/108.

¹²⁴ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Wingfield: Mills'.

¹²⁵ PROB 11/293/280: will of John Ashe of Freshford.

¹²⁶ Benjamin was described as 'of Freshford' in his 1670 marriage licence: Chester, JL (ed) *Allegations for Marriage Licenses issued by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, 1558-1699* (London, 1886), but 'of Iford' in his will, proved in 1673: TNA PROB 11/342/14.

¹²⁷ Both daughters married courtiers: Elizabeth to Robert Villiers, later Lord Purbeck; Anne to Henry Lee, a neighbour of Henry Danvers at Cornbury. The mother of John Danvers junior was Grace Hewitt or Hewes: Kelsey 'Sir John Danvers'.

¹²⁸ Henning, BD 'Sir Edward Bayntun (1618-79)' *HoP 1660-90*.

at the Devizes, for choosing of Knights of the Shire' in March 1660.¹²⁹ There the republican candidates Edward Bayntun IV and Walter St John were easily out-voted by supporters of Anthony Ashley Cooper and John Ernle,¹³⁰ including Aubrey's own connections. One of these, William Yorke of West Lavington, who agreed to survey the Middle Division of the county,¹³¹ was a professional lawyer; steward of Melksham hundred¹³² for the Danvers family, he numbered Philip Herbert, 5th Earl of Pembroke among his clients.¹³³ Yorke no doubt encouraged the thirty-four year old Aubrey to undertake the survey of the Northern Division with the help of Thomas Gore, John Ernle and Jeffrey Daniel,¹³⁴ whose estates were ranged across the county at Alderton, Calne and Marlborough respectively. These men were conservatives but not overt royalists. Further assistance would be provided by George Worthe's son-in-law, the republican Robert Nicholas of Roundway,¹³⁵ who had been one of the assize judges seized by Penruddock at Salisbury and threatened with hanging,¹³⁶ and was described by Aubrey as 'the greatest antiquary, as to evidences, that this county hath had in memory of man': Nicholas would provide access to his memoranda.¹³⁷

After fresh elections in 1661, however, the pendulum swung strongly to the royalists, benefiting a different group of Aubrey's acquaintances and benefactors. Charles Seymour and Henry Hyde were elected knights of the shire.¹³⁸ As Powell notes, Aubrey had known Seymour since at least 1648, when Seymour invited him to join a hunt across the Marlborough Downs for which Penruddock was also part of the company.¹³⁹ James Long of Draycot, whom Aubrey at Easton Piercy may have known as a near neighbour and later numbered among his *amici*,¹⁴⁰ was said during the 1660s to have 'more interest than anyone on the Avon,' though avoiding open involvement in politics at this time.¹⁴¹ Walter Long of Whaddon, who returned from exile in 1659, recovered his office as Registrar of Chancery, and was made a baronet in 1661.¹⁴² The parliamentarians were frozen out. Robert Nicholas was obliged to retire from the bench; he took up residence at Seend and in

¹²⁹ Aubrey *Wiltshire* 3.

¹³⁰ Naylor 'Wiltshire'.

¹³¹ Aubrey *Wiltshire* 3.

¹³² WRO 947/1554.

¹³³ Ferris, JP 'William Yorke (c1609-66)' *HoP 1660-90*; WRO 947/1554.

¹³⁴ Aubrey *Wiltshire* 3.

¹³⁵ See Chapter 4.4.

¹³⁶ Orr 'Robert Nicholas'.

¹³⁷ Aubrey *Wiltshire* 3.

¹³⁸ Naylor 'Wiltshire'.

¹³⁹ Powell *Aubrey* 60-1.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid* 248.

¹⁴¹ Henning, BD 'Sir James Long (1617-92)' *HoP 1660-90*.

¹⁴² Lancaster & Healy 'Sir Walter Long'.

December 1664 was denounced for declaring that he had drafted the charge against Charles I and would do so again.¹⁴³ James Ashe was dismissed from the commission of the peace in Somerset and replaced as Recorder of Bath,¹⁴⁴ while his father-in-law James Harrison, a former parliamentary commander, lost his grand Middlesex estate and was forced into exile.¹⁴⁵ John Danvers' estates were excluded from the 1660 Act of Indemnity and forfeited to the Crown.¹⁴⁶ His ancestral manor of Dauntsey was granted to the Duke of York,¹⁴⁷ and the Earl of Clarendon secured the Cornbury estate in Oxfordshire as his price for restoring most of the remaining Wiltshire estates to Danvers' son and daughters.¹⁴⁸ During this tense and abrasive decade the anger of the royalists was vented on religious dissent. In 1660 the wealthy clothier Isaac Selfe of Market Lavington was jailed for withholding tithes,¹⁴⁹ in 1663 sixteen Quakers were arrested,¹⁵⁰ and two men were imprisoned for nearly ten years for attending meetings at Selfe's house.¹⁵¹ But the militant Quakers were far less numerous than the baptists and presbyterians who also attended religious meetings away from the parish churches. Such events had been recorded since the early 1650s: as early as 1654, for example, adult women had been baptised at the pond on Devizes green.¹⁵² An attempt to stifle dissent by ejecting non-compliant ministers in the first two years of the Restoration saw over sixty clergy dismissed, but about half – including the presbyterian ministers Philip Hunton of Westbury and Thomas Ruty, formerly of Keevil – chose to remain in the county and preach to gatherings or 'conventicles' away from the parish churches.¹⁵³ Dissenters came from all sections of the community, 'men and women, rich and poor',¹⁵⁴ and sizeable congregations developed in or near most of the cloth towns, including Warminster, Westbury, Trowbridge, Bradford, Melksham, Devizes, Calne and Chippenham.¹⁵⁵

Many of the west Wiltshire gentry were sympathetic, especially to presbyterians. Justices including William Trenchard of Cutteridge, John Hall of Bradford and Edward Hungerford III

¹⁴³ Orr 'Robert Nicholas'.

¹⁴⁴ Barclay 'James Ashe'.

¹⁴⁵ Kelsey, S 'Sir James Harrington (1607-80)' *ODNB*.

¹⁴⁶ 12^o Charles II c 11.

¹⁴⁷ *VCH Wilts* vol 14 'Dauntsey: Manors and Other Estates'.

¹⁴⁸ Greer, G 'Anne Wharton, 1659-95' *ODNB*.

¹⁴⁹ *VCH Wilts* vol 10 'Market Lavington: Nonconformity'.

¹⁵⁰ *Report on Manuscripts from Various Collections* vol 1, Historical Manuscripts Commission 55 (London, 1901) 145.

¹⁵¹ *VCH Wilts* vol 10 'Market Lavington: Nonconformity'.

¹⁵² *Mss from Various Collections* 130.

¹⁵³ Taylor 'Schism' 64.

¹⁵⁴ Lancaster 'Nonconformity' 224.

¹⁵⁵ *ibid* 232-5.

of Farleigh protected dissenting ministers and their followers.¹⁵⁶ Justices of the Warminster and Devizes divisions were denounced to Secretary Nicholas by the royalist Henry Coker of Hill Deverill as ‘mongrel judges that were for Oliver, who proceed coldly and neglect duty,’¹⁵⁷ but the 1664 Conventicle Act was ‘almost completely ignored in rural Wiltshire.’¹⁵⁸ Despite a crackdown in 1669 instigated by Aubrey’s friend Bishop Seth Ward,¹⁵⁹ the numbers attending conventicles grew ever larger. In August 1670 1,200 presbyterians gathered on Rowde common,¹⁶⁰ and in September the following year meetings at Southwick drew crowds estimated at 1,500 and 2,000 people.¹⁶¹ An outraged royalist, John Eyre of Chalfield near Bradford, denounced Hungerford and Bayntun to the bishop,¹⁶² and for a few months they were stung into vigorous action, particularly against Quakers, before relapsing once more into *de facto* tolerance.¹⁶³

The tendency of some west Wiltshire justices to shield their neighbours from government policies which might otherwise be resisted was also seen in the operation of the Hearth Tax, introduced in 1662 to provide funding for the royal household.¹⁶⁴ Assessment and collection was to be administered by the sheriff, who in 1663 was Henry Coker. He was well aware of the widespread antagonism to the Crown in west Wiltshire and had earlier resisted appointment as a deputy lieutenant, fearing reprisal and legal challenge. Coker’s attempts to collect the tax of one shilling per chimney were obstructed across the region and by 1668 he was still £777 in arrears. Amendments to the original act introduced exemptions for the poor, for homes with fewer than two chimneys and for artisans such as dyers using furnaces in their business. Lists of the exempt were drawn up in each tithing by churchwardens or overseers of poor, and were certified by justices in large numbers. Resistance continued despite further reforms in 1665, which transferred collection first to county receivers and subsequently to London syndicates working through local commission agents with the power to force entry. In Norrey’s words, ‘the collectors required the co-

¹⁵⁶ Norrey ‘Restoration Regime’ 804-8.

¹⁵⁷ Lancaster ‘Nonconformity’ 155, citing *CSPD Charles II, 1661-2* 155.

¹⁵⁸ Taylor ‘Schism’ 288.

¹⁵⁹ Norrey ‘Restoration Regime’ 806-7.

¹⁶⁰ Lancaster ‘Nonconformity’ 133.

¹⁶¹ *Mss from Various Collections* 151.

¹⁶² Bayntun, E *The Commonplace Book of Sir Edward Bayntun of Bromham* ed Freeman, J, WRS 43 (Devizes, 1988) 21-3.

¹⁶³ Lancaster ‘Nonconformity’ 134-6.

¹⁶⁴ This paragraph is based on Norrey ‘Restoration Regime’ 797-802.

operation of the local justices to give them coercive power; this was withheld when the magistracy regarded revenue agents as a destabilizing threat in difficult times.¹⁶⁵

The difficult times were those already noted, the decade-long depression in the cloth export trade caused by the wars with Spain and Holland, compounded by the Plague and the Fire. By comparison the early years of the Interregnum had been far more stable, at least until Cromwell's assault on Spain. For the clothiers and their workforce and local wool suppliers, the 1650s seem to have been a period of strong growth after the disruption of Civil War. In 1655 weaving rates were increased by 1s per cloth – probably equivalent to an extra day's pay¹⁶⁶ – and spinning by 1/2d per pound, suggesting a buoyant labour market.¹⁶⁷ Despite the war with Spain, which so aggrieved the London merchants, the greater clothiers were thriving. In 1657 Paul Methuen was confident enough to buy the freehold of the large medieval house he already leased in Bradford,¹⁶⁸ and the same year Isaac Selfe of Beanacre bought the manor house in Melksham from the trustees of John Danvers' estate.¹⁶⁹ In 1659, the year John Ashe of Freshford died, Methuen brought to Bradford the Dutch spinner Derricke Jonsen of Amsterdam¹⁷⁰ and bought 159 bags of Spanish wool: a very substantial quantity.¹⁷¹ Also in 1659 the clothier John Winsmore of Great Cheverell bought the fulling mill and house at Hurst from Henry Long of Rood Ashton.¹⁷² In 1664 the dyer Edward Halliday, perhaps a kinsman of Lady Hungerford, paid £400 for a lease of the demesne farm of Warminster Scudamore from her nephew Edward Hungerford,¹⁷³ including common of pasture for six oxen and a hundred sheep.¹⁷⁴

By 1662, however, depression had set in again. In Westbury, 250 inhabitants petitioned the justices for relief claiming that 'the trade of clothing...is become as nothing.'¹⁷⁵ In June 1665 the Plague drove the Court from London to Salisbury,¹⁷⁶ and when plague appeared there

¹⁶⁵ Norrey 'Restoration Regime' 800.

¹⁶⁶ See Appendix 3.

¹⁶⁷ Mann 'Textile Industries: Cloth, 1640-1790'.

¹⁶⁸ Rogers 'Paul Methuen'.

¹⁶⁹ WRO 47/1457.

¹⁷⁰ Mann Textile Industries: Cloth, 1640-1790'.

¹⁷¹ Rogers 'Paul Methuen'. Rogers does not give the value of this purchase, but at the rate of £28 per bag paid by Methuen in June 1657 it would have been £4,452. A bag of Spanish wool contained about 200 lbs.

¹⁷² WRO 947/1427.

¹⁷³ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Warminster: Manors'; 'Upton Scudamore: Manors'.

¹⁷⁴ Longleat House: Wiltshire, Warminster 2.5 02/07/1664.

¹⁷⁵ *Mss from Various Collections* 144.

¹⁷⁶ Porter *Great Plague* 40; *VCH Wilts* vol 6 'Salisbury: City Politics and Parliamentary Representation since 1612'.

too the Court moved on to Oxford in September.¹⁷⁷ In late July St James's Fair in Bristol was cancelled¹⁷⁸ and as late as January 1666 the justices prohibited tradesmen bringing goods to Wiltshire from London or Southampton.¹⁷⁹ During the latter half of 1665 few clothiers or carriers from Wiltshire can have risked the journey to Blackwell Hall, even if it remained open, and cloths held by factors or merchants in the summer of 1666 may well have been consumed by the Fire.

The notebook of a small-scale clothier, William Gaby of Bromham, which includes his transactions throughout the 1660s, is therefore of exceptional interest.¹⁸⁰ Between 1664 and 1667 Gaby sent his factor Richard Scott a total of about fifty cloths, including ten in 1665 'which lay there in the sickness time.' Scott sold none between August 1664 and April 1666, and the value of his sales fell from £67 for ten cloths in August 1664 to £60 and £61 in 1667, after the destruction of Blackwell Hall. Gaby's carrier William Webb made about six journeys over the same period, with a gap between midsummer 1665 and spring 1666, and then two journeys at Christmas 1666 and Lady Day (March 25) 1667.¹⁸¹ After that Gaby appears to have abandoned sending cloth to London, though a series of entries for 1672 may summarize the commissioning of one or two cloths,¹⁸² and he did continue buying and selling wool and yarn into the 1680s. Mann thought that Gaby might 'already have been something of an anachronism,' but his record is nonetheless revealing. It suggests that while the catastrophes in London set back the lesser clothiers, who had paid cash for materials and labour and were left with unsold stock for months at a time, their exposure was limited by relatively low production, in Gaby's case just ten cloths at a time. These were not fine broadcloths: a value of only £6-7 per cloth suggests that Gaby's weavers were producing serge or coarse medley cloths. He was not put out of business by the delay in receiving payment for his stock; he stopped because the fall in value rendered the business unviable.

The 1673 will and inventory of the dyer Edward Seagry also Parsons of Calne,¹⁸³ perhaps a relative of the Richard Parsons employed by Gaby,¹⁸⁴ shed a similar light on the smaller producers of the Bromham area, several of whom seem to have sent their cloth to Calne

¹⁷⁷ Wynne, SM 'Catherine of Braganza, 1638-1705' *ODNB*.

¹⁷⁸ Porter *Great Plague* 121.

¹⁷⁹ *Mss from Various Collections* 147.

¹⁸⁰ Coward, E 'William Gaby, his Booke' *WAM* 46 (1932-4) 50-7, 336-49.

¹⁸¹ *ibid* 52. The dates given by Coward have not been adjusted to a year beginning 1 January.

¹⁸² Coward *William Gaby* 55.

¹⁸³ WRO P26/204.

¹⁸⁴ Coward *William Gaby* 54.

rather than Devizes for finishing. Seagry left his widow Alicia 'all my shop of tools belonging to dressing of cloth and also all my dyeing vats and furnaces', and his inventory lists a ton of woad worth £16 but only £2 worth of other dyestuffs. In the chamber over the shop were sixty yards of serge valued at £6, eighteen yards of medley at £3 12s and twelve yards of fine cloth at £4 10s. He also had sixteen yards of dyed cloth worth £2 and thirty-eight yards of white cloth at £3 10s. These stocks throw doubt on Mann's contention that 'From the Restoration onwards the bulk of the Wiltshire cloth was woven of dyed wool,'¹⁸⁵ and may also suggest that the local or regional market for coarse cloths was by this date able to support more spinners and weavers than has usually been acknowledged.

While Seagry ran a fairly modest business – his inventory was valued at only £200 – his contemporary Nathaniel Tylie at Hurst was in a different league, with appraised goods totalling £1,800 including sixteen pairs of shears in his workshop, at least two looms and a workhouse for carding and spinning wool and spooling yarn.¹⁸⁶ His 1673 inventory reveals Tylie as one of a new breed in west Wiltshire, a clothier with direct control of all the manufacturing processes, who also ran a sizeable if dispersed farming business. As well as a bull, twenty-five kine and several heifers and calves at Hurst, he grazed seven young beasts on Westbury common; and he had 230 sheep, of which eighty-one were at Westbury, seventy at Littleton and thirty-six at Imber on the Plain. At Hurst he had a dyeing furnace as well as a fulling mill, and he held another mill at Seend Head. Each mill held a variety of cloths, ranging in value from £20 for a fine grey to £9 for a 'white mark' say.¹⁸⁷ Tylie seems to have sold cloth locally by the yard, for he also had single pieces of several types of cloth: coarse and fine black; coarse and fine white; grey and medley broadcloth; and white and blue serge. Turnover must have been brisk, for he held some £75 worth of wool, about a third of it Spanish, and six cloths on the loom. Most of his production seems to have been of better quality cloths. Of the twenty-three complete cloths listed, five were Spanish and three fine, while five were serges and only one was described as coarse. It is a reasonable assumption that most of Tylie's production was destined for London. There he used at least three factors: he had eighteen cloths unsold 'in Mr Langworth's hands' worth £260 (about

¹⁸⁵ Mann 'Textile Industries: Cloth, 1640-1790'. In 1674 as many as 30,000 people were said to be employed in producing white pack cloths in Wiltshire: *CSPD 1673-5* 315.

¹⁸⁶ TNA PROB 4/6145.

¹⁸⁷ A 'say' was a type of coarse cloth: OED.

£14 each);¹⁸⁸ two medley cloths worth £10 each in Mr Curtis's hands and a pack of ten cheaper white cloths in Mr Scott's hands worth £57.¹⁸⁹

Gaby, Seagry and Tylie were all operating on the eastern margins of the west Wiltshire cloth district, where they co-existed with the major operators of the Semington Brook, most notably the Sumners who will be discussed in the next section of this chapter. Similar independent operations competed with the great clothiers along the Frome valley, where for some time after John Ashe's death in 1659 his widow Elizabeth continued her husband's business at Freshford.¹⁹⁰ These decades, however, also saw country clothiers converge on the town of Trowbridge as a commercial centre. William Brewer of Lullington, son of the say-dyed clothier noted in Chapter 4.3, had established a business there by 1650; in 1661 he was styled 'gentleman' when he acquired more land there from John and Richard Yerbury, perhaps reflecting a business alliance between the two families.¹⁹¹ Brewer's relatives continued to hold the Staplemead fulling mill at Lullington, and after 1666 Brewer succeeded Paul Methuen at Edward Hungerford's mill at Iford,¹⁹² one of the most valuable on the northern Frome. In the 1680s John Aubrey would state that William Brewer 'driveth the greatest trade for medleys of any clothier in England,'¹⁹³ and he was already prominent nationally by 1673, when the Privy Council chose to send twenty-three Dutchmen 'skilled in the art of making fine cloth,' who sought refuge from the Franco-Dutch war, to the care of William Brewer of Trowbridge.¹⁹⁴

Robert Houlton, originally from Bradford, was another prosperous clothier in Trowbridge during the 1650s and 1660s.¹⁹⁵ A close friend of the Bradford Yerburys,¹⁹⁶ he had bought

¹⁸⁸ Probably John Langworth, Merchant Taylor, whose 1678 will names Henry Cornish as an executor: TNA PROB 11/356/604.

¹⁸⁹ Perhaps the Richard Scott who factored for Gaby, see above.

¹⁹⁰ In his will John Ashe asked his executors to ensure that Elizabeth had sufficient cash to complete the cloths unfinished at the time of his death, and left her his utensils of trade. Although his 'estate of cloth wool and yarn' had passed into the possession of their merchant son John, Elizabeth may have continued the business during the minority of a younger son Edward, the designated heir of Freshford: TNA PROB 11/293/280. The widespread belief (repeated for example in Barclay 'John Ashe') that John Ashe's business passed to his son-in-law Paul Methuen may be a myth initiated by Aubrey, who stated that Methuen 'succeeded his father-in-law in the trade': Aubrey *Natural History* 113. In fact Methuen's son Anthony acquired the Freshford mill from the Ashe family at the end of the seventeenth century: Rogers *Woollen Mills* 195.

¹⁹¹ Devon RO 281M/T784.

¹⁹² Rogers *Woollen Mills* 193.

¹⁹³ Aubrey *Natural History* 113

¹⁹⁴ Mann 'Textile Industries: Cloth, 1640-1790'.

¹⁹⁵ Rogers, KH 'Trowbridge Clothiers and their Houses' in Harte, NB & Ponting, KG *Textile History and Economic History* (Manchester, 1973) 142-5. Except where otherwise noted, the information in this paragraph comes from this source.

the old Langford house in Fore Street from Edward Hyde, later the Earl of Clarendon, in 1641.¹⁹⁷ In 1663 his son Joseph married Elinor Cooper of Clifford Mill in Beckington, where John Ashe of Teffont was now lord of the manor,¹⁹⁸ and Joseph Houlton was still 'of Clifford' in 1668 when he acquired two closes in Trowbridge shortly before his father's death. His sister Katherine married another new arrival, Edward Mortimer, who seems to have moved to Trowbridge from Fyfield near Marlborough sometime before 1663. By 1670 both Joseph Houlton and Edward Mortimer were leading members of the Baptist congregation meeting in Trowbridge and at Southwick, whose first church would be built around 1700 on land belonging to Joseph Houlton.

Such men were evidently generating significant wealth even during the 1660s, when there is every sign that rural landowners were being squeezed by a combination of high taxes, declining rents and – at the end of the decade – a fall in wool prices. The trend of disposals by the gentry continued, with west Wiltshire estates attracting financial buyers. In 1664 the merchant John Eyles of Exeter bought the manor of Hilperton, formerly owned by John Danvers, from Henry Hyde, Lord Cornbury, acting as a trustee for the Crown.¹⁹⁹ In 1666 Charles Fane, Earl of Westmoreland, sold the Manor of Seend and Seend Row acquired by his ancestor William Sharington at the Dissolution to Richard Blake,²⁰⁰ a London-based property developer.²⁰¹ Five years later it was John Aubrey's turn, obliged to sell Easton Piercy to clear his debts.²⁰²

4 Lords and tenants of Bulkington vale

Documentary evidence is patchy for the village of Bulkington in these decades. Entries in the parish registers were disrupted during the Commonwealth, and while the court book for the Lambert manor of Bulkington recorded six-monthly meetings of the homage up to 1664, presentments were few and mostly concerned with house repair.²⁰³ Even so, enough records survive nearby to enable a patchwork image to be constructed. The churchwardens' book for Steeple Ashton gives a valuable account of parish affairs, and

¹⁹⁶ Boucher, R 'Genealogical Notes on the Houlton Family' *WNQ* 6 (1911) 83-4.

¹⁹⁷ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Trowbridge: Lesser Estates'.

¹⁹⁸ SRO DD\BR\bs/1.

¹⁹⁹ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Trowbridge: Manors'; WRO 947/1493/2. Cornbury was Clarendon's son.

²⁰⁰ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Melksham: Manors'.

²⁰¹ TNA PROB 11/374/96.

²⁰² Powell *Aubrey* 137.

²⁰³ WRO 288/2.

especially of the collection of the poor rate, up until 1668.²⁰⁴ The court book for the hundred of Melksham covers the whole period from 1648 to 1672; while its content is restricted to the maintenance of roads and highways, which had earlier been the responsibility of the manor courts, it provides full listings of high constable and constables of the tithings including Bulkington.²⁰⁵ All of these sources, and especially the last, give an overwhelming impression of stability within the community, despite the persistence of political, religious and economic tension. But the population probably declined during the period, as a result of war deaths, out-migration and a period of high mortality between 1666 and 1670, especially in 1667 and 1668 when there were twenty-five burials each year at Keevil.²⁰⁶ By 1670 the combined population of Keevil and Bulkington may have fallen to about 500 from a high of 600 in 1600.²⁰⁷

Stability is especially apparent in the records of Melksham hundred. For most of the period the steward was William Yorke of West Lavington, the intended co-author with John Aubrey of the *Survey* of Wiltshire. Yorke's appointment was unaffected by the death of John Danvers in 1655 or his attainder in 1661, and when Yorke himself died in 1666,²⁰⁸ he was replaced by his deputy. On 25 April 1650 we find Robert Collins ordered to repair the millway at Bulkington; in October 1665 he was high constable of the hundred. The same few families were ordered to provide the Bulkington tithingman in turn: Collins, Dowse, Flower, Gaysford, Harris. When John Lambert, a wealthier man, was chosen he sent two deputies.²⁰⁹ The main responsibility of the court was to keep the roads passable in the clay vales, so susceptible to flooding: precise and detailed orders were given about who was to scour which ditch and brook; in April 1656 the men of Bulkington and Seend were ordered to work together to scour the Westmoor Brook, with both tithingmen to supervise and present any who refused to co-operate. Over the two decades the main evidence of social change is merely in the passing of responsibility to younger men. The record is dull, yet the importance of this work to the local economy can hardly be exaggerated: it enabled crops to grow without rotting in the ground, kept pastures firm and roads passable. Attendance at the twice-yearly court brought the leading men of the community into regular contact with each other, with the most prominent serving as high constable. The lord through his

²⁰⁴ Knubley, EP (ed) & Willis, FM (transcriber) 'Steeple Ashton Churchwardens Accounts' *WNQ* 7 (1911-13) 187-8, 224-8, 279-82, 322-31.

²⁰⁵ WRO 947/1554.

²⁰⁶ Richardson 'Annals' 104.

²⁰⁷ See Appendix 4.

²⁰⁸ Ferris 'William Yorke'.

²⁰⁹ WRO 947/1554: 26 September 1651.

steward gained a close knowledge of individuals' loyalties, strengths and weaknesses, while operational relationships could foster commercial dealings across the hundred.

The Steeple Ashton churchwardens' book gives a more nuanced picture. Again it was the leading men of the community who were elected each year, with the names of Beach, Bennet, Blagden, Long, Markes and Martyn appearing repeatedly, but the focus was on collecting money for the relief of the poor and the repair of the church, damaged by Waller's forces during the Civil War.²¹⁰ To ensure effective collection, dues were payable monthly from 1650,²¹¹ but since in most years there were only small surpluses remaining after disbursements, the churchwardens raised funds by selling seats in the aisles at around 2s 6d per seat,²¹² and burial places for families within the church at around 5s.²¹³ In 1654, after a year in which outgoings to the poor exceeded receipts, the churchwardens agreed to make no disbursements to 'wandering people or brief bearers', and a further rate of 3s 6d per yardland was ordered for reparations.²¹⁴ These measures brought the accounts into credit, and in the 1660s further income was generated by the sale of 'improved seats' at the much higher price of 6s 8d.²¹⁵ The same year the poor rate was increased to 3s 4d the yardland and in 1661 the stock passed on to the incoming churchwardens reached a record £27 19s 6d, but still only generated a surplus of £2 5s 1d.²¹⁶ Seats, graves and 'ringing of the great bell' simply did not produce enough cash to meet the increasing demand, so in 1662 a new rate of 5s 4d the yardland was set for funding a new bell and ringing loft, perhaps a delayed celebration of the King's Restoration.²¹⁷ In 1663 a statutory requirement that the parish must contribute to the relief of maimed soldiers and seamen and of prisoners at the King's Bench and Marshalsea led to a reassessment how the burden should be shared.²¹⁸ In 1664 the loan stock of £48 from charitable bequests was recalled from those that had borrowed it, due to fear of losses, and the vestry ordered that anyone letting a house or dwelling to strangers must first give a bond to the churchwardens to pay their future charge and also have their monthly assessment raised by 20s.²¹⁹ By 1665 the disbursements

²¹⁰ A rate to repair the stained glass had been raised in 1648: *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Steeple Ashton: Churches'.

²¹¹ Knubley 'Steeple Ashton' *WNQ* 7, 187.

²¹² *ibid* 186 (1649).

²¹³ *ibid* 225 (1653).

²¹⁴ *ibid* 225.

²¹⁵ *ibid* 228.

²¹⁶ *ibid* 279.

²¹⁷ *ibid* 280.

²¹⁸ *ibid* 280.

²¹⁹ *ibid* 281.

to the poor had risen to £44 4s 1d, again only just covered by the income.²²⁰ In February 1666, with the Plague still active in London and Salisbury, Henry Long Esquire of Rood Ashton agreed to undertake at his own charge the installation of a sixth bell, accepting in return a churchwardens' contribution of £18 and the old sanctus bell. But there was no pause in the requirement for additional income. At the same meeting the churchwardens ordered a new rate of 6s per yardland for further repairs to the church.²²¹ Thus the accounts demonstrate not only increasing need in the community, but also the continuing willingness of property owners to meet it.

Like the Melksham hundred court book, the churchwardens' accounts reflect a displacement of the manorial courts from much of the governance they had undertaken during the Jacobean era, when the Lambert court of Keevil and Bulkington had itself dealt with issues of poverty and vagrancy, and with drainage and road maintenance.²²² The manor court was now concerned only with tenancy. It was administered throughout the two decades from 1650 to 1670 by the Warminster lawyer Robert Beach, who had acquired lands at West Ashton by marriage to Grace Flower in 1634²²³ and became a churchwarden of Steeple Ashton and an important figure in west Wiltshire. As steward for Sir Walter Long of Whaddon, returned from exile, Beach also presided over the manorial courts of Whaddon and Southwick for a fee of 10s per session,²²⁴ and in 1669 and 1670 he was steward of the manor of Bradford for John Paulet, 5th Marquess of Winchester.²²⁵ At Keevil and Bulkington, Beach was the effective authority on behalf of the widowed Elizabeth Lambert until her death in 1666, when she was resident at St Andrew's, Holborn.²²⁶ Beach retained his stewardship under her son Thomas Lambert II of Boyton, a captain in the Wiltshire militia who had been 'active against Anabaptists and separatists' in 1661 and whose uncle Thomas was Archdeacon of Sarum.²²⁷ Beach's diplomatic skills may have been tested by Lambert's politics, which were probably not shared by many of his tenants.

No conclusive evidence has been found of the community's religious preference, but there is little doubt that some if not the majority of the Bulkington community would have leaned

²²⁰ *ibid* 329.

²²¹ *ibid* 330.

²²² WRO 288/1.

²²³ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Steeple Ashton: Lesser Estates'; WRO Steeple Ashton PR.

²²⁴ WRO 947/962.

²²⁵ Stote, AW 'Abstracts of Copies of Court Rolls and Other Documents Relating to the Manors of Bradford and Westwood' *WAM* (1920-22) 227.

²²⁶ TNA PROB 11/322/297.

²²⁷ Ferris, JP 'Thomas Lambert, (c1638-1692)' *HoP* 1660-90.

towards presbyterianism, while a few may have been more forceful in dissent. As has already been noted, their minister from 1646 to 1654 was Thomas Ruty, who had replaced the ejected Matthew Hynde (appointed under Laud)²²⁸ and later became a noted presbyterian preacher in west Wiltshire. Nothing is known of Samuel Forksey, who succeeded Ruty at Keevil and was ejected when Hynde returned at the Restoration,²²⁹ but he must also have been a reformist. Some villagers may have attended the nearby Baptist conventicle at Erlestoke, recorded in 1662.²³⁰ Two years later, during Elizabeth Lambert's lifetime, Thomas Greatrakes was appointed schoolmaster of Keevil parish school, no doubt a kinsman of the pre-war vicars,²³¹ but tension persisted. In 1669 there were fines at Keevil for non-payment of tithes, and reports of brawls in the churchyard.²³² From 1671 Keevil had a new vicar, the stern and litigious James Garth; but two years later Garth was appointed rector of Hilperton and left Keevil in the hands of the curate and schoolmaster William Crouch until 1684. Garth complained that his Hilperton parishioners rarely attended church, and enjoyed drinking and playing games on Sundays; but he made no such complaints about Keevil.²³³

The earliest memorials within St Leonard's, Keevil date back to this period, most notably an ornate wall monument dedicated to John Harris, citizen and alderman of London, who died at Bath in 1657. Harris was from Keevil rather than Bulkington; a girdler by trade he may have made his fortune supplying military equipment such as belts and harness to the army and had acquired several properties in London, Middlesex, Gloucester and Essex.²³⁴ He was perhaps a role model for two young men from Bulkington who migrated to London at this period to join the Carpenters' Company. In 1659 Hugh Harris, son of Robert Harris of Bulkington, cloth-finisher, bound himself apprentice to a Joseph Darvoll of the Bridgehouse; in 1667 Daniel Gaysford, son of Daniel Gaysford of Bulkington, broadweaver, bound himself to Hugh Harris.²³⁵ The first of these records, the earliest that has been found for an apprentice from Bulkington, shows that cloth was now being completed in the village.

²²⁸ CCED: Keevil. Presumably the son of one of the former vicars, Francis and Stephen.

²²⁹ WRO Keevil PR (Marriage Index).

²³⁰ Reeves, M & Morrison, J *The Diaries of Jeffery Whitaker, Schoolmaster of Bratton, 1739-41* WRS 44 (Trowbridge, 1989) lii.

²³¹ CCED: Keevil.

²³² WRO D/1/14/1/1a/108.

²³³ Spaeth *Church in an Age of Danger* 19-20; CCED.

²³⁴ TNA PROB 11/266/112.

²³⁵ Marsh, B *Records of the Worshipful Company of Carpenters* vol 1 'Apprentices Entry Books, 1654-1694' (London, 1913).

Almost certainly it was being made for Robert Collins, the owner of Bulkington mill.²³⁶ Collins died intestate by 1672, when administration was granted to his sister Margery Whitchurch.²³⁷ No inventory or account has survived for him or his father, so it is impossible to assess the scale of their activity, but it is unlikely that they achieved substantial wealth.

The surviving wills of Bulkington residents suggest instead that yeomen continued to dominate the local economy and to rely on mixed farming, though with dairy perhaps contributing more than in earlier times. Christopher Wilkins, whose inventory was taken in January 1664, was probably the tenant of the Merewether manor house and a moderately prosperous farmer. In a total inventory of £171 which makes no mention of any bonds or cash, he had nine kine worth £40, a cheese loft with 5 cwt of cheeses valued at £5 11s 8d and a buttery with five barrels. By comparison, he had only four acres of winter wheat worth £9 growing in the fields and £7 worth of corn in the barn, but this may understate his arable farming since he had three oxen, a pair of harrows, two ploughs, a waggon and other gear worth in all about £30. He had forty-nine sheep and lambs worth £16, but in summertime his flock may have been considerably larger.²³⁸ Other farmers probably prioritized sheep over kine. Both William Harris and William Mathew had sheephouses for over-wintering flocks, according to the Lambert court book.²³⁹ The total acreage of land under the plough may have reduced significantly, as yeomen converted arable lands to grazing. To the west of Bulkington, William Whitaker of Bratton had parcels of lands in several parishes, worth £45 a year, all of which were pasture and meadow except for one plough-land at Bratton.²⁴⁰

It was yeomen, not clothiers, who were the buyers when Samuel Sheppard sold freehold land in Bulkington on behalf of his stepson Francis Merewether, the heir to George Worthe's manor.²⁴¹ In 1657, during the war with Spain, Sheppard sold a copyhold to Stephen Gaysford for £200,²⁴² and in 1660 he sold a further copyhold to Worthe's kinsman Anthony Martyn of West Ashton,²⁴³ in each case reserving only quit rents and suit of

²³⁶ His father Robert died in 1657: TNA PROB 11/276/397.

²³⁷ WRO P2/C/621.

²³⁸ WRO P2/W/483.

²³⁹ WRO 288/2: Court of 26 September 1654.

²⁴⁰ Slocombe *Quarter Sessions* 280.

²⁴¹ See Chapter 4.4.

²⁴² WRO 130/36.

²⁴³ See Chapter 4.4.

court.²⁴⁴ In 1668, after the catastrophes in London and the flight of the Earl of Clarendon, it was Thomas Lambert's turn to dispose of land in Bulkington, selling the former holding of William Harris in three separate tranches, to Richard Jeffery and to James and Stephen Gaysford.²⁴⁵ Richard Hoyle has seen the widespread disposal of manorial copyholds in this period as a 'trend stimulated by two factors: the inability [of manorial lords] to profit further from customary lands except by sale and the economic weakness of a proportion of the gentry and nobility.'²⁴⁶ In these cases the decision to sell may have been triggered by short-term trading crises, weakening the demand for wool and exacerbating the effect of a long fall in the real value of rents; conversely, the yeomen's confidence to buy in a falling market reflects their expectation that the cloth trade would recover, and with it the demand for wool.

These were the social and economic trends in which John Aubrey became entangled as he struggled to keep his lands of inheritance at Easton Piercy. Aubrey's father Richard had died in 1652, leaving his widow Deborah the leasehold estate at Broad Chalke. In 1662 Deborah's mother died, and Easton Piercy passed to Deborah; perhaps she had already moved there, since Aubrey describes himself as 'of Easton Piercy' in 1659,²⁴⁷ before the electoral meeting at Devizes. In the summer of 1665, while Aubrey was in Wiltshire avoiding the Plague in London, Deborah was negotiating a loan from Joan Sumner of Sutton Benger, about five miles east of Easton Piercy, when she decided that this clothier's heiress was a suitable match for her son.²⁴⁸

Joan was the sister of Thomas Sumner, who owned both Passion's Mill at Littleton²⁴⁹ and the Seend Head Mill tenanted by Nathaniel Tylie.²⁵⁰ Joan's mother had died earlier in the year, leaving her the household stuff and nearly £200 out on loan,²⁵¹ in addition to a copyhold in Sutton Benger which Joan had inherited from her father Edward.²⁵² A possible

²⁴⁴ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Keevil: Manors'.

²⁴⁵ WRO 1976/4/35.

²⁴⁶ Hoyle 'Tenure and the Land Market' 16.

²⁴⁷ Powell *Aubrey* 310.

²⁴⁸ Except where otherwise noted, this account is based on Powell *Aubrey* 115-26. Since Powell's narrative is not always chronological and contains some minor errors it has been checked where possible from the sources he cites. The additional evidence cited below confirms Powell's general reliability.

²⁴⁹ WRO 1461/623 & 625. Thomas Sumner married Agnes Blagden, daughter of the Keevil-born clothier William Blagden, of Great Hinton near Littleton: PROB 11/340/385.

²⁵⁰ See section 3 above.

²⁵¹ WRO P3/S/417.

²⁵² TNA PROB 11/239/400.

snag was that Joan was already betrothed to a kinsman, Samuel Gaysford of Bulkington,²⁵³ but this was somehow overcome. Joan's attorney drew up a contract for her marriage to Aubrey, who obtained a licence at Salisbury on 11 April 1666.²⁵⁴ That summer Aubrey 'waiting then upon Joan', stayed with her other brother John Sumner at Seend and attended the local revel.²⁵⁵ In Seend, Aubrey noted later, 'the good houses were built by the clothiers,'²⁵⁶ and he was caught up with commercial possibilities. He enthused over the iron-rich waters of John Sumner's courtyard well and tried to interest the physicians at Bath in its health benefits; when they demurred he placed an advertisement in 'Mr Lilly's Almanack'. The following summer, claimed Aubrey, 'there came so much company that the village could not contain them, and they are now preparing for building of houses against the summer. John Sumner sayeth (whose well is best) that it will be worth to him £200 per annum.'²⁵⁷

But at some point during this entrepreneurial flurry, Joan Sumner thought better of marriage to Aubrey and a fierce dispute broke out. In February 1667 Aubrey sued for breach of promise at the consistory court at Salisbury.²⁵⁸ Retaliation soon followed. At some stage Joan had given Aubrey bonds held for debts; amongst them one from William Yerbury, of Queenfield near Beanacre,²⁵⁹ from whom Aubrey demanded payment. Before the year's end Joan sued both Yerbury and Aubrey for repayment of this debt, although there is no indication that the two men knew each other, and Yerbury refused outright to pay her for a debt demanded by Aubrey.²⁶⁰ In December Aubrey was arrested for debt in Chancery Lane.²⁶¹ In February 1668 he was awarded £600 damages by the consistory court, but Joan appealed.²⁶² A second trial was held in March 1669, when the award was halved,²⁶³ by Aubrey's account after intervention by Lady Hungerford.²⁶⁴ But the case

²⁵³ Samuel was a younger brother of James and Stephen Gaysford. Their mother Rebecca, née Tipper, was probably the aunt of John Sumner's wife Mary Tipper. See Pedigrees.

²⁵⁴ Powell *Aubrey* 120.

²⁵⁵ *ibid* 117.

²⁵⁶ *ibid* 118.

²⁵⁷ *ibid* 118.

²⁵⁸ *ibid* 126n. The documents referred to by Powell are the Bishop's Act Books, held at the History Centre, Chippenham: WRO D/1/39/1/56-8.

²⁵⁹ TNA C 6/48/111. The location close to the Avon may suggest that he was a clothier; possibly the son of the clothier William Yerbury of Bromham d 1646/7.

²⁶⁰ TNA C 6/48/111.

²⁶¹ Powell *Aubrey* 120.

²⁶² *ibid* 120.

²⁶³ *ibid* 120.

²⁶⁴ *ibid* 126n. The identity of Lady Hungerford is not certain, but the available evidence supports Powell's view that she was probably Lady Hungerford of Corsham, widow of the Parliamentarian

dragged on almost to Easter 1670.²⁶⁵ After costs, Aubrey can have gained little from his suit, and the house and lands at Easton Piercy had to be sold.²⁶⁶

Aubrey's biographer Anthony Powell recounts this episode as one of a precocious but indebted gentleman ensnared by 'a dangerous woman',²⁶⁷ for whom marriage to Aubrey would have brought 'advancement in the social scale.'²⁶⁸ From an economic perspective, the story is just a failed attempt at financial partnership. Joan Sumner's dowry of £2,000 could have saved Easton Piercy and brought her a share in landed estate worth £700 a year, close to her own home. By Joan's account she broke the agreement – which she denied was ever signed – because Easton Piercy had been mortgaged for £500. Possibly Joan could not raise the dowry: her clothier brother Thomas may well have been short of cash in 1667, when Blackwell Hall was in ruins. But Joan Sumner's self-confidence in rejecting the marriage, and her access to influence in the form of intercession by Lady Hungerford, shows her to have been, at least in local estimation, Aubrey's equal. By the 1660s the leading clothiers of the Semington vale had good reason to doubt the value of union with the lesser gentry, even if might bring social advancement and – in Aubrey's case – a distant kinship with the Earl of Pembroke. Aubrey's subsequent downfall as a landowner, and the rise of the Sumners over the following decades,²⁶⁹ reinforces that conclusion.

5 Social and economic change, 1650-70

Aubrey's personal difficulties coincided with those of the political nation, which must partly account for the melancholy of his 'Preface'. In 1663 he had been at the height of his social fortunes: a newly-elected fellow of the Royal Society, he was summoned in August by his sponsor Walter Charleton to guide the King and Duke of York around the stone circle of Avebury, and with them climbed the prehistoric earthwork of Silbury Hill.²⁷⁰ The royal brothers had spent the previous night at Marlborough with Charles Seymour and made this

commander. Powell states incorrectly that her father, the Mercer William Halliday, had been lord mayor of London, confusing William with his kinsman Leonard Halliday.

²⁶⁵ Powell *Aubrey* 137.

²⁶⁶ The date of the sale is uncertain. Aubrey *Natural History* 119 says in 1669, to a Francis Hill, who sold it on to Mr Sherwin; but Powell *Aubrey* 137 says on 25 March 1671, to Robert Sherwin.

²⁶⁷ Powell *Aubrey* 116.

²⁶⁸ *ibid* 126.

²⁶⁹ John Sumner's granddaughter Mary Webb, heiress of his son Edward, married Edward Seymour, who became the 8th Duke of Somerset in 1749; as Duchess she rebuilt their Seend house in 1760. *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Melksham: Manors: Seend Park'; Aubrey *Wiltshire* 303.

²⁷⁰ Powell *Aubrey* 106-8.

brief excursion before dining with John Talbot at Lacock,²⁷¹ en route to Bath for the Queen to take the waters.²⁷² Aubrey's prospects seemed high in the mid-1660s, despite the financial worries which marriage to Joan Sumner might have ended. But by 1670, Aubrey was close to ruin. His hopes of making a reputation with the *Survey of North Wiltshire* had disappeared '*in fumo tabaci*';²⁷³ his co-author William Yorke and consultant Robert Nicholas had both died.²⁷⁴ Yet he still drafted a 'Preface' to the notes he had compiled over a decade riding between Broad Chalke and Easton Piercy, describing what had changed in his own lifetime:

This country was [in former times] a lovely champain...very few enclosures, unless near houses...in my remembrance much hath been enclosed, and every year, more and more is taken in...Then were a world of labouring people maintained by the plough...There were no rates for the poor even in my grandfather's days; but for Kington St Michael (no small parish) the church-ale at Whitsuntide did the business...in every church was a poor man's box; but I never remembered the use of it...Since the Reformation and inclosures aforesaid, these parts have swarmed with poor people. The parish of Calne pays to the poor (1663) £500 per annum; and the parish of Chippenham little less, as appears by the poor's books there. Inclosures are for the private, not for the public, good. For a shepherd and his dog, or a milk-maid, can manage meadow-land that upon arable employed the hands of several scores of labourers.²⁷⁵

It is a bitter vision of paradise lost, peppered with hard fact: date, location, number. The town parish of Calne, on the Avon north of Bromham, was by Aubrey's account disbursing twelve times more poor aid than rural Steeple Ashton in the same year.²⁷⁶ But as so often in his writing, such detail is sparse and anecdotal. Frustratingly – since it is Aubrey whom many acknowledge for the identification of north and west Wiltshire as 'cheese country' – he does not estimate the ratio of sheep to kine on the enclosed meadows, though his phrasing might suggest that the milk-maid was secondary to the shepherd. Documentary sources, however, show that in the 1640s the Marsh pasture at Calne was overstocked with sheep and in 1657 the townsmen 'kept few dairy cattle on the commons.'²⁷⁷ It seems likely

²⁷¹ Helms, MW & Henning, BD 'Sir John Talbot (1630-1714)' *HoP 1660-90*.

²⁷² Powell *Aubrey* 274.

²⁷³ *Aubrey Wiltshire* 3.

²⁷⁴ *ibid* 3.

²⁷⁵ *Aubrey Wiltshire* 9-11.

²⁷⁶ The overseers for Steeple Ashton disbursed £38 18s 8d in the year ending April 1663: *Knubley Steeple Ashton* 280. No figure is provided for the following year.

²⁷⁷ *VCH Wilts* vol 17 'Calne: Economic History.'

that in 1670 Calne remained an outlier of the west Wiltshire cloth economy,²⁷⁸ and that wool was more important than cheese.

Aubrey's portrayal is that of a small landowner experiencing loss and grieving for the past; he has none of the commercial awareness of Defoe. There is no reason to doubt what he says about enclosures and the increasing numbers of poor, but in the 'Preface' large areas of the broader picture remain blank. The evidence presented in this chapter seems to tell a more complex story, with the losses of large landowners such as the Danvers family balanced by gains for the more successful clothiers, most notably the Ashes but also the Yerburys and Sumners, and for the parish yeomanry whose principal sources of income were wool, sheep and grain. The west Wiltshire economy does not appear to have been in unusual difficulty. Even wage earners seem finally to have made some ground after decades of decline in real terms income. John Eyles' will of 1662, for example, shows that he paid his servant £6 a year, where earlier in the century £3 or £4 had been standard.²⁷⁹ The implication is not only that labour was in demand, but also that many employers could afford to pay the increased rates. In 1670 Edward Bayntun, who was out of favour with the government and whose income of about £4,000 per annum²⁸⁰ came largely from rents and fines,²⁸¹ was sufficiently in funds to lend William Eyre of Corsham £1,000, secured by mortgage on a 150 acre stone-walled enclosure.²⁸² Charitable gifts could be substantial throughout the period. In 1651 William Tipper of Seend bequeathed £50 to buy coats or waistcoats for the poor of the parish.²⁸³ James Thynne in 1655 built an almshouse for six poor men and two poor women at Longbridge Deverill,²⁸⁴ matched in 1668 by Lady Hungerford's almshouse and school at Corsham.²⁸⁵ In 1670 Elizabeth Ashe of Freshford, her son John Ashe of Teffont and the clothier William Ivileaf gave three houses and gardens in Beckington to fund the charity school and almshouse in Frome.²⁸⁶ These prosperous individuals had money to spare for philanthropy.

Taken together, these scraps of evidence suggest a deepening gap between rich and poor, and an increasing difference between town and village life, despite and because of the flow

²⁷⁸ Thomas Long of Trowbridge had acquired the hundred in 1553: see Chapter 3.2.

²⁷⁹ TNA PROB 4/7767.

²⁸⁰ Henning 'Sir Edward Bayntun'.

²⁸¹ Freeman *Commonplace Book* xvi-ii, 41-57.

²⁸² Freeman *Commonplace Book* 31.

²⁸³ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Melksham: Charities'.

²⁸⁴ www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/explore/items/sir-james-thynnes-almshouses.

²⁸⁵ WRO 490/12.

²⁸⁶ *History and Description of the Public Charities in the Town of Frome* (Frome, 1833) 12-13.

of capital generated by the cloth trade. Davis judged the progress of trade after the Civil Wars, despite temporary setbacks caused by bad harvests and interruptions of trade, as 'continuous but slow',²⁸⁷ and the increasing value of inventories suggests that the greater gentry, clothiers and yeomen gained steadily as consumer prices fell back after a century of growth.²⁸⁸ Paul Methuen's estimated fortune of £60,000 far exceeded his predecessor Edward Horton's £20,000.²⁸⁹ Material benefits may also have spread more widely. Aubrey himself observed a major improvement in living conditions that benefited almost everyone: 'Heretofore (before Henry VIII) glass windows were very rare, only used in Churches and the best roomes of gentlemen's howses. Even in my remembrance, before the Civil Wars, copyholders and ordinary poor people had none. Now the poorest people that are upon alms have it.'²⁹⁰ Some of the 'swarming' poor Aubrey described so graphically would have settled on wastes and unenclosed commons within walking distance of the cloth towns where they could find at least occasional work; though others were dismissed by Paul Methuen in his 1667 will as 'those who make a trade of begging.'²⁹¹ Even in the 1660s however most of the west Wiltshire towns would have provided employment on an increased scale as the demand for local dyeing and cloth finishing enabled town clothiers to compete more effectively with the rural fulling mills.²⁹² Town populations were probably growing throughout the period. At Frome the clothier Richard Yerbury and others had built new houses on the edge of town by 1660.²⁹³ Working from the 1676 Church Commission survey, Peter Clark and Jean Hosking have assessed the population of Chippenham at that date at about 1,300, Melksham at almost 3,000 and Bradford at nearly 4,700,²⁹⁴ far larger than any village.

Demographic and cultural change in west Wiltshire during these two decades was probably more rapid than at any time since the 1530s and 1540s, when Leland travelled through the cloth district and admired the new buildings in the cloth towns of Bradford, Trowbridge and

²⁸⁷ Davis *Overseas Trade* 153.

²⁸⁸ Allen's decennial price index for London shows a steady decline from 3.18 in 1640 to 2.01 in 1680: a fall of 27 per cent. Mayhew, NJ 'Prices in England, 1170-1750' *P&P* 219 (2013) table 1.

²⁸⁹ Rogers 'Paul Methuen'; BL Add Ms 15561 f 79. The comparison however may not be like for like, especially regarding real estate.

²⁹⁰ Aubrey *Wiltshire* 14.

²⁹¹ TNA PROB 11/324/441.

²⁹² Larger rural clothiers such as Grace Ashe at Westcombe and Nathaniel Tylie at Hurst had their own dyeing furnaces: WRO 118/108, TNA PROB 4/6145.

²⁹³ Leech, R *Early Industrial Housing: the Trinity Area of Frome* (London, 1981) 2-3; TNA PROB 11/305/50.

²⁹⁴ Clarke, P & Hosking, J *Population Estimates of English Small Towns, 1550-1851* (Leicester, 1993) 159.

Steeple Ashton.²⁹⁵ The wealthiest clothiers made substantial gains in property ownership, and enlarged their workforces by increasing the production of locally-finished cloth; employers and workers turned to non-conformity. Yet political and judicial control of both society and the economy remained largely in the same hands as it had in 1640. Bindoff's contention that 'in Wiltshire, as elsewhere, the Civil War...appears as not much more than an incident in the gradual process by which the old governing families were supplanted by new'²⁹⁶ can emphatically be rejected for this corner of the county. Here, while the Danvers fortunes were curtailed by John Danvers's attainder, the Bayntuns, Hungerfords, Thynnes and Longs maintained their oligarchy; indeed Walter Long increased his dominance in 1671 by acquiring Melksham manor and hundred from the next, much diminished, John Danvers.²⁹⁷ What did occur however, among both gentry and clothiers, was a significant generational change, since most of the dominant figures of the war years were dead before 1670. As we will see in the final chapter of this study, some leading figures of the Restoration generation – Edward Hungerford, Thomas Thynne and Lady Purbeck, and the clothiers William Brewer and Joseph Houlton – proved very different in character from their forebears; and for the late 1680s Aubrey's vision of paradise lost appears more perceptive and convincing than it does for 1670.

²⁹⁵ See Chapter 1.1.

²⁹⁶ Bindoff 'Parliamentary History, 1629-60'.

²⁹⁷ WRO 947/1547, TNA C 54/4327/13.

Chapter 6 **Reprise, 1530-1680**

The first chapter of this study opened with an episode from 1536, when the west Wiltshire clothier John Flower sought help from Edward Bayntun following a robbery on his way home from London. Flower never won the justice he sought, and believed the man he accused was protected by influential friends among the landowning gentry. One hundred and thirty-four years later the indebted landowner John Aubrey believed that he had been denied justice in the Bishop's court because his opponent, the clothier's daughter Joan Sumner, was protected by the merchant's daughter and magnate Lady Margaret Hungerford.¹ Over the long century from Reformation to Restoration, west Wiltshire society had changed: clothiers of the second rank were now more than a match for second-rank gentlemen. But in a broader sense little had altered. West Wiltshire society still operated through the exertion of influence, with kinship and shared interest the most important levers of power for anyone outside the hierarchies of church and state.

This chapter seeks to trace both changes and continuities in west Wiltshire from the dissolution of the monasteries to the last years of Charles II. The first section considers Aubrey's account, and how it continues to influence the standard narrative of historians today, then reprises the questions set out at the start of the study. The second section revisits the development of the cloth economy and argues that its continuing strength was the critical factor underlying social change on west Wiltshire. The next three sections present the findings reached for the constituent groups followed through the study: the clothiers and the gentry of west Wiltshire; and the lords and tenants of Bulkington vale. Two further sections consider what is known about cottagers and the landless poor, and about changes in material and intellectual culture. The chapter closes by summarizing the core argument of the study.

1 Aubrey and the historians of Wiltshire

Aubrey's attempt in his 1670 'Preface' to summarize the principal changes in Wiltshire society over several generations was rare amongst his antiquarian writings as something considered, not merely a collection of notes and insights scribbled down to be improved later. He highlighted several symptoms of change amongst the greater gentry, including the abandonment of aristocratic display in the form of trumpets, livery and bands of armed

¹ See Chapter 5.4.

followers, and the decline of communal hospitality in great halls with central hearths.² He noted legal changes: the end of the Court of Wards and the breaking of entails, and – above all – the destruction of manors which, he claimed, had started in the reign of Henry VIII but was ‘now common, whereby the mean people live lawless, nobody to govern them, they care for nobody, having no dependance on anybody.’³ He evoked an era of social breakdown, in which the conversion of open arable fields and commons to enclosed pasture had brought landlessness; poverty and disorder had become widespread; and voluntary charity had been replaced by the poor rate.⁴

To this concise and coherent picture Aubrey’s jumble of notes for *The Natural History of Wiltshire* (which he started in 1656, tidied up in 1675 when submitting a clean copy to the Royal Society, then amended with further additions to the original manuscript up to 1691)⁵ provides a challenging contrast. In the *Natural History* his tone was rarely melancholy and could be sharp and confrontational. Notoriously, he asserted: ‘Our clothiers combine against the wool masters, and keep their spinners just alive: they steal hedges, spoil coppices, and are trained up as nurseries of sedition and rebellion.’⁶ But otherwise the cloth trade is almost absent from Aubrey’s account. This is a view of late seventeenth century Wiltshire from the viewpoint of a rentier landlord, facing increasing difficulties as the years passed by. In a note which must have been made after 1670, when wool prices began to fall,⁷ Aubrey wrote: ‘The falling of rents is a consequence of the decay of the Turkey trade; which is the principal cause of the falling of the price of wool...By these means my farm at Chalke is worse by sixty pounds per annum than it was before the civil wars.’⁸

That Aubrey’s focus on landlord-tenant relationships, landlessness and poverty, revived by RH Tawney in *The Agrarian Problem* and pursued by a later generation of Marxist and revisionist historians,⁹ remains central to current academic thinking on a national scale can be seen in the 2013 publication *Landlords and Tenants in Britain, 1440-1660*,¹⁰ a series of essays edited by Jane Whittle. According to Whittle the argument has moved on: ‘The new history of rural Britain that is being written is perhaps less concerned with explaining the

² Aubrey *Wiltshire* 7-8.

³ *ibid* 9.

⁴ *ibid* 11.

⁵ Powell *Aubrey* 272.

⁶ Aubrey *Natural History* 110.

⁷ Bowden *Wool Trade* 220; *CSPD 1675-6* 163.

⁸ Aubrey *Natural History* 111.

⁹ See Chapter 1.3.

¹⁰ Whittle, J (ed) *Landlords and Tenants in Britain, 1440-1660* (Woodbridge, 2013).

rise of capitalism or the causes of industrialization. Instead it focuses more on explaining how people negotiated the changes, economic, legal and political, that did take place.¹¹ Much interest pivots around an emerging group of ‘middling’ landowners, below the lesser gentry in the social hierarchy, but self-confident and assertive: the social group to which Joan Sumner and the yeomen of Bulkington belonged. In the same collection of essays the legal historian Christopher Brooks writes of ‘something like a social revolution in which patriarchal and seigneurial landlord-tenant relationships have been replaced by “economic ones” and where a class of smaller holders existed alongside the gentry and vigorously exercised their rights.’¹² The durability of the manor also remains a subject of debate. For Whittle, ‘the overall picture is one of decreasing lordly power within the manorial system,’¹³ not of the wholesale ‘destruction’ of manors described by Aubrey.¹⁴ Aubrey’s references in the ‘Preface’ to the decline of chivalric display and to developments in material culture within the household as indicators of social change have also yielded enduring themes, which continue to attract political historians such as Richard Cust¹⁵ and art and architectural historians such as Kimberley Skelton.¹⁶

The *Natural History* however has proved more treacherous ground. As was noted in Chapter 1.3, Aubrey’s bold linking of the north Wiltshire pasture lands with dissent and the arable downlands with conformity, developed by David Underdown, was comprehensively refuted by John Morrill in 1987,¹⁷ but the notion still attracted the religious historian Henry Lancaster in 1995. Drawing on the work of economic historians who have adopted a similar dichotomy, Lancaster characterised west as well as north Wiltshire as ‘cheese region...three quarters of which was enclosed, [and] was dominated by pastoral dairy involving a patchwork of small fields and numerous isolated farms. This was a region in which 80 per cent of the land was occupied by cattle farmers. It was characterised by weak manorial control.’¹⁸ The validity of this standard narrative has been questioned throughout this study, and will be considered further in this chapter.

¹¹ Whittle *Landlords and Tenants* 220-1.

¹² Brooks, CW ‘The Agrarian Problem in Revolutionary England’ in Whittle *Landlords and Tenants* 198.

¹³ Whittle *Landlords and Tenants* 219.

¹⁴ See Chapter 1.1.

¹⁵ Cust, RP ‘Charles I and the Order of the Garter’ *JBS* 54.2 (2013) 343-69.

¹⁶ Skelton, K ‘Redefining Hospitality: the Leisured World of the 1650s Country House’ *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 68.4 (2009) 496-513.

¹⁷ Morrill ‘Ecology of Allegiance’.

¹⁸ Lancaster ‘Nonconformity’ 9-10.

Aubrey's influence here rests on the short but trenchant paragraph: 'In North Wiltshire...there is but little tillage, they only milk the cows and make cheese...they are generally more apt to be fanatics...On the Downs...where 'tis all upon tillage...they have not leisure to read and contemplate of religion.'¹⁹ As was noted in the previous chapter, however, it is likely that even where there was significant dairying in west Wiltshire it was small in scale and kine were greatly outnumbered by sheep;²⁰ while on the Downs the vast flocks were legendary. Wiltshire in the early modern period must always have seemed to the observer to be sheep country first and foremost. In his 'chapter' on wool Aubrey himself acknowledges that 'this county hath the most sheep and wool of any other.'²¹ But his attention is always seized more by the curious and unusual than by the everyday and obvious, a trait which leads him frequently into overstatement or omission. The *Natural History* provides no more than the briefest notes on wool and the cloth trade, and even those are unreliable. He tells us for example that in Seend clothiers 'did flourish...till about 1580, when they removed to Trowbridge,'²² a claim for which modern historians have been unable to find any evidence,²³ and which is contradicted by the evidence cited in Chapters 4.4 and 5.4 that the fulling mills at Seend Head, Baldham and Littleton were busy throughout Aubrey's lifetime,²⁴ though work may have been suspended for Whitsun or in the aftermath of the Plague when he visited the Seend Revel in 1666.²⁵ Aubrey's claim that 'Mr Paul Methuen of Bradford succeeded his father-in-law [John Ashe] in the trade'²⁶ has similarly been shown in Chapter 5.3 to be a misleading overstatement, yet it was not challenged by Britton and is commonly repeated by modern historians.²⁷

The questions this chapter will finally try to answer can be based more soundly on the careful phrasing of Joan Thirsk, who in 1976 summarised the historical process in which Aubrey was himself caught up: 'It is important to remember that those gentlemen who survived the Restoration and were set fair for another hundred years were, in fact, the upper ranks of their class...less stable conditions prevailed among the lower ranks. Smaller gentry often declined in fortune, along with many small freeholders...A new middle class of

¹⁹ Aubrey *Natural History* 11.

²⁰ See Chapter 5.5.

²¹ Aubrey *Natural History* pt II, c 9 'Wool'.

²² *ibid* pt II, c 11 'History of Clothing'.

²³ It is nonetheless repeated as fact in *VCH Wilts* 7 'Melksham: Trade and Industry'.

²⁴ See Chapter 4.4 and Chapter 5.3 & 5.4.

²⁵ The Revel was probably held at or near Whit Sunday. In 1613 it was held on Rogation Sunday, the second before Whit Sunday: WRO D/1/39/2/7 f 25v.

²⁶ Aubrey *Natural History* pt II ch 12 'Eminent Clothiers of this County'.

²⁷ Eg by Kerridge *Textile Manufactures* 38, Rogers 'Paul Methuen', Wroughton 'John Ashe' and Barclay 'John Ashe'.

substantial tenant farmers was established.²⁸ The object of this study has been to understand how and when this process began in west Wiltshire, and to assess the relative strength of the factors involved. It has been assumed from the start that ownership or access to monetary capital was fundamental: apart from royal grants of attainted property, this was an era of negotiated financial transactions. But who in west Wiltshire had that capital, and how did they take advantage of it? At the Reformation it was evident that the wealthiest clothiers – some identified by Leland²⁹ – were well-placed financially, yet the largest estates were quickly absorbed by the more influential gentry. Were clothiers and gentry genuinely separate groups, and if so how did they interact socially and economically? Such questions could only be answered with reference to their activity in London, where clothiers sold their produce and gentlemen were educated at the Inns of Court, borrowed money, and attended parliament.

Only the gentry had significant access there to political capital in the form of influence with the Crown and its office-holders, in return for loyalty and diligence in governing the county. Yet the clothiers as employers of very large numbers of wool-sorters, spinners, weavers and other workers were also crucial in maintaining a stable society. What did these men bring from London beyond the proceeds of their sales? How did they spend their money and invest their profits, and how far-reaching were their economic and social relationships in the region? By the end of the Elizabethan era some had acquired large estates and the conventional narrative holds that they ‘entered the gentry.’ But what does that phrase mean in reality? Did they really abandon profitable business for a life of ease, or were there business reasons for their investments in land? Did their outlook change, did they acquire influence, were they welcomed into the political class? Did the new gentry become entrepreneurs in agriculture?

And perhaps the most crucial questions: how did the flow of money from the capital to the countryside affect the social structure of west Wiltshire? Did all boats float on a rising tide, or were the interests of the entrepreneurs opposed to those of their suppliers, whether of wool or of labour? What was the impact of trade downturns, and especially of the great depression of the 1620s? When political crisis led to civil war and religious ferment, did the economic interests of the wool producers and the clothiers influence their political and religious engagement? Who gained and who lost from the hard-won settlement of Protectorate and restored monarchy, and who most influenced the emerging order? In

²⁸ Thirsk *Restoration* 154.

²⁹ See Chapter 1.1.

short, was Aubrey right to have discerned a transfer of political power from the ancient gentry to the common people?

2 The social impact of the cloth trade

To evaluate the impact of cloth manufacturing on social change in west Wiltshire it is necessary to assess the capital flows resulting from the trade; but in the near-absence of reliable production or sales figures historians have been forced to use deductive methods of varying accuracy. In 1943 Ramsay relied mainly on figures from the London customs books, which led him to view the Elizabethan period as one of slow and painful recovery;³⁰ but in 1970 Gould calculated that when outports were included and revenues adjusted for inflation the real value of shortcloth exports doubled between 1540 and the first years of James I,³¹ before declining by 6-9 per cent from 1600 to 1640;³² a trajectory confirmed by Broadberry's wool consumption data, which shows a peak in 1606 followed by a plateau to 1650. No comparable series has been published for the late Stuart period, but Schumpeter calculated the value of cloth exports for 1700 as £2,818,871,³³ some 70 per cent above Gould's 1640 figure, indicating a return of growth in the second half of the century.

But while the national trend in cloth exports is one of sixteenth-century growth, then seventeenth-century stagnation followed by renewed growth, using these figures to deduce trends in local production and revenues is a tricky procedure, requiring estimates to be made of Wiltshire's market share. As discussed in Chapter 1.2, Ramsay accepted Friis' computation that Wiltshire supplied 45,000 shortcloths in the peak year of 1606,³⁴ which should have yielded close to £300,000 at the rates of £5 to £7 for pack cloths and £8 to £10 for fine cloths paid that year by Lionel Cranfield.³⁵ Mann made her own calculation for 1700, based partly on a contemporary estimate of total Spanish medley production, including those made in Somerset and Gloucestershire, of 30,000: for Wiltshire she suggested only 20,000 Spanish medleys and other broadcloths.³⁶ But the market had not fallen by 50 per cent since 1606, as Mann's figure might suggest. She herself admits that

³⁰ Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* 67-9.

³¹ Gould, JD 'Cloth Exports 1600-40' *EcHR* 24.2 (1971) 252.

³² Gould 'Cloth Exports' 250.

³³ Schumpeter, EB *English Overseas Trade Statistics, 1697-1808* (Oxford, 1960) tabs xii and xiii, cited in Mann *Cloth Industry* 309.

³⁴ Ramsay *Wiltshire Woollen Industry* 72.

³⁵ KRO U269-1 AB3 f 51 'Cloths bought of Sundry Men'.

³⁶ Mann *Cloth Industry* 332.

the figure for Wiltshire may be under-estimated;³⁷ and it has also to be adjusted to reach a like-for-like comparison with Friis's figure, because in earlier times Somerset cloths sealed between Frome and Bath were often counted as Wiltshire.³⁸ If we allow a further 5,000 for this Frome valley output in 1700,³⁹ and add another 10,000 for the wide variety of other cloths produced in Wiltshire, especially the serge made around Devizes, Wiltshire's total output in 1700 may have been about 35,000 pieces, many of them produced for the domestic market but still sold largely to London drapers and haberdashers. At an average selling price of £10 or more,⁴⁰ that would yield something over £350,000 per annum,⁴¹ an increase of 16 per cent in value despite a possible fall in volume over the century, and roughly in line with inflation.⁴²

The lion's share of this revenue probably came to west Wiltshire, because by the late seventeenth century Salisbury was still focused on the production of fine whites, dyed in London or exported to Holland;⁴³ and by 1727 the only mills in Wiltshire deemed worthy of inspection outside the core study areas of Fromewater and the Semington Brook were those at Warminster, Corsham and Kingswood.⁴⁴ While the purchasing power of wages declined – perhaps by a third – between 1530 and 1670,⁴⁵ it was still this flow of capital into the western parts of Wiltshire that bought the county's wool and paid the wages of everyone employed in cloth production. Furthermore it was the only really substantial flow coming into the area during the Tudor and Stuart era, except perhaps for the fee income of

³⁷ Mann *Cloth Industry* 332.

³⁸ eg TNA E 159/361 Humphrey Yerbury of Beckington, John Whalley of Bath; TNA E 159/371 John Baylie of Beckington, Henry Davis (Davison?) of Norton St Philip, Gregory Style of Bath. Numerous other examples could be cited.

³⁹ The quantity made with similar technology in later decades, see Mann *Cloth Industry* 334-5.

⁴⁰ Mann *Cloth Industry* 331 reaches a figure of £10 or less for Gloucestershire cloths, but these included many white cloths sold for as little as £5 or £6 in the 1670s.

⁴¹ Mann's more cautious estimate appears justified by the aulnage farmers' accounts for the exchequer years 1686-8, which give the average revenue from Gloucestershire as £600 against £300 for Wiltshire, and thus imply that Wiltshire's production was only half that of Gloucestershire, estimated elsewhere at 50,000 cloths and £500,000 per annum. However the aulnage accounts give £800 for Somerset, of which a substantial part must have come from the Frome valley and would earlier have been regarded as Wiltshire cloths; the Somerset figure could also include cloths made by Wiltshire weavers for clothiers in Frome. The accounts are published in *Fourteenth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, Appendix, Part VI: House of Lords* (London, 1896) 42-44; note also the claim by the King's attorney on 35 that 'the duty given is only what is exported.' All in all, Mann's Wiltshire estimate may well be too low.

⁴² Allen's decennial cost of living index for the same period rises from 2.55 in 1610 to 2.92 in 1700, an increase of 14 per cent: Mayhew 'Prices' table 1.

⁴³ *VCH Wilts* vol 6 'Salisbury: Economic History since 1612'; Aubrey *Natural History* pt II ch xi 'History of Clothing'.

⁴⁴ Mann 'Textile Industries: Cloth, 1640-1790'.

⁴⁵ Clay *Economic Expansion* vol 1, 217-8.

exceptionally high-earning officials such as John Thynne I and James Ley, 1st Earl of Marlborough. Wool and yarn broggers, grain badgers, craftsmen and merchants must certainly have operated across the county borders. But most of west Wiltshire's other revenues would have been generated locally: as rental income; by the sale of food and drink, wool, livestock, crops, timber and stone; or by office-holders taking a percentage of taxes and other levies.

The hypothesis that the cloth economy of west Wiltshire grew throughout the sixteenth century, peaked in the first decade of the seventeenth, then levelled out until the 1680s, underpins the five core narratives presented in this chapter:

First, the leading clothiers of west Wiltshire survived the crises of the 1620s to achieve near-full employment of the region's fulling capacity throughout the Stuart era, thanks to the development of new products requiring local dyeing and finishing to meet the needs of new markets both at home and in the Mediterranean. Over the whole study period, the continual if interrupted generation of profits allowed a small number of well-capitalised families to accumulate large cash surpluses, which could be lent out at interest or reinvested in land and buildings and, at least in large families, distributed through bequests much more widely than was typical among the gentry.

Second, the largest landowners of west Wiltshire benefited substantially from the wealth generated by cloth manufacture, without risking their own capital. Magnates raised significant rental income from the fulling mills, tenements and cottages they leased to cloth-workers, and from the sale of wool. There is no evidence that any of the larger landowners invested directly in cloth production, other than by grazing large flocks and acquiring the freehold of fulling mills. But as landlords they took their share of the capital flowing from Blackwell Hall to their cloth-working tenants in the form of rent. Buoyed by this income, the wealthier resident gentry of west Wiltshire proved highly resilient over the Tudor and Stuart era, defending their estates and privileges against a wave of Tudor incomers and office-holders, the exigencies of Civil War and sequestration, and the aspirations of the commercial entrepreneurs themselves. While many clothiers came to style themselves gentlemen, and some acquired landed estates, few entered the ranks of gentry society during the study period.

Third, the clothiers' demand for wool was such that west Wiltshire yeomen with adequate arable land to support their families had good reason to stock sheep on enclosed pastures and acquire additional grazing at every opportunity. Yet throughout the study period, as

seen in the micro-study of Bulkington vale, yeomen hedged the risks of periodic downturn by producing grain, cheese and bacon for the market. The wisdom of this mixed farming strategy was borne out during the 1650s, when wool prices fell by 20 per cent, and again when they fell sharply in the 1670s and 1680s.⁴⁶ But for most of the study period the combination of strong local demand for wool and an increasing population dependent on the market for food was highly beneficial for farmers with sufficient land to yield a surplus.

Fourth, the rural poor – the cottagers and landless labourers who made up the agricultural and manufacturing work-force – faced increasing hardship over most of the study period as the population grew and prices rose faster than wages. At times of exceptional stress in 1614 and again in the 1620s and 1630s there were incidents of grain seizure and social unrest. But fears of violent uprisings proved largely unfounded. In most years, cloth manufacture provided sufficient employment to maintain the peace, and indeed to attract migrant workers. During the seventeenth century the population of the larger cloth towns of the Frome, Biss and Avon grew substantially.

Fifth, the social stability engendered by a century and a half of commercial stability (even if interrupted by trade depressions and civil war) was reflected in a stability of material culture. In plain terms, the rich stayed rich and the poor, in increasing numbers, stayed poor. But between these extremes there was scope for advancement by patient accumulation: over the decades those who could generate and retain a surplus, notably clothiers and yeomen, could significantly increase their material and intellectual capital and eventually call themselves gentlemen. For the emerging 'middle sort', a limited range of luxury goods slowly became the norm and their houses became more comfortable. Even better-off husbandmen and weavers improved their conditions, and learned to write as well as read.⁴⁷ But few of any class applied their literacy to subjects beyond commerce, religion and the law.

The remaining sections of this chapter summarise the evidence for these five narratives.

⁴⁶ Bowden *Wool Trade* 220.

⁴⁷ In 1604 only fifteen out of fifty tenants of the Steeple Ashton manor could write their own names: WRO 947/1236.

3 Clothier families

Estimating the numbers of clothiers and workers in west Wiltshire is as hazardous as estimating the number of cloths produced, yet some rough calculations should be made. In the 1530s, the merchant Thomas Kytson bought cloths from about seventy men in north and west Wiltshire and forty in east Somerset, many of whom sold him fewer than ten pieces.⁴⁸ In the 1680s the Blackwell Hall factor Henry Cornish had dealings with 114 clothiers from roughly the same area.⁴⁹ Julia Mann estimated that by the early 1700s there were 200 to 250 'fairly substantial manufacturers of cloth' in Wiltshire and east Somerset, but this much higher figure includes the whole of Wiltshire and the very productive Shepton Mallet area of Somerset,⁵⁰ after what appears to have been a surge of growth in the last quarter of the seventeenth century. It is reasonable then to assume that for most of the study period there were at least a hundred clothiers along the Wylde, Frome and Avon, of whom perhaps half were in west Wiltshire.

Along these fifteen to twenty miles of river, there were about thirty fulling mills, which in a typical year may have processed on average 500 cloths each or about 15,000 cloths in all. If anything, this may be a conservative figure, compared with the estimate of 35,000 cloths for the whole county. If we take the output per loom as a maximum of twenty broadcloths per year, there were probably at least 750 looms in the area. At the rate of eighteen to twenty workers per loom for white broadcloths, and as many as twenty-five for Spanish cloths, this suggests a total workforce of around 15,000 during the Elizabethan era, and up to 18,000 by the Restoration.⁵¹ Applying the Pareto Principle or 80:20 rule to these numbers, we could expect about ten clothiers in west Wiltshire to be employing, directly or indirectly, some 12-14,000 workers, and producing about 12,000 broadcloths a year. Analysis of Kytson's purchases gives strong support to this calculation, since the top 20 per cent of his suppliers provided 68 per cent of his purchases in Wiltshire, while in Somerset his top suppliers produced 75 per cent of purchases. Cornish's ledger conforms even more

⁴⁸ Brett 'Wiltshire Clothmen' 39-40; 'Somerset Clothmen' 32,39.

⁴⁹ TNA E 178/6737.

⁵⁰ Mann *Cloth Industry* 33.

⁵¹ Mann *Cloth Industry* 316, 318 argues that 14-16 is more credible, and notes that workers such as fullers and shearmen spent far less time on a single cloth than weavers or spinners. But contemporary estimates of unemployment when looms were abandoned reflect the higher numbers: see Chapter 4.3 & 4.4.

precisely, with the top 20 per cent of his clients accounting for exactly 80 per cent of his loans and debts.⁵²

These calculations all support the findings of previous chapters, that west Wiltshire manufacturing was dominated throughout the study period by a very small number of highly successful businessmen, despite changes in economic conditions that might have been expected to reduce their competitive advantage by encouraging smaller businesses, for example improvements in transport or the emergence of commission-based factors. These dominant clothiers could exploit their accumulated wealth to secure or retain the greatest share of resources: the best-located fulling mills, convenient deposits of good-quality fuller's earth, long-term agreements for wool supply, retention of a skilled workforce and, with their large output, priority access to customers in London and overseas.

The wealth accumulated by individual clothiers is difficult to assess, but it seems beyond doubt that the most successful clothiers grew wealthier with each generation, and throughout the period could build very large fortunes in a couple of decades, provided they had access to prime resources. Inventories such as that of Edward Horton in 1603 provide only a snapshot of his chattel wealth at the time of death; he may have been significantly richer or poorer earlier in his career. But as shown in Chapter 3.2, Horton certainly controlled a much larger estate than his father Thomas in 1549, despite inheriting only the manufacturing resources at Bradford and Iford – most of the land had gone to his elder brother William.⁵³ Successful sons typically outstripped their fathers. John Ashe became vastly wealthier than his father James, despite the latter having a long career at Westcombe;⁵⁴ just as William Brewer became the leading clothier of his generation, where his father had been one of many, and not especially wealthy.⁵⁵ The common factor amongst

⁵² Since the 80:20 ratio can in theory be re-applied to the top 20 per cent, we might expect the top two or three clothiers at any one time to be handling as many as 8,000 cloths between them, but there is no evidence for such a large production. John Ashe for example stated in the 1650s that he was earning £3,000 a year from the cloth trade: Barclay 'John Ashe'. If his yield was 20 per cent, his total sales would have been £15,000, which at a typical wholesale price of 14s per yard or about £17 per 24 yard cloth required an output of less than 1,000 cloths. At a yield of 15 per cent the output would still be under 1,200 cloths. It seems likely that output remained low because the shortage of fulling capacity remained a constraint throughout the study period.

⁵³ See Chapter 3.2.

⁵⁴ James Ashe was said to be worth not less than £15,000 in 1637: Mann *Cloth Industry* 91; but two years after his death in 1646 James's widow Grace had only £8 worth of silver plate and £5 worth of linen: WRO 118/108.

⁵⁵ William Brewer's will makes provision in case there is insufficient cash to pay his grandchild's legacy of £60: TNA PROB 11/329/180.

the foremost clothiers was that each secured one or more of most productive fulling mills: Stowford, Iford and Freshford on the Frome; Avoncliff and Bradford on the Avon; Littleton, Seend Head and Hurst on the Semington and Bulkington Brooks. As Paul Methuen rose to eminence in the 1640s and 1650s he acquired leases of Iford mill and Trowle mill at Bradford,⁵⁶ once held by the Hortons and Yerburies;⁵⁷ and the Sumners' steadily accumulating wealth stemmed likewise from securing first Littleton and then Seend Head mill, held previously by the Passions and Barkedales.⁵⁸

Access to capital alone enabled the second rank of clothiers to buy wool and perhaps pay their spinners and weavers before receiving payment for the cloth, but rarely if ever allowed the major breakthrough that a fulling mill could deliver. The fast-rising brothers Thomas and Henry Long chose to acquire at least three mills in the mid-sixteenth century, although none were in the best locations.⁵⁹ Whaddon is scarcely noticed after 1610 and by the mid-century may have become a grist mill.⁶⁰ Even in the mid-seventeenth century, when fulling capacity was no longer the bottleneck it had been in the sixteenth and early seventeenth, the prime sites serving Trowbridge and Bradford remained strategic assets which gave their owners an overwhelming competitive advantage. Mann found that 'substantial' clothiers might only produce 200 cloths per annum,⁶¹ but Paul Methuen sent 1,400 to London over the two years 1641-3, when he probably had privileged access to his brother-in-law John Ashe's mill at Freshford. By 1656, when he also held Iford and perhaps also Bradford, he was said to be worth £60,000,⁶² a fortune which suggests he may have sent 2,000 cloths a year during the Interregnum, many of them bought from clothiers using his mills. Assuming an average sale price of £15 per Spanish cloth and a profit of 20 per cent,⁶³ 2,000 cloths would yield £6,000 a year, enough to generate such wealth in just a decade.⁶⁴

Richard Grassby's study of London's business community in the seventeenth century led him to conclude that merchants gained steadily in wealth throughout the period, despite

⁵⁶ TNA PROB 11/324/441. Methuen was a leaseholder at Iford by 1650: WRO 490/1532. His acquisition of the Bradford mill has not been traced.

⁵⁷ *VCH Wilts* vol 11 'Westwood: Mills'; TNA PROB 11/160/334 & PROB 11/219/644.

⁵⁸ Rogers *Woollen Mills* 110-2.

⁵⁹ See Chapter 3.2.

⁶⁰ WRO 947/1229.

⁶¹ Mann *Cloth Industry* 33n.

⁶² Rogers 'Paul Methuen'.

⁶³ Jonathan Ashe paid £14 for most cloths, but as much as £20 for others. John Ashe's profit on Spanish cloth is here assumed to have been slightly higher than Thomas Webb's on broadcloth (see Appendix 2), but even a 15 per cent margin would have yielded £60,000 in less than fourteen years.

⁶⁴ Methuen's career lasted more than two decades; he died aged 53: Rogers 'Paul Methuen'.

low productivity and inelastic costs, because they grew their fortunes through accumulation, while controlling their expenditure.⁶⁵ Clothier fortunes were built the same way, by retaining surpluses, investing spare cash in property to maintain a constant cash-flow and cutting back sharply on manufacture whenever trading conditions were adverse. With few permanent employees, clothiers were free to slow or cease production whenever the market was saturated, interrupted by warfare or closed by plague or fire; and those with the greatest capital resources could afford to support their most valued and skilled casual workers, reinforcing bonds of loyalty that might endure for generations. In this way business fortunes could be made and developed without improvements in productivity.

The innovations of Spanish cloth and serge, with local dyeing and finishing, did not increase output, but brought increased employment to west Wiltshire and enhanced clothier margins because of the higher selling price.⁶⁶ For wealth generation these changes were incremental rather than transformational: the distribution of wealth within west Wiltshire society remained essentially as it had been for generations. But the 1670s saw innovation of a different order. As noted in Chapter 5.3, twenty-three Dutch refugees, 'skilled in the art of making fine cloth', were employed by William Brewer in Trowbridge.⁶⁷ The nature of their expertise is unknown, but around this time spinners began to produce yarn of a much finer gauge, and with much less wastage than in earlier times. By Aubrey's account Samuel Ashe claimed one pound of wool made twice as much cloth in the 1680s as before the Civil Wars,⁶⁸ which is supported by Brewer's testimony in 1690 that his medley cloths of twenty to twenty-four yards weighed less than thirty pounds.⁶⁹ a Wiltshire broadcloth of twenty-six yards had weighed sixty-four pounds.⁷⁰ While fine spinning was more time-consuming and expensive,⁷¹ halving the wool requirement probably accelerated the fall in Wiltshire wool prices and further increased clothier margins. By the end of the century there is evidence of investment in capital infrastructure on a scale not seen since the first decade. New houses were built for Brewer's workers at Avoncliff,⁷² and the mill at Iford was extended, with a dye-house, clay-house and drying room.⁷³ In 1685 the Phipps brothers of Westbury Leigh

⁶⁵ Grassby *Business Community* 395-8.

⁶⁶ See Chapter 5.3.

⁶⁷ Mann 'Textile Industries: Cloth, 1640-1790'. In *Cloth Industry* 12 she gives the number as 29.

⁶⁸ Mann 'Textile Industries: Cloth, 1640-1790'.

⁶⁹ *Fourteenth Report* 37.

⁷⁰ *An Act Touching the Making of Woollen Cloths*: 4 & 5 Philip and Mary c 5.

⁷¹ Muldrew "'Th'ancient Distaff'" 508; Mann *Cloth Industry* 317.

⁷² Mann *Textile Industries: Cloth, 1640-1790*'.

⁷³ HE listings database; *VCH Wilts* vol 11 'Westwood: Mills'.

leased a 'newly built' house, fulling mill and dye-house there.⁷⁴ By the 1690s new homes for cloth-workers amongst others were being built on the hillside above Anthony Methuen's house and mill at Bradford.⁷⁵

Grassby found that it was unusual for a merchant family to sustain a business beyond two generations,⁷⁶ but this was not true of clothiers. Cornish's accounts in 1685 included several names – Adlam, Blagden, Wilkins, Yerbury – that appear one hundred and fifty years earlier in Kytson's ledger, and several more that were prominent by 1600, such as Potticary and Sumner. This does not prove continuous descent, and certainly not continuous business, but detailed investigation of individual families shows that successful clothiers did sustain their businesses over many decades. The clearest evidence comes from bequests and leases of fulling mills, which show for example that Adlams held Bull Mill at Crockerton from at least 1558, when they appear to have inherited it from the Clevelod family, to well beyond 1700;⁷⁷ Sumners held Littleton mill from at least 1597 to 1699,⁷⁸ and Wilkinses held Brook Mill near Westbury for most of the same period.⁷⁹ When the most valuable mills changed hands, they seem usually to have passed either to in-laws, favoured allies or clients, sometimes only temporarily, and only rarely by an arms-length sale. Freshford Mill was held by William Long by 1525 and passed by 1545 to his brother-in-law Alexander Langford, whose family held it until 1612. Sold then to Henry Davison, it later passed to Davison's son-in-law John Ashe and later to his grandson Anthony Methuen.⁸⁰ Iford Mill was held by Hortons from about 1500 to 1610 and by their Yerbury kinsmen until at least 1633, before passing to their friend Paul Methuen by 1650 and then to William Brewer – perhaps the 'Cousin Brewer' named in Methuen's will.⁸¹

The presumption must be that many business relationships continued across generations, and this is supported by evidence that widows could sustain businesses between the deaths of their husbands and the succession of young heirs, as in the cases of Joan, widow of Thomas Long,⁸² Grace, widow of James Ashe of Westcombe,⁸³ and Elizabeth, widow of John

⁷⁴ WRO 2161/3.

⁷⁵ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Bradford-on-Avon'.

⁷⁶ Grassby *Kinship and Capitalism* 411.

⁷⁷ WRO P2/3Reg/119c; Rogers *Woollen Mills* 240.

⁷⁸ TNA PROB 11/91/87; Rogers *Woollen Mills* 111-2.

⁷⁹ Rogers *Woollen Mills* 219.

⁸⁰ Brett *Norton St Philip* 16; Rogers *Woollen Mills* 195.

⁸¹ Rogers *Woollen Mills* 192; WRO 490/1530; TNA PROB 11/324/441.

⁸² TNA PROB 11/66/241.

⁸³ WRO 118/108.

Ashe of Freshford.⁸⁴ Indeed it seems likely that when a family did give up a valuable interest in the cloth business, the principal reason was often the lack of a suitable heir, or an unbridgeable gap between generations. This appears to have happened with the Baylies of Wingfield,⁸⁵ the Hortons of Westwood,⁸⁶ the Langfords of Freshford,⁸⁷ and the Longs of Whaddon,⁸⁸ who all sold up after a potential successor had died at a critical time. Such a disaster could prevent the transfer of essential business skills to the next generation, unless the widow or trustees could keep the business going until an infant heir could be given suitable training.

The need to consider this contingency may partly explain the friendly relationships that seem to have prevailed amongst men one might have expected to have been fierce competitors, for example between Paul Methuen and the Yerburys of Bradford, into whose territory Methuen moved from Beckington in the 1640s.⁸⁹ Methuen's sister or niece Dorothy married John Yerbury of Beckington;⁹⁰ and Jonathan Ashe's accounts include cash payments made in London to 'Mr Yerbury' made on Paul Methuen's authority,⁹¹ while Methuen's will in 1667 makes fond mention of 'the family and brotherhood of the Yerburys,' and names Joseph Ashe and Samuel Ashe amongst his trustees. While rivalries must have existed, and fierce competition broke out in the 1630s between the 'say-dyed' and the Spanish clothiers, these seem typically to have been resolved by inter-marriage. The result of such commercial alliances and kinship networks was that cloth production in west Wiltshire was dominated throughout the study period by a very small number of manufacturing dynasties who could collude in setting wages,⁹² and through control of the aulnage seals maintain a near-permanent oversight of smaller producers.⁹³ Aubrey may also have been correct in accusing such clothiers of combining against the wool-masters.⁹⁴

⁸⁴ TNA PROB 11/293/280.

⁸⁵ Stowford Mill passed to Ashe family soon after the death without issue of John Baylie in 1621: TNA PROB 11/137/316.

⁸⁶ Edward Horton's nephew William was dead by 1616, and his grandnephew Toby sold Westwood and Iford estates soon after inheriting them: see pedigree.

⁸⁷ John Langford sold Freshford Mill to Henry Davison in 1612, shortly before Langford died: TNA PROB 11/120/215.

⁸⁸ See Chapter 4.3.

⁸⁹ Rogers 'Paul Methuen'.

⁹⁰ BRO P/Xch/D/20(b)i-ii ;TNA PROB 11/183/682.

⁹¹ TNA C 107/17, December 1645.

⁹² In 1677 William Brewer led other employers in suppressing demands for a wage increase at Trowbridge: *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Trowbridge: Commercial and Industrial History'.

⁹³ See Chapter 3.2.

⁹⁴ Aubrey *Natural History* 110.

While perhaps not oligarchs in the sense of wielding political power, the Restoration clothiers exerted huge influence over thousands of dependent workers, demanded acknowledgement of their social status and carefully planned the succession to their dynastic businesses, just as Edward Horton had done from the 1560s⁹⁵ and Edward Long after 1612.⁹⁶ Like the London merchants studied by Grassby, they modified the conventions of primogeniture to ensure a wide distribution of opportunity to the next generation.⁹⁷ Nowhere are such features better exemplified than in Methuen's will,⁹⁸ which sought to ensure his lasting presence in the community by leaving the parish church a pulpit cloth 'made of fine wool' with his coat of arms and cloth mark in the corners. His body was to be buried in a vault close to his seat, and his epitaph in Latin engraved in white letters on the finest bluestone. His children, male and female, were to inherit equal shares of his fortune, except his eldest son who took two shares and his second son Anthony who as designated successor in trade inherited the leaseholds of the fulling mills at Iford and Bradford, the workshops and all the utensils of trade.

This portfolio approach to legacies can best be understood as a kind of investment strategy, which allowed the dying businessman to place the commercial interests of the family into the hands of his most talented son or kinsman. As Grassby notes of merchants, land could if necessary be managed by stewards, but commerce required hands-on management.⁹⁹ Paul Methuen was content to describe himself as clothier, not gentleman, in his will, and even on his deathbed did not abandon trade. Such men had every expectation that the business of cloth manufacture would continue to provide wealth for their descendants over many generations to come. Defoe's belief that many gentry families had their origins in the cloth trade cannot be substantiated for this period:¹⁰⁰ in 1673 Methuen and Edward Horton III were the only identifiable members of clothier families in a list of 132 gentlemen and nobles of Wiltshire, which included even minor gentry like John Aubrey.¹⁰¹

Like his father-in-law John Ashe, Methuen served briefly as a magistrate, but they were the first clothiers appointed to the Wiltshire bench since William Stumpe in 1547, and only

⁹⁵ See Chapter 3.2.

⁹⁶ See Chapter 4.3.

⁹⁷ Grassby *Business Community* 400.

⁹⁸ TNA PROB 11/324/441.

⁹⁹ Grassby *Kinship and Capitalism* 416.

¹⁰⁰ See Chapter 1.3.

¹⁰¹ WNQ 6, 25-31, an unattributed transcription of Thomas Roycroft's *Britannia* (London, 1676).

William Brewer of Trowbridge would follow them during the study period.¹⁰² The exclusion of most clothiers from the bench does not seem to have been because of their political or religiously attitudes, which were in any case not uniform; more likely it was because successive governments sought to exert control over the cloth economy by using the justices to enforce the laws on apprenticeship, manufacturing standards and wages,¹⁰³ and needed to preserve a degree of impartiality. The effect of this policy was that the clothiers remained legally subservient to the landowning gentry, whose cultural and economic priorities were different in many ways.

4 Gentry families

A rental of the manor and hundred of Bradford, produced around 1660, recorded Paul Methuen as a copyholder of Thomas Hall's manor, held of William Paulet, who held of the King.¹⁰⁴ In terms of legal tenure, Aubrey's 'nest of boxes' remained characteristic of west Wiltshire society long after he implied its time had passed.¹⁰⁵ The same held true in terms of local governance, with Paulets and other leading gentry dominating the local bench after the Restoration just as they had since the Reformation.¹⁰⁶ The grip of the resident gentry, though briefly broken in the 1540s and 1650s, had proved extraordinarily firm. The ancient families of Hungerford, Bayntun and Long had been joined by Danvers, Paulet and Thynne, not displaced by them. John Danvers left West Lavington for Chelsea during the Interregnum,¹⁰⁷ but his granddaughter Eleanor and her husband James Bertie, Earl of Abingdon, were occasional residents after their marriage in 1672;¹⁰⁸ and his cousin John Danvers still lived at Baynton in 1673.¹⁰⁹

Eric Kerridge's study of Wiltshire agriculture led him to conclude that 'judging by the accounts of their receivers-general and by their own style of life, most landowners enjoyed unprecedented affluence'¹¹⁰ in the Tudor and early Stuart era, but this judgment should be qualified at least for some Tudor in-comers. The estates bought with merchant capital in

¹⁰² See the lists of Elizabethan and early Stuart JPs in Johnson *Sessions* 220, Wall 'Wiltshire Commission' 196-8 and Slocombe *Quarter Sessions* 321-2; and TNA E 163/18/2, C 193/12/1-6 and C 193/13/1-6.

¹⁰³ Hurstfield 'County Government: Civil Affairs'.

¹⁰⁴ WAM vol 41 (1921) 221-6.

¹⁰⁵ Aubrey *Wiltshire* 7.

¹⁰⁶ The commissioners of Wiltshire appointed in 1663 are listed in 'An Act for Granting Four Entire Subsidies to his Majesty' *Statutes of the Realm* vol 5 (1628-80) 453-581, accessed at BHO.

¹⁰⁷ Kelsey 'Sir John Danvers'.

¹⁰⁸ Macnamara *Memorials* 297.

¹⁰⁹ *WNQ* 6, 29.

¹¹⁰ Kerridge 'Agriculture'.

the Elizabethan era did not all endure; nor did the proceeds of royal office. Thomas Smythe's great house at Corsham passed to the Hungerfords as early as 1602,¹¹¹ William Dauntsey's estate at West Lavington went to the Danvers family in 1628,¹¹² as did William Brounker's at Melksham in 1634.¹¹³ By the 1680s the legacies of the Elizabethan merchant magnates Richard Lambert and Lionel Duckett were much reduced: Thomas Lambert sold the manor of Keevil and Bulkington in 1681;¹¹⁴ William Duckett's inventory at Hartham in 1686 totalled just £810.¹¹⁵ The estates of the Tudor office-holders William Sharington and Henry Brounker passed to the greater gentry, Lacock Abbey to John Talbot,¹¹⁶ Melksham to Walter Long of Rood Ashton;¹¹⁷ in 1686 William Brounker's inventory at Erlestoke was valued at just £326.¹¹⁸ Only the Thynnes at Longleat seem an exception to the rule that in Stuart west Wiltshire, the Tudor interloper families had either been absorbed by the greater gentry or suffered a decline.

The wealthiest gentry were richer than the wealthiest clothiers, but not by so very much. James Thynne's nephew and heir Thomas, murdered in London in 1682, was nicknamed 'Tom o' Ten Thousand', referring to his annual income,¹¹⁹ but this was exceptional; at the Restoration Edward Bayntun's income was estimated at about £4,000 per year,¹²⁰ probably no more than John Ashe's had been in 1656, when he told parliament that his earnings from the cloth trade alone came to £3,000 per annum.¹²¹ Edward Hungerford's income was also estimated at £4,000 per year in 1664, but he depleted this so rapidly by compulsive spending that in 1684 he was obliged to sell Corsham House and many of his Wiltshire estates to the financier Richard Kent;¹²² three years later Farleigh Castle went to Hungerford's young rival Henry Bayntun,¹²³ and before the middle of the next century

¹¹¹ WJJ 'Sir Edward Hungerford'.

¹¹² Kelsey 'Sir John Danvers'.

¹¹³ *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Melksham: Manors' citing TNA C 54/3956/22. Many Brounker lands had been alienated since 1598 to pay off debts: Kite 'Place House, Melksham' 447-8.

¹¹⁴ TNA CP 25/2/747/33CHASIIIEASTER.

¹¹⁵ TNA PROB 4/21741.

¹¹⁶ A kinsman of the Earl of Shrewsbury: Helms & Henning 'Sir John Talbot'.

¹¹⁷ WRO 947/1547 (1671).

¹¹⁸ TNA PROB 4/5487. Brounker had sold the manor, reserving the capital mansion, in 1677: *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Erlestoke: Manors'.

¹¹⁹ Ferris, JP 'Sir Thomas Thynne, c1648-82' *HoP 1660-90*. His ancestor John Thynne had only about £2,000 a year in the 1570s: Burnett, D *Longleat: the Story of an English Country House* (Stanbridge, 1978) 37.

¹²⁰ Henning 'Sir Edward Bayntun'.

¹²¹ Barclay 'John Ashe'.

¹²² Henning, BD 'Edward Hungerford (1632-1711)' *HoP 1660-90*.

¹²³ Henning, BD & Jaggard, G 'Henry Bayntun (1664-91)' *HoP 1660-90*.

Corsham would be owned by a Methuen.¹²⁴ In 1669 Walter Long of Whaddon's four manors yielded about £2,000 per year,¹²⁵ but most of the landed gentry were worth considerably less than either the magnates or the greatest clothiers, and some were no better off than their yeoman tenants. The 1689 inventory of Francis Merewether, direct descendant of George Worthe at Bulkington, totalled just £440;¹²⁶ most of his demesne lands had already been sold. After Aubrey's death in 1697, his property at Broad Chalke was valued at just £21 10s 7d.¹²⁷ As Joan Thirsk found more generally, many great landowners had flourished, but some of the lesser gentry had declined.¹²⁸

Aubrey in the 'Preface' linked the change in gentry fortunes to the ending of legal feudalism, with the abolition of many royal prerogatives in 1641,¹²⁹ but also to changes in political and cultural behaviour which can readily be traced in west Wiltshire. Susan Brigden defined the feudal era as one in which nobles were all-powerful in their own provinces and willing on occasion to challenge the Crown.¹³⁰ By this measure, the fall of the Seymours in the 1550s bore the mark of a new order, in which the Crown's servants became the dominant force in west Wiltshire, led by William Paulet, John Thynne and John Danvers.¹³¹ For Brigden, however, the decisive moment came at the start of the seventeenth century, with the Essex revolt of 1601 that claimed the life not only of the earl but of his ally Charles Danvers:¹³² 'Essex and his friends were torn between two worlds: a lost world of "overmighty subjects", bound by friendship in arms, with unimpeded power in their local communities and the military support of a loyal tenantry; and the real world of service at court and dependency upon the Crown.'¹³³

The change of royal dynasty accelerated this process in west Wiltshire, as the ancient magnates attached themselves to the Stuart regime, Edward Hungerford through his connections to Buckingham and his Berkeley kinsmen¹³⁴ and Thomas Thynne through a timely marriage into the Howard family.¹³⁵ During the Civil War the Thynnes again proved

¹²⁴ It was acquired by Paul Methuen's grandson to house his furniture and art collection: Schweizer, KW 'Sir Paul Methuen (c1672-1757)' *ODNB*.

¹²⁵ WRO 947/962.

¹²⁶ TNA PROB 4/10841.

¹²⁷ TNA PROB 4/8868.

¹²⁸ Thirsk *Restoration* 154

¹²⁹ Davies *Early Stuarts* 103.

¹³⁰ Brigden, S *New Worlds, Lost Worlds: The Rule of the Tudors, 1485-1603* (London, 2001).

¹³¹ See Chapter 3.1 & 3.2.

¹³² Hammer, EJP 'Sir Charles Danvers (c1568-1601)' *ODNB*.

¹³³ Brigden *New Worlds* 349.

¹³⁴ See Chapter 4.2.

¹³⁵ Lancaster & Thrush 'Thomas Thynne (1577-1639)'

adroit at handling shifting times. The 'old lady' Catherine (née Howard) successfully moved £30,000 in money and personalty from the sequestered Longleat,¹³⁶ and James Thynne paid a reduced composition fine of only £4,034 after surrendering at Exeter on favourable terms.¹³⁷ Even the clothier-magnate John Ashe was circumspect in his family's interest, despite his prominence in the Parliamentary cause. In 1645 he wrote to the Committee for the Advance of Money in defence of Lady Beauchamp at Edington, whose son Richard Lewis had spent the war years in France;¹³⁸ and Ashe can scarcely have been unaware of his own son Joseph's support for the royal cause, which eased the family's fortunes under the restored monarchy.¹³⁹ In the east of the county the Herberts at Wilton lost their ascendancy during the Commonwealth, but under Charles II would eventually regain the lord-lieutenancy from the Seymours. It was granted in 1675 to Philip, the 7th Earl,¹⁴⁰ the owner according to Aubrey of 'fifty-two mastiffs and thirty greyhounds, some bears, and a lion, and a matter of sixty fellows more bestial then they.'¹⁴¹ The spirit of chivalric feudalism at least lived on at Wilton.

The possession of a great house was the most crucial demonstration of magnate status, with Hungerford's castle at Farleigh and Bayntun's mansion at Bromham the grandest in west Wiltshire until the late sixteenth century. Protector Seymour in the 1540s¹⁴² and Robert Cecil in the 1600s have been credited with inspiring a wave of more modern building or rebuilding, by John Thynne at Longleat, to designs by Robert Smythson,¹⁴³ and by John Hall at Bradford, whose house was perhaps designed by William Arnold.¹⁴⁴ Construction from scratch could be hugely expensive: in the case of Longleat as much as £8,000 *excluding* the cost of freestone, timber and other essentials.¹⁴⁵

In their love of architectural display the greater gentry differed markedly from the clothiers, who rarely aspired to more than a gabled stone manor house like Horton's at Westwood or Henry Long's at Whaddon, which both resembled Aubrey's description of a typical gentleman's house with 'a good high strong wall, a gate house, a great hall and parlour, and

¹³⁶ Greene, ME *Calendar of the Proceedings of the Committee for the Advance of Money, 1642-56* vol 1 (London, 1888) 51.

¹³⁷ Ferris 'Sir James Thynne'.

¹³⁸ Greene *Advance of Money* vol 1, 568.

¹³⁹ Ferris *Sir Joseph Ashe*; and see Chapter 5.2.

¹⁴⁰ Brydges, E (ed) *Collins's Peerage of England* vol 3 (London, 1812) 140.

¹⁴¹ Aubrey *Brief Lives* 146.

¹⁴² Pevsner *Wiltshire* 34-5.

¹⁴³ Girouard, M 'Sir John Thynne (1515-80)' *ODNB*.

¹⁴⁴ Slocombe, P *The Hall, Bradford-on-Avon* (Bradford-on-Avon, 2012) 33.

¹⁴⁵ Stone *Crisis* 554.

within the little green court where you came in, stood on one side the barn.¹⁴⁶ But even these plain houses could be burnished with expensive features such as ornate porches and shell niches, finely carved chimney pieces, heraldic devices and moulded plaster ceilings.¹⁴⁷ By the 1680s Walter Long's house at Whaddon had his heraldic crest (a lion's head) on the gate posts, his arms over the porch, the heads of the twelve Roman emperors in stone or plaster of paris around the hall, and busts of Aristotle and Sophocles over the chimney.¹⁴⁸ Interior furnishings were lavish. Edward Lewis and his wife Lady Beauchamp seem to have thoroughly restored the house at Edington which had been ruinous when briefly occupied in 1599 by the Keevil clothier William Jones:¹⁴⁹ at Beauchamp's death in 1665 the Green Chamber alone was furnished to a value of £200, the Lady's Bedchamber, Parlour, and Great Dining Room £50 each, the Withdrawing Room £40 and Parlour Chamber and Closet £35. As Aubrey recorded, the days of the great hall as a living space had long since passed,¹⁵⁰ but at Edington the hall still bristled with twenty muskets and cullivers, ten pikes, four headpieces, six corselets and six swords.¹⁵¹

The cost of such purchases, and other major expenses such as the education and establishment of heirs and provision of marriage portions for daughters, were met largely out of manorial income such as rents and fines, heriots and amercements, and the sale of agricultural products such as grain, livestock and wool and the natural resources of stone and timber. In cloth-producing manors, the rent payable on the fulling mill was typically the highest on the estate, and cloth-workers in aggregate made valuable tenants, since their paid income meant that in normal times they could survive on one- or two-acre properties and pay their rent reliably, while in times of distress the clothiers could be pressurized to provide some relief. For the gentry, scale was critical: the bigger the estate, the greater the potential income, provided the land was good and the estate well-managed, which in practice often meant enabling the yardlanders to farm in severalty. In 1602 Francis Fane's steward Edward Michell negotiated the sub-division of a common at Seend because it

¹⁴⁶ Wiltshire's Hearth Tax returns for 1662 are too incomplete to permit useful comparisons of the number of fireplaces in west Wiltshire houses.

¹⁴⁷ All these features are present at The Hall, Bradford: Slocombe *The Hall* 21-32, and are found elsewhere. In 1611 a porch and shell niches were installed at Keevil Manor: *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Keevil: Manors'. John Horton's house at Broughton Gifford (c1622) had an elaborately carved chimney piece. *VCH Wilts* vol 7 'Broughton Gifford: Manors'. An ornate plaster ceiling was installed at Westwood c1620: see Chapter 4. 5.

¹⁴⁸ Dingley *History in Marble* 147.

¹⁴⁹ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Edington: Manors'.

¹⁵⁰ Aubrey *Wiltshire* 8.

¹⁵¹ Anon *Anne, Lady Beauchamp's Inventory*.

'being good land hath proved little in value by reason of some that overcharged the same.'¹⁵²

Magnates like the Fanes, Thynnes, Hungerfords and Bayntuns, and indeed John Ashe,¹⁵³ could afford to employ stewards, bailiffs and attorneys to enforce manorial custom, collect rents, and negotiate such agreements. Lesser gentry could handle their own affairs. At Broughton Gifford, John Horton's memorandum book for the 1660s shows that he personally sold timber, let out pasture, gathered rents and sold leases for new cottages, and paid out hearth tax, levies for the poor and for highways, and hefty quarterly demands for royal aid.¹⁵⁴ With many rents fixed by customary tenancies, revenue was typically increased by bringing new land into production from marshes, woodland and other wastes, by building or granting licences to build cottages and by granting long enough leases on existing demesne lands to persuade tenants to make the improvements to fencing and hedging, drainage and soil condition which alone would justify a substantial fine when the lease came up for renewal. On smaller estates the scope for revenue increase was limited, and where their owners could not escape financial pressures by borrowing, sale of freeholds became the only option. It is in this sense that Aubrey could speak credibly of the destruction of manors and the rise of 'the common people': manors were not so much destroyed from without as hollowed out from within. Freeholders and copyholders with enclosed land of their own had less and less need of manorial regulation.

For the greater gentry, preserving large estates by strict observance of primogeniture was a more pressing obligation than for the great clothiers. Younger sons were not neglected, but nor were they necessarily set up for life. Edward Bayntun in 1657 left £200 per year to his second son Henry but only £500 in total to his third son Nicholas¹⁵⁵ – less than half the inheritance enjoyed by the younger sons of Paul Methuen.¹⁵⁶ When the head of the family produced sons by successive wives, however, primogeniture might be challenged, with long-lasting consequences. After 1610 the division of Walter Long of Wraxall's estate between two sons, one at Wraxall and the other at Draycot, left the influence of Wraxall much diminished;¹⁵⁷ while Thomas Thynne's 1639 will leaving a sizeable inheritance to his second wife's eldest son in return for her dowry caused a long, bitter and expensive feud

¹⁵² WRO 1558/15.

¹⁵³ Ashe appointed two overseers 'to take care for the letting and improving of the lands' bequeathed to his four younger sons: TNA PROB 11/293/280.

¹⁵⁴ In 1666 he paid over £9 per quarter, up from £5 in previous years: WRO 34/5.

¹⁵⁵ Lancaster & Thrush 'Sir Edward Bayntun (1593-1657)'

¹⁵⁶ TNA PROB 11/324/441.

¹⁵⁷ Lancaster 'Sir Walter Long of Draycot (1594-1637)'.

between James Thynne and his step-mother.¹⁵⁸ For the most part, however, primogeniture was observed, enabling successive generations of families to pursue long-term strategic objectives, although always at the risk of catastrophic failure should an unworthy heir succeed to the estate. The manor of Dilton, near Westbury, granted to Walter Hungerford's client John Bush in the 1530s,¹⁵⁹ was acquired by another Walter Hungerford in 1587.¹⁶⁰ It remained in the family until 1684, when a century of prudent management was undone by the uncontrollable Edward Hungerford, whose weakness for lavish spending had been recognized by his aunt thirty years before.¹⁶¹ Perhaps Aubrey had such consequences in mind when noting as early as 1670 that entails, 'a good prop for monarchy', had gone out of fashion.¹⁶²

5 Lords and tenants of Bulkington vale

In the villages of west Wiltshire, where clothiers and weavers, yeomen and labourers lived side by side and did homage together at the manorial court, there is little evidence that the greater gentry or their stewards instigated agricultural improvements apart from the hedges and ditches that accompanied enclosure. There are few references in inventories before 1680 to crops other than the hay, wheat, barley, oats, beans, peas and vetches that had been grown for generations.¹⁶³ Even the wealthier yeomen of Bulkington vale continued with the mixed farming practised there at the start of the seventeenth century and probably for a long time before.¹⁶⁴ At Seend in January 1671 John Sumner had only five kine but six pigs, six oxen for the plough and twenty-eight breeding sheep; the main source of his agricultural income was the grain crops.¹⁶⁵ That same year William Blagden at Hinton had eleven kine worth £29, but his thirty-eight cheeses were worth only £2 and the contents of his cheese loft, including all the cheeses and the shelves, only £5. By comparison his oxen and heifers were worth over £40, and he had more than 300 sheep

¹⁵⁸ Lancaster & Thrush 'Sir Thomas Thynne (c1577-1639)'

¹⁵⁹ See Chapter 2.2.

¹⁶⁰ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Westbury: Manors'.

¹⁶¹ In her 1672 will Margaret, Lady Hungerford had urged him not to 'by improvident courses lessen the estate of his family' and offered the incentive of an extra £500 if he paid his debts within a year: WRO 1546.

¹⁶² Aubrey *Wiltshire* 9.

¹⁶³ Kerridge 'Agriculture'.

¹⁶⁴ See Chapter 4. 4.

¹⁶⁵ TNA PROB 4/21955.

worth over £50 in total and £21 worth of wool.¹⁶⁶ In Bulkington in 1689 Francis Merewether had fifty cheese shelves and 138 cheeses, but they were worth in total only £10.¹⁶⁷ Cheese sales must certainly have provided regular income for many farmers, and production times were shorter than with crops or animals, but by grouping this part of west Wiltshire with 'the cheese country' historians have over-stated the prevalence of small dairy farms and under-stated the value of sheep, beef cattle and grains.

Throughout west Wiltshire yardlander families of the Tudor age grew steadily wealthier, sustained by rising grain prices which by the later Stuart era probably outstripped the importance of wool for most farmers.¹⁶⁸ With markets close by at Devizes, Market Lavington and Warminster such families were well-positioned to convert their surpluses to cash and to accumulate large reserves over the decades. A rough idea of the distribution of wealth over time and place can be gleaned from occupational descriptions in wills. Over a period of 150 years just twenty-five men were described as gentlemen in Steeple Ashton parish, the number rising from two between 1550 and 1600, to six between 1600 and 1650 and seventeen between 1650 and 1700. In Keevil there were only nine: two before 1600, three more before 1650 and another four by 1700; three or four of these were in Bulkington. In Melksham there were twenty-three, of whom two before 1600, four more by 1650 and seventeen between 1650 and 1700. A pattern of steady and sustained growth in rural wealth is clearly suggested and is confirmed by similar results for the term yeoman. In Keevil and Bulkington the number of men so described rises from four before 1600 to nineteen between 1600 and 1650 and twenty-six between 1650 and 1700.¹⁶⁹

Turning to individuals, the overriding narrative is equally clear. While parish gentry families were in many cases able to maintain their status across the whole period, they were joined by a select few whose increased wealth can be attributed to the role they had played in the cloth economy or to their professional expertise. In Steeple Ashton the Stileman, Markes, Martyn and Bennet families persisted as gentry throughout the period, but were joined by Sumners and Blagdens (amongst others), whose fortunes were made from cloth as well as land, and by the Long family's steward Robert Beach.¹⁷⁰ Such families soon demonstrated their new status. Having moved their principal home from Keevil to Hinton around the time of the Interregnum, the Blagden family enlarged and embellished their Keevil house to bear

¹⁶⁶ TNA PROB 4/12928.

¹⁶⁷ TNA PROB 4/10841.

¹⁶⁸ Kerridge 'Agriculture'; Clay *Economic Expansion* vol 1, 40-1; Bowden *Wool Trade* 220.

¹⁶⁹ Figures compiled from the WRO Wills Database and the TNA catalogue, both searched online.

¹⁷⁰ See Chapter 5.4.

comparison with the Lambert manor house across the street.¹⁷¹ Robert Beach moved from the Warminster area to settle in West Ashton, where Aubrey tells us his son Thomas had a 'very fair' labyrinth in his garden around 1670.¹⁷² In 1681 his kinsman William Beach purchased from Thomas Lambert the manor of Keevil with Bulkington, now with just ten messuages and ten cottages, and took up residence in the manor house.¹⁷³

This last transaction followed what Aubrey might have termed the 'destruction' of the last remaining manor of Bulkington. In the 1560s there had been three, held by George Worthe, Richard Lambert and Andrew Bayntun.¹⁷⁴ In 1627 they had been reduced to two, when Thomas Lambert acquired the former Bayntun manor.¹⁷⁵ During the Interregnum most of Worthe's manor was sold off by his son-in-law Samuel Sheppard and grandson Francis Merewether.¹⁷⁶ After the Restoration Thomas Lambert II sold some of his remaining copyholds in Bulkington to his long-term tenants, the Gaysford and Jeffery families. For the Gaysfords in particular this was a remarkable advance on their position at the start of the century. At that time, despite holding two yardlands in Bulkington, William Gaysford valued the good will of George Worthe enough to name a son after him,¹⁷⁷ just as Roger Blagden in Keevil named a daughter Dulsabelle after the wife of Edward Lambert.¹⁷⁸ Yet by 1641 William's brother John Gaysford had laid aside enough to lend money to the cash-strapped Edmund Lambert.¹⁷⁹ In 1656 Stephen Gaysford, John's son by a second wife, was sufficiently wealthy to marry into the Long family of Marston and Worton¹⁸⁰ and the following year bought a freehold in Bulkington from Samuel Sheppard and his son-in-law Francis Merewether.¹⁸¹ It was Stephen's younger brother Samuel who was accepted as a suitor by their kinswoman Joan Sumner before her engagement to John Aubrey.¹⁸² In 1668

¹⁷¹ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Keevil: Manors'; HE listings database. The five-gabled house with two stories and an attic is similar in design to the Lambert manor house, though built of rendered brick instead of ashlar.

¹⁷² SAL MS 817/12 f 9. Jackson cites Hutchins *Dorset* vol 1, 101n.

¹⁷³ TNA CP 25/2/747/33CHASIEASTER.

¹⁷⁴ See Chapter 2.3.

¹⁷⁵ See Chapter 4.4.

¹⁷⁶ See Chapter 5.4.

¹⁷⁷ WRO Keevil PR, George Gaysford b 1593. The name does not occur before or after the time of Worthe's arrival at Bulkington.

¹⁷⁸ WRO Keevil PR, Dulsabelle Blagden b 1616.

¹⁷⁹ See Chapter 4.4.

¹⁸⁰ A branch of the clothier family, and substantial landowners since 1600: see Chapter 3.2.

¹⁸¹ WRO 130/6.

¹⁸² See Chapter 5.4.

Stephen acquired another freehold yardland from Thomas Lambert, redeeming the loan made by Stephen's father to Lambert's father in 1641.¹⁸³

In just one generation this family had advanced to the edge of gentry status in Bulkington, while the two manorial lords, the Lamberts and Merewethers had retreated. No inventory has been traced for Thomas Lambert, but the bequests in his 1691 will are modest: his eldest daughter receiving only £700, her younger sisters and brother only £400 each.¹⁸⁴ Francis Merewether's 1689 inventory, appraised by John Sumner, James Gaysford and others, had a total value of just £440.¹⁸⁵ The explanation for their financial weakness is probably that they had leased out their demesne lands as wool prices fell and were unable to benefit from rising demand for food produce. Stephen Gaysford, holding perhaps £200 in ready money and willing to farm for himself, was not wealthy but relatively well-placed. None of the six brothers in this branch of the Gaysford family seems to have been involved in the cloth trade, though the youngest brothers Samuel and Jonathan had inherited £40 each plus 'the sheep-house' lease and may have grown wool intensively.¹⁸⁶ It seems more likely that the family's fortunes had risen mainly with livestock and grain prices and through interest on loans, to the point where more than one brother could seek to profit from an advantageous marriage.

But while some Bulkington yardlanders flourished, had the poor become poorer? Little evidence has been found that much if any land was added to the available stock, but improved drainage may have made the marshes between Bulkington and Erlestoke more productive by the end of the period, as it did at Bratton.¹⁸⁷ The open fields had been farmed in severalty from the beginning of our period, and by the end the once-stinted pasture of Bulkington Leaze had also been divided.¹⁸⁸ Thus the result of population growth up to the Civil War could only be an increase in the landless population, most of whom probably supported themselves by working for farmers, cloth-manufacturers or both, since only a few tradesmen appear to have operated in the village. Few records have been traced to illuminate this process, but a set of Hearth Tax exemption certificates does survive, recording that twenty-two men and widows received alms in Bulkington in 1670, while in 1674 eight cottages with either one or two hearths were declared exempt as being worth

¹⁸³ WRO 1976/4/35.

¹⁸⁴ TNA PROB 11/412/302.

¹⁸⁵ TNA PROB 4/10841.

¹⁸⁶ WRO P2/9/295. In 1671 the eldest brother, John Gaysford of Southwick would style himself gentleman: TNA PROB 11/335/192.

¹⁸⁷ Reeves & Morrison *Diaries of Jeffery Whitaker* xix.

¹⁸⁸ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Keevil: Economic History'.

no more than twenty shillings 'on the full improved rent.'¹⁸⁹ The Bulkington lists include poor relations of most of the long-established yardlanders, including Gaysford, Harris, Jeffery, Nash and Taylor, and provide little evidence of in-migration in Stuart times. A 1675 document for Keevil notes individual disbursements to the poor over a twelve-month period totalling £34, mostly in regular payments of three or six shillings per month to the same half-dozen recipients.¹⁹⁰ While there were certainly poor families in both Bulkington and Keevil, there is nothing to suggest abject poverty of the type that Aubrey records around Calne.¹⁹¹

6 Cottagers and the Labouring Poor

Scarcity of evidence means that only a tentative account can be given of social trends among the poorest segment of west Wiltshire society: those with little or no land, whether in villages or towns. The poor are barely visible in Leland's *Itineraries* of the 1540s and appear infrequently in the records of the Elizabethan Quarter Sessions. Surviving minutes for the period 1575-92 show the justices capping a fine for one individual (a weaver) 'because he is a pauper',¹⁹² and reveal that in the dangerous years around the time of the Armada they were ready to punish those who refused to help support the poor by contributing to the parish chest.¹⁹³ Otherwise the minutes are silent, perhaps suggesting that until late in the century most parishes were able to provide what relief was required, after families had looked after their own. What the labouring poor themselves did to earn their keep is the subject of much historical debate, and cannot be resolved by the current study. All that can be assumed is that most rural cottagers in west Wiltshire must have earned some money from agriculture, if only at harvest time, or as household servants to yeoman families; and many must have been employed in cloth manufacture. The poor (which would include the elderly and infirm) are ever-present in clothiers' wills, which invariably provide small sums for their relief. Perhaps a quarter of the population lived at subsistence level, without savings or surplus to protect them from price inflation, dearth, sickness, injury or unemployment.

¹⁸⁹ TNA E 179/348.

¹⁹⁰ WRO 1497/2.

¹⁹¹ See Chapter 5.5.

¹⁹² Johnson *Sessions* 28.

¹⁹³ *ibid* 121-2, 135.

With the steady rise in both population and prices from the 1550s, poverty seems also to have grown, and the threat of rural unrest became of increasing concern to the authorities. Parish poor rates were introduced at the end of the Elizabethan era,¹⁹⁴ but in the early seventeenth century poverty became a serious problem for both town and countryside. West Wiltshire's dependence on the cloth trade was brutally exposed by the depression of the early 1620s, which caused great distress at both Bromham and Rowde,¹⁹⁵ and social nuisance in the borough of Devizes. Beier relates that 'In 1625, spinners and cloth-workers in Devizes were reported to "want work for the maintenance of themselves, their wives and children [so] that many of them living idly do wander up and down begging both in town and country." The Common Council accordingly set aside £150 to employ the many poor people of the borough.'¹⁹⁶ This may be an early indication that poverty was becoming concentrated in and around the major cloth towns of west Wiltshire; it was perhaps exacerbated by the conversion of arable lands to pasture for sheep. In 1642 Quarter Sessions were told that 'of late years much of the arable land in the three tithings ... of Leigh, Woolley and Comberwell [in Bradford parish] has been converted to meadow and pasture...there are not now...above the third part of the ploughs that in former times were kept there.'¹⁹⁷ From around this time the justices made some efforts to crack down on cottages erected without the four acres of land required by law,¹⁹⁸ under Privy Council pressure to prevent riots by landless labourers in times of crisis. But people had to live somewhere, and workers were needed in agriculture as well as cloth-making; in practice cottages with little or no land continued to be built under licence from manorial lords. Even when the right to build was challenged at Quarter Sessions, it was sometimes confirmed by the justices, though the frequency should not be exaggerated – only forty-four approvals were granted in Wiltshire during the period 1642-54.¹⁹⁹

Buchanan Sharp, in his account of riots and uprisings in the West Country from 1595 to 1660, claimed that by the early Stuart era there was 'a large rural industrial proletariat [in east Somerset and west Wiltshire] living on wages earned in various cloth-working

¹⁹⁴ 'An Act for the Relief of the Poor' 43 Elizabeth c3 (1600-1).

¹⁹⁵ See Chapter 4.3.

¹⁹⁶ Beier, AL, 'Poverty and Progress in Early Modern England', in Beier, AL, Cannadine, D & Rosenheim JM (eds) *The First Modern Society: Essays in English History in Honour of Lawrence Stone* (Cambridge, 1989) 225.

¹⁹⁷ Slocombe *Quarter Sessions* 9.

¹⁹⁸ Enforcing the terms of the 'Act against Erecting and Maintaining of Cottages' 31^o Elizabeth c 7 (1588). See also Chapter 4.4.

¹⁹⁹ Slocombe *Quarter Sessions* xix-xx

occupations and dependent on the market for food.²⁰⁰ He argued that a significant proportion of this 'proletariat' was entirely dependent on wages from the clothiers: cloth-workers with only a cottage garden or an acre or two were not part-time farmers or pastoralists, and did not spin or weave as a 'by-employment' from farming their own small-holdings. If entirely landless, they were entirely 'at the mercy of natural calamities and the fluctuations of a mercantile economy.'²⁰¹ Sharp may have over-stated the case to some extent: he drew his conclusions from a narrow spectrum of sources, and the very small number of riotous incidents he identified in west Wiltshire might evidence a prevailing stability rather than the opposite.²⁰² But Sharp did provide valuable evidence that by early Stuart times the west Wiltshire cloth manufactory was becoming concentrated around towns, notably Chippenham and Calne, on the Avon north of Bromham, and Frome and Bradford-on-Avon. Near all four places there were large areas of royal forest,²⁰³ giving ample space for cottages, and settlement had begun before the end of the sixteenth century. An Exchequer commission of 1610 found 137 cottages on the King's demesne in Blackmore (Melksham) Forest, and a further 76 in Pewsey Forest, the majority built within the previous twenty-five years. Of these cottages as many as 162 had no land at all, and 41 were held rent free.²⁰⁴

Sharp also cited two important documents describing high levels of migration to Frome. In the first, written in 1621 during the deepest trade depression of the early Stuart era, Anthony Methuen, vicar of St John's,²⁰⁵ and his churchwardens petitioned the justices that the parish was overburdened with 500 poor – perhaps 100 families – because large numbers of cloth-workers had been drawn to the area and built cottages in Selwood Forest, which extended into the eastern part of this large parish.²⁰⁶ The second document, a report from the justices of Frome to the Privy Council when trade with Flanders was suspended in 1630-1, confirmed that the town and forest were 'over-crowded with the cottages of the

²⁰⁰ Sharp *In Contempt* 3

²⁰¹ *ibid* 6-7

²⁰² In west Wiltshire as defined in the current study Sharp notes only grain seizures near Warminster in 1595, at Warminster, Westbury and Seend in 1614, and at Midford Hill, near Freshford, in 1630: *In Contempt* 18, 23, 28-9. Since Warminster was the main grain market in the region, and hence an obvious place to seize grain, it is unsafe to place too great an emphasis on its location at the edge of the cloth district.

²⁰³ See Map 4.

²⁰⁴ Sharp *In Contempt* 163. It is worth noting that even if all 213 cottages had been built within twenty-five years, the rate of building was only eight per year, in extensive woodlands adjoining the cloth towns of Chippenham, Calne, Devizes and Melksham, as well as the smaller settlements of Lacock, Seend Head and Rowde.

²⁰⁵ Father of the clothier Paul Methuen: CCED; Rogers 'Paul Methuen'.

²⁰⁶ Sharp *In Contempt* 161 citing SRO Session Roll 43.ii f166.

poor.’ It estimated the population of Frome at 6,750,²⁰⁷ significantly more than at Bradford-on-Avon, with less than 4,500 at that time,²⁰⁸ or Devizes, said in 1655 to house only 455 families and whose total population in 1631 may have been less than 2,000.²⁰⁹

But even Frome was not a perennial centre of unrest; and villages more distant from the towns were generally able to accommodate a growing population without undue stress. As Paul Slack has noted, ‘poverty in [early modern] England was shallow rather than deep, and respectable rather than disorderly;’²¹⁰ riots and uprisings occurred only sporadically in west Wiltshire, when trade depressions or harvest failures were extreme. The crises of the 1620s and 1631-2 were exceptions rather than the rule. The evidence of the current study suggests that the cloth trade did normally support a very large workforce, even if only at subsistence levels; and that it attracted migration to the towns. It seems certain that as clothiers of the Frome and Biss took up production of Spanish cloth and their demand for workers grew, space was found for migrant settlement in the woodlands and commons near Frome and Trowbridge. Short-distance migration may have reduced population pressure and poverty in fielden villages, perhaps including parts of Bulkington vale after the enclosure of the Northwood in Keevil parish in 1604;²¹¹ which might explain why, when growing numbers of poor were migrating to the towns, Paul Slack found only one migrant from Keevil parish amongst the vagrants of early Stuart Salisbury.²¹² Frome and Bradford may have been more favoured destinations.

In summary, it appears likely that the number of poor in west Wiltshire increased until about 1630 with the growth in population and prices, because wages remained low and employment in white broadcloth manufacture reached a peak around 1610 and then declined. From the 1630s, clothiers turned to dyed and finished Spanish cloth and serge, and employment rose until Civil War and Cromwell’s war with Spain brought their own crises. In the crisis years of the 1660s, labour concentration around the emerging centres of the cloth trade seems to have resulted in the period of urban poverty noted by Methuen at Bradford and by Aubrey at Calne and Chippenham (which Aubrey blamed largely on enclosure).²¹³ But trade slowly recovered after the catastrophe of the Great Fire in London, and the commercial centres at Bradford, Trowbridge, Westbury and Frome entered the

²⁰⁷ *ibid* 161-2, citing TNA SP 16/204/112.

²⁰⁸ Clark & Hosking *Population Estimates* gives a figure for Bradford of nearly 4,700 in 1676.

²⁰⁹ VCH ‘Borough of Devizes’ ‘Town, Castle & Estates’ citing *WAM*. ii. 330 n.

²¹⁰ Slack *Poverty and Policy* 113.

²¹¹ See Chapter 4.4.

²¹² Slack *Early-Stuart Salisbury* 50

²¹³ Aubrey *Wiltshire* 11

new cycle of growth that would be celebrated by Defoe at the start of the eighteenth century.

7 Material and intellectual capital

In an analysis of early modern inventories of Cornwall and Kent, Mark Overton and his co-authors were able to demonstrate that between 1600 and 1750 Cornish incomes declined, especially amongst the yeomen and husbandmen, as farms specialised more on beef than dairy, while Kentish prosperity grew with increased household production of butter, cheese and beer.²¹⁴ Wiltshire's experience appears closer to that of Kent, but the research for the current study has been directed at specific individuals not necessarily representative of an entire population and any conclusions must therefore be tentative. The limitations of probate inventories as evidence of social change must also be reiterated: they rarely address the poor, who perhaps accounted for more than a quarter of the population, and they omit or generalise as 'other lumber' many low-value items that might give valuable insight into daily life.²¹⁵ Nonetheless it is worth making three observations on the west Wiltshire inventories considered for this study.

First, they provide little evidence of significant change in the material capital of either the richest or the poorest households. Henry Sharington at Lacock in 1575, Edward Horton at Bradford and Bath in 1603, Henry Long at Whaddon in 1611, Edmund Lambert at Keevil in 1643, Anne, Lady Beauchamp at Edington in 1665 and Henry Bayntun at Bremhill and Spye in 1690 all had lavish furnishings, ranging from Turkey carpets and Arras tapestries to leather chairs and walnut tables. By the 1660s, 'old' coaches were found in stables, perhaps indicating that these had been in use from about the late 1630s, but otherwise there is little to distinguish the start from the end of the era, and the variation in wealth is seen mainly in the number of rooms and the quantity and quality of jewellery and plate. At the other end of the social scale the possessions of cottagers after the Restoration can scarcely have improved since the Reformation, as the few surviving inventories list only apparel, beds and utensils for work and cooking.

The changes that can be observed are most evident among the increasing numbers of yeomen whose wills in Tudor times often listed their possessions, which can thus be

²¹⁴ Overton, Whittle *et al*, *Production and Consumption* 53, 57, 171.

²¹⁵ Overton, Whittle *et al*, *Production and Consumption* 170; Spufford 'Probate Inventory'.

compared with those noted in late Stuart inventories. The difference typically lies in a greater quantity of farm equipment, larger herds and flocks, more valuable apparel, bedding and napery, and a number of items not recorded in earlier generations, such as books, fowling pieces, clocks, looking glasses and wine bowls. But if yeomen were spending more freely on a small range of discretionary items, they nonetheless remained impervious to many of the physical comforts so valued by the gentry and wealthy clothiers. While feather beds had been widely used even in Elizabethan times, the most typical seating in a yeoman's house of 1670 remained stools and forms, with very few chairs, although cushions might be found in the upstairs chambers. Food and drink were a different matter. The appearance of malt-mills and spice-mills in yeomen's houses suggest beer replacing ale and a demand for more tasty meals; in 1689 Francis Merewether also had a mustard-mill and pot.²¹⁶

Second, the inventories shed considerable light on the housing otherwise known only from rentals and inquisitions post mortem as 'messuages', 'tofts' or cottages. From the start of the period the yardlanders' houses seem to have been substantial, with at least a hall, parlour and kitchen downstairs and chambers over both parlour and kitchen; some even had cock-lofts above the chambers. By the early 1600s 'great chambers' over the hall are described, perhaps indicating that ceilings and chimneys had been inserted, or simply that lofts were now furnished and used as bedrooms. Nearly all these houses were timber-framed with wattle and daub panelling between the posts and a thatched roof, while barns and outhouses were often weather-boarded, sometimes even on the roof.²¹⁷ Downstairs rooms including parlours were often used for storing bulky items, while wool was usually kept in a loft, where it could dry out thoroughly after washing.²¹⁸ Most of these houses would have been first constructed well before the Reformation, though frequently repaired because of rot or fire. Other smaller buildings were added throughout the period, from lean-to workshops on the outside of cottages to free-standing brew-houses, coal-houses and well-houses in the yard.

Third, there is relatively little evidence of improved living standards being matched by a broadening of cultural interests. The few books kept by yardlanders are rarely named but must most commonly have been bibles or books of common prayer; the 'Statutes' are

²¹⁶ TNA PROB 4/10841.

²¹⁷ Slocombe, P *Medieval Houses of Wiltshire* (Stroud, 1992) 30-1, 53.

²¹⁸ As for example at William Merewether's house at Great Cheverell in 1601: WRO P2/M/164.

identified in one inventory.²¹⁹ Their scarcity suggests that yardlanders' sons were still educated mainly at the parish church, with perhaps a small élite travelling to Steeple Ashton, Trowbridge or West Lavington for a preferred teacher.²²⁰ There is little to suggest that either farmers or clothiers were developing interests beyond those of their immediate commercial needs or religious leanings. Only amongst the wealthy do we find evidence of more cultivated tastes. John Hall at Bradford had a pair of virginals in 1597.²²¹ At Corsham Edward Hungerford erected a memorial to the clothier Thomas Hulbert and his brother John, declaring that 'Thomas was endowed with such rare parts, he no wages needed to be taught the arts: and though he kept him to his trade in cloth, yet was he divine, and a courtier both.'²²² Such achievements were probably rare indeed outside the magnate families.

For the middling sort, the attractions of antiquarianism and of genealogy were perhaps more compelling than any other cultural interest. Armigerous parishioners, whether gentry or clothiers, lawyers or yeomen, could assert their status and distinguish themselves from their neighbours by displaying their coats of arms and their links to other families. Aubrey himself was born in a room 'with two escutcheons in the chimney';²²³ Paul Methuen, according to Aubrey, lived in a house with 'many old escutcheons';²²⁴ churches everywhere displayed the arms of parishioners and benefactors (though at Seend, Aubrey tells us, there was 'not one escutcheon in the Church remaining' from before the Civil War).²²⁵ Some 300 Wiltshire gentry (including Aubrey's father and grandfather, and several clothiers' sons) were fined under Charles I for neglecting to be knighted,²²⁶ but this in no way implied indifference to family status; and proof of lineage was a requirement of customary tenure for the husbandman and yeoman just as much as for the tenant *in capite*. In such a context it is no surprise that Robert Nicholas, whose collection of ancient deeds may have traced the descent of many manors, should in 1660 have been asked to collaborate in Aubrey's survey of north Wiltshire, nor that the clothier-yeoman William Blagden of Hinton should in

²¹⁹ WRO P2/9Reg/74a: Will of Roger Blagden, Yeoman, 1630.

²²⁰ Francis Seymour, 1st Baron Trowbridge, was educated at Trowbridge grammar school: Bowen 'Sir Francis Seymour'.

²²¹ Slocombe *The Hall* 19.

²²² Phillipps, T *Monumental Inscriptions of Wiltshire by Sir Thomas Phillipps, 1822: a facsimile edition* ed Sherlock, P, WRS 53 (Devizes, 2000) 25. Thomas Hulbert died in October 1632.

²²³ Britton, J *Memoir of John Aubrey FRS* (London, 1845) 25.

²²⁴ Aubrey *Wiltshire* 21.

²²⁵ *ibid* 305.

²²⁶ WRO X4/7.

1671 have chosen to leave each of his children and grandchildren a silver tankard engraved with his name and his coat of arms.²²⁷

8 Summary

The evidence presented in this and previous chapters demonstrates that over the period 1530-1680 west Wiltshire evolved a dual but interlinked political economy, in which the clothiers and their workers constituted a manufacturing hierarchy parallel if subordinate to the agrarian hierarchy of lords, freeholders and copyholders; and supports the hypothesis that the cloth economy of west Wiltshire was the main driver of social and economic change in the region. The greater gentry did not invest directly in cloth manufacture, but they supported the leading clothiers, much as the Crown and nobility supported the wealthier London merchants,²²⁸ and profited substantially from their trade. The magnates benefited directly from both wool sales and rental income; they licensed the settlement of landless cottagers on their own lands and in the royal forests of Selwood and Blackmore; and they relied on the wealthiest clothiers to employ their cloth-worker tenants, and to support them in times of trade downturn. As magistrates on the commission of the peace the magnates set maximum wage levels to protect the profitability of cloth-making; they also employed clothiers as their tax-gatherers.²²⁹ So successful was this co-operation that both the wealthier gentry and the leading clothier families of west Wiltshire proved highly resilient over the Tudor and Stuart era.

The cloth manufactory expanded during the sixteenth century, peaked in the first decade of the seventeenth, then levelled out until the 1680s; but throughout the period it employed many thousands of workers, attracted migrants to the producing centres, and generated very substantial wealth and property for the small clique of leading clothiers who dominated the business. The success of the manufactory also underpinned the commercial advance of the west Wiltshire husbandmen and yeomen who stocked sheep on enclosed pastures and steadily acquired additional grazing, while hedging the risks of periodic downturn by producing grain, cheese and bacon for the market. Even the increasing numbers of rural poor – the cottagers and landless labourers who made up both the

²²⁷ TNA PROB 11/340/385.

²²⁸ See Chapter 4.3.

²²⁹ William Brewer I served as high collector of the subsidy of 1641 for the Somerset hundreds of Frome, Wellow and Bath Forum: TNA E 179/172/398; Paul Methuen was collector for a Wiltshire county rate in 1674: Bayntun *Commonplace Book* 39.

agricultural and manufacturing work-force – would almost certainly have been worse off without the cloth manufactory. Times of exceptional stress saw grain seizures and riots, but attempts at violent uprising were rare or non-existent. For most of the study period, cloth manufacture provided sufficient employment to maintain the population of the larger towns, while a century and a half of commercial stability (though interrupted by trade depressions and civil war) was reflected in a social stability within which a ‘middle sort’ could emerge and flourish .

The brief final chapter of this study will set out the detailed conclusions of the study, and explain how they modify the narrative established by previous historians.

Conclusion **Social Change in West Wiltshire, 1530-1680**

John Leland in the 1540s and John Aubrey in 1670 were both writing after periods of exceptional turbulence, their works given urgency by an acute awareness of change; in their different ways both sought to capture the features of an era already passing. But Aubrey's 'Preface' is exceptional in its attempt to trace the origins of change far back into the past. Writing at a point in time when his own financial difficulties would soon be shared by many others, as a sharp fall in wool prices after 1680 triggered a downturn in rents, he identified key elements of legal, social and material change that occupy historians to this day. Yet he was strangely blind to the impact in Wiltshire of the capital generated by the cloth trade, and to the economic significance of the unprecedented growth of London during his own lifetime.

In practice material change in west Wiltshire was restricted mainly to the 'middle sort', whether minor gentry in decline or clothiers and yeomen on their way up. Amongst the wealthiest gentry there was very little change in status or living standards and few indications that they significantly influenced the lives of their tenants, although the progress of enclosure might be negotiated by their stewards. But as Laurence Stone noted, this era saw Wiltshire's middling gentry increase greatly in number, with 109 new names added to the herald's list between 1565 and 1625: a 50 per cent increase.²³⁰ These 'new' families prospered without significant agricultural innovation other than enclosure and improved drainage. Like the west Dorset studied by Henry French, west Wiltshire was by the seventeenth century already 'saturated with capitalist forms of land-holding and economic activities,' even if only a very small percentage of tenants aspired to be called gentlemen.²³¹ In west Wiltshire the parish gentry typically practised mixed agriculture and were careful not to become dependent on wool, knowing full well that the cloth trade was prone to sudden downturn. They were essentially conservative in outlook: social change was driven primarily not by farmers but by the broadcloth magnates such as the Longs, Hortons, Yerburies and Ashes. Even London merchants like Richard Lambert and Lionel Duckett who acquired lands in west Wiltshire in the Elizabethan era had little impact

²³⁰ Stone *Crisis* 38. There were 208 names in 1565.

²³¹ French *Middle Sort* 262.

compared with the greater clothiers, who not only amassed large estates but were heavily involved with new building in towns, especially before 1550 and again after 1660. David Underdown's calculations suggest that by 1676 over half the population of west Wiltshire lived in towns or large villages with more than 1,000 residents.²³² Most if not all of these larger settlements would have depended on the cloth trade and been exposed to its volatility.

The broadcloth trade with London generated a large capital inflow throughout the period, enhanced in the mid-Tudor era by substantial transfers in the same direction by merchants and commercially-minded exchequer officials such as Henry Brounker at Melksham and his nephew Thomas 'Customer' Smythe at Corsham. Royal patronage also brought substantial benefits via the newly-arrived magnate John Thynne at Longleat and the lawyer James Ley, whose rapid advance to wealth and the earldom of Marlborough under James I was a galvanizing process for Westbury, while the marriage of Edward Hungerford to the merchant's daughter Margaret Halliday, encouraged by the Duke of Buckingham, gave new impetus to one of the oldest magnate families and the town of Corsham. The hiatus caused by civil war and Cromwell's assault on Spain may have slowed the pace of change by setting back trade for a few years at a time; and the catastrophes in London of the mid-1660s were similarly damaging. But the mentality of the great clothiers, like that of farmers, was to anticipate setbacks and control risk, not to withdraw from business. The Ashes and Paul Methuen made their fortunes in these hazardous decades; and their rising status in west Wiltshire society was made highly visible by John Ashe's purchase of Heywood House near Westbury, the former home of James Ley, in a prominent position on the slopes facing west towards Beckington.²³³

By the time of Aubrey's 'Preface' in 1670 the inexorable growth in the London population had stimulated demand for food from beyond the home counties, increasing the production of beef and cheese in west Wiltshire, and enabling gentry farmers to further diversify their output. It was a timely development, since the mainstay of the economy had for nearly two centuries been the symbiotic relationship between wool grower and clothier, now threatened by the clothiers' access to Spanish and Irish wool. Innovations in spinning which reduced the quantity of wool needed to make cloth coincided with a fall in the price of wool, creating a virtuous circle for the clothiers which would greatly increase their profitability in the first decades of the eighteenth century: the era of Defoe. But in 1670

²³² Underdown *Revel* 293-5.

²³³ See chapter 5.3.

that change was in its infancy. Gentry, yeomen and clothiers still formed a mutually beneficial partnership, together exerting social control through the bench, the vestry and manor courts, and through the power to give or deny employment. Great economic changes had taken place, but it is important not to overstate their effect on social interaction. West Wiltshire society was still characterised by social hierarchy and reciprocal obligation, especially between lord and tenant, the continuing duty of service symbolized by the requirement to kneel when accepting tenancy.²³⁴ There were still flickers of life in the forms and customs of the Tudor past.

This account of change over the period differs from currently accepted narratives in two important ways, both in regard to the cloth economy. First, it challenges the idea that cloth manufacture in west Wiltshire evolved in a 'cheese country', characterised by dispersed hamlets in a 'wood-pasture' ecology. This narrative emerged from Joan Thirsk's work on 'The Farming Regions of England', which noted Aubrey's description of north Wiltshire as 'sour, woodsere land' and identified this region as extending southwards along the western boundary of the county:²³⁵ that is, into the Frome valley and Semington vale. Thirsk cited Eric Kerridge's 'Agriculture' in *VCH Wiltshire*, but in his unpublished PhD thesis Kerridge had noticed that the area between Westbury and Devizes, at the heart of the broadcloth district, did not in fact fit this pattern, and was characterized by nucleated villages and mixed farming.²³⁶ David Underdown also noticed a 'third, less geographically defined intermediate category which includes...a number of large, scattered parishes containing nucleated cores (sometimes towns such as Warminster and Westbury) and a few rural parishes such as Edington which...shared both types of rural economy.'²³⁷ But this did not dissuade him from locating the cloth district within the 'cheese country' when linking culture to political allegiance during the Civil War.²³⁸ While the limitations of the 'wood-pasture' concept have since been identified,²³⁹ the generalization of the 'cheese country' has not been challenged. Yet in the Tudor and Stuart era it is more logical to describe the mixed farming area of west Wiltshire as 'cloth country' than 'cheese country'. Although many of its farmers made cheese and indeed butter, even more of them raised sheep; there must always have been far more sheep than cows in every village; and the wool they

²³⁴ Even in 1668 the freeholds sold by Thomas Lambert maintained the obligation of suit of court: WRO 1976/4/35.

²³⁵ Thirsk *Agrarian History* vol 4, 67.

²³⁶ Kerridge 'Agrarian Development' 53-4.

²³⁷ Underdown *Revel* 193.

²³⁸ *ibid* 74.

²³⁹ Davie, N 'Chalk or Cheese? Fielden and Forest Communities in Early Modern England' *Journal of Historical Sociology* 4 (1991) 19-23 sets out the limitations of Underdown's approach.

produced was processed locally into cloth as a product of sheep-grazing, not of dairy farming.²⁴⁰

Attempts by Thirsk and Underdown to found models of economic and political change on these uncertain foundations magnified the problem of a mistaken rural economy. In her essay 'Industries in the Countryside' Thirsk challenged the then orthodox view that the Wiltshire cloth industry had grown up where it did because of convenient access to water power, fuller's earth and wool supplies, arguing that the decisive factor was the availability of labour and that the dairy economy 'required less labour than a corn-growing farm and left men time to engage in a subsidiary occupation.'²⁴¹ Though based on a fallacy where the mixed farming area of west Wiltshire is concerned, this secondary narrative has taken firm hold: according to Keith Wrightson 'the local availability of raw materials, or of swift-running streams to drive the wheels of the fulling mills...such factors were of small significance. ...mill-races could be constructed where they were required.'²⁴² In fact new mills were rare in west Wiltshire and very expensive to construct;²⁴³ but a more fundamental objection is to this theoretical model being constructed on the notion of the 'cheese country'. The older orthodoxy that clothiers moved to the west Wiltshire area to exploit its resources of wool, water and fuller's earth is much more convincing than the revised orthodoxy that they did so to find a workforce, even if clothiers did subsequently import wool and even fuller's earth from distant parts.²⁴⁴

Second, the study challenges George Ramsay's narrative of a long decline in broadcloth manufacture from a 'golden age' before 1550, relieved only by a partial recovery after the 1630s. The well-worn notion of 'the decline of the white cloth industry'²⁴⁵ is highly misleading: exports of white cloth declined, but the manufactory did not – the producers remained in business, either dyeing their own cloths or making medleys. By tracing the careers of wealthy Elizabethan and Jacobean clothiers, notably Henry Long, Edward Horton,

²⁴⁰ Cheese production was more intensive in the Avon vale of north Wiltshire: Wilson *Forgotten Harvest* 37-45.

²⁴¹ Thirsk 'Industries in the Countryside' 231.

²⁴² Wrighton *Earthly Necessities* 104.

²⁴³ See chapter 2.2.

²⁴⁴ The fuller's earth sold at Wilton was brought from Woburn in Bedfordshire (over 100 miles): Aubrey *Natural History* 35. The earth itself was cheap, but the cost of carriage was substantial. Aubrey says the bushell price in Wilton in the 1680s was 10 groats, or 3s 4d; yet the price at Woburn was only 6d a bushell a century later: <http://www.mkheritage.co.uk/wsc/docs/Fullers%20Earth.html>, citing *Oxford Journal*, 23 February 1783. Thus in the seventeenth century West Wiltshire clothiers with local supplies may have paid no more than 1s a bushell including carriage; it was perhaps even cheaper there in the sixteenth century.

²⁴⁵ Mann *Cloth Industry* xvi.

Thomas and Robert Webb, and John Ashe, the study argues that the engine of the west Wiltshire manufactory was the Frome valley and the south-eastern flanks of the Somerset Mendips, an area beyond the limits of Ramsay's study, and concludes (like Zell's study of the Kent cloth manufactory) that the peak output was probably not reached until the first decade of the Jacobean era.²⁴⁶ The century between 1550 and 1650 saw the greatest changes in west Wiltshire society, with major gains in landownership by clothiers and a steady increase in population through natural increase and immigration, which permitted an unremitting restraint of wages. The study confirms Julia Mann's tentative findings that the setbacks of the Cockayne project and the 1620 depression were short-lived and that the impact of market contraction in Central Europe during the Thirty Years War was quickly countered by innovations in the Frome valley which soon spread to the Semington and Bulkington vales, enabling output to plateau at levels not far below the late Elizabethan average, and generated large incomes for the leading clothiers. Total revenue may even have grown, while output remained close to fulling capacity. The study also challenges Ramsay's view (which permeates *VCH Wiltshire*) that successful clothiers rarely stayed in business for more than a couple of generations before leaving the trade to live on their rents. It shows that the most productive fulling mills of the Frome valley and Semington vale were held through many generations by the same families or their close allies, passing sometimes through the female line.

A central theme throughout the study has been to assess how important contact with London was to developments in west Wiltshire. One significant conclusion is that despite the capital's crucial role as the primary market for the clothiers, the return was largely in coin rather than goods or the luxury items for which the capital was famous. The ledgers of Edward and Jonathan Ashe show that, apart from than the wool, dyes and oil needed for their trade, their despatches to the countryside were usually limited to small items such as silk stockings and hats.²⁴⁷ Thomas Michell in 1679 left a 'silver tankard bought for me in London',²⁴⁸ but it seems likely that many other consumer items were purchased in west Wiltshire, and either made in the region or distributed through larger towns such as Salisbury and Bristol. With improvements in transport during the Stuart era many more individuals would have visited London, but relatively few seem to have migrated before the Civil Wars; and those identified in this study who went as apprentices were all from clothier, yeoman or gentry families.

²⁴⁶ Zell 'Industry in the Countryside' 326, 241.

²⁴⁷ TNA C 107/17.

²⁴⁸ WRO P3/M/2331.

FJ Fisher proposed that by the second half of the seventeenth century 'entrepreneurs within sixty or eighty miles of the capital found agriculture more profitable than industry,'²⁴⁹ and this development no doubt stimulated the export of cheese from northeast Wiltshire during the Restoration.²⁵⁰ Far more significant economically, however, was growth in the domestic market for cloth, including the medley cloth and serge of west Wiltshire. In 1616 Julius Caesar estimated that only 16,000 broadcloths were sold in England,²⁵¹ about one-sixth of normal annual production. But by the 1680s half of England's woollens were sold at home,²⁵² and as Ken Rogers has shown new entrepreneurs were busy in Trowbridge,²⁵³ just as they were in Bradford and Frome.²⁵⁴ Fisher's notion that 'the dynamic element had shifted from the manufacturer to the merchant' may have been true of overseas trade,²⁵⁵ but it was a different matter in domestic trade. Members of the leading west Wiltshire clothier families had set up as wholesalers and factors in London and these men, together with other Blackwell Hall factors, provided access to the haberdashers and drapers serving the domestic market, both in the capital and elsewhere in the country.

In summary then, west Wiltshire in the early modern period can be characterised in Charles Phythian-Adams' terms as a 'cultural' region shaped largely by its topography and natural resources.²⁵⁶ Bounded to the west, south and east by the slopes of the Mendips, Salisbury Plain and Marlborough Downs and to the north by the River Avon and the Great West Road, this catchment with its huge resources of wool and clear flowing water was pre-eminent among the Wiltshire cloth districts, and at the head of what Defoe would call the 'great vale of trade' stretching north from Warminster to Malmesbury.²⁵⁷ Throughout the period the leading entrepreneurs of each generation controlled the most productive fulling mills, employed very large workforces and made themselves indispensable to the commission of the peace and greater gentry by continuing to provide at least a minimum of work when trade was interrupted, by serving as tax collectors,²⁵⁸ and as long-term purchasers of large quantities of wool. It was their activity that generated much of the coin

²⁴⁹ Fisher 'London and the English Economy' 196.

²⁵⁰ *VCH Wilts* vol 12 'Marlborough: Trade & Industry'.

²⁵¹ Friis *Cockayne's Project* 334.

²⁵² Davis *Overseas Trade* 8.

²⁵³ Rogers *Trowbridge* 47-9.

²⁵⁴ Mann *Cloth Industry* 32-3.

²⁵⁵ Fisher 'London and the English Economy' 190.

²⁵⁶ Phythian-Adams *Societies, Cultures and Kinship* 13.

²⁵⁷ Defoe, *Tour* vol 1, 281.

²⁵⁸ William Brewer served as high collector of the subsidy of 1641 for the Somerset hundreds of Frome, Wellow and Bath Forum: TNA E 179/172/398; Paul Methuen was collector for a Wiltshire county rate in 1674: Bayntun *Commonplace Book* 39.

that circulated in west Wiltshire and was exchanged for housing, clothes and food for thousands of adults and children who have left few traces in the documentary record. In this highly-integrated economy, where almost everyone contributed to and gained in some way from the cloth trade, husbandmen and yeomen could also flourish, and by the end of the period some achieved parish gentry status. But the drivers of the economy and the principal agents of social change in west Wiltshire were the clothiers who brought capital to the countryside.

Appendix 1 Cloth exports and wool production, 1520-1670

The figures in Table 1 – published by Ralph Davis in 1973 – show that, while cloth exports grew steeply during the early Tudor era, the conventional narrative of decline and stagnation during the Elizabethan era is highly misleading.¹ Exports were strong throughout much of Elizabeth’s reign, except during periods of diplomatic tension. After 1575, when the Antwerp market finally closed and the merchants used ports in Protestant Germany instead,² trade was relatively unaffected by war, either in the Netherlands or in France.³ Cloth exports did not fall until the 1620s, after which few reliable statistics are available.

Davis’s figures are in thousands of ‘cloths of assize’ (standard broadcloths of 24 yards), as recorded by the Customs office for Exchequer years running from Michaelmas to Michaelmas.⁴ Where the period shown is more than one year, the number given is the annual average. The figures are higher than those reported by Fisher for the Elizabethan and Stuart eras,⁵ because they have been adjusted upwards by 10 per cent: one cloth in ten was used as a ‘wrapper’, and was free of customs duty from 1558.

Table 1 Cloth exports from London by era, 1518-1669 ('000s of cloths of assize)

Early Tudor		Elizabethan		Stuart	
1518-22	62	1559-61	104	1604	125
1523-7	69	1562-4	68		
1528-32	70	1565-7	106	1614	144 (est)*
1533-7	85	1568-70	104	1620	95 (est)
1538-42	98	1571-3	81	1622	76**
1543-7	112	1574-6	111	1628	120**
1550-2	110	1577-9	109	1631-3	96**
		1580-2	109		
		1583-5	112	1640	96
		1586-8	106		
		1589-91	110		
		1592-4	113	1663	79
		1598-1600	114	1669	85
		1601-3	116		

Source: Davis *English Overseas Trade* 52-3

* This record level of sales was due to merchants and their customers anticipating the crisis triggered by the Cockayne Project (see Chapter 4.2)

** added from Fisher *London’s Export Trade* 153, and amended to include wrappers

¹ See opening paragraphs to Chapter 3.

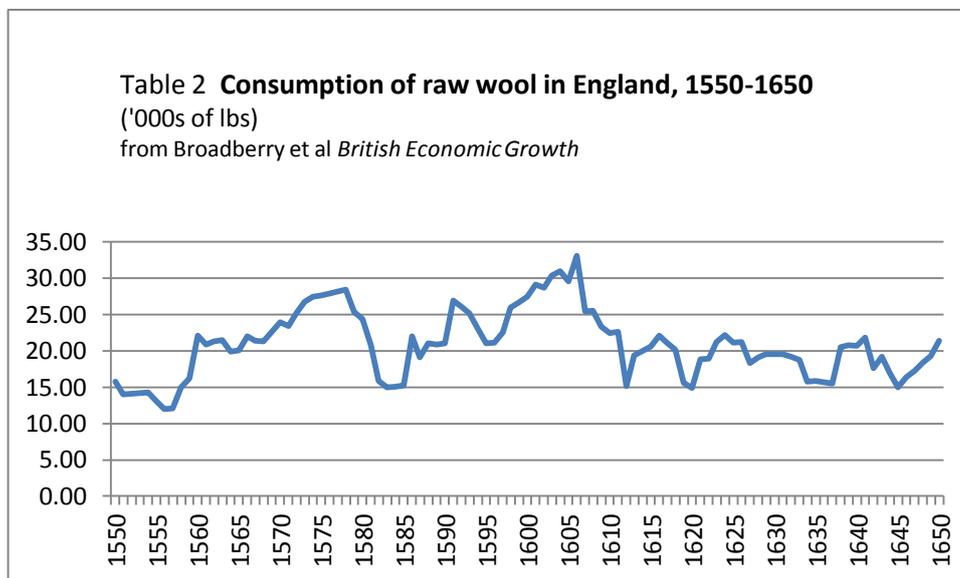
² Emden, Hamburg and Stade: Unwin ‘Merchant Adventurers’ 61.

³ The trade crisis of 1587, during the war with Spain, was over within months: see Chapter 3.2.

⁴ For shorter and narrower cloths, such as kerseys, and for longer broadcloths, customs duty was charged pro rata to the standard broadcloth. Three 12-yard kerseys, for example, were charged the same as one shortcloth. A Wiltshire broadcloth of 26-28 yards was charged at 1/6th of a shortcloth: Supple *Commercial Crisis* 275.

⁵ Fisher ‘Commercial Trends’ 82.

To identify trends in the volume of cloth production, these export figures would ideally be supplemented by domestic cloth sales, but no reliable statistics exist. However some indication of long-term trends can be inferred from the estimates of wool consumption made by Broadberry *et al*, shown in Table 2.⁶ These estimates were created by deducting exports of raw wool from estimates of total domestic wool production.



Broadberry's figures support the notion that the Elizabethan era was one of strong growth in domestic cloth production, supplementing a buoyant and largely stable export trade.⁷ Production in the Stuart era may not have declined as steeply as the consumption of wool might suggest, partly because domestic wool supplies were supplemented from the 1620s by increasing quantities of Spanish wool,⁸ and after the Restoration by imports from Ireland;⁹ and partly because the trend towards lighter and finer cloths meant that less wool was required to make each cloth.¹⁰

⁶ See also the opening paragraphs of Chapter 3.

⁷ The sharp downturn in 1584-5 is not reflected in Davis's export figures, but perhaps anticipated the outbreak of war with Spain: see Unwin 'Merchant Adventurers' 162-3, and Chapter 3.2.

⁸ See Chapters 4.3 and 5.3.

⁹ Mann Cloth Industry 261.

¹⁰ See Chapter 6.3.

Appendix 2 Prominent west Wiltshire clothiers, 1530-1680

Adlam, William, fl 1558	Bull Mill, Crockerton	Uncle of Thomas Clevelod, d 1558. Adlam family held mill to at least 1700.
Ashe, Edward, 1635-51	Freshford Mill	Son of John Ashe.
Ashe, Elizabeth, d 1673	Freshford Mill	Daughter of Henry Davison, wife of John Ashe.
Ashe, Grace, d 1654	Alham Mill, Batcombe	Née Pitt, mother of John Ashe.
Ashe, James, d 1646	Alham Mill, Batcombe	Father of John Ashe.
Ashe, John, 1597-1659	Freshford, Stowford and Clifford's Mills	Worth 'over £60,000' at death.
Barkesdale, Robert, c 1500-58	Keevil and Bulkington	Described in court case as 'head man of Keevil'.
Barkesdale, Thomas, d 1530	Keevil; Seend Head Mill?	Mill held by Barkesdale family from at least 1551 to 1642.
Barkesdale, John, d 1642-9	Seend Head Mill	Sold moiety of mill to George Sumner, 1642.
Bath, see Whitaker		
Baylie, Christopher, d 1559	Stowford Mill	Second son of Thomas Baylie; married Maud Horton.
Baylie, Marion, fl 1536	Baldham Mill	Kinswoman of Baylies of Keevil.
Baylie, Nicholas, d 1597	Baldham Mill	Kinsman of Baylies of Keevil.
Baylie, Thomas, d 1543	Trowbridge; Stowford Mill	Noted by Leland as 'Old Baylie', a rich clothier.
Baylie, William, c1514-52	Bulkington and Hurst Mills	Eldest son of Thomas Baylie
Brewer, William I, d 1669	Lullington and Trowbridge	Father of William Brewer II; producer of say-dyed cloth.
Brewer, William II, 1625/6-1707	Trowbridge; Iford & Avoncliff Mills	Had 'the greatest trade in medleys of any clothier in England' (Aubrey).
Chivers, Roger, 1546-1602	Quemerford Mills, Calstone	Kinsman of John Ashe and Thomas Hulbert.
Clevelod, John, d 1537	Beckington., Clifford's Mill?	Largest supplier to Thomas Kytson, Mercer.
Clevelod, Thomas, d 155	Warminster	Friend of William Burde, Customer of Goods Outward from London.
Collins, George, fl 1604	Bulkington Mill	Kinsman of Thomas Sumner, d 1631.
Collins, Robert, d 1658	Bulkington Mill	Son of George Collins.
Davison, Henry I, 1543-1604	Freshford Mill	Acquired Manor of Freshford in 1603.
Davison, Henry II, c1580-1658	Freshford	Father-in-law of John Ashe.

Horne, Richard, w 1620	Bradford	Business partner of John Yew.
Horne, Thomas, fl 1604	Lower Fulling Mill, Bradford	Brother-in-law of Henry Long II of Whaddon.
Horton, Edward, c1520-1603	Westwood; Iford & Avoncliff Mills	One of the greatest Elizabethan clothiers: estate valued at nearly £20,000.
Horton, Thomas I, d 1539	Iford and Westwood	Uncle of Thomas Horton II.
Horton, Thomas II, d 1549	Iford and Westwood	Father of Edward.
Houlton, Joseph, 1637-1720	Clifford's Mill, Beckington; Trowbridge	Leading member of Baptist congregation
Houlton, Robert, d 1669	Trowbridge	Father of Joseph. Bought part of Langford estate in Trowbridge.
Hulbert, James, c1547-16	Corsham	Married a granddaughter of Thomas 'Customer' Smyth.
Hulbert, John, 1576-1626	Corsham	Son of James. Married a daughter of Roger Chivers.
Hulbert, Thomas, 1577-1632	Corsham	Son of James. Married a daughter of Thomas Wallis of Trowbridge.
Langford, Alexander I, d 1545	Trowbridge and Freshford Mills	Made cloth at Clifford's Mill, Beckington, and at Freshford.
Langford, Alexander II, 1519-85	Trowbridge Mills	Sold Trowbridge Mills in 1571.
Langford, Edward, d 1551	Freshford Mill	Married Mary, d of William Long of Freshford.
Long, Edward, c1545-1622	Monkton	Nephew and heir of Thomas Long of Trowbridge.
Long, Henry I, c1510-58	Whaddon	Younger brother of Thomas Long of Trowbridge.
Long, Henry II, c1540-1610	Whaddon	Son of Henry Long I, cousin of Edward Horton.
Long, Joan, d 1582	Trowbridge	Née Yerbury; born at Batcombe, Somerset.
Long, Thomas, c1508-62	Trowbridge	Great early Tudor clothier: estate included nine manors.
Long, William, w 1529	Freshford Mill	Father- in-law of Edward Langford.
Methuen, Anthony, 1650-1727	Bradford; Freshford Mill	Bought Manor of Freshford from Ashe family c1700.
Methuen, Paul, 1613-67	Bradford	Son-in-law of John Ashe. Said to be worth £60,000 in 1656.
Passion, Anthony, w 1559	Littleton Mill	Assignee of Robert Long of Semington, d 1502.
Potticary, Christopher, fl 1640	Stockton	Leading producer of narrow-list white cloths in 1631.
Potticary, Jerome, w 1628	Stockton	Leading producer of say-dyed cloth.
Smythe, John, w 1538	Weavern Mill, Slaughterford	Father of Thomas 'Customer' Smythe.
Stumpe, William, by 1498-1552	Malmesbury	Used buildings of Malmesbury Abbey as weaving workshops.

Sumner, George, d 1647	Seend Head Mill	Son of Thomas Sumner I of Littleton.
Sumner, Thomas I, d 1631	Littleton Mill	Acquired mill by 1604.
Sumner, Thomas II, d 1668	Littleton Mill	Brother of Joan, who sued Aubrey for breach of promise.
Wallis, Alexander, fl 1574	Tellisford Mill	Family owned Tellisford Mill to end of seventeenth century.
Wallis, Thomas, w 1599	Trowbridge	Father-in-law of Thomas Hulbert of Corsham?
Webb, Robert, d 1611	Clifford's Mill, Beckington	Brother of Benedict Webb of Kingswood, inventor of Spanish cloth.
Webb, Thomas, d 1584	Clifford's Mill, Beckington	Apprentice of Edward Langford. Father-in-law of Robert Webb.
Whitaker, John, fl 1550	New Mill, Edington	Whitaker family held New Mill from c1510 to at least 1601.
Whitaker, Jeffery, d 1601	New Mill, Edington & Langham Mill, Rode	Son of Stephen Whitaker of Westbury. Acquired Langham Mill c1590.
Whitaker, Nash, 1576-1610	New Mill, Edington; & Langham Mill, Rode	Admitted to Lincoln's Inn in 1594.
Whitaker alias Bath, Robert, d 1559	Bishopstrow	Father of William Whitaker, Merchant Taylor of London.
Whitaker, Stephen, d 1576	Penleigh and Bitham Mills, Westbury	IPM notes his large mill, with 'all things necessary for the dressing of cloth.'
Wilkins, William, fl 1599	Brook Mill, Westbury	Wilkins family held mill from at least 1599 to at least 1674
Yerbury, John, d 1614	Bradford and Atworth; Avoncliff Mill	Nephew of Edward Horton, d 1603.
Yerbury, Edward, 1585-1648	Trowbridge	Royal commissioner in Trowbridge during Civil War.
Yerbury, Richard, d 1661	Corsham and Frome; Iford Mill	Younger son of John Yerbury d 1614; acquired substantial estate in Frome.
Yerbury, Thomas, w 1651	Bradford; Lower Tucking Mill	Son of John Yerbury of Bradford d 1614.
Yerbury, William, d 1609	Trowbridge	Nephew of Edward Horton, d 1603.
Yew, John, w 1623	Bradford; Lower Tucking Mill	Business partner of Richard Horne.

Appendix 3 The profitability of Elizabethan cloth-making

On 8 April 1578 commissioners at Frome took evidence from four weavers, a joiner and two fullers about the commercial activities of Thomas Webb of Beckington,¹ noted in Chapter 3.2 as a leading clothier of the day. From the evidence presented, augmented with data from other sources, it is possible to create a model of the revenues, principal costs and profits of a substantial Elizabethan clothier, with several employees to wash, sort, card and distribute wool to the spinners; to carry yarn to the weavers and collect the woven broadcloth; to scour, full, stretch, measure, make good, shear, fold, press and pack; and to dispatch the cloth to London. The witnesses declared that Webb commissioned 20 or more broadcloths a week, about 1,000 per annum.² He must also have fullled cloths for the tenants of his manor of Beckington, who owed him 'suit of fulling mill'.³ For the total quantity he probably used three fulling mills.⁴

Table 3 Thomas Webb's profit margin, c1578

Revenues	£	Calculation	Source/basis of calculation
Sales	5000	1000 @ £5	witness statements ⁵
Third party fulling	67	500 @ 2s 8d	estimate; Henry Long account ⁶
Costs			
Wool	2100	1000 @ £2 2s	84 lbs ⁷ per cloth @ ave 6d per lb ⁸
Oil	350	1000 @ 7s	2 gallons per cloth ⁹
Spinning	875	1000 @ 17s 6d	70lb @ 3d per lb ¹⁰
Weaving	700	1000 @ 12s	12d per day, 12 days per cloth ¹¹
Fuller's earth etc	5	1000 @ 1¼d	estimate ¹²
Aulnage, subsidy	19	1000 @ 4½d	statute ¹³
Carriage	92	1000 @ 1s 10d	Henry Long account ¹⁴
Mill rent & repair	50		estimate ¹⁵
Servants' wages	24	c8 x £3	sorters, fullers, shearers, etc ¹⁶
NET PROFIT (%)	852 (17%)		

¹ TNA E 134/20Eliz/East12. Webb had been sued by the Treasury informer Robert Blackborrow.

² William Holland, weaver, claimed Webb had produced about 1,100 cloths in the past year, but Richard Jordan, fuller, thought only 800.

³ Still an obligation in 1633, when Robert Ashe II sold the manor to John Ashe: GRO D2700/NR/12/2.

⁴ 500 was probably the maximum annual output of a four-stock fulling mill: see Chapter 2.2.

⁵ TNA E 134/20Eliz/East12. Three witnesses valued the cloths at £5, one (the eldest) at £4. Prices had risen steadily from the 1550s, which perhaps explains this discrepancy. See Chapter 3.2.

⁶ WRO 947/1707: an account produced in 1584 by the clothier Henry Long of Whaddon.

⁷ Mann *Cloth Industry* 312.

⁸ Cloth was woven from a mixture of fine, coarse and list wool, estimated at about 8d, 4d and 2d per lb respectively: WRO 947/1707; Jackson *Berkshire Woollen Industry* 48.

⁹ Mann *Cloth Industry* 319. Seville oil was valued at £45 per tun (252 gallons) in 1567: Dietz *Port and Trade* 39.

¹⁰ Muldrew "'Th' Ancient Distaff'" 505.

¹¹ Estimated rate, includes journeyman/apprentice and spooler: *Mss from Various Collections* 168. The rate varied according to the fineness of the cloth, and the number of warp threads used.

¹² Assumes one quart per cloth at 1d for fuller's earth, plus a small allowance for ash, manure, sig (urine), also used as scouring agents. See Chapter 7 for the cost of fuller's earth.

¹³ 27^o Edward III statute 1, c 4: *An Act for Making Cloths* (1353).

¹⁴ WRO 947/1707.

¹⁵ Repair costs would obviously fluctuate. See Chapter 2.2.

¹⁶ Mann *Textile Industry: Cloth 1550-1640* and other sources give £2 per year plus bed and board as a typical wage. I have allowed an additional £1 per head for meals and other costs.

Appendix 4 Manors and population of Keevil parish

In 1560 most of the population of Keevil and about half of that at Bulkington (about sixteen households) were tenants of the Earl of Arundel's manor of Keevil with Bulkington, sold to Richard Lambert that year.¹⁷ About six households at Bulkington belonged to a second manor, owned by the Bayntuns of Bromham, but paid their rents to Lavington Chantry until its suppression in 1536; this manor was absorbed by the Lambert manor in 1627.¹⁸ Another ten households of Bulkington had been tenants of Edington Priory's manor of Bulkington, sold by the Crown to the Worthe family in 1560.¹⁹

Table 4 Descent of the manors of Bulkington, 1530-1680

Earl of Arundel's manor c 300 acres in Bulkington? ²⁰	Bayntun manor c 200 acres ²¹	Edington Priory manor c 330 acres ²²
Earls of Arundel to 1560	Edward Bayntun to 1544	Abbey of Romsey to 1539 ²³
	(rents to Lavington Chantry/Bayntun family until seized by Crown in 1545) ²⁴	Crown, 1539-41
	Andrew Bayntun, 1544 to 1561; sold manor to Roger Earthe, 1561	Dean & Chapter of Winchester, 1541 to 1547?
	Crown (former Chantry rents), 1536-87 leased to Francis Walsingham, 1572	Crown 1547? to 1560
Richard Lambert, 1560-1567	Earthe family 1561 to 1598 (manor only)	Crown to George Worthe, 1560
	Crown to Francis Walsingham, and Walsingham to William Dodington I, 1587 (former Chantry rents)	Nicholas Snell of Kington St Michael for George Worthe II, c1560 to 1583 ²⁵
Alice Paston, 1567-1608	William Earthe to William Doddington II, 1598 (manor)	George Worthe II, c1583 to 1644
Edward Lambert 1608-12	William Dodington to Giles Tooker, 1609	Samuel Sheppard of Minchinhampton, Gloucs, ²⁶ step-father of Francis Merewether II, 1644 to 1672. Sheppard sold most copyholds to tenants from 1650 onwards. Mansion house and demesnes retained by Merewethers.
Dulsabelle Lambert 1612-36	Edward Tooker to Thomas Lambert, 1627	
Thomas Lambert, 1635-38	<<<	
Edmund Lambert, 1638-43		
Elizabeth Lambert, 1643-66		
Thomas Lambert II, 1666-81		
William Beach 1681-		

Principal sources: *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Keevil: Manors'; WRO 1976/4; and see Chapters 2-5.

¹⁷ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Keevil: Manors'. The number of households has been taken from WRO 288/1 *passim* (c1610).

¹⁸ See Chapter 3.3. Number of households from TNA C 66/1289 m 27 (1587).

¹⁹ TNA SP 15/12 ff 43-8 (1564).

²⁰ Survey of Arundel's Bulkington Manor, 1397, transcribed in WRO 3535/2; WRO 288/1 *passim*.

²¹ Fry & Fry *Wiltshire IPMs* 332.

²² TNA SP 15/12 ff 43-8.

²³ Edington Priory was a possession of the Abbey of Romsey: *VCH Wilts* vol 3 'House of Bonhommes, Edington'.

²⁴ *VCH Wilts* vol 10 'Market Lavington: Manors and Other Estates'.

²⁵ See Chapter 3.2.

²⁶ Second husband of George Worthe's daughter Isabella Merewether. See Chapter 4.4.

The total acreage of Keevil parish was over 2,000 acres, of which nearly 1,000 were in Bulkington, including the common pastures of Bulkington Leaze and a horse drove.²⁷ The population was concentrated in just three significant locations: the villages of Keevil and Bulkington and the small hamlet of Keevil Wick, just west of the Bulkington Brook. The fulling mills at Baldham, close to Seend Head on the south bank of the Semington Brook, and at Bulkington were away from the main settlements.²⁸ Fiscally and militarily, Keevil and Keevil Wick were in Whorwellsdown hundred, while Bulkington was in Melksham hundred.²⁹ But all residents were parishioners of St Leonard's, Keevil, in the Diocese of Salisbury (Sarum).

The parish registers compiled at St Leonard's date from 1559.³⁰ They are difficult to use for calculating population because the variation in the number of recorded births and burials year by year suggests anomalies within the registers, notably for the six years 1577-82. Since this period coincides with the death of a long term parson and the subsequent incumbency of two short-term parsons,³¹ a likely explanation is irregular attendance by the clergy. Thereafter the registers appear reliable, though with further interruptions from 1645-53, and from 1659-62 (all dates inclusive).

The parish population during the period 1562-1612 was calculated by AT Richardson at 820,³² and Ingram no doubt used his figures when estimating 7-800 for the period 1600-40.³³ Both estimates appear too high. A method of calculation designed by DEC Eversley,³⁴ if applied to the two five year periods 1572-6 and 1583-7, yields the much lower figure of 519 for 1572. If the parish population grew in line with national increase, it would have reached about 700 by 1600 and about 920 by 1640, before stabilising around that level until the end of the century.³⁵ However, heavy mortality in 1643 and some out-migration to towns and cities, including London, may have reduced the later total. A calculation based on the Compton survey of 1676 gives a figure of only 783 for Keevil parish,³⁶ still slightly below Richardson's estimate for the Elizabethan era.

For the study period of 1530-1680, therefore, I have assumed a parish population, located almost entirely in the settlements of Keevil, Keevil Wick and Bulkington, rising from less

²⁷ *VCH Wilts* vol 8 'Keevil'; 'Keevil: Manors'. Bulkington Leaze was probably at least 100 acres in area; the horse drove was smaller, perhaps 50 acres (sizes estimated from modern Ordnance Survey maps).

²⁸ See Map 2.

²⁹ See Maps 2 & 4.

³⁰ WRO Keevil PR.

³¹ A long-term vicar, Robert Yorke, who had been presented in 1550, died in 1577 and was succeeded by William Hutton in 1578 and William Seston in 1580. The number of registrations increased in 1583, after the appointment of John Rogers in 1582: WRO Keevil PR; CCED.

³² Richardson 'Annals' 276.

³³ Ingram, M 'Ecclesiastical Justice in Wiltshire, 1600-40' unpublished PhD thesis (Oxford, 1976) 100.

³⁴ S Sogner, 'Aspects of the Demographic Situation in Seventeen Parishes in Shropshire, 1711-60' *Population Studies* 17 (1963) 264

³⁵ Smith *Nation State* 'The Population of England and Wales, 1541-1661' shows a 26 per cent increase from 1571-1601 and a further 24 per cent from 1601-41.

³⁶ Whiteman *Compton Survey* 122. The figure of 470 given there (of whom only seven were non-conformists) has been increased by 40 per cent to take account of the under-age population not counted in the survey.

than 500 to about 800. Bulkington's population was about 40 per cent of the parish total,³⁷ and rose from less than 200 to more than 300 over the period.

The table below lists the years of unusually high mortality in the parish, and notes possible contributing factors; the years of highest mortality are in bold type. Remarkably, neither 1607 nor 1644 are included in the list, despite serious outbreaks of plague in Devizes, only five miles distant.³⁸ The average number of burials over the period of reliable entries from 1583-1644 was 17.

Table 5 **Burials at Keevil, 1580-1670: years of high mortality**

Year	Burials	Contributory factors?
1587	27	Trade crisis (war in Netherlands) ³⁹
1592	27	
1594	22	Poor harvest
1596	26	Dearth
1597	59	Dearth
1598	29	
1620	22	Trade crisis (start of Thirty Years War)
1626	22	
1637	24	
1638	24	
1640	24	
1643	33	Battle of Roundway, Siege of Devizes
1657	22	Poor harvest
1658	23	Poor harvest
1663	26	
1667	25	Trade crisis (2 nd Dutch War)
1668	25	
1670	23	

Sources: WRO Keevil PR (burial index); Smith *Nation State* 'Good and Bad Harvests, 1529-1660'

³⁷ The proportion has been estimated by comparing several lists for the two tithings, including the 1539 Muster lists: TNA SP1/145; the 1576 subsidy published in Ramsay *Taxation Lists* 69-70, 140; the 1626 subsidy TNA E 179/199/387 (Keevil) and TNA E 179/199/385 (Bulkington); and the 1642 subsidy for Bulkington, TNA E 179/ 199/ 408, and 1648 levy on Keevil for the support of Ireland: Hurley *Protestation Returns and Taxation Records*. None of the lists are comprehensive, but all are relatively full and the ratio is fairly consistent.

³⁸ Waylen *Devizes* (unfolioed).

³⁹ Cloth production may have been affected by the deep but short-lived trade crisis which broke out in late 1586: see Appendix 1.

Bibliography

1 Manuscript sources

British Library (BL)

Add Ms 11757	Letters and papers of Long family of Whaddon from 1552
Add Ms 15559	Account of Henry Long, executor of Edward Horton, 1603-5
Add Ms 15561	Documents relating to the Long family, 1254-1766
Add Ms 34012	Royalist suspects reported to Major-general Disbrowe, 1655
Add Ms 36785	Exports and imports of the City of London, 1663 and 1669
Add Ms 37270	Bayntun Court Book, 1565-1612
Add Ms 39213	Terriers of lands of Thomas Long of Beckington, 1562
Add Ms 42048	Richardson, AT (Vicar of Keevil 1908-14) <i>Annals of Keevil and Bulkington</i> : undated typescript. A document-based account of the two villages from earliest times. A copy is held at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre.
Stowe Ms 165	Contributors to the loan raised in 1589 for the defence of the realm

Cambridge University Library (CUL)

Hengrave Hall Deposit 78 (2)	Thomas Kytson's Boke of Remembraunce, 1530-40
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Kent History and Library Centre, Maidstone ME14 1LQ (KRO)

U 269/1 AB1 & AB5	Ledgers of Richard Sheppard, 1590-1600
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Gloucestershire Archives, Gloucester, GL1 3DW (GRO)

D 9125/1/13881	Papers of John Smyth relating to Benedict Webb, 1621-9
D 12960	Letters of Benedict Webb to John Smyth, 1630-2
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D2700/NR/12/2	Purchase of Beckington Manor by John Ashe, 1633

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1592A	Grocers' Company admissions, 1345-1679; Alphabet Book
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St John's, Frome	Old Church Book, vol 1, 1567-1692
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Mercers' Company	Thomas Gresham Day Book, 1546-50
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Principal classes of documents consulted:

C 2	Chancery proceedings
C 142	Inquisitions post mortem

CP 25/2	Court of Common Pleas: Feet of Fines
CP 40	Court of Common Pleas: Plea Rolls
E 134	Exchequer: King's Remembrancer: depositions taken by commission
E 159	Exchequer: King's Remembrancer: memoranda rolls
E 178	Exchequer: King's Remembrancer: special commissions of inquiry
E 179	Exchequer: King's Remembrancer: records of lay and clerical taxation
PROB 4	Prerogative Court of Canterbury: inventories exhibited from 1660
PROB 11	Prerogative Court of Canterbury: will registers
REQ 2	Court of Requests: pleadings
SP 1	State Papers, Henry VIII: general series
SC 2	Special Collections: court rolls
SC 6	Special Collections: ministers' and receivers' accounts
STAC 2-8	Star Chamber pleadings: Henry VIII-Charles I
WARD 2	Court of Wards and Liveries: deeds and evidences
WARD 7	Court of Wards and Liveries: inquisitions post mortem

Society of Antiquaries, London (SAL)

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Somerset Heritage Centre, Taunton, TA2 6SF (SRO)

DD\BR\bs/1 Beckington deeds, 1651-1863

Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre, Chippenham, SN15 3QN (WRO)

12	Documents relating to the Worthe family of Bulkington
212 A & B	Miscellaneous deeds
288	Court records of the Lambert manor of Keevil with Bulkington
445, 840	Gaisford (Peto) of Iford
947	Records of the Long family of Steeple Ashton, Whaddon and elsewhere
1494	Gibbs (Gaisford) of Westbury
1908/1	James Sartain's Map of Keevil, 1749
1976	Lambert family of Boyton and Keevil
2972	Gaisford and Bushell family deeds
3535	Working papers of John A Goodall, FSA
D	Records of the Diocese of Sarum
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Most volumes of *Wiltshire Notes and Queries* (WNQ) and the *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society Magazine* (WAM), and many out-of-copyright works can be accessed at the Internet Archive and Google Books noted below.

Devizes Heritage (<http://www.devizesheritage.org.uk/wanhs.html>) provides a useful interface to the accessible volumes of WAM.

Access to Archives	http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/A2a
Anglo-American Legal Tradition	http://aalt.law.uh.edu
Alumni Cantabrigiensis	http://venn.lib.cam.ac.uk
Bibliography of British and Irish History	http://www.brepolis.net (via Birkbeck)
British History Online	http://www.british-history.ac.uk
<i>Encyclopedia Britannica</i> Online	http://www.britannica.com
Clergy of the Church of England	http://db.theclergydatabase.org.uk
Connected Histories	http://www.connectedhistories.org
<i>Dictionary of Canadian Biography</i>	http://www.biographi.ca
Discovery (The National Archives)	http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk
Early English Books Online	http://eebo.chadwyck.com (via Birkbeck)
Historic England listings database	http://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing
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Project Gutenberg	http://www.gutenberg.org
<i>Strype's Survey of London</i>	http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/strype
Wiltshire Wills Database	http://history.wiltshire.gov.uk/heritage/index
Wiltshire Museum collections database	http://www.wiltshiremuseum.org.uk/collections

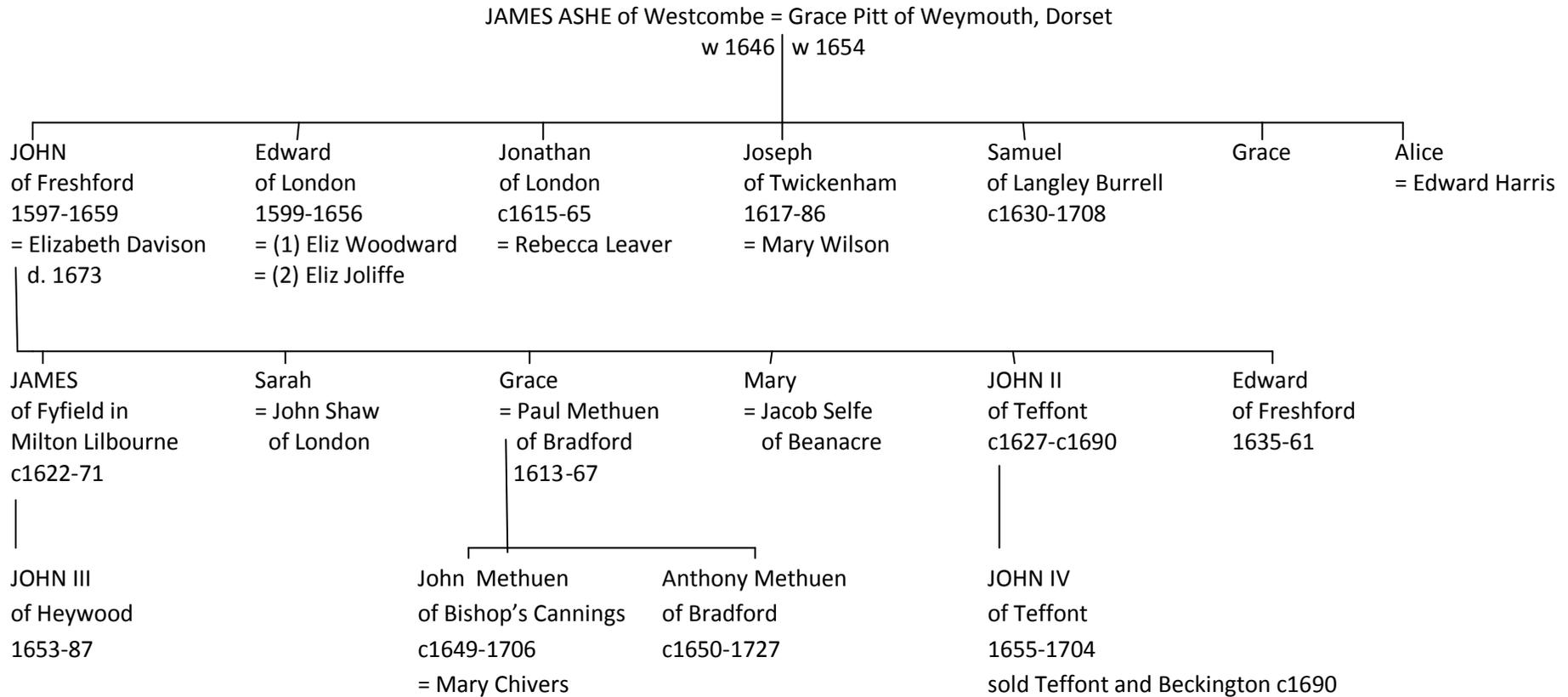
Pedigrees

The summary pedigrees on the following pages are intended to clarify relationships within the families most frequently referred to in the text; they are far from comprehensive. Most are based on heralds' visitations, augmented and amended by documentary evidence encountered in the course of research, most importantly by wills and IPMs; the sources are too numerous to be footnoted. I have normally followed *ODNB* and *HoP* for the birth and death dates of the gentry.

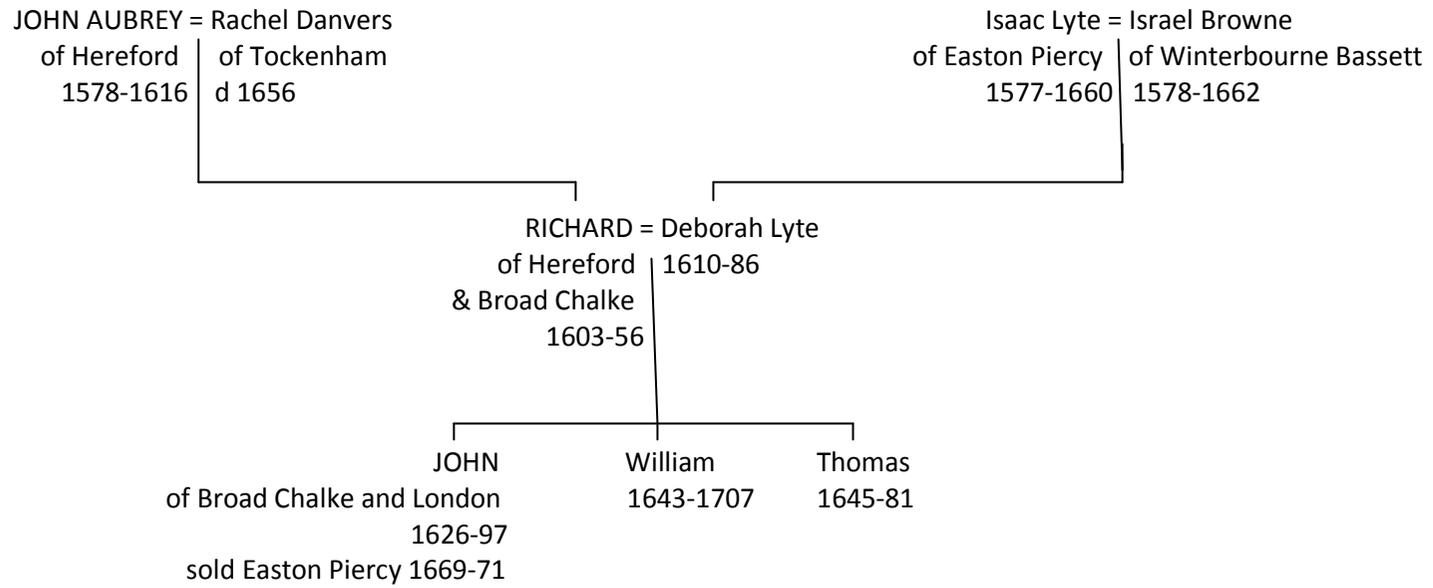
The main lines of descent are indicated by the names given in CAPITALS. The sequence of names given in a generation does not indicate birth order, but (if known) the eldest son is shown first. All places named are in Wiltshire unless otherwise stated. Cross-references to other pedigrees are indicated by a superscript 'p', thus the appearance of 'Edward Bayntun^p' in the Horton pedigree indicates that there is also a pedigree for Bayntun. The pedigrees are arranged in alphabetical order, but are listed below within categories.

Gentry	Clothiers	Bulkington vale
Aubrey	Ashe	Gaysford
Bayntun	Baylie	Lambert
Brounker	Horton	Sumner
Danvers	Long	Worthe
Hungerford	Webb	
Long	Yerbury	
Thynne		

Pedigree 1 ASHE of Westcombe and Freshford in Somerset; Fyfield, Teffont Evias and Heywood in Wiltshire; and London



Pedigree 2 **AUBREY of Easton Piercy and Broad Chalke**



Pedigree 3 **BAYLIE of Keevil, Stowford (in Wingfield) and Southwick**

THOMAS BAYLIE I = Agnes Cleveland (Cleveland?)

of Trowbridge
d 1543

WILLIAM I
of Keevil
c1514-52

Walter
of Devizes
w 1560

Joan
= William Horton^p
of Iford

CHRISTOPHER I
of Stowford, d 1559
= Maud Horton^p

WILLIAM II
of Wingfield
d 1562

CHRISTOPHER III
of Wingfield
d 1602

= Jane Fillol
of Knight Street, Dorset

THOMAS II
of Stowford
c1540-1568

= Maud Fillol
of Woodlands,
Dorset = (2) Walter Bush
of Southwick

CHRISTOPHER II
of Southwick
d 1583

= Joan Yerbury

William Baylie= Marion Culverhouse
of Baldham (Keevil)
w 1536

Thomas
d 1569
= (1) unknown

William
d c1569

= (2) Cicely Snell

Nicholas
d 1597

JOHN
d 1621
= Katherine Yerbury

Robert

Edith
d 1604
= George Worthe^p
of Bulkington

CHRISTOPHER IV
d after 1636
= Mary Hall of Bradford

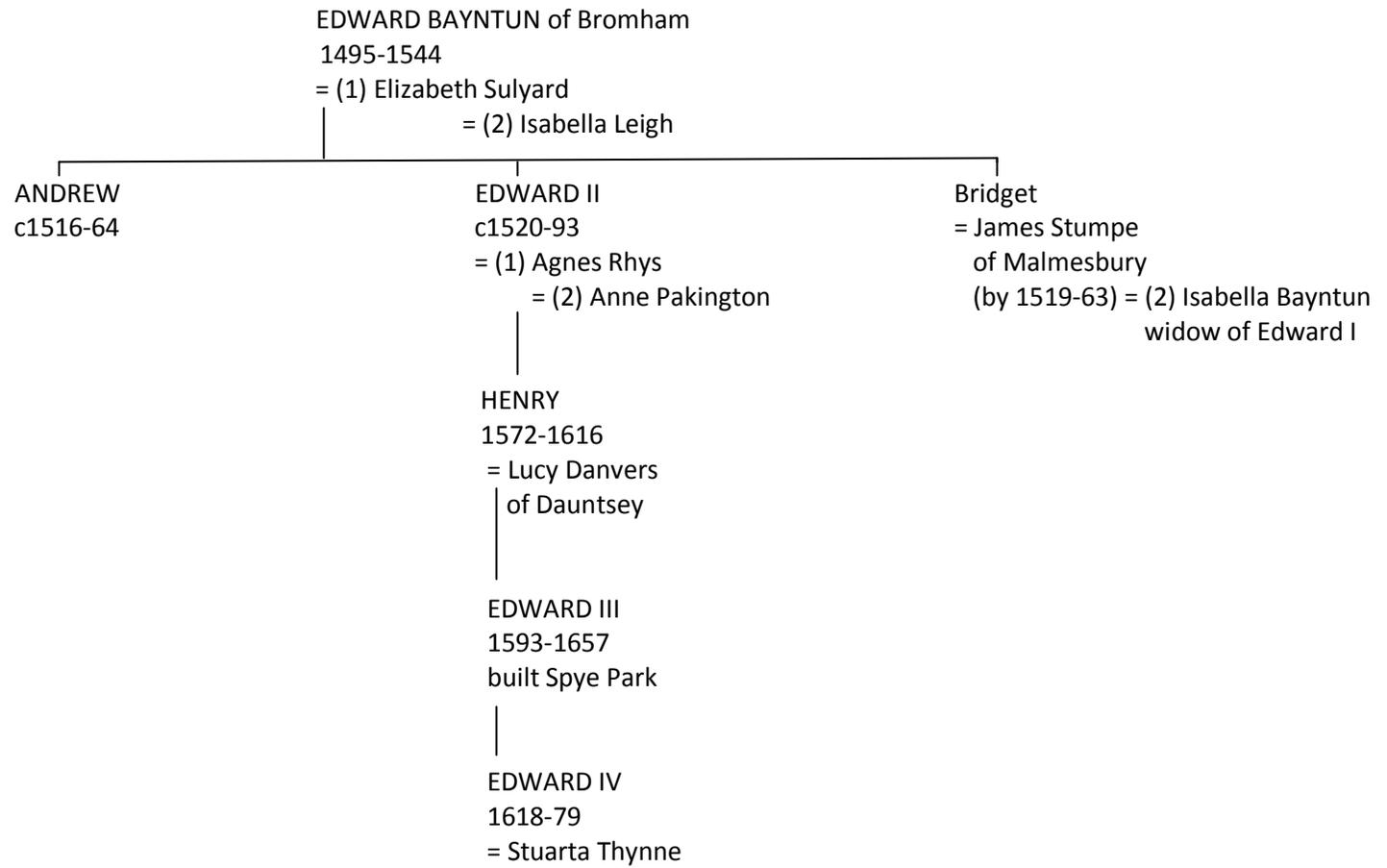
JOHN
d 1655
= Mary Lambert of Boyton

Sold Wingfield to Samuel Ashe, 1647

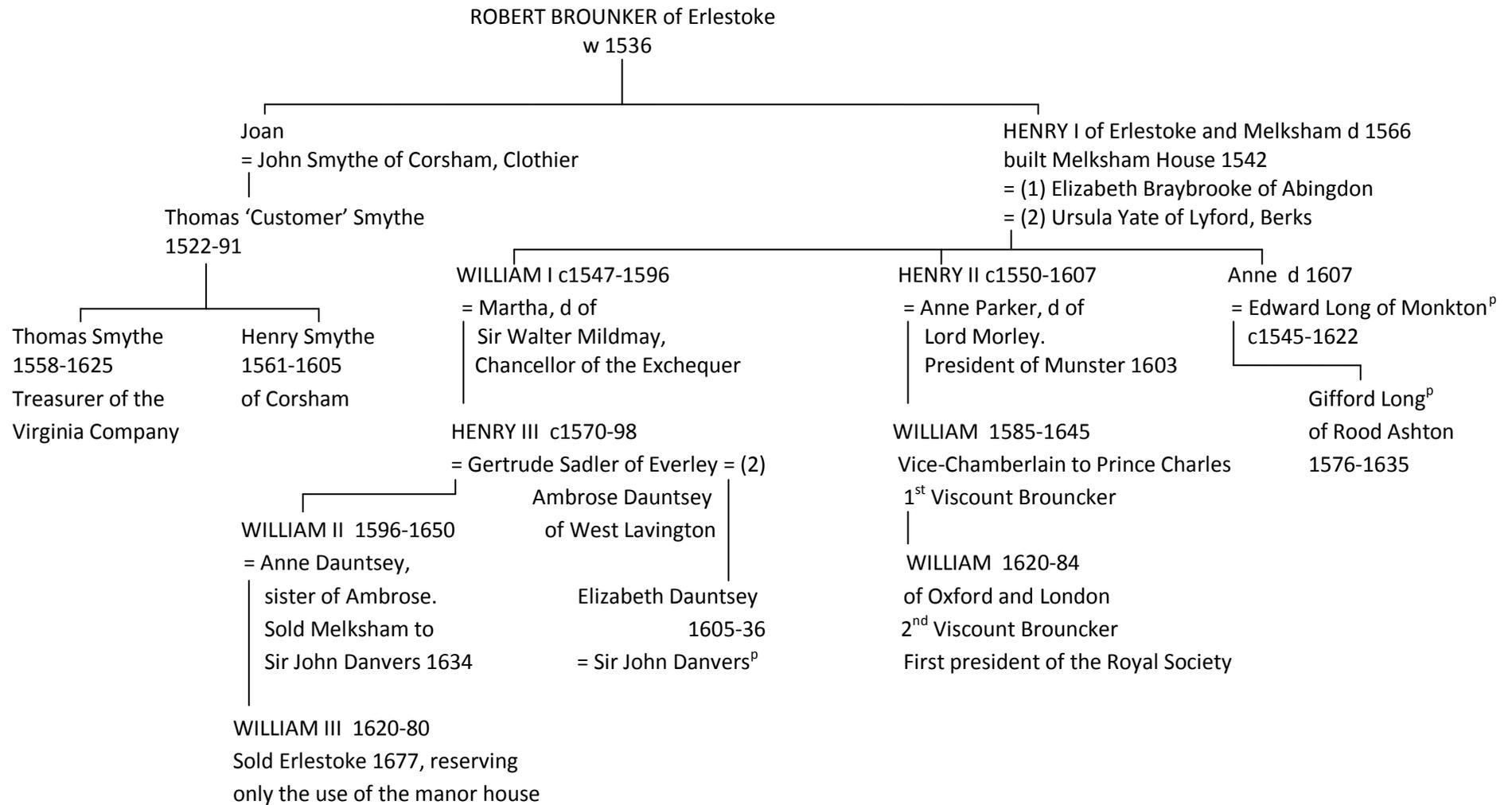
REBECCA^p
of Southwick
1567-c1650
= (1) Henry Long III^p of Whaddon, d 1612
= (2) Henry Sherfield of Salisbury, 1572-1634

WALTER LONG^p of Whaddon, 1592-1672

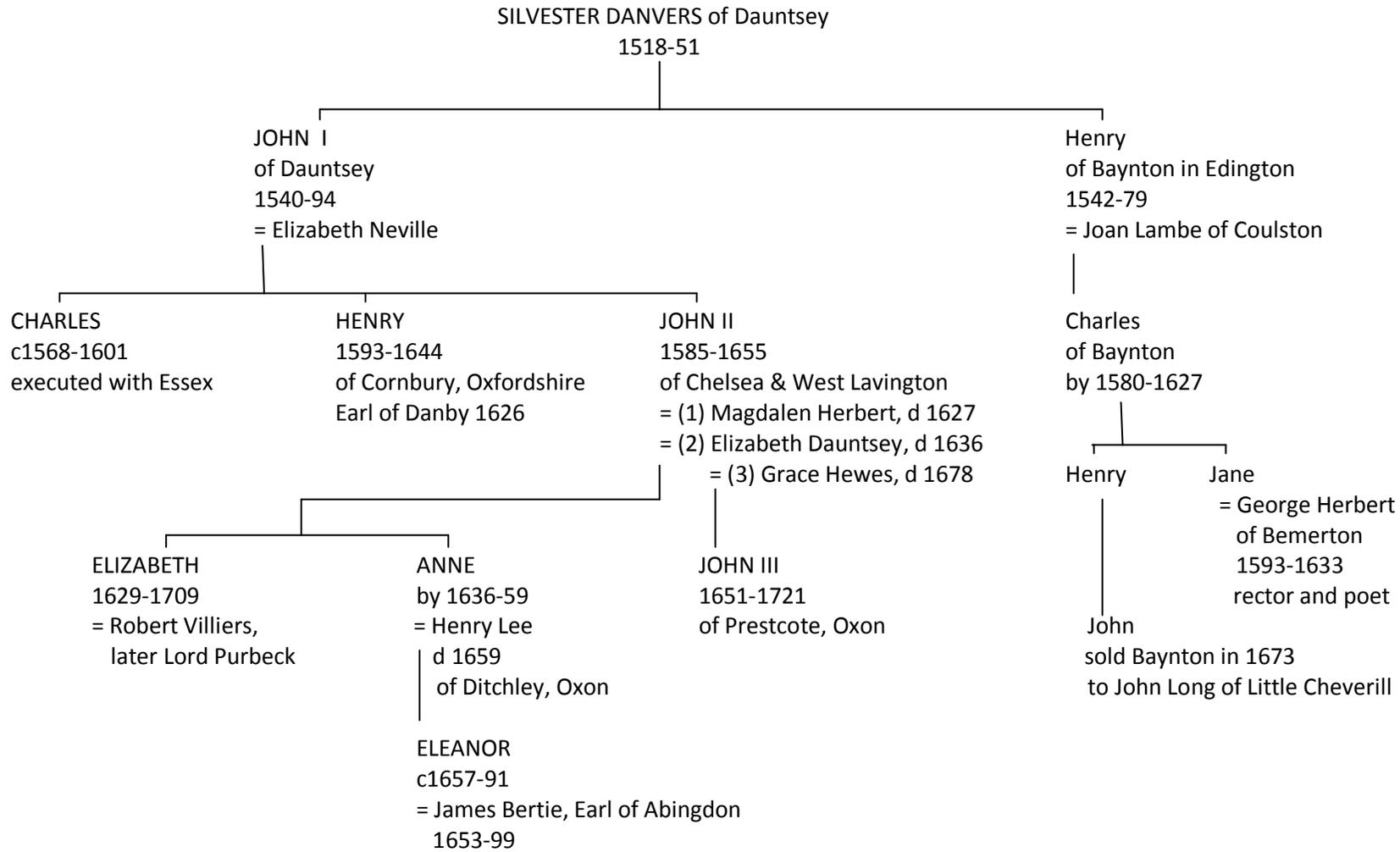
Pedigree 4 **BAYNTUN of Bromham and Spye**



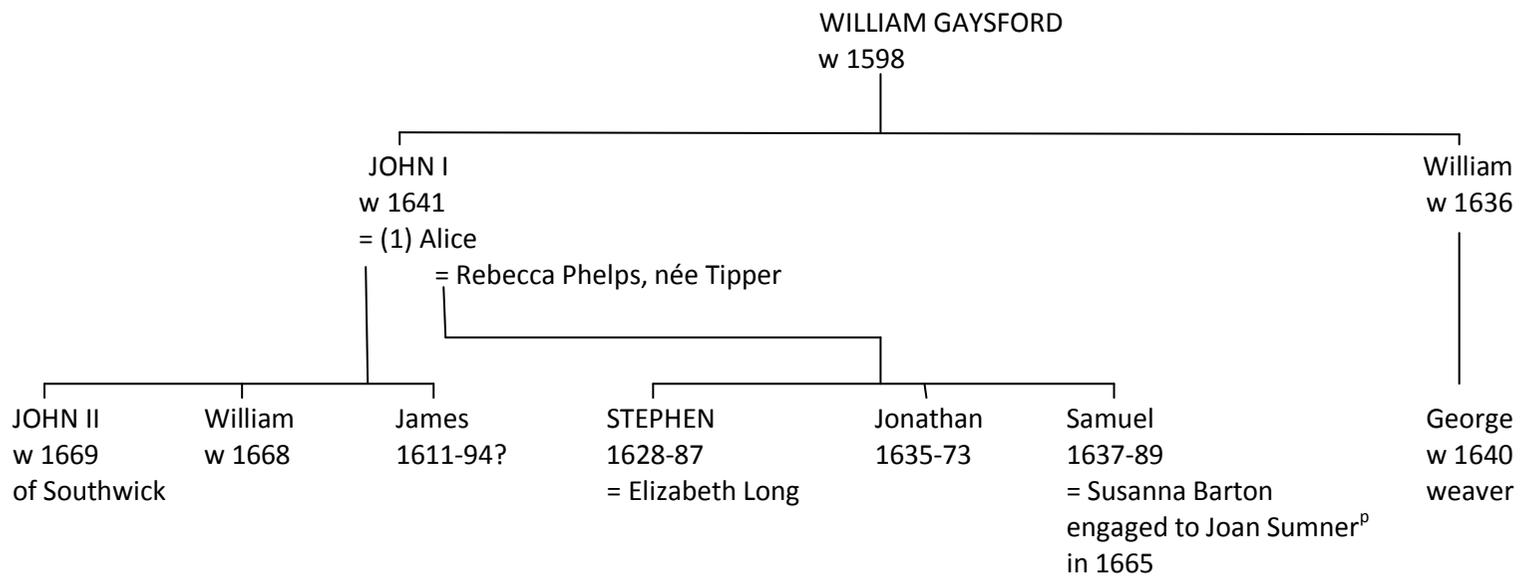
Pedigree 5 **BROUNKER of Erlestoke and Melksham, Wiltshire; and Oxford and London**



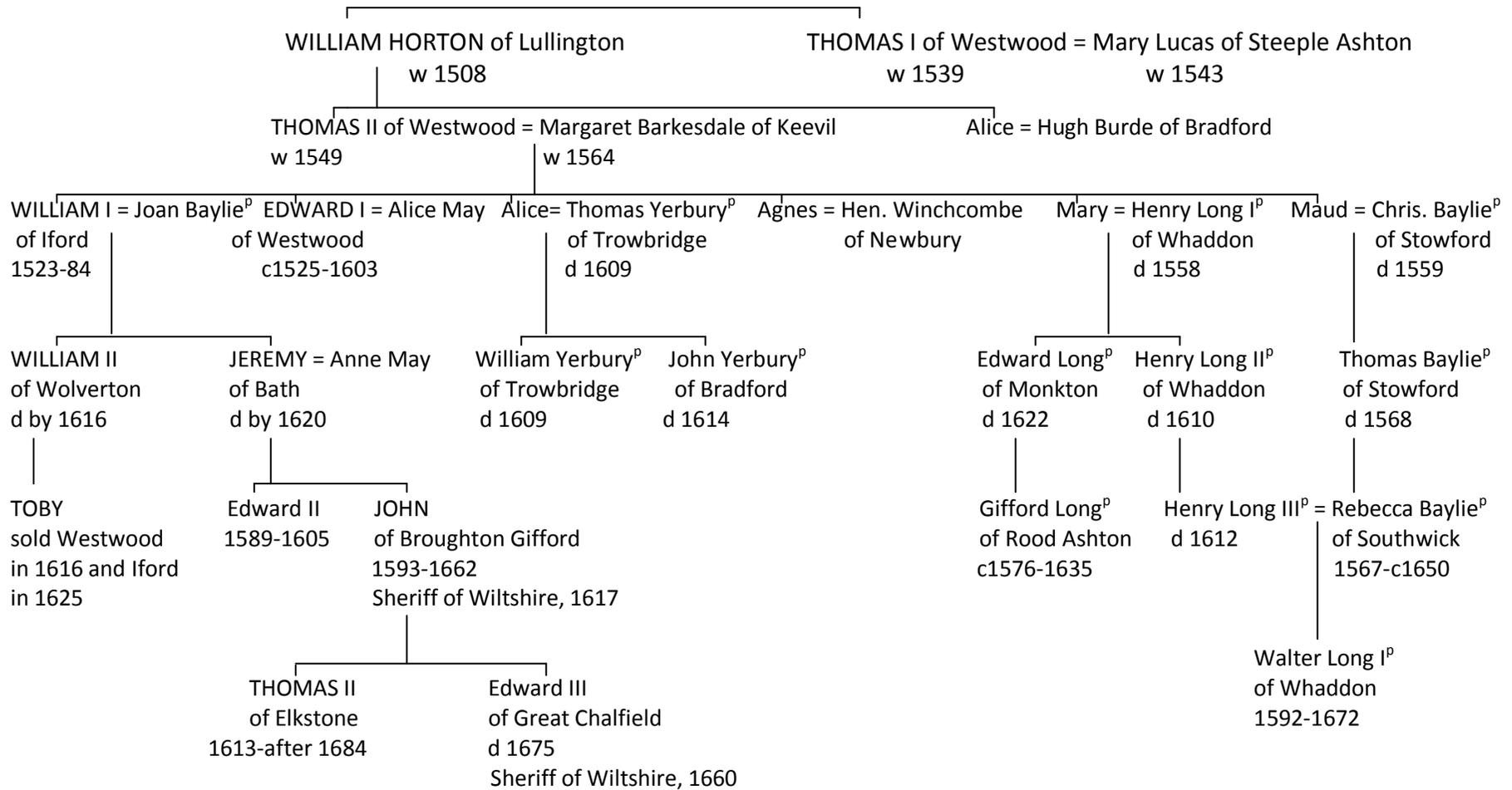
Pedigree 6 DANVERS of Dauntsey, Chelsea, West Lavington and Baynton



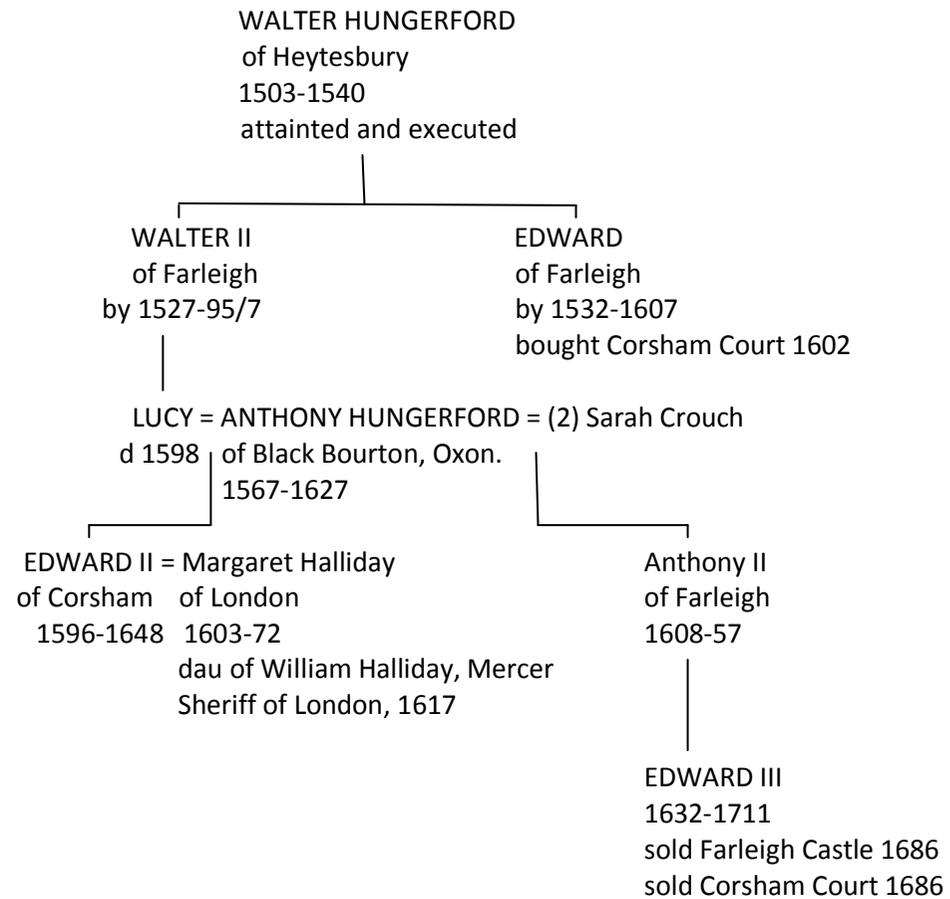
Pedigree 7 **GAYSFORD** of Bulkington



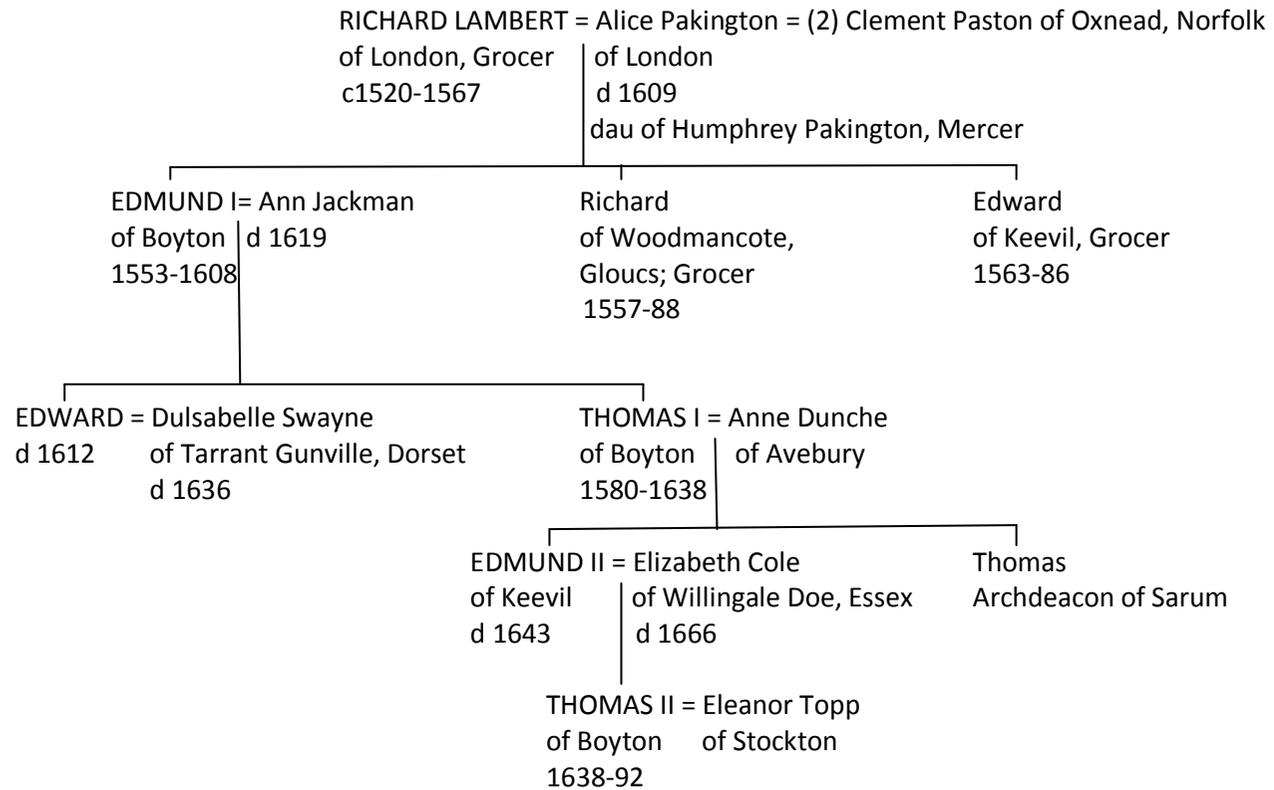
Pedigree 8 **HORTON of Westwood, Iford and Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire; Wolverton and Bath, Somerset; and Elkstone, Gloucestershire**



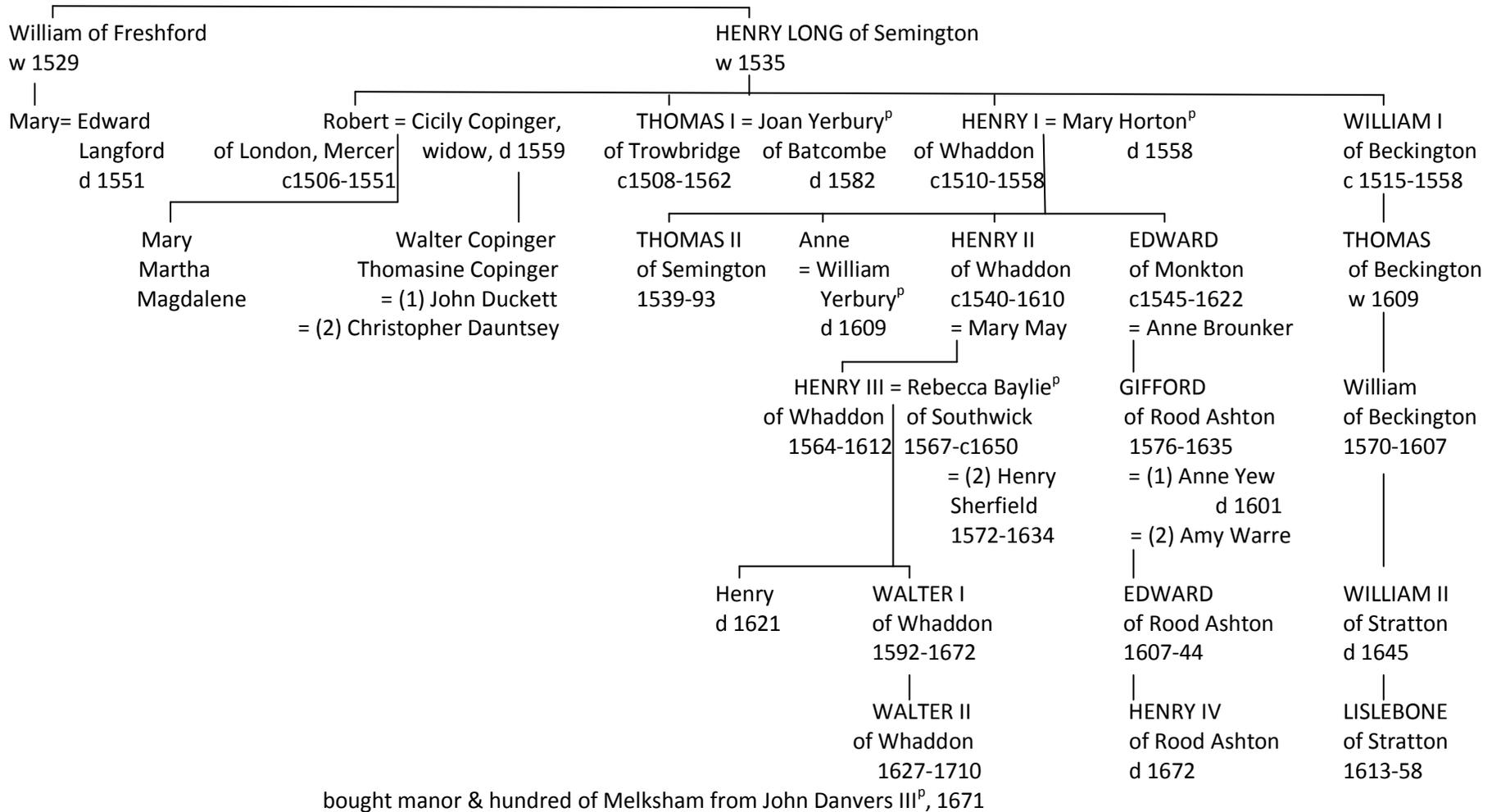
Pedigree 9 **HUNGERFORD of Heytesbury, Farleigh Castle and Corsham Court**



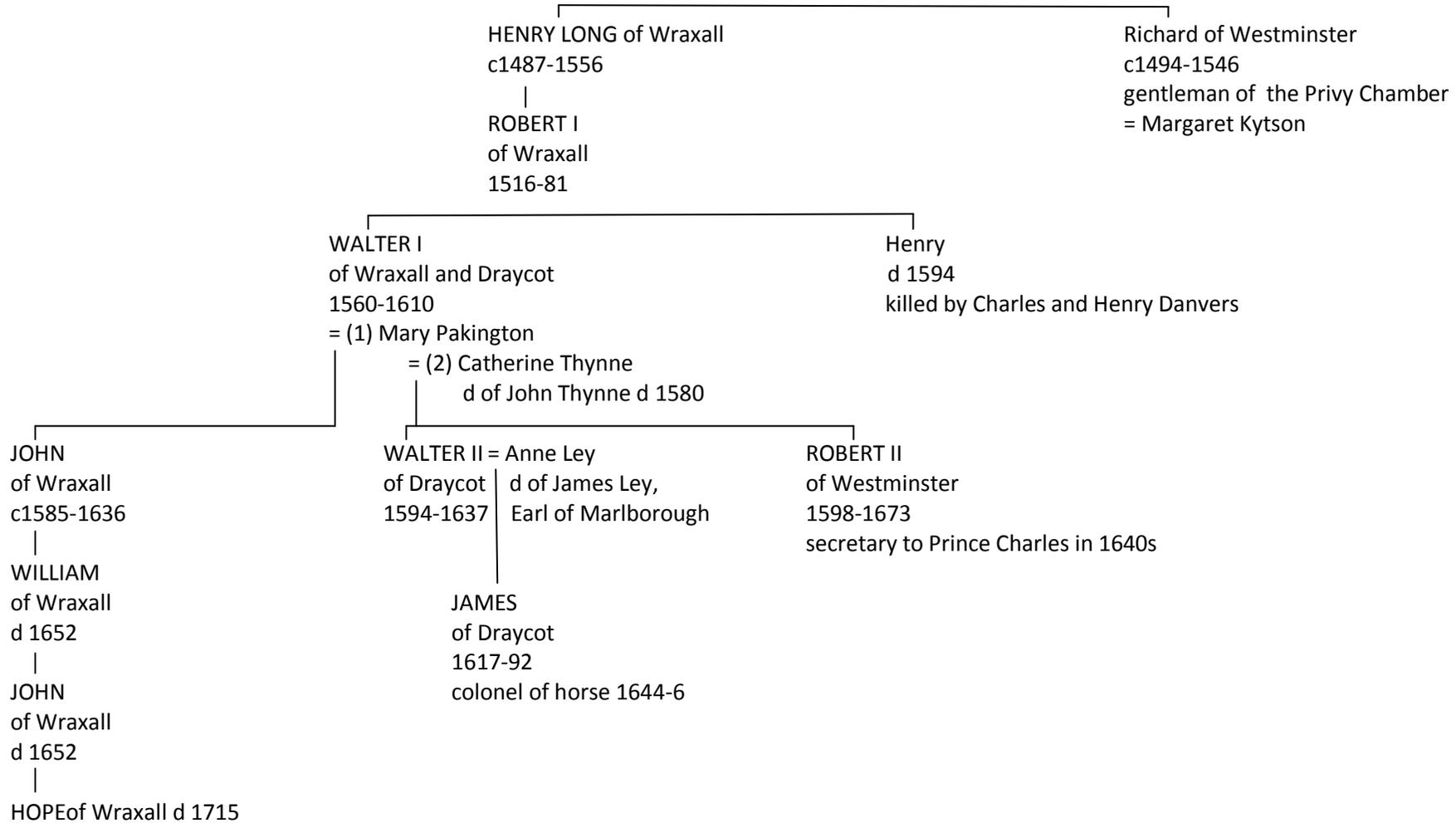
Pedigree 10 **LAMBERT of Boyton and Keevil**



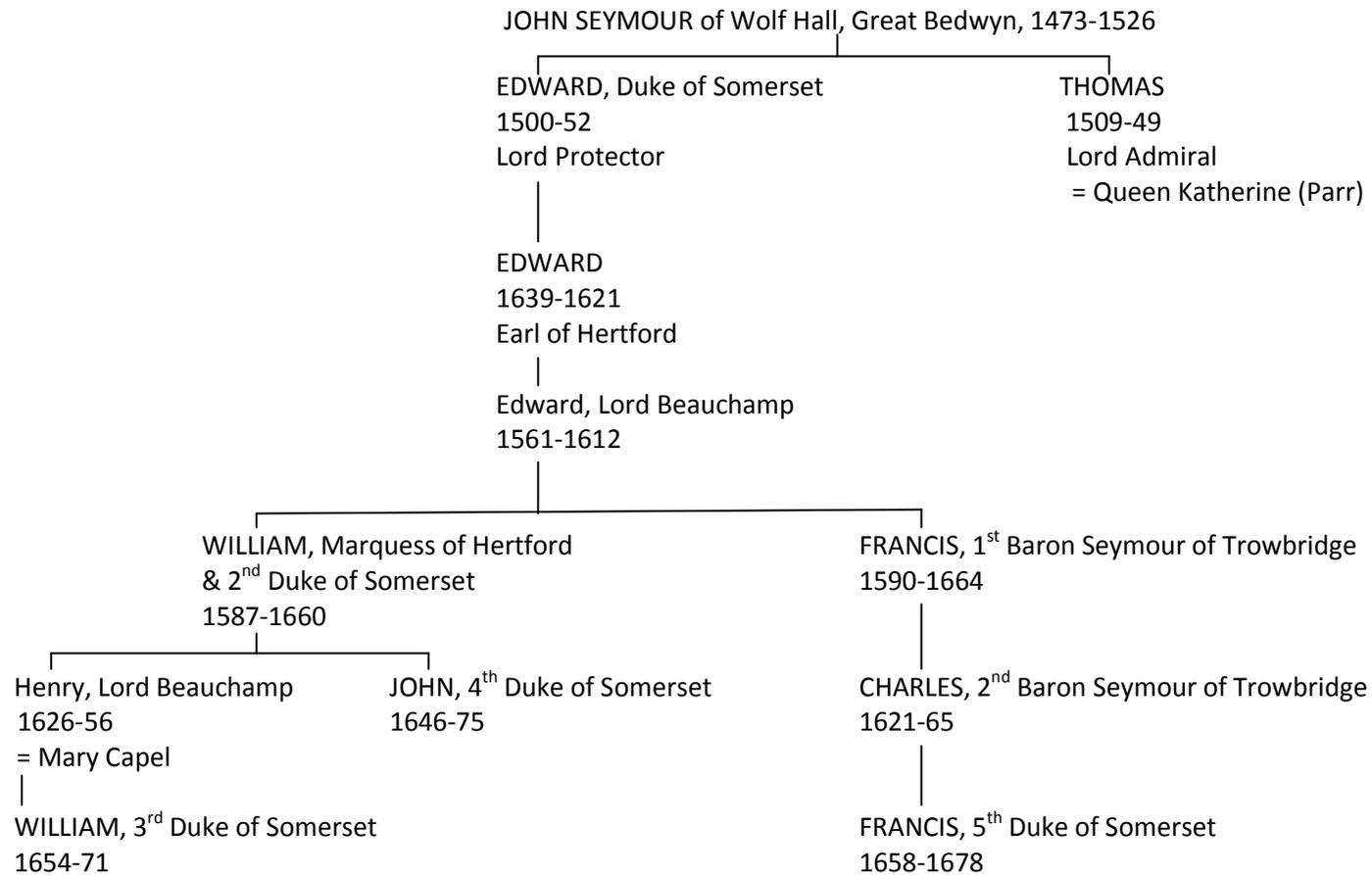
Pedigree 11 **LONG of Semington, Trowbridge and Whaddon, Wiltshire; and Beckington and Stratton-on-the-Fosse, Somerset**



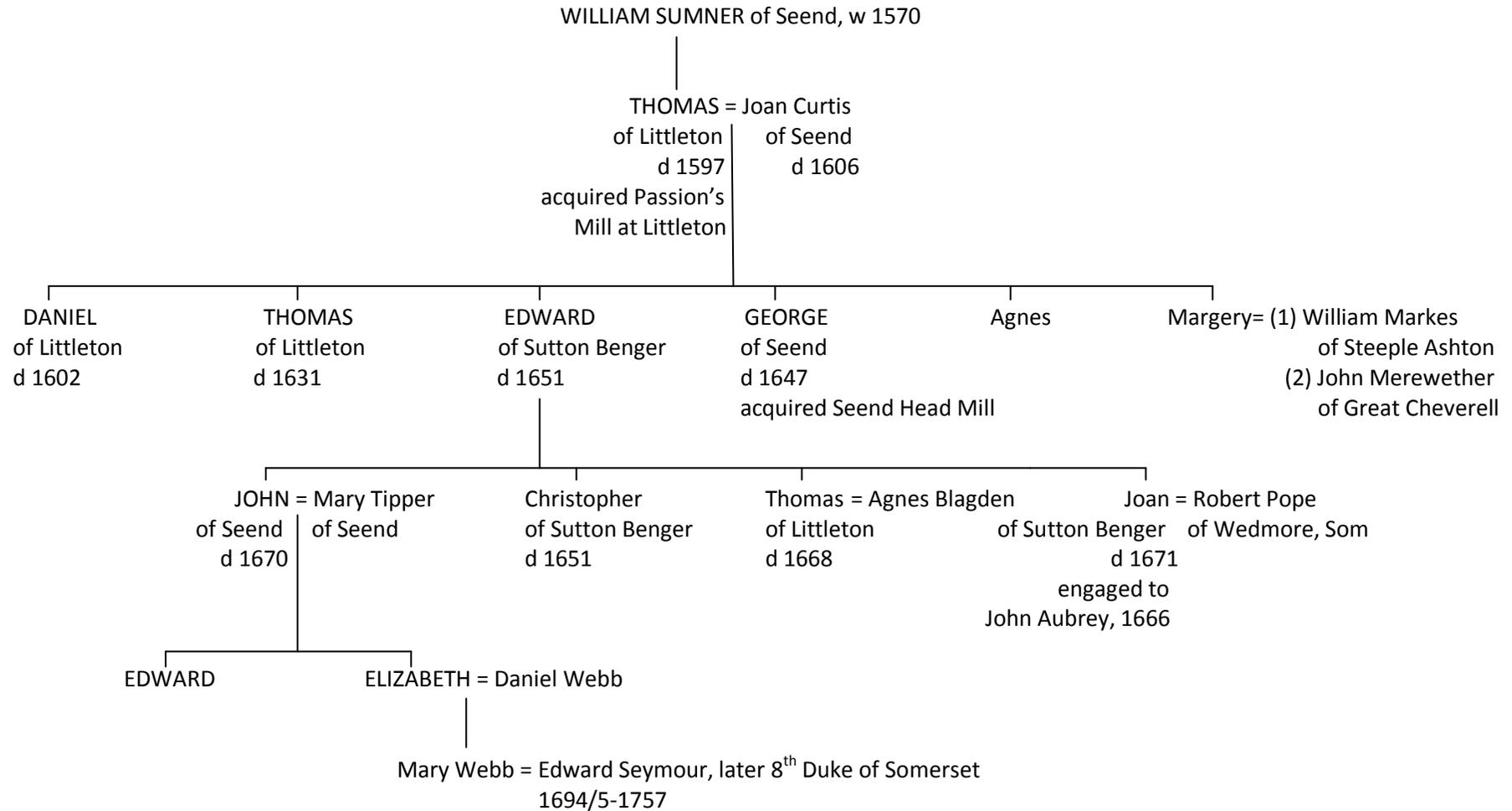
Pedigree 12 LONG of Wraxall and Draycot



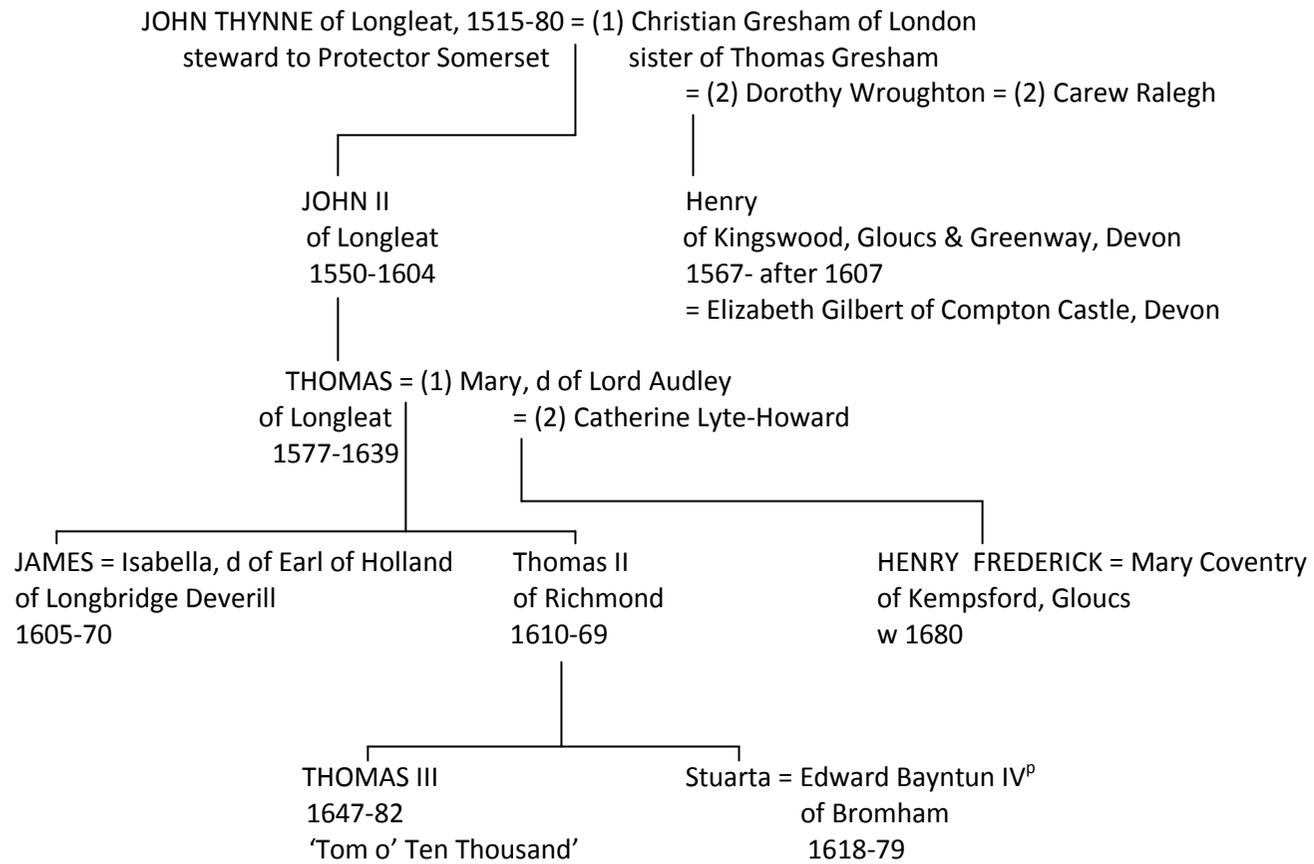
Pedigree 13 SEYMOUR of Great Bedwyn and Marlborough



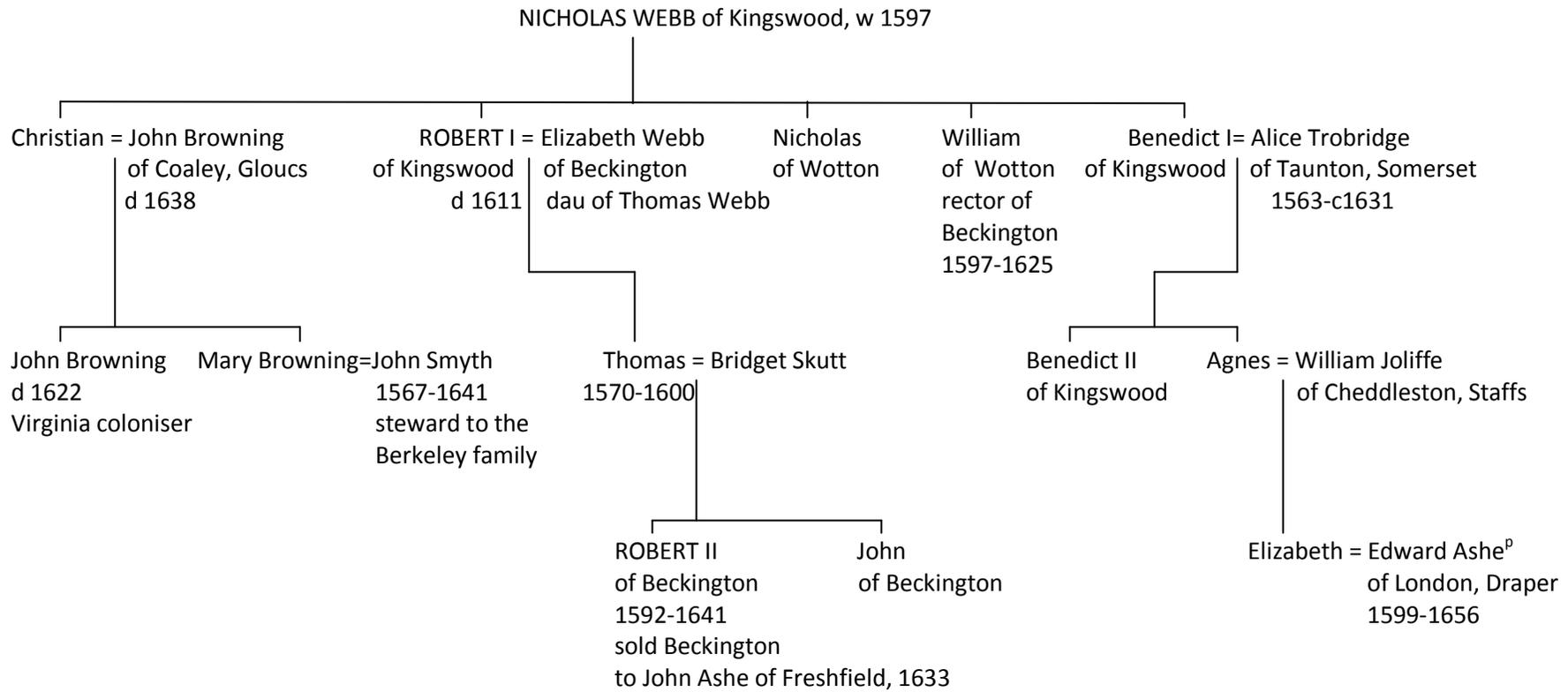
Pedigree 14 **SUMNER of Seend, Littleton and Sutton Benger**



Pedigree 15 **THYNNE of Longleat**

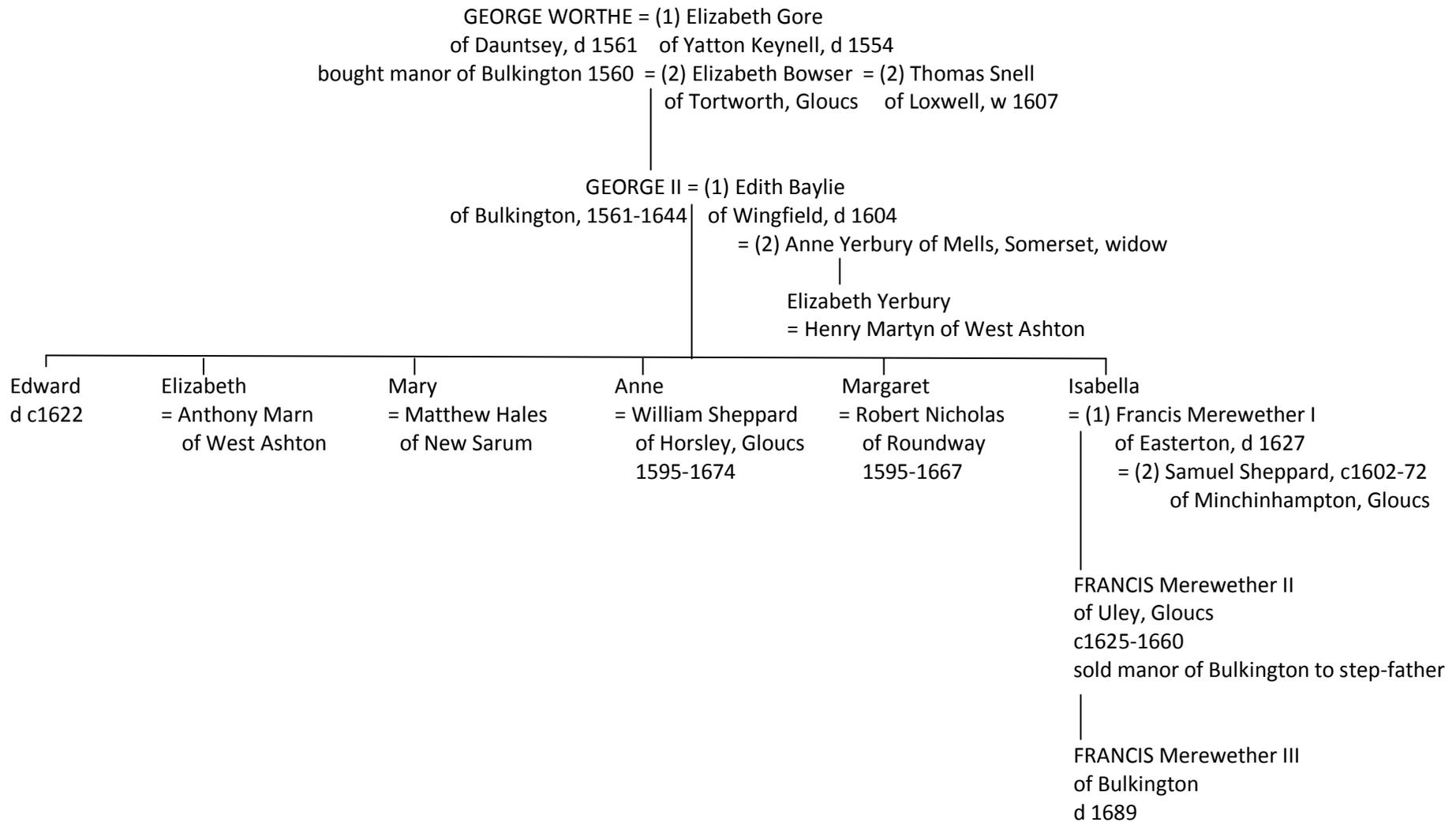


Pedigree 16 **WEBB of Wotton-under-Edge and Kingswood, Gloucestershire;* and Beckington, Somerset**

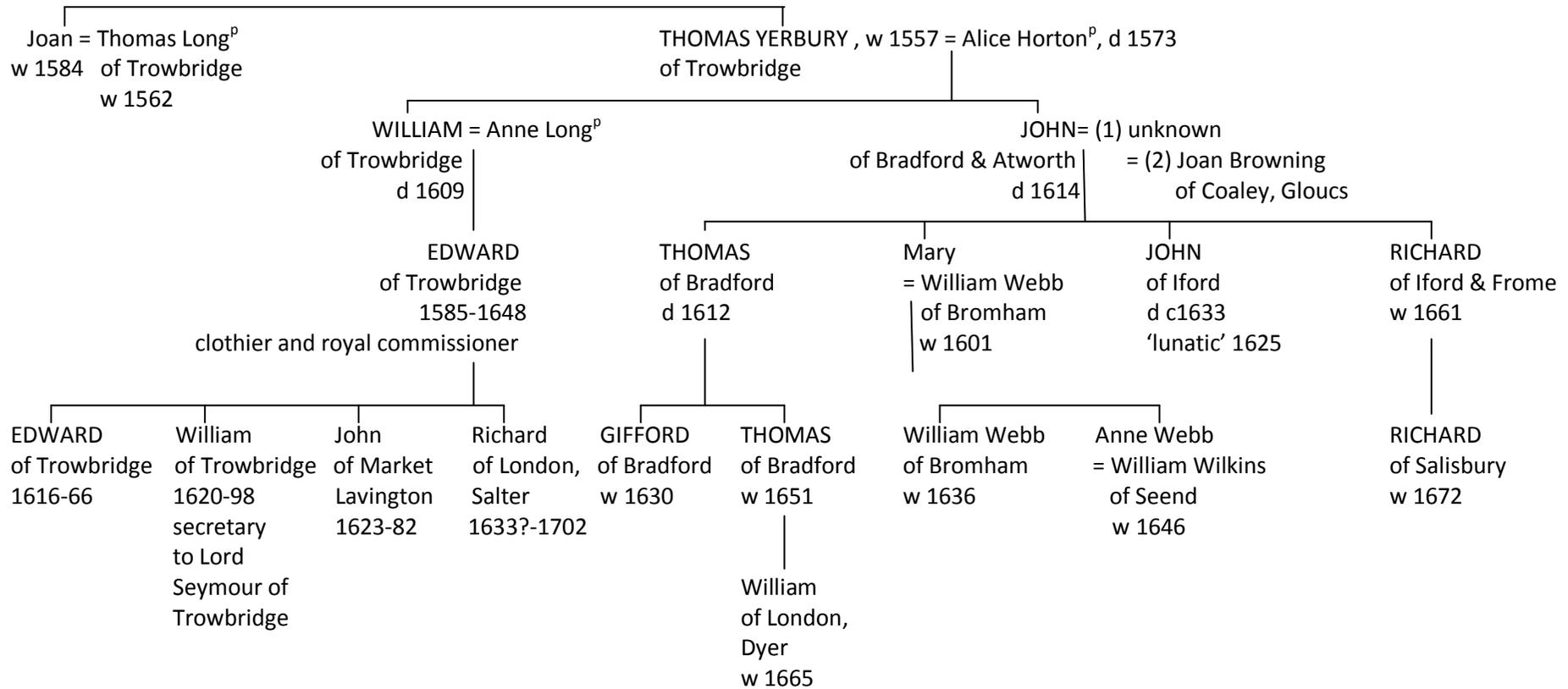


* In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Kingswood was a remote enclave of Wiltshire

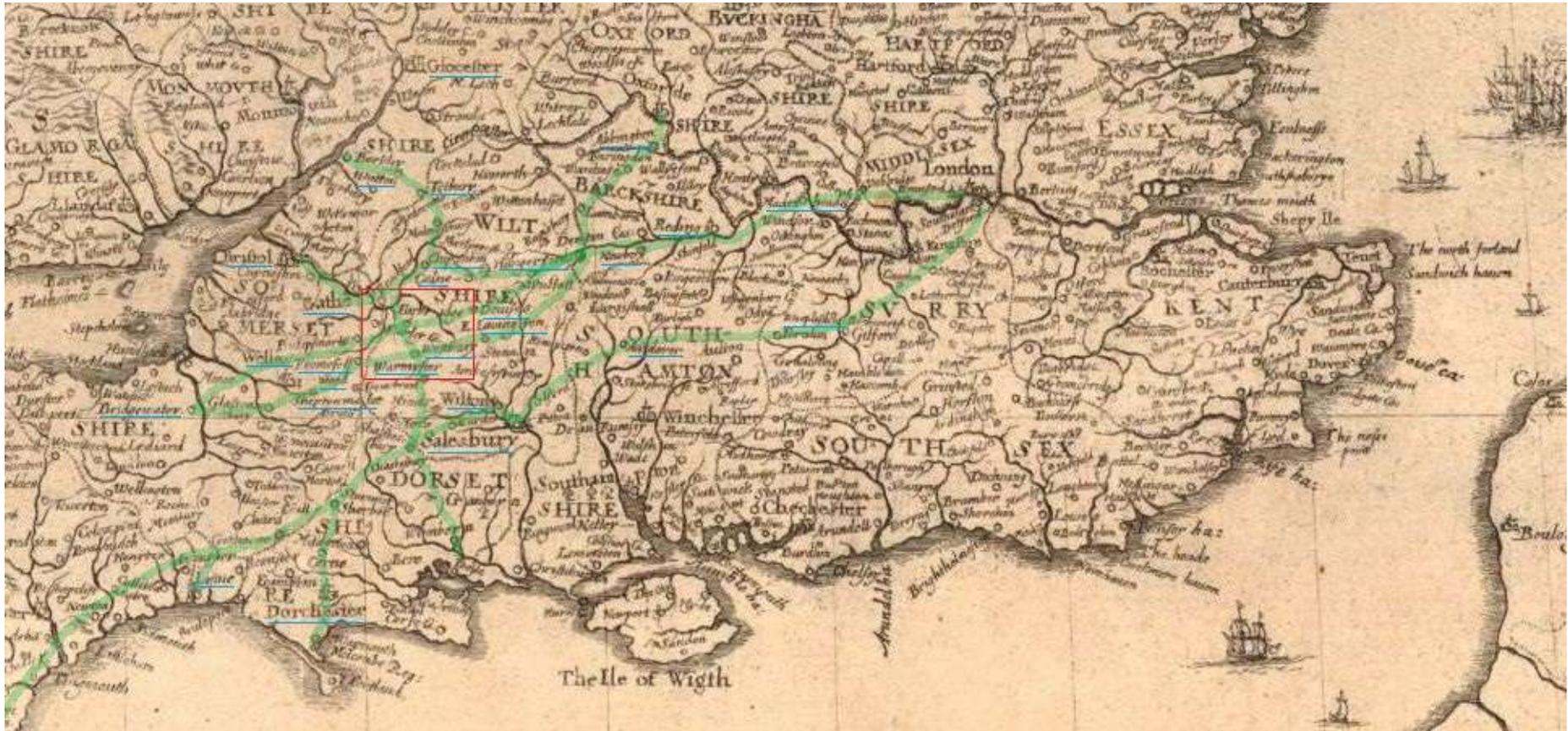
Pedigree 17 **WORTHE of Dauntsey and Bulkington**



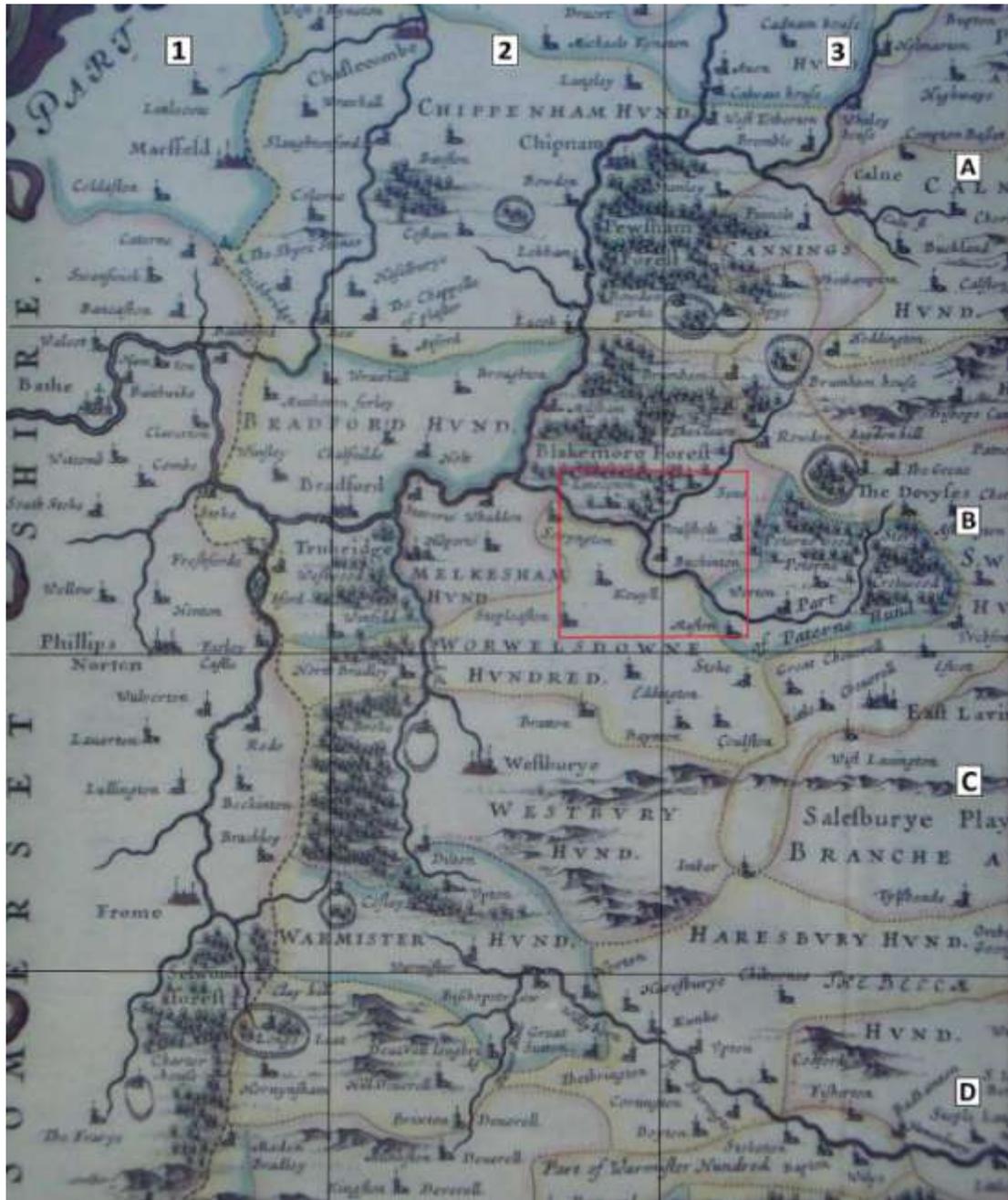
Pedigree 18 YERBURY of Trowbridge, Bradford-on-Avon and Atworth,* Wiltshire; and Frome, Somerset



*Atworth is shown as Atford on Map 4 (West Wiltshire, 1648)



Map 3 **Southern England** Extract from *A Guide for Travellers and the Plain Man's Map* (London, 1654) courtesy of the British Museum Image Service. Principal roads are marked in green, and significant locations underlined in blue. West Wiltshire – approximately the area marked by the red line – is shown in more detail in Maps 2 & 4.



Map 4 **West Wiltshire** Extract from Blaeu, J & W *Nieuwe Atlas* (Amsterdam, 1648)

The Blaeu map was based on John Speed's map of 1610, which has the same selection of settlements, rivers, forests and hills, with the same spellings. The area outlined in red is Bulkington vale, shown in greater detail in Map 2 (page 27).

Index to Map 4 West Wiltshire

Places referred to in the text but omitted from the Blaeu map are cross-referred either to the nearest place shown or to Map 2 (page 27), if shown there.

- Atworth = Atford B2
 Baldham *see Map 2*
 Bath B1
 Baynton C3
 Beckington = Beckinton C1
 Bishopstrow = Bishopstraw D2
 Bishop's Cannings B3
 Boyton D3
 Bradford-on-Avon = Bradford B2
 Bratton C2
 Bremhill = Bremble A3
 Bromham = Brumham B3
 Broughton Gifford = Broughton B2
 Bulkington = Buckinton B3
 Brook = Broke C2
 Calne A3
 Calstone = Calston A3
 Chippenham = Chipnam A2
 Corsham = Cosham A2
 Coulston C3
 Crockerton C2 *south of Warminster*
 Devizes = The Devizes B3
 Dilton C2
 Draycot = Dracot A2
 Easterton C3 *northeast of Market Lavington*
 East Lavington C3
 Easton Piercy A2 *west of Kingston St Michael*
 Edington = Edington C2
 Erlestoke = Stoke C3
 Farleigh Hungerford, Farley Castle B1
 Freshford = Freshforde B1
 Frome C1
 Great Chalfield = Chalfeilde B2
 Great Cheverell = Great Cheuerell C3
 Great Hinton *see Map 2: Hinton*
 Hazelbury = Hazelburye A2
 Heywood C2 *north of Westbury*
 Hill Deverill = Hill Deuerill D2
 Hilperton B2
 Hinton Charterhouse = Henton B1
 Hurst *see Map 2*
 Iford B1
 Imber C3
 Keevil = Keuyll B2
 Kingston St Michael = Michaels Kinston A2
 Lacock, Lacok A2
 Little Cheverell = Little Cheuerell C3
 Littleton = Linecoton B2
 Longbridge Deverill = Deuerill Longbridge D2
 Longleat = Longe Leat D1
 Loxwell B3 *north of Bromham*
 Lullington C1
 Maiden Bradley D1
 Market Lavington = East Lavington C3
 Marston = Maston B3
 Melksham = Milsham B2
 Monkton B2 *south of Broughton Gifford*
 Monkton Farleigh = Munketon Ferley B1
 North Bradley C2
 Norton St Philip = Phillips Norton B1
 Potterne = Poterne B3
 Poulshot = Poulsholt B3
 Rode C1
 Rood Ashton B2 *west of Steeple Ashton*
 Roundway B3 *between Devizes and Bagdon Hill*
 Rowde = Rowden B3
 Salisbury Plain = Salesburye Playne C2-3
 Seend = Sene B3
 Seend Head *see Map 3*
 Semington = Sevyngton B2
 Slaughterford A2
 Southbroom B3 *tithing of Devizes*
 Southwick C2 *west of North Bradley*
 Spye A3
 Sutton Benger A2 *see Draycot*
 Steeple Ashton = Stepleaston B2
 Trowbridge = Trubridge B2
 Warminster = Warmister C2
 Wellow B1
 West Ashton B2 *west of Steeple Ashton*
 Westbury = Westburye C2
 West Lavington C3
 Westwood B1
 Whaddon B2
 Wingfield = Winfield B2
 Wolverton = Wulverton C1
 Worton B3
 Wraxall = Wraxhall B2

