

OCCUPATION AND PHYSIQUE, 1608.

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Men and Armour in Gloucestershire, 1608 contains a list of 'all the able and sufficient men in body fitt for his Ma'ties service in the warrs ... viewed by the Right honourable Henry Lord Barkley Lord Lieutenant ... in the month of September, 1608.'

The list was compiled parish by parish and hundred by hundred by John Smyth, Lord Berkeley's steward, presumably from information supplied by the High Constable of each hundred who, in turn, would have been supplied with information by the petty constable of each parish or tithing. It is of great interest to local historians because against the name of most of the men listed is recorded his occupation and also some indication of his age and physique. This brief study was undertaken to ascertain whether any useful information could be obtained about the relative physique of the men in the various divisions of the county - hill, vale and forest - in town or country, or according to occupation or social class.

First it was necessary to determine whether a uniform system of classification into age groups and the various categories of physique was used throughout the whole country or whether different standards of classification were applied in different hundreds. In this preliminary investigation the returns from three hundreds have been studied and analysed: Longtree, Bisley and Whitstone. These were chosen because they adjoin each other and together comprise that part of the county principally engaged in the woollen industry. Whitstone, however, differs from the other two in that it lies in the vale whereas the others are on the Cotswolds.

To classify men according to age is a simple operation and one would expect a considerable uniformity in the percentage of men in each age group from hundred to hundred. Table 1 shows the number of men, and the percentage of the total, in each age group in the three hundreds, and it is immediately noticeable that there are wide differences between the hundreds.

All the physically fit men between the ages of sixteen and sixty were listed and they were divided into three groups which were very loosely defined:

- 'The figure (1) sheweth the age of that man to bee about Twenty'
- 'The figure (2) about fforty'
- 'The figure (3) to be between fyfty and threescore'

In Longtree Hundred only 28% of the men listed were put into Age Group 1, whereas in Bisley and Whitstone Hundreds 49% were placed into that group. There may well have been differences in the proportion of younger men from hundred to hundred just as there are differences in age group proportions in different areas of the country today.

Table 1.

NUMBER OF MEN AND PERCENTAGE IN EACH AGE GROUP

	Group 1		Group 2		Group 3		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Longtree	227	28	547	69	23	3	797
Bisley	291	49	262	44	38	6	591
Whitstone	514	49	503	48	38	4	1055

(Percentage to nearest whole number)

Establishment of a new industry in one area would attract a disproportionate number of young people; the decline of an older industry would result in younger people moving from the area in search of employment, leaving behind a disproportionate number of the elderly. But such a wide variation in age grouping as is apparently shown in two areas so similar as the hundreds of Bisley and Longtree can only be explained by assuming a difference in interpretation of any instructions given.

Groups 1 and 2 together include the men between the ages of 16 and 50 years, a span of 34 years. If that is equally divided Group 1 would include men from 16 to 33 years of age; Group 2 men from 34 to 50 years old. There are no statistics concerning the birth rate, mortality rate or expectation of life for this or much later periods in history. We do not know whether population was rising, falling or stable. Obviously the percentage of men unfit for military service would rise in the older age groups as disease and accidents took their toll. It is probable that in Bisley and Whitstone Hundreds the dividing line between Age Groups 1 and 2 was drawn at about 30 to 34 years of age; in Longtree Hundred at about 25 years.

Certainly as far as these three hundreds were concerned, no conclusions concerning age groups can be drawn except that few men above 50 years of age were considered fit for military service. But what standard of fitness was required? How many men survived 50 years of life? We do not know.

The men were classified in four grades according to their physique:

'The L're (p) showeth the man to bee of the tallest stature fitt to make a pykeman'

'The L're (m) of a middle stature fitt to make a musketyer'

'The L'res (ca) ... of a lower stature fitt to serve with a Calyver'

The L'res (py) of the meanest stature fitt for a pyoner, or of little other use.'

Only the stature or height of the men is mentioned but some regard must have been given to the strength of the men because of the requirement of the arms they were to wield. The pikeman had to be big and strong for his pike was sixteen to eighteen feet

long with a sturdy shaft. It was not wielded like a lance; the butt was pressed into the ground and the staff held at an angle pointing towards the enemy to present a hedge of iron spikes against a cavalry attack. It had to be held firmly so that it was not easily brushed aside to leave a gap in the hedge through which the cavalry could penetrate. The musket, too, was a heavy weapon; too heavy to be held like a modern rifle when fired. The barrel was four and a half feet long and, in firing position, was rested on a forked staff stuck in the ground in front of the musketeer. The weight of musket, staff, powder holders and shot was a considerable burden. The caliver was a lighter firearm which could be fired without a rest but its shot could not pierce the armour still worn by soldiers of the time. The pioneers were the baggage men and labourers of the army; unarmed and not expected to engage in battle. The letters (tr) placed after a man's name showed that he was a trained soldier. No pioneer in the three hundreds was certified as being trained.

Table 2 shows the number of men, and the percentage of the total, placed in each physical grade. The last column attempts to show the average grading in each hundred. The grading was obtained by awarding 4 points to a pikeman, 3 to a musketeer, 2 to a man bearing a caliver, 1 to a pioneer. A trained statistician would, no doubt, devise a better method, but the one used will facilitate comparison between the grading in each hundred. The figures for Bisley Hundred include 119 men whose age was not recorded. This accounts for the apparent discrepancy in the number of men in that hundred recorded in Table 1 and in Table 2.

Table 2

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF MEN IN EACH GRADE

	p		m		ca		py		Total	Average Phy- sique
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Longtree	60	7.5	214	26.9	490	61.5	33	4.1	797	2.38
Bisley	133	18.7	167	23.5	382	53.8	28	3.9	710	2.57
Whitstone	158	15.2	157	15.1	661	63.3	66	6.3	1042	2.39

(Percentages to nearest last figure)

Again, there is a wide variation in the percentage of men placed in each grade. In Longtree Hundred only 7.5% of men are classed to be suitable for pikemen; in Whitstone 15.2% and in Bisley 18.7%. There may well have been local variations in physique but such a wide difference between two adjacent and similar hundreds suggest that different standards of classification were used in each hundred. Obviously the height of the men was not measured.

It is obvious, too, that in all three hundreds the men graded (m), of 'middle stature', were actually of above average height for more than fifty percent were not as tall as they were.

The various grades should therefore be interpreted as (p), the tallest, (m) above average height, (ca) average or below, (py) of poor physique. Below these were the men unfit for service who were not recorded. It is unlikely that many of these were so graded because of lack of inches but more likely because of deformity, disease or injury - the halt, maimed, and blind and, no doubt, the mentally deficient.

In Table 3 the number of men, and the percentage, in each grade and in each group are recorded. (Percentages, except for the totals, are not given for grades in Age Group 3 as numbers are not sufficient to make this worthwhile). The one significant fact emerging from the Table is that in all three hundreds the physique of the men in Age Group 2 (about 30 to 50 years of age) was better than that of the younger men (16 to 30 years). This is particularly noticeable in Longtree Hundred where the two groups were divided at a lower age. In more modern times each generation has tended to be rather taller than the preceding one. It appears probable that this was not so when Men and Armour was compiled. The figures, too, cast doubt on the belief that in those days men matured at an earlier age and were fully grown at sixteen years of age.

Table 3

<u>NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF MEN IN EACH GRADE IN EACH HUNDRED</u>											
	p		m		ca		py		Total	Average Physique	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%			
<u>Age Group 1</u>											
Longtree	5	2.2	38	16.7	183	80.6	1	0.4	227	2.21	
Bisley	58	19.9	52	17.9	177	60.8	4	1.4	291	2.56	
Whitstone	54	10.7	57	11.3	382	75.6	12	2.4	505	2.30	
Total	117	11.4	147	14.4	742	72.5	17	1.7	1023	2.36	
<u>Age Group 2</u>											
Longtree	53	9.7	170	31.1	295	53.9	29	5.3	547	2.45	
Bisley	50	19.1	76	29.0	122	46.6	14	5.3	262	2.62	
Whitstone	99	19.8	95	19.0	265	53.1	40	8.0	499	2.51	
Total	202	15.4	341	26.1	682	52.1	83	6.3	1308	2.51	
<u>Age Group 3</u>											
Longtree	2	-	6	-	12	-	3	-	23		
Bisley	12	-	4	-	15	-	7	-	38		
Whitstone	5	-	5	-	14	-	14	-	38		
Total	19	19.2	15	15.2	41	41.4	24	24.2	99	2.29	

(All decimals to nearest last figure).

As the standards for assessing physique varied from hundred to hundred Men and Armour cannot be used as a basis for the comparison of physique in different areas of the county. The only comparisons which may be made are between the physique of men of various occupations or classes within each hundred, as these were assessed by the same standard. This has been done for eight occupational groups within each hundred and the result is shown in Table 4. Time did not allow for analysis of every trade or occupation, and some occupations were grouped together in order to get a number sufficient to have any significance. Even so the number of gentlemen - only 20 - is, perhaps, too small to be really representative.

The figure showing average physique of each occupational group has been calculated by the same method used in Tables 2 and 3. The groups are arranged in order according to physique.

Table 4

PHYSIQUE OF DIFFERENT OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS

Occupational Group & Hundred	No. of Men in each Grade				Total No. Men	Average Physique
	p	m	ca	py		
1. <u>Gentlemen</u>						
Longtree	1	3	1	0	5	3.00
Bisley	4	0	1	0	5	3.60
Whitstone	3	1	6	0	10	2.70
Total	8	4	8	0	20	3.00
2. <u>Yeoman</u>						
Longtree	3	4	6	0	13	2.77
Bisley	15	16	22	2	55	2.80
Whitstone	12	25	14	0	51	2.96
Total	30	45	42	2	119	2.87
3. <u>Clothiers</u>						
Longtree	7	12	10	1	30	2.83
Bisley	6	2	3	0	11	3.27
Whitstone	3	8	14	1	26	2.50
Total	16	22	27	2	67	2.78
4. <u>Tailors & Shoemakers</u>						
Longtree	5	17	18	1	41	2.63
Bisley	6	7	14	0	27	2.70
Whitstone	5	4	33	0	42	2.33
Total	16	28	65	1	110	2.54

continued ..

Table 4 continued

PHYSIQUE OF DIFFERENT OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS

Occupational Group & Hundred	No. of Men in each Grade				Total No. Men	Average Physique
	p	m	ca	py		
5. <u>Husbandmen</u>						
Longtree	12	34	86	5	137	2.39
Bisley	33	37	56	8	124	2.69
Whitstone	47	33	128	11	219	2.53
Total	92	94	270	24	480	2.53
6. <u>Smiths,</u> <u>Masons,</u> <u>Carpenters,</u> <u>Tilers,</u> <u>Slatters &</u> <u>Joiners</u>						
Longtree	1	12	30	1	44	2.30
Bisley	7	12	23	1	43	2.58
Whitstone	6	6	31	4	47	2.30
Total	14	30	84	6	134	2.39
7. <u>Weavers</u>						
Longtree	5	40	156	8	209	2.20
Bisley	19	26	98	5	148	2.40
Whitstone	35	33	142	16	226	2.38
Total	59	99	396	29	583	2.32
8. <u>Labourers</u>						
Longtree	1	6	28	7	42	2.02
Bisley	2	9	23	3	37	2.27
Whitstone	15	9	89	17	130	2.17
Total	18	24	140	27	209	2.16

(Decimals to nearest last figure)

The investigation shows what might well have been anticipated: physique varied in accordance with the wealth and prosperity of the various occupational classes; the gentlemen, clothiers and yeomen being high in the list, the labourers at the bottom. The weavers, as one might expect, are near the bottom, for the clothing trade always suffered from periods of depression when malnutrition would have a harmful effect on the health of the weavers. The comparatively high rating of the tailors and shoemakers is somewhat surprising for these are occupations which would attract men of poor physique and could be undertaken by cripples. It must be remembered, however, that cripples and other men unfit for military service are not listed in Men and Armour. Regrettably, John Smyth, who spent so much of his time searching the records of previous generations, did not realise how much more valuable Men and Armour would have been to future generations had he listed the men unfit for military service as well as the fit.

There is a considerable degree of agreement in the order in which the physique of the various occupational groups is placed in each of the three hundreds as shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Occupation	Order in each Hundred		
	Longtree	Bisley	Whitstone
1. Gentlemen	1	1	2
2. Yeomen	3	3	1
3. Clothiers	2	2	4
4. Tailors & Shoemakers	4	4	6
5. Husbandmen	5	5	3
6. Smiths, Masons, Etc.	6	6	7
7. Weavers	7	7	5
8. Labourers	8	8	8

As a source of information concerning health and physique in the early 17th Century, Men & Armour is somewhat disappointing. Nevertheless it might be worthwhile to extend this pilot study of occupation and physique to other hundreds and for all occupations employing more than a hundred men in the whole county. It might well indicate the relative prosperity and standard of living of the various trades and occupations, for this pilot study shows that there was a relationship between physique and social class in 1608 as there is in this century when medical examination of wartime recruits for the armed forces showed that boys from the public schools and universities had a much higher standard of physique than those from working class homes.