

MEN AND ARMOUR FOR GLOUCESTERSHIRE IN 1608

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This session the analysis and summary of John Smith's Men and Armour for Gloucestershire in 1608 (1) which has occupied three sessions, has been completed and tables have been compiled showing the number of men engaged in each of almost two hundred trades or occupations in each manor, hundred, and division in the county, and in the whole of Gloucestershire. The tables are far too lengthy for inclusion in this article, the purpose of which is to explain some of the differences between this analysis and a similar one by A.J. and R.H. Tawney published in The Economic History Review in 1934 (2); to make some criticisms of that analysis; and to make a new assessment of the value and importance of Men and Armour.

Smith's work is a list of 'all the able and sufficient men in body fitt for his Ma'tie's service in the warrs .. viewed by ... Lord Barkley, Lord Lieutenant' in August and September 1608. It gives the name of each man and states the occupation of about seventy-five per cent of them. For the remainder either no occupation is stated or they are stated to be servants of gentlemen or of employers whose occupation is not stated. It also gives some indication of the age and physique of most of the men. Finally it lists the names of all men - and of 135 women - who held arms or armour or who were under a legal obligation to provide this.

In this analysis only those men fit to serve in the militia have been included; the total for the whole of Gloucestershire being 18,624. The Tawneys' list, however, totals 19,402. This is because they have included those men, but not the women, who held - or were charged with the duty of providing - arms or armour. Consequently this analysis numbers only able-bodied men within a certain age group whereas the Tawney numbers include about 800 men not in those categories. As no occupation is given for most of those 800 their inclusion adds little to our knowledge but makes the difficult task of comparison with any other statistics concerning the population of the county even more difficult.

It is doubtful whether any two persons counting the number of men in Men and Armour would arrive at exactly the same number. In Berkeley Division about 20 names have been cancelled and these men have not been included in this summary. The Tawneys did not state whether they included them or not - probably they did. Moreover a few entries in Men and Armour are ambiguous and in two or three instances a man appears to have been recorded twice. These cancellations and ambiguities are, however, insufficient to be of any significant importance.

The classification of men into occupational groups generally follows that of the Tawneys but there are some differences. The most important concerns their classification of 'Servants, Household and Unspecified. Servants to Knights, etc.' In Men and Armour for Sapperton, for example, one man described as 'gent', 14 as yeomen and 9 as husbandmen have been bracketed together as 'Servants to Sir Henry Poole'. Similarly for Dodington, 8 yeomen and 6 husbandmen are stated to be 'menyall and household servants' to Mrs Richard Codrington. In this summary these men have been classified as yeomen or husbandmen. The Tawneys have classified them as 'Servants to Knights, etc.'. Similarly, if, as at Rodborough, a man is stated to be a tucker and also a servant to a clothier he has been classified in this survey as a tucker, emphasis being given to the most specific rather than the more vague description of a man's employment.

Professor and Mrs Tawney have misunderstood some terms used to describe a man's occupation. As they themselves state, they did not have an intimate knowledge of Gloucestershire but reference to the Oxford English Dictionary or a more careful scrutiny of the context in which some of the terms are used would have prevented some errors in classification. A list of some of these follows, the Tawneys' classification being given in brackets.

Colliers (included with Miners). Cyril Hart, in Royal Forest, a History of Dean's Woods, gives this definition. 'Charcoal-burner. From eighteenth century a miner of mineral coal'.(3) Certainly the two colliers at Minchinhampton and the two at Bisley must have been charcoal-burners. Out-crop coal was probably mined for local household use in the Forest by 1608 and one coal miner was listed in Men and Armour at Kilcot, near Newent, but coal could not be used in the iron industry until about 1730 and the difficulty of transporting it by land made its cost prohibitive as household fuel at any considerable distance from the Forest. Coal was, however, being mined more extensively in the Kingswood area where proximity to Bristol made its use as household fuel a possibility. In 1601 Lord Berkeley ordered the men of Bitton to fill in any old coal-pits not still in use.(4) In this summary therefore colliers have been classified as charcoal-burners in the Forest Division but in the Kingswood area of Berkeley Division as either charcoal-burners or coal-miners.

Cardboard-makers and Card-makers (Makers of cardboard or card in the modern sense). Cardboard in its modern sense, was not made till about 1800. Cyril Hart defines it as 'Cleft timber, boards, pales and the like; chiefly oak'.(5) In 1608 there was one cardboard maker in the Forest, and one, with two card-makers, in Gloucester city. Evidently they were wood-workers and probably made the 'cards' used for combing wool preparatory to spinning.

Chamberlains (Officials). Chamberlain is the masculine form of chambermaid and indicates a servant at an inn. In Men and Armour men so described are listed with tapsters, etc. immediately after an innkeeper.

Loaders (Transport workers). These are almost always listed immediately after a miller and frequently described as 'his loader'. Evidently they were millers' servants who loaded the hoppers at the top of the mill with the corn which trickled down to the mill-stones.

Pinner (Makers of pins). Also defined as pin-makers by the present writer in Glos. Historical Studies, Vol.VIII, p.8. On second thoughts it appears more probable that 'pinner' is another form of 'pinder', i.e. one who impounds stray horses, cattle or sheep. Two are listed in the West Ward of Gloucester, near the town meadows, and three, with three servants, in the Forest of Dean.

The analysis of Men and Armour completed, there remained the important and more interesting work of assessing its value and importance. In particular there were two questions requiring answers: 1. How complete was the list of men? and 2. What was the lower age limit of the men?

Territorially the whole of the present county, with the exception of the city of Bristol, is covered by Men and Armour. Of the parishes listed in The Survey of Church Livings in Gloucestershire, 1650, (6) only one, Weston-on-Avon, now in Warwickshire but then in Gloucestershire, is not included. As it was on the county border the men there may have been included in some Warwickshire manor, for parish, manor, and county boundaries sometimes overlapped. As there were only fourteen families there in 1650, its omission is of trivial importance. In Whitstone Hundred two adjacent ancient parishes, Randwick and Standish, are not mentioned by name. It must be remembered that in Men and Armour the men are listed in manors, not parishes, and that manor boundaries often overlapped parish boundaries. For Oxlynch, a manor on the border of Standish and Randwick, 123 men were listed, and a further 22 men were listed for the manor of Putloe, in Standish parish. According to Atkyns there were 203 houses in Standish and Ruscombe in 1712, (7) so the 145 men listed for Oxlynch and Putloe must have included all the able-bodied men of these parishes.

Were the names of any able-bodied men, other than those legally exempt from militia service, omitted from the lists? The Tawneys asserted that 'a considerable number of persons who ought to have given in their names failed, or refused to do so' and that John Smith himself stated this. In a footnote to justify this statement they add, 'Smith (A Description of the Hundred of Berkeley, p.9) refers to "many that were defaulters in this hundred and appeared not"! If there were defaulters

in the hundred of Berkeley it is probable that there were many more in other parts of the county. It may be added that only three clergymen appear in the return, though the servants of fourteen are listed.'(8)

The last sentence shows that the Tawneys had little knowledge of the militia, for clergymen, like members of the nobility and their household servants, were exempt from militia service. The suggestion that men may have 'refused' to give their names is somewhat naive. Moreover Smith did not state very precisely that the names of a considerable number of men were omitted. The statement to which the Tawneys refer asserts that at the muster of 1608 there appeared before Lord Berkeley '2064 able men fit for martial service, then dwelling in this hundred, whose names ... were ... written in three books in folio, the labour of my selfe and of William Archer my Clerk, which now remain in Berkeley Castle; besides many that made default in this hundred and appeared not.' (9) Later statements by Smith in his accounts of the individual parishes are rather more precise. Writing of Alkington for example, he states 'And of able men for the warres between 20 and 60 years old were in 1608, which appeared before Henry lord Berkeley, then Lieutenant of the County at a generall muster - 106.' (10)

There were reasons for doubting whether the statements by John Smith himself were entirely reliable.

First, he stated that the lower age limit for the men called to the muster was 20 years whereas Lindsay Boynton, The Elizabethan Militia 1558-1638 states that the lower age limit was 16 years.(11). Moreover in the introduction to each of the three folios comprising Men and Armour it was stated that the figure 1 after a man's name indicated a man of 'about' 20 years of age.

Secondly, John Smith was an old man when he finished writing A Description of the Hundred of Berkeley. Sir John Maclean, who edited the printed version in 1885, wrote in the introduction 'This volume has been written in haste ... left in a less perfect condition than in his previous work. There are many blanks, which perhaps ... his defect of memory did not enable him readily to fill up.'(12). Smith was 73 years old when he finished writing in December 1639 this, the last of his works, 'which as the last, I rejoyce to behold, the labour beinge ended'. He dedicated the work to his son John and his ancient and honest servant, William Archard, and in the dedication listed his twenty six works - 'my endeavours ... great indeed had not continued delight of 40 years haled me along'(13). He looked back on his life with great pleasure and satisfaction, remembering 'Going to Tilbury Camp in 88', 'The Lord Berkeley keeping his great Christmas at Berkeley Castle' in 1603, the great flood of 1606, and 'The fall of the great Elm at Hams green' in 1575 (14). In writing of Berkeley town he remembered the ancient inn, the 'Ivy Bush', 'which

having byn my rendezvous for 48 yeares or more, I may not without ingratitude to the Bush which so long agone first beckened me thither, passe by (without mention)' (15). It was 31 years since the muster of 1608; he may well have forgotten some of the details. He died fourteen months later.

Was Men and Armour a list of the men who attended the muster of 1608, or was it a list of those who should have attended it? There were reasons for believing it to be the latter.

Common sense would suggest the Lord Lieutenant, faced with the task of mustering the militia, would require a list of all men liable for service. How, otherwise, would he know if there were any defaulters? How did John Smith know there were many defaulters if there was no such list? When the militia was revived in 1756-7 the parish constables were required to draw up a list of all the men liable for service. It appeared likely that the same procedure was followed in 1608. A careful scrutiny of the lists of men in Men and Armour suggested that the lists had, indeed, been drawn up by the constables, for they are too individualistic to have been compiled by one central authority at the musters. There are wide differences in the amount of care taken; for Twigworth and Kingsholm no occupations are stated whereas for Alvington the occupation of only one man out of 165 is omitted. There are differences in the classification of occupations; 83 men classified as labourers at Tewkesbury, only six at Gloucester. There are differences in arrangement; for Painswick all the agricultural workers, weavers, tailors, etc. are grouped together, in most places they are scattered haphazardly in the list. There are differences in nomenclature; millers, milners, millards, etc.

It is inconceivable that defaulters were not recorded, and, if separate lists of defaulters were made, why did not Smith use them when noting the number of men in each parish in Berkeley hundred? Could Men and Armour be a list of all men fit for service including those who attended the muster and those who defaulted?

These doubts and uncertainties were discussed with our tutor and editor, Mr. Smith, who took a similar view and kindly searched the original lists for Men and Armour, and other documents concerning it, in the Muniment Room at Berkeley Castle. There he discovered, and transcribed, a letter from the bailiff and constables of Cheltenham Hundred of such importance that it is here reproduced in full.

'To the Constable of Charleton Kinges
By vertue of a warrante to us directed ffrom the righte honourable the lorde Berkley lord lieuetennant of the Countie of Gloucester

'These are therefore willinge and requyringe you with all dilygence that you geive warninge unto all able

persons dwellinge within your office of the age of xviiij yeares and upwards that they doe personally appere at Cheltenham upon Saturdaie the xxiiij of this instance month of September by viij of the Clocke in the ffore noone of the same day being ffytt to sarve his majestie in his warres if hereafter anie of them shall be therunto requyred there to be viewed and inrouled accordyng to the tenor of the letters of his majesties pryvie Councell And alsoe that you brynge with you wrytten in paper a roull contaynyng the names and surnames of everie such inhabitante within your sayde parish or Constabulary with such additions as are most usually geve unto them And of what quallitie trade or occupation everie of them are of setting downe the names of able servantes next after their maisters and of able sonnes next after their ffathers And what Armor or other martiall weapons every person within your sayde parishe or Constabulary hath in his house or custody And what armor anie of the sayde Inhabitantes stand chargable with towards the ffurnishinge of anie trayned bandes expressinge also who are trayned soldiers within your parishe and who are lordes of anie Mannor within your parishe and wheyther such lordes be most usually resydent in this Countie or not And that your selfe be then allsoe there with a Roull in paper of all such particulars as are fformerly recyted And here of ffaile ye not at your uttermost perill

Cheltenham this xjth of September 1608
Your loveinge ffriends

Thomas Paget Bayliffe
Walter Mason Constables
Wm. Stroude'

(16)

Mr. Smith also examined some of the original rolls for the various manors. Many of these are headed only by the name of the manor but that for Kingscote begins

'A true note & Certyficat of the names and syrenames & other additions of those able men that are warned within our Tythinge to appeare at Barkley by vertue of a warrant from the honorable the Lord Barkeley'.
(17)

On the original rolls the names and occupations of the men are written by one hand, but to the right of each name the symbols classifying the men into age groups and suitability for the various branches of the militia (pikeman, musketeer, caliver-man or pioneer) are written by a different hand and in a different ink. Obviously they were added at the muster, after the men had been inspected by the captains.

On the left of each name, also added in a different ink, is either a dot or a D. The D probably indicates a defaulter.

Another document at Berkeley Castle noted by Mr Smith is the agenda of a meeting held at Berkeley on 24 August 1608 the purpose of which was

1. To read the Privy Council's letter in the hearing of all
2. To deliver notes or copies of it to every captain
3. To show how the Berkeley muster rolls had been compiled
4. To arrange places and dates for the general musters. Men from about 24 tithings were to assemble at each muster, held by ten captains
5. To appoint a place, 'as at Glouc,' to view all those making default because of sickness, travel, etc. It was estimated that there would be about a thousand defaulters, four from each parish.

The document concludes with many queries about the raising of the trained bands, training, arms, and ammunition. (18)

The fourth item on the agenda shows that the militia was not mustered in divisions but in smaller groups. This explains why the precise date of the musters is not given in Men and Armour, which states only that three of the divisions mustered in August and two in September. Lindsay Boynton states that in 1608 the musters of all divisions within each county were to be held on the same day. (19) This was not done in Gloucestershire.

The documents at Berkeley Castle prove beyond doubt that Men and Armour is a list of all the men in Gloucestershire between eighteen and sixty years of age who were fit for military service with the exception of those exempt. According to Lindsay Boynton, those exempt were 'nobles and their households along with certain other exempt groups' (20) He does not expand on this statement except to state that it included the clergy. (21) More research is called for. Possibly some officers of the parishes and hundreds were not included in the lists for the names of Thomas Paget, bailiff, and Walter Mason and Wm Stroude, constables of Cheltenham Hundred do not appear in the list of those ordered to muster though obviously they had to attend. The bailiff may have been too old or infirm for military service but it is very unlikely that the two constables were.

Professor and Mrs Tawney therefore, were wrong in their assumptions that Men and Armour was a list of the men between twenty and sixty years of age and that 'a considerable number of men who ought to have given in their names failed, or refused, to do so', but we may be sure that they would have been delighted to know that Men and Armour was a more complete and, consequently a more valuable document than they had imagined.

Having made some criticisms of their article, it is only fair to point out, first; that Professor Tawney and his wife did not have access to the documents in Berkeley Castle. Secondly, that theirs was the first, and remained for forty-two years the only, summary of Men and Armour; a surprising fact, for it is a unique document containing a wealth of information about every town and village in Gloucestershire in 1608. Thirdly, that their article is full of carefully worked out statistics and valuable comment.

Finally, eminent professional historians such as R.H. Tawney would have been wasting their talent had they spent as much time studying one local document as a local amateur might be prepared to devote. Happily the professionals have left something for the amateurs to discover. All who follow in the footsteps of John Smith, that most lovable of Gloucestershire's amateur historians, must be thankful that this is so.

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12. Description of Hundred of Berkely pp.ii & iii.
13. Ibid., p.34
14. Ibid., p.411
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16. Berkeley Castle Muniments 115/11.
17. Ibid., pps.104/7
18. Ibid., pps.102/5
19. Elizabethan Militia p.210
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