

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON INDUSTRY IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE, 1608

This article is based on evidence provided by John Smith's Men and Armour for Gloucestershire in 1608, so it is necessary first to consider the value of that evidence.

Men and Armour is a list, compiled by the constables of each manor, under the supervision of the high constable of each hundred, of all those men between 18 and 60 years of age who were considered by the constables to be fit to serve in the armed forces, and who were summoned to musters of the militia held in August and September 1608. At the musters the men were classified into three age groups: 'about twenty', 'about forty', and between fifty and three score' years of age. They were also graded according to physique into four groups: the tallest as fit to be pikemen; the next as musketeers; the third as calivermen; the fourth group as men 'of the meanest stature fit for a pioneer, or of little other use'.

The lists were copied into three large folio volumes by John Smith, estate steward, friend and confidant of the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Berkeley, and by his clerk, William Archard. We cannot be certain that no list was lost or mislaid or that Smith and Archard made no mistakes in copying them. There is some evidence that misunderstandings and errors occurred on rare occasions. At the end of most lists of militiamen was added a further list of men who held arms or armour or were charged with the duty of providing them. No such list appears in Men and Armour for the Borough of Twekesbury though such a list must have been made, for the Privy Council, which ordered the musters of 1608, appears to have been more concerned about the armour than about the men. The number of militiamen recorded in the joint entry for Upton St. Leonards, Matson and Saintbridge is very small, only 57, though there were stated to be 324 communicants there in 1603. There were three manors in Upton, so five in all. Did Smith and Archard, by misunderstanding, omit some manors? This was the last entry for the Hundred of Dudstone and Kings Barton - a likely place for misunderstanding to occur. Oddly enough, the list for Shipton Moyne and Dovel, the last entry for Longtree Hundred, also appears suspect: only six militiamen but 120 communicants in 1603. At Kempsford only 35 militiamen are listed although there were 245 communicants in 1603. Kempsford is the last entry for the Hundred of Brightsell's Barrow!

For the whole of Gloucestershire 18,623 men were recorded and comparison with an ecclesiastical survey made in 1603 of the number of communicants in each parish of the Diocese of Gloucester suggests that about 76.06% of all men between 18 and 60 years of age were recorded. A few of the men who were not recorded were exempt from militia service but the great majority were physically unfit (1).

The occupation of most of the men was also recorded for Men and Armour but no occupation was recorded for 1,719 men, 370

men were recorded only as servants to men of unspecified occupation, and 21 more were recorded according to their official position as mayors, constables, etc., and not according to their occupation. The occupation of 16,513 men is therefore recorded: about 68.41 per cent or, roughly, two-thirds of all the men between 18 and 60 years of age.

Of these, however, 1,970 are described only as labourers and not assigned to any specific industry, and a further 691 are described as servants to gentlemen. The latter were almost all in country districts. Some may have been household servants but most were obviously engaged in agricultural or estate work. The labourers cannot easily be assigned to any particular industry; an attempt to do so would involve a study of each individual manor. There is some evidence that whereas in some places labourers were recorded as such, in others they were included amongst those for whom no occupation at all was recorded. For example, for Tewkesbury Borough 83 labourers were recorded and no occupation was given for only 15 men; for Gloucester City only 6 men were classed as labourers but no occupation was given for 60 men. In country districts, where there was no other industry to employ them, the labourers must have been agricultural workers; in areas where there was some alternative heavy industry such as mining, quarrying or ship-building, labourers could, perhaps, be allocated to particular industries in proportion to the number of men known to be employed in each. As most of the men classified as labourers were in country parishes it may reasonably be assumed that most were agricultural labourers. None of the labourers would have been engaged in weaving tailoring, glovemaking or similar light industries.

As previously stated, Men and Armour lists about 77.06 per cent of all men in the county between 18 and 60 years of age. That percentage, however, refers to the county as a whole; the constables who compiled the lists adopted different standards when deciding whether or not a man was fit for military service. For example: in Gloucester City 55.41 per cent of the men selected were in the youngest age group and only 2.81 per cent of the men were between 50 and 60 years of age whereas in the hundred of St. Briavels the corresponding percentages were 23.40 and 8.79. Moreover in St. Briavels Hundred 21.40 per cent of the men were of poor physique, fit only to be pioneers, whereas in Gloucester City only 7.97 per cent of the militiamen were in that category. Similar differences in selection exist between other hundreds and it is apparent that more than 77.06 per cent of men were listed in hundreds such as St. Briavels, less than that percentage in others. Investigation of this aspect of Men and Armour is proceeding but is not yet complete.

In assessing the evidence provided by Men and Armour it must be remembered that a higher proportion of men in the 'about forty' age group would be unfit for military service than in the 'about twenty' age group; a higher proportion still in the '50 to 60' age group. Calculations made suggest that only 24.15 per cent of men in the latter group were selected for service. Furthermore, of course, no men over 60 years of age were included. Thus it is probable that a smaller proportion of men in the employer class such as, for example, yeomen, clothiers, millers, or innkeepers, was recorded.

Some trades such as weaving or tailoring could be performed by cripples and men of very poor physique and a relatively higher proportion of men in these trades would be unfit for service and not recorded.

Furthermore it must be remembered that, in an age when children were set to work as soon as they could perform some simple tasks, boys under 18 years of age constituted a considerable proportion of the workforce. When considering agriculture or the clothing industry it must be borne in mind that whereas it is improbable that any yeomen or clothiers were under 18 years of age many hundreds of farm workers and weavers were. This is very apparent if we consider the broadcloth weavers, 252 of whom are recorded in Men and Armour. Every weaver using a broadloom needed an assistant to return the shuttle, for the loom was wider than the span of his arms, yet only 11 sons and 14 servants were recorded to the 252 men. The other assistants were probably under eighteen years of age. Some broadweavers may have worked in pairs as equal partners but this is unlikely: the loom was in one person's house and he is likely to have been the employer.

Finally it must be remembered that female workers are omitted entirely.

Within these limitations Men and Armour is a unique source of information about the economic life of the county at that time. The following notes do not deal in depth with any industry but illustrate the kind of information which can be obtained.

Agriculture, as might be expected, was by far the most important industry. Of the 16,514 men whose occupation was stated, 6,133 were engaged in agriculture. If we add to that number two-thirds of the 1,970 labourers and 691 servants to gentlemen - which seems a conservative estimate - the number of men employed in agriculture would be 7,907 or 47.89 per cent of the adult male workforce. Most of these were described as yeomen (952) or husbandmen (3,865) or as their sons or servants.

It must be remembered that many more men held small plots of land and were partially engaged in agriculture. Probate inventories of the period show that many craftsmen owned agricultural implements and livestock (2).

Ninety-four shepherds were recorded, almost all of them on the Cotswolds - 49 on the north Cotswolds in Kiftsgate Division, 28 in Cirencester Division. Only one shepherd was recorded in the Forest Division.

Although much farming, particularly by the smaller husbandmen, was carried out for subsistence, there was a surplus to supply the towns and this was sold either in the open markets or to the 'badgers' - dealers in corn and other agricultural produce. Twenty-six badgers were recorded in Men and Armour, most of them in the Severn Vale though there were four at Cowley, two at Brimpsfield and one at Stow-on-the-Wold. The proximity of many of them to the Severn - there were five at Hasfield, three at Apperley, one at Uckington and one at Ashleworth - suggests that they sent corn down the river to Bristol, while the two at

Westerleigh, corn at Wickwar and one at Itchington probably supplied the same market by land.

Agriculture supplied many industries with the necessary raw materials. Milling occupied 184 men distributed fairly evenly throughout the county and including six millwrights and one mill-carpenter. There were four millers in Barnwood and Wotton and another at Hucclecote, probably supplying the Gloucester market.

There were 69 maltmakers in the county employing only three sons and one servant between them. Of these 13 were in Gloucester City. In Kiftsgate Division, where there were 31 maltsters, Tewkesbury with 14, and Cheltenham with 11, were important centres. Of the 23 maltsters in Berkeley Division 21 were in Marshfield, probably supplying the Bristol market. No maltsters were recorded in Cirencester Division and only two in the Forest which suggest that little, if any, of the 23 m grown in those areas could be spared for that purpose.

In comparison with the number of maltsters very few brewers were recorded; brewing in the home or by the ale-house keepers evidently used most of the malt. Only 13 brewers, with three servants, were recorded and nine of these, and the three servants, were in Gloucester city. There was one brewer in Winchcombe, Tewkesbury and Cirencester, and one at Tortworth but he was stated to be a household servant to Sir William Throckmorton.

Sixty innkeepers were recorded. The inns supplied food and lodgings for travellers and in addition to them there were 25 victuallers supplying food but not lodging. The village ale-houses, which supplied only drink, were evidently kept by 'ale wives', and manorial records reveal the large proportion of woman-ale-sellers, or as a part-time occupation by men recorded under a different trade, for only one 'ale-seller' was recorded. The innkeepers and victuallers were almost all in the towns but there were some who catered for travellers crossing the Severn or travelling by it. Apart from those at Newnham and Lydney, there were victuallers at Westbury, Aylburton and Ashleworth and an inn at Aust. This inn serves what must have been a busy crossing for there were eight boatmen and a waterman at Aust and probably an equal number of ferrymen on the opposite bank.

Tanning and the preparation of leather gave employment to 159 men: 103 tanners with two sons and 33 servants; 17 curriers with one servant; and two 'tegorers' - an obscure term which probably means men who 'tawed' or softened leather but could refer to men who extracted linen fibre from flax. The plentiful supply of oak bark made tanning an important industry in the Forest Division where there were 36 tanners with one son and 11 servants, but Gloucester and Tewkesbury, with 12 tanners each, were the principal centres. There were only three tanners in Cirencester Division which suggests that few cattle were raised on the Cotswolds. Most of the 27 tanners in Kiftsgate Division were in the vale, including the 12 at Tewkesbury and 12 in or near Cheltenham.

Shoemaking was widely and evenly distributed throughout the county mostly in the market towns but also in some villages.

Tewkesbury, with 28 shoemakers, Gloucester, with four shoemakers and 17 cordwainers, Cirencester, with 20 shoemakers, and Wotton-under-Edge with 18 were the principal centres but there were 13 shoemakers in Cheltenham, 12 in Thornbury, 10 in Marshfield and 8 in Newent.

Glovesmaking gave employment to 146 men, mostly in the towns but also in some villages, and fairly evenly distributed throughout the county. Eighteen glovers were recorded in Tewkesbury, 12 in Gloucester, 9 in Winchcombe, 7 in Chipping Sodbury and 6 in Newent and Tetbury. The stitching of gloves was a cottage industry in the earlier years of the present century when the leather was cut by men and distributed by the glovers to women in the surrounding area for stitching. If the same system operated in 1608 it must have given employment to several hundred women and have been particularly welcomed in Kiftsgate Division which had the highest number of glovers, 38, and fewer industries than the rest of the county.

Second only to agriculture in economic importance was the woollen industry which gave employment to 2,615 men, 15.84 per cent of all men whose occupation was stated and 30.38 per cent of all those not engaged in agriculture. As 1,850 of them were weavers, or their servants, and several spinners were required to keep the weaver supplied with yarn, spinning must have provided employment for several thousand women. Of the weavers 1,554 were classified simply as weavers; 275 as broadweavers, 5 as fustian weavers, and 13 as coverlet weavers, all of whom were in the Forest Division.

The industry was carried on all over the county: there were 286 parishes in Gloucestershire, excluding the eleven in Gloucester City, and weavers were recorded in 161 of these parishes. There were, almost certainly, weavers in many of the remaining parishes who were unfit for military service and consequently not recorded. Weaving could be done by cripples and men of very poor physique. A writer in the Gloucester Journal of 6 March 1739 stated 'The weavers in general are the most feeble, weak and impotent of all the manufacturers'. Consequently a higher than average percentage of them would have been unfit for service. Though not confined to it, the industry was principally concentrated in the Severn vale south of Gloucester and on the edge of the Cotswold escarpment. In the hundreds of Berkely, Longtree and Bisley more men were engaged in the woollen industry than in agriculture, and in Whitstone hundred the numbers were almost equal.

In this area, and in the Forest, the industry was coming under the control of the clothiers. The names of 196 clothiers appear in Men and Armour, approximately one to every nine weavers, though, as previously noted, there would have been many weavers, or their assistants, under militia age and many more unfit for service. Despite these reservations it is apparent that most of the 196 clothiers must have been in a very small way of business though some, like William Clutterbuck of Alkerton, who had ten servants, and John Hollister who was lord of the manor of Stinchcombe, were men of substance.

It might be said that there were two types of woollen industry in Gloucestershire for not one clothier was recorded in the whole of Kiftsgate Division. There may have been a clothier there, too old or physically unfit to be recorded, or the district may have been served by a clothier from a neighbouring county, but the weavers in the north of the county were so scattered - 78 of them divided amongst 34 parishes - that it could hardly have been worth a clothier's time to travel the area. In Tewkesbury there were 8 weavers, in Cheltenham 6, 5 in Winchcombe and Marston Sicca or Long Marston, 4 in Charlton Kings; the remainder were scattered mostly one to a village. There were fullers at Stanway and Stow-on-the-Wold and two at Chipping Campden, and at Tewkesbury a tucker, three dyers and five shearmen. Possibly these men finished and disposed of any cloth surplus to local requirements, but for the most part it is probable that the weavers in the north of the county executed orders and sold directly to individual customers. George Eliot describes such a weaver in Silas Marner written at the much later date of 1861.

Such weavers would have found plenty of customers among the village tailors. If we except agriculture and weaving, tailoring employed more men than any other industry and was the most widely distributed, as shown in the table below of some of the most common occupations.

Occupation	No. of Men (excluding servants)	Distributed in:-	
		Manors (442)	Parishes (286)
Innkeepers	60	38	35
Tanners	103	50	36
Bakers	102	45	44
Glovers	132	49	46
Shoemakers & Cordwainers	316	89	68
Butchers	255	97	82
Carpenters & Joiners	410	201	156
Smiths & Blacksmiths	381	203	158
Weavers (all kinds except silk)	1708	214	161
Tailors	651	247	183

(Gloucester City is counted as one parish)

Tailors were not confined to the towns or even to the larger villages; there were two in such small villages as Down Hatherley, Oxenhall and Ashleworth. Of all men for whom some occupation was recorded, one in every 24 was a tailor. It seems a very high proportion until one remembers that there were no sewing machines; that cotton fabric was almost unknown, silk and linen were only for the well-to-do; hand-stitching of coarse woollen cloth or of leather breeches and jerkins a slow and laborious process. Clothing was comparatively so very expensive that people included it in their wills.

Only 186 men in the county were recorded as being employed in mining, quarrying or charcoal burning but men recorded as labourers may have been employed in these industries making the total number of men engaged in them considerably higher. These industries were almost totally confined to the Forest of Dean and the mining area in the neighbourhood of Bristol.

The 32 miners, with two servants, were all in the Hundred of St Briavels except two at Yate. The Forest miners were engaged in mining ironstone with the exception of one man at Kilcot, near Newent, stated to be a coalminer.

In the Forest were 22 colliers with one son. A collier was one who produced or sold 'coal' and at that time 'coal' usually meant charcoal, mineral coal usually being known as 'sea-coal' because it came to London by sea from Tyneside. Most, if not all, of the Forest colliers were charcoal burners (3). Coal mining was little developed in the Forest. Coal was probably used locally as house fuel but the difficulty of transport, would have made it too expensive for household use further afield. Other evidence suggests that the small Newent coalfield was being first worked from about 1600. The coal-miner at Kilcot may well have sold his coal in Newent.

In the Bristol area were 91 colliers with three sons and one brother. Forty-five of them were in Bitton and Hanham, 25 at Easton - now the Eastville district of Bristol. Some may have been charcoal burners but probably most were coal miners for as early as 1601 Lord Berkeley was ordering the men of Bitton to fill in coal-pits not still in use (4). Bristol, only a few miles away, provided a large and convenient market for coal mined in the locality and there were five 'coal drivers' in the area - three at Old Sodbury and two at Wick and Abson - who, presumably, transported the coal.

The two colliers at Minchinhampton and the one at Painswick must have been charcoal burners.

Though iron-ore was mined in the Forest most of it was at this time smelted just over the county border in Herefordshire and Monmouthshire. One iron-founder, employing three servants, was recorded at Aylburton and a 'furne' (furnace?) keeper at Ruardean. One 'iron workman' was recorded at English Bicknor.

Enough iron was smelted to supply the numerous smiths and the 39 'nailers' and one apprentice and 14 servants who worked in the Forest. Littledean, with 17 nailers and 8 servants was the principal centre of this industry. There were 23 cutlers in the county, 5 in Gloucester and in Tewkesbury. Wire-drawing employed 6 men in Gloucester, 3 in Newnham and one at Tidenham and at Newent.

Only two quarrymen were recorded, both at Guiting Power, but there were six grindstone hewers and two millstone hewers in the Forest. There were five lime-burners in St Briavels Hundred and three at Wick and Abson, near Bristol. At Westerleigh were four 'wasburners' with two servants. They burnt some kind of ore - perhaps copper.

The building and repair of ships employed 33 men on the Severn below Gloucester and probably some labourers in addition. There were five shipwrights at Minsterworth; three and one servant at Elmore; two with two sons and a servant at Elton; one with two sons and four servants at Eastington, and one at Ruddle, Tidenham, Allaston, Purton, Hagloe and Blakeney. There were also two ships' carpenters at Wtloe and one at Westbury, Woolaston, Aylburton and Arlingham.

Silk-weaving gave employment to 10 men in Gloucester and one in Cheltenham, and felt-making to five men in Tewkesbury, two in Gloucester, one at Newnham and one at Easton.

Space does not permit an account of all the trades or industries: the fullers and dyers, masons and building workers, basket makers, carriers, mercers and drapers, etc., but perhaps special mention should be made of Thomas Crosse of Cirencester, the only man in the county described as a 'loyterer'. The full Oxford English Dictionary gives no other meaning for the word than the commonly accepted one. To give Thomas his due, he attended the muster and was declared to be 'about twenty' years of age and fit to be a caliverman. Happy the county with only one loiterer.

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