

Navigation, Trade, and Consumption in Seventeenth Century Oxfordshire

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ABSTRACT

“Navigation, Trade, and Consumption in Seventeenth Century Oxfordshire” investigates how the inhabitants of Oxfordshire transitioned from an agricultural to a consumer community during the Jacobean and post-Restoration eras. In agrarian England, this reconfigured landscape was most clearly embodied in the struggle over the enclosure of common land. Focusing on the yeoman’s understanding of the fiscal benefits of enclosure and land acquisition, I argue that the growth in grain markets within Oxfordshire led to a newfound prosperity, which was most clearly articulated in the yeoman’s rise as a viable and discernible luxury goods consumer. Accordingly, my project draws attention to the yeoman’s relevance and leadership in this role, which not only observes their elevation and advancement within the English class structure, but it also views the expansion of luxury consumption and the impact of the developing market economy on the English rural household.

By juxtaposing probate documents, inventories, pamphlets, and diaries from the market towns of Burford, Chipping Norton, and Henley-on-Thames in Oxfordshire, this study examines the process by which these late sixteenth and early seventeenth century communities began to embrace the consumption of luxury goods, and, most importantly, purely market-based understanding of agrarian life.

Note

The year has been taken as beginning on 1 January and a double year is used (ex: 1660/61) in the text where appropriate. In quotations from documents, the original spelling has been retained except for the following modifications. The initial letters of proper names have, where necessary, been altered to capitals; the early modern upper case “F” or ‘ff’ has been rendered as a capital only where modern usage deems necessary. Lastly, punctuation has been inserted in places to assist the reader.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES.....	v
LIST OF CHARTS.....	v
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of Purpose.....	2
Scope.....	10
2 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW.....	60
Henley-on-Thames.....	61
Chipping Norton.....	66
Burford.....	77
3 SIGNIFICANCE OF GRAIN MARKETS.....	88
River Transportation.....	93
Navigation and Improvements.....	102
Increase in Trade.....	112
4 THE EVIDENCE OF WEALTH.....	125
Architecture.....	132
Contents of Interior.....	159
5 ASSESSMENT OF LUXURY GOODS.....	164
Early Modern Debates.....	166
Evidence of Internal Wealth.....	174
China.....	180

	Books.....	187
	Silver and Pewter.....	189
	Linen and New Draperies.....	193
	Beds and Bedding.....	202
	Wearing Apparel.....	216
6	OWNERSHIP AND DISSEMINATION	
	Furniture.....	225
	Pictures, Painting, Portraiture and Wall Coverings.....	251
	Tea and Tobacco.....	258
	Shopping.....	262
	CONCLUSION.....	267
	REFERENCES.....	277

LIST OF TABLES AND CHARTS

Table		Page
1.	Oxfordshire Population 1676.....	22
2.	Wealth Tables.....	130-131
3.	Rooms.....	146-149
4.	Luxury Charts.....	178-179
5.	Bedding.....	206-209
6.	Cupboards.....	235-236
7.	Chests and Drawers.....	237-238

The future is dark, the present burdensome; only the past, dead and finished, bears contemplation.

Geoffrey Elton

Introduction

This work is an effort to identify one area of change in seventeenth-century English society—namely the growth in yeoman wealth—brought on by agricultural development. This newfound prosperity gave people—for the first time—disposable income, which ultimately contributed to the emergence of a viable and discernible group: luxury good consumers. The yeomanry (prosperous farmers situated below the nobility and gentry) thrived in the late seventeenth-century due to the international and domestic demand for food. Access to more arable land over the period from 1550 to 1660, coupled with agricultural innovations after 1660, made the yeoman an important supplier of grain to both the domestic and foreign markets. Moreover, this “yeoman wealth” phenomenon gradually eroded some of the traditional ideas of English social hierarchy by creating the possibility of economic and social mobility. Although the yeomen were essentially agriculturalists, their wealth exceeded some of the lesser gentry and their consumption drove the demand for luxury items. Accordingly, a substantial display of material goods can be observed in their homes, wardrobe, and furnishings.

In an attempt to measure the impact of trade in rural counties, my research concentrates on, but is not restricted to, analyzing the behavior of the yeomen in the Oxfordshire towns of Burford, Chipping Norton, and Henley-on-Thames. The consumer behavior that surfaced in the aforementioned villages of the Chiltern and Cotswold Hills placed the yeomanry at the nexus of the consumer revolution. Their fortunes were also based on the result of a perfect mix of ingredients: their position in an evolving, fluid social structure, their close proximity to domestic and foreign trade routes, English land organization, the timely introduction of agrarian innovations and river reclamation schemes, and the development of institutions and infrastructure that helped facilitate social emulation and consumer spending.

In an effort to understand these trends, it is first necessary to view the social structure and stratification of the early modern era. English society during the sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries was preoccupied with social order. Village society was stratified and hierarchy was a fundamental fact of life.¹ Sumptuary laws² were promulgated over centuries in an effort to reinforce order and distinguish status. Although the English social hierarchy of rank and status appeared rigid and relatively unchanging, there was a certain amount of upward mobility. Social commentators have identified

¹ Keith Wrightson and David Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village, Terling, 1525-1700* (London: The Academic Press, 1979), 174.

² Medieval and early modern laws governing dress and the restrictions on the use of certain materials and fabrics to the nobility.

ways in which the nobility and gentry expressed their dominant social position: social customs, economic fortune, and the notion of fashion.

However, the fixed hierarchy was soon to be made more fluid by the growth of the “middling sort”—a social category routinely used to describe the tradesmen, manufacturers and yeomen who occupied the middle status of wealth and power in the later seventeenth century, and found the possession of wealth (due to changing fortunes in agriculture) as the key to social mobility. Historian P. Borsay argues that by the early eighteenth century, this prosperous middling sort may have been increasingly visible as a distinct social group in provincial centers such as Bristol and Norwich, East Anglia, growing manufacturing hubs and port cities such as Leeds, Manchester, and Birmingham, and possibly in the larger county and resort towns, notably York and Bath.³ Thus, the growing wealth of the middling sort, as historians Neil McKendrick and John Brewer claim, gave birth to a consumer society.⁴ Yet, the most important question remains: is there evidence that the yeomanry belonged to this new “social group” of consumers and were they now obsessed with conspicuous luxury and overt displays of wealth in the decades preceding the Industrial Revolution?

This question is essential to understanding English consumerism, particularly in rural areas, since the question of emerging rural consumerism

³ P. Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, c.1660-1760* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 9.

⁴ *Consumption and the World of Goods*, John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds. (London: Routledge, 1993), 2.

has been only partially answered by historians. Yeomen inhabited an important place in the social and economic history of England; however, their impact on the growth of consumerism in the seventeenth century has seldom been studied. The traditional focus of early modern historians has been to analyze the disintegration of cultural and religious traditions while using the effects of the Reformation and the Civil War as a convenient backdrop. As Linda Levy Peck claims in her work on luxury good consumption, “The story of seventeenth-century England is often told as a tale of the unique triumph of Protestantism, parliamentary sovereignty, and law over absolute monarchy and Counter-Reformation Catholicism through civil war and glorious revolution.”⁵ This is particularly true of the area under study, since the colleges and most of the area surrounding Oxford University proved to be a region that witnessed the impact of what yeoman-farmer and noted iconoclast William Dowsing (1596-1668) described as “a hotter sort of Protestantism.”⁶

The focus on major political and religious turmoil tends to disregard the economic and social changes that contributed to the yeoman’s central involvement in establishing a consumer culture. With these factors in mind, this study seeks to provide evidence of the growing wealth of the Oxfordshire yeomanry through the development of the grain trade, which ultimately led

⁵ Linda Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendor, Society and Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 3.

⁶ *The Journal of William Dowsing: Iconoclasm in East Anglia During the English Civil War*, Trevor Cooper, ed. (London: The Boydell Press, 2001), 4.

to their central position in a growing consumer culture. Thus, I seek to elucidate the impact of that culture on the lifestyle and spending habits of the Oxfordshire yeomanry, who, although having lived in an area with “the hotter type of Protestantism,” most notably, spearheaded the consumption of luxury goods.

Fortunately, a number of historians have made important contributions to our understanding of social history in the early modern period by investigating the social and economic changes in small towns and local peasant societies. My analysis owes much to the work of Keith Wrightson, David Levine, and Robert Whiting, who have studied social change in English villages in the century and a half between the Reformation and the Glorious Revolution. Wrightson and Levine’s seminal work, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village* (1979) is a groundbreaking analysis of social interaction and transformation in the Essex village of Terling. They utilize probate documents in order to reconstitute a model of early modern life, which ultimately sheds light on the weakening of localism, the growing differentiation between rich and poor, and the mounting hostility and fractious behavior brought about by economic change.

Robert Whiting’s *The Blind Devotion of the People* (Cambridge, 1989) explores the effects of the English Reformation on ordinary men and women in Devon and Cornwall. In this regional study, he assesses social changes by

measuring the eroding levels of support for traditional, religious activities.⁷

Whiting concludes that religious piety and the sense of obligation to authority were being replaced by the hope of material gain, the fear of material loss, and the dread of social isolation. In effect, the region's inhabitants were more affected by economic expansion than religious change.

These scholars provide valuable assessments of local economic patterns and their impact on social behavior. This work is an effort to bridge the ideas of these historians and to identify the economic underpinnings, geographical advantages, and social motives that placed the English yeoman at the forefront of luxury good consumption.

Since this work is concerned with farming communities, it is necessary to include an examination of the growing wealth of the agricultural sector in England. In 1919 R.E. Prothero (Lord Ernle) claimed:

Mediaeval husbandmen had been content to extract from the soil the food which they needed for themselves and their families. Tudor farmers despised self sufficing agriculture; they aspired to be sellers and not consumers only, to raise from their land profits as well as food.⁸

Indeed, the move from traditional subsistence farming to an agricultural market society significantly impacted English society. As Lord Ernle explains, agrarian innovations during the early modern era were the catalyst

⁷ Robert Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People* (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1989), 3.

⁸ R.E. Prothero (Lord Ernle) *English Farming, Past and Present* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961), 58.

towards the shift from consuming to selling—a development that influenced agrarian history throughout the following centuries. More recently, Mark Overton—in response to Ernle’s classical model—argues that English agriculture experienced technological changes between the mid-sixteenth and the mid-eighteenth centuries, which essentially amounted to what some scholars refer to as an “agricultural revolution.”⁹ Overton’s work further identifies and defines the nature of the innovations that led to this revolutionary change. More importantly, his work stresses the impact of the innovations, namely the introduction of fodder, root crops, and grass substitutes in parts of East Anglia and the English Midlands that influenced the agricultural landscape, which ultimately created profitability for the “farmers who adopted these innovations.”¹⁰

“The history of the English yeoman is the history of land,” wrote Mildred Campbell, author of the first significant work on English yeomanry, who asserts that, although land remained extremely important, it was the *relationship* that people had with the land and the growing significance of trade and industry that redefined its character as a commercial vehicle.¹¹ More recently, Craig Muldrew has added that there was little surplus production in traditional societies because “markets were submerged in

⁹ Mark Overton, “A New Perspective on Medieval and Early Modern Agriculture: Six Centuries of Norfolk Farming c. 1250-c.1850,” *Past and Present*, no. 141 (November 1993): 38-105.

¹⁰ Mark Overton, “The Diffusion of Agricultural Innovations in Early Modern England: Turnips and Clover in Norfolk and Suffolk, 1580-1740,” in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, Vol. 10, no. 2 (1985): 205-221.

¹¹ Mildred Campbell, *The English Yeomen Under Elizabeth and Early Stuarts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), 64.

social custom, yet innovation helped redefine the relationship and pulled land from its medieval moorings.”¹² He further uses Adam Smith’s behavioral theory of “rational self-interest” in an attempt to explain the cognitive process and identify the results. There is also the question of whether consumption was based on a supply of consumer goods as opposed to a simple demand function; J. C. D. Clark believes:

A market for consumer goods did not wait for the ‘rise’ of the ‘middle class’ in the eighteenth century, but can be observed, albeit for more simple products, from a far earlier period: the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries illustrate many of the economic structures which facilitated the steadily expanding output of an ever-growing range of such products in later decades, and witnessed also a deliberate government policy to foster the native manufacture of consumer goods...via the accoutrements of elegant living: swords and watches, shoes, and hats, lace and velvet, furniture and fabrics, china and silverware.¹³

Historians, such as F. J. Fisher, argue that changes in the sixteenth and seventeenth century economic cycle are most visible in the consumer habits of London, which grew in population and spread out to its neighboring suburbs.¹⁴ But is it possible to interpret the changes in villages as a symptom of the larger changes in the nation as a whole? Is the pattern of life within a few square miles indicative of the larger expansion of commercial activity and did the yeomen embrace these changes and develop consumption habits

¹² Craig Muldrew, “Economic and Urban Development,” in *A Companion to Stuart Britain*, Barry Coward, ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2003), 150.

¹³ J.C.D. Clark, *English Society, 1660-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 227.

¹⁴ F.J. Fisher, “The Development of London as a Centre of Conspicuous Consumption in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 30, no. 4 (1948): 37-38.

similar to the larger metropolis? This is a distinct possibility as Keith Wrightson writes:

Lower in the urban hierarchy the mounting prosperity of the gentry and the yeomanry of the countryside rubbed off on the urban masters and professional men who supplied their needs for miscellaneous manufactures and services. In general this demand occasioned a growth in the range of occupations in the towns and a filtering down into quite small country towns of specialized services not formerly available at such a local level—those of doctors, lawyers, and booksellers, for example.¹⁵

Therefore, according to Wrightson, it is possible to measure the impact of trade in rural areas, which, he adds, is necessary if one is “to understand the fortunes of individual towns.”¹⁶

In an effort to explore the impact of trade locally, I have chosen three communities in rural settings in Oxfordshire, which were historically involved in trade, and that contained a fair number of yeomen within their population. The examination of these communities will enable scholars to understand the formation of English economic behavior away from the metropolis and help us to grasp how consumption emerged in the lives of the yeomanry during the seventeenth century.

From probate documents, I have reconstructed the lives of the yeomen, predominantly the main family structure and living space. Although religious and political controversies would occupy England for much of the seventeenth century, it is my belief that through the prosperous trade in grain, the yeomanry led a “consumer culture” that cultivated and encouraged

¹⁵ Keith Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680* (London: Routledge 1982), 139.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

attitudes towards displays of conspicuous affluence (consumption), which were manifested in the architecture of their houses, as well as their clothing, and household furnishings during the period of 1600-1720.

The dissertation concludes in the 1720s, a point that economic historian Peter Mathias contends experiences the onset of a fundamental change in the structure of the agrarian economy—namely the fundamental redeployment of resources away from agriculture over a period of time along with investment in both production and the labor force—a process that Britain experienced between 1740 and 1750.¹⁷ Although the Industrial Revolution is a momentous event that emerges at this point in English history, its future impact on the yeomen is beyond the scope of this study.

I have chosen the market towns of Burford, Chipping Norton, and Henley-on-Thames since they represent the various farming areas of the Midlands and the Chiltern Hills. My aim is to investigate how each town coped with the challenges of unpredictable soil, a constantly changing water level, animal husbandry, and—most importantly—how the resourceful yeoman eventually overcame and flourished under these often testing conditions. Also, Oxfordshire is relatively close to London, and it is fortunate enough to be situated near a number of important water sources, particularly the Thames River, which afforded it the advantage of trade with the metropolis.

¹⁷ Peter Mathias, *The First Industrial Nation: An Economic History of Britain, 1700-1914* (London: Routledge, 1983), 2.

The ensuing chapters are concerned with the rise of wealth, the improvement of water navigation, and the process by which the English yeoman made his social advancement in seventeenth and early eighteenth century Oxfordshire. By using wills, inventories, land records and personal diaries, I aim to reconstruct and recapture the human aspect of the early modern English countryside. It is my hope that by concentrating on these towns, and by examining various, causal factors such as land organization, the grain market, geography, and trade, it is possible to understand the process that transformed the Oxfordshire yeoman from a practical, humble farmer into a luxury goods consumer.

CHAPTER 1

And you, good yeomen, whose limbs were made in England.

Henry V, act III, sc. 1

It is better to be the head of the yeomanry than the tail of the gentry.

Old English Proverb

The Beginning

On 27 March 1634, the soul of William Jennings, yeoman¹⁸ of Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire passed “into the hands of Almighty God” and “through the merits, death, and passion of Jesus Christ my blessed Saviour and Redeemer request remission for all my sins [and] bee buried in a decent manner.”¹⁹ English law dictated that a family member, a neighbor, and an alderman take inventory of personal goods and chattels; thus, James Maynard (brother-in-law to the deceased), William Lorde (alderman), and William Elton were appointed executors. As they walked through to assess the goods of the simple home, they may have been surprised—and most assuredly impressed—by the substantial amount of luxury items held within.

Dozens of pewter plates and silver spoons sat upon intricately joined

¹⁸ The term generally refers to a landed farmer who worked his own land. Under the Tudors, the term was gradually widened to include the prosperous working farmers below the rank of gentry. The title had no legal precision, but was used informally to distinguish a farmer who was more prosperous than the average husbandman. The wealth that was needed to be judged a yeoman by his neighbors varied from region to region and changed over time.

¹⁹ William Jennings of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 27 March, 1634, no. 199.74; 136/3/39, Oxfordshire Records Office.

furniture in the entry hall with carpets and window curtains appearing in each room. Cushions adorned multiple featherbeds that were made up with flaxen sheets and Holland cloth pillowcases. Finally, long joined tables ringed with chairs and stools covered in green cloth were listed among a small amount of farming tools at a remarkable sum of 410 pounds sterling. How did luxury furnishings—normally found in the houses of the elite—make their way into the home of a yeoman in a remote, rural area in seventeenth-century Oxfordshire? William Jennings is a fitting example of the growing wealth of the yeomen, whose prosperity illustrates the new mobility of the middling sort and the distinct trend of consumerism that preceded the Industrial Revolution.

In order to identify the increase in yeoman wealth in relation to the development of agriculture in seventeenth-century Oxfordshire, it is necessary to examine some of the factors contributing to the English yeoman's agricultural prosperity: yeoman origins, Oxfordshire geographical elements, and the advancement of English agricultural systems (including land tenure) during the early modern era.

Origins and Forebears

The English yeomen occupy a distinctive place in the annals of European social, economic, and agricultural history. In an effort to understand their contribution to early modern consumer culture, it is necessary to uncover the genesis of the term and the yeoman's place amongst the social structure of seventeenth-century England.

The term *yeoman* is rooted in Old English and emerges possibly from both Anglo-Saxon and northwest Germanic origin, perhaps as an extension of the terms “yongman,” “yongerman,” or “geman,” an ancient word meaning “district” or “country villager.” The Germanic roots can be found in *A Grammar of Gothic Language*, which defines *gauja* as a “country man; used in place of a land or region.”²⁰ The Germanic *gau-* root slowly populated Anglo-Saxon in the *ge-* form, which the Bosworth Toller Dictionary of Anglo-Saxon defines originally as a preposition meaning “with.” This soon developed into a term that utilized both *ge-* and the suffix *-mae* that denotes “an end, boundary, termination or limit of location” and is used in words describing, in both Germany and Switzerland, a borderland or river area.

Given the rustic etymology of the term, it is evident the yeoman’s predecessor was directly descended from ancient, free-tenant families.²¹ Although the yeoman was considered the uppermost of the middling sort and closely associated with the land of the manor or estate, many of his tasks required various manual duties (erecting fences, repairing bridges, serving as guard), whereas he would then be given land—copyhold and sometimes freehold—by the lord for services well rendered.²²

²⁰ Joseph Wright, *A Grammar of the Gothic Language and the Gospel of St. Mark, Selections from the Other Gospels and the Second Epistle to Timothy* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1954), 323b.

²¹ These were families that held land in freehold tenure.

²² *The Oxford Companion to Local and Family History*, David Hey, ed. (London: BCA, 1996), 509.

However, by the late thirteenth and toward the fifteenth century, the term *yeoman* had changed its meaning, and was principally “applied to a knight’s servants or retainers.” The term appears in Middle English literature in its most recognizable form about 1377 in the poem *Piers Plowman* as “3onge men” to denote a retainer or attendant or servitor, a person giving not menial but honorable service.²³ The yeoman is mentioned most prominently—perhaps disapprovingly—at this time in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*. He appears in both the “Reeve’s Tale” as Simpkin the Swagger a yeoman “thief of corn and meal” and also is the teller of the final Canon’s “Yeoman’s Tale.”²⁴ However, it is generally believed that this was merely self-parody, since Chaucer himself was descended from yeoman stock. His father and grandfather were upper-middling vintners and as a young boy Chaucer held a position as an attendant in the house of noblewoman Elizabeth de Burgh, Countess of Ulster.

Additionally, yeoman families distinguished themselves on the battlefield. Historian Sir George Sitwell argues that the primary meaning of the word in the fourteenth century developed a “military” nature.²⁵ The yeomanry of Wales, Cheshire and Macclesfield, categorized as the third order of fighting class between a squire and a page, provided English armies with their archery skills—particularly with the longbow—and brought military

²³ Mildred Campbell, *The English Yeoman Under Elizabeth and the Early Stuarts*, Reprints of Economic Classics (New York: A. M. Kelley, 1968), 8.

²⁴ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, trans. by Neville Coghill (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1951), 108.

²⁵ Cited by Campbell, *English Yeoman*, 8.

prestige and glory on the fields of Crecy and Poitiers, and fought valiantly in the wars against Scotland. They proved their gallantry during the Hundred Years War and King Henry VII officially established the Yeoman of the Guard in 1485 after the battle of Bosworth Field for their loyal service during the war.²⁶ Thomas Dyche's defines the *Yeoman of the Guard* as: "A peculiar sort of soldiery or foot-guards to the king's person, of a larger stature than common, everyone being required to be at least six foot high, whose number is 100 in constant waiting or duty, and 70 not in duty; one half bear harquebuses, and the other partisans; their attendance is one of the sovereign's person both at home and abroad."²⁷ Writers of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century exalted their skill and military endeavors by pointing out that it was their ancestors "who in times past made all France afraid."²⁸ This stereotype established the English yeoman as the epitome of the hearty and independent peasant: proud, industrious, and self-reliant.

As early as the beginning of the fifteenth century a second usage of the word had gained acceptance. As the days of private warfare waned, the yeoman was now employed to designate rank or status in rural society.²⁹

²⁶ *The Oxford Companion to British History*, John Cannon, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 696.

²⁷ Thomas Dyche, *A New General English Dictionary; Peculiarly Calculated for the Use and Improvement of Such as Are Unacquainted with the Learned Languages. To Which Is Prefixed, a Compendious English Grammar. Together with a Supplement Of the Proper Names of the Most Noted Kingdoms, Provinces, Cities, Towns, Rivers, &c. As Also of the Most Celebrated Emperors, Kings, Queens. Originally Begun by the Late Reverend Mr. Thomas Dyche and Finished by the Late William Pardon* (London: Printed for C. and R. Ware, J. Beecroft [etc.], 1771), 889.

²⁸ Albert J Schmidt, *The Yeoman in Tudor and Stuart England*, Folger Booklets on Tudor and Stuart Civilization (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1961), 1.

²⁹ Campbell, *English Yeoman*, 10.

The statute of 1429 denotes that all freemen are enfranchised and recognized “the right of suffrage to the annual land value of forty-shilling and those above.”³⁰ These stipulations allowed the yeoman protection under the courts of law, which separated him from “base-born” persons. Thus, the yeoman was a free tenant, though bound by certain tenorial duties. He was his “own man,” managing his own life as he saw fit and in conformity with the standards recognized for men of his class.”³¹

By the late Tudor and early Stuart periods, the yeoman not only worked his land, in contrast to the gentry and aristocracy who let their agricultural duties to tenant farmers, but he easily participated in typical country pastimes such as shooting and hunting, and held significant offices such as constable. England was still overwhelmingly an agrarian community and, although the yeoman, along with the tenant farmer, was one of two divisions of the rural middle class in traditional English society, his status and respectability now ranked above the husbandman, artisans and laborers. C. G. A. Clay observes that the yeomen were “wealthy villagers whose appearance had been one of the most significant social developments of the later Middle Ages.”³² Because of their trusted position as manorial reeves³³, they oftentimes managed the affairs “on behalf of an absentee lord and thereby acquired more capital and business experience than the average

³⁰ Ibid., 12.

³¹ Ibid, 13.

³² C. G. A. Clay, *Economic Expansion and Social Change: England 1500-1700* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 57.

³³ A reeve is an official who supervised a lord’s manor or estate.

peasant.”³⁴ This elevated status was soon chronicled by moralist Thomas Fuller’s *The Holy State* (1642), where he depicted the yeoman as “a gentleman in ore, whom the next age may see refined, and is the way capable of a gentle impression when the prince shall stamp it.”³⁵

From a legal perspective, a yeoman was a freeholder who could meet the qualification for voting in parliamentary elections, but the term could also include freeholders, copyholders and sometimes tenant farmers.³⁶ William Harrison describes the yeoman as “those which by our law are called *legales homines*, freemen born English, and may dispend of their own free land in yearly revenue to the sum of 40s. sterling or 6 pound as money goeth in our time.”³⁷ Thomas Dyche’s *English Dictionary* (1744) defines a yeoman in more contemporary terms as a “freeholder, or one that is possessed of so much land of his own as will entitle him to vote for a member to represent the county; also a dignity or title of office in the king’s household of a middle rank or place between an usher and a groom.”³⁸ However, a notable amount of wealth—or the inordinate display of it—was needed in order for him to be judged a yeoman by his peers.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ *The Holy State* by Thomas Fuller, B.D. and Prebendary of Sarum (London: Printed by John Redmanynne for John Williams, and are to be sold at the Sign of the Crown in St. Paul’s Churchyard, 1663, Book II, 105

³⁶ *Oxford Companion to British History*, 695.

³⁷ Georges Edelen, ed., *The Description of England by William Harrison, 1587* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), 117

³⁸ Dyche, *A New General English Dictionary*, 889.

The same rusticity that afforded the yeoman praise also left him open to ridicule by the city dweller and his better-off country neighbor. In literary terms he is sometimes referred to as a clownish, rural image, since the pejorative term “clown” or “clot” was derived from the Latin term *colonus* or “tiller of soil.”³⁹ In his 1628 work *Microcosmographie*, John Earle refers to the yeoman as:

A country fellow that manures his ground well but lets himself lie fallow And untilled...his conversation is among beasts...his mind is not much Distracted with objects, but if a good fat cow come in his way he stands Dumb and astonished, and though his haste be never so great will fix here Half an hour's contemplation⁴⁰

Ultimately, the general usage of the word *yeoman* became more of a descriptive rather than a legal term.

Therefore, from the aforementioned evidence, it is possible to see the yeomen's gradual increase in rank and respectability over time. Yet, his ultimate importance in the consumer economy is much more rapid and profoundly more visible at the dawn of the early modern age.

The story of the yeoman takes place in the English countryside, since land was “the center and substance of their lives and their livelihood.”⁴¹ The fortunes of the English yeomen and their ensuing status as luxury consumers are inherently linked to the changes in agricultural practices within the East

³⁹ “clown, n.”. OED Online. June 2012. Oxford University Press.
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/34756?rskey=XRBM6w&result=1&isAdvanced=false>
(accessed September 06, 2012).

⁴⁰ Cited by Schmidt, *The Yeoman in Tudor and Stuart England*, 3.

⁴¹ Campbell, *English Yeoman*, 66.

Anglian region, which, in turn, impacted Oxfordshire and the communities of Burford, Chipping Norton, and Henley-on-Thames.

The Elizabethan and Stuart periods were a time of “land hunger,” where the landowner recognized the potential commercial characteristics of land. This is particularly true of Oxfordshire, a rural society with fielden parishes.⁴² Observing these changes will help explain how the villages of Burford, Chipping Norton, and Henley-on-Thames adopted these alterations and helped develop an echelon of wealthy yeomen farmers. Accordingly, a fair amount of knowledge of the general agrarian conditions, claimed by some historians as “revolutionary,” is essential to understand the yeoman’s central role. But first, it is necessary to describe the geographical backdrop and discuss the various forms of land tenure that characterized this regional landscape.

Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire is located in the southeast region of England, bordered by Warwickshire and Buckinghamshire to the east, Gloucestershire to the west, Northamptonshire to the north, and Berkshire and Wiltshire to the south. At a total area of 1006 square miles, it resides in the midland region that historian Jennifer Sherwood describes as a bulky, L-shaped mass of land that

⁴² Level open land, especially used for or suitable for cultivation.

“is overshadowed by the city and university.”⁴³ Although situated in the middle of the Cotswolds to the west and the Chiltern Hills to the east, it bulges seawards towards the Thames estuary. The sloping valley landscape oftentimes encroaches from all sides, and the center of the shire includes good farming country, which ultimately makes up its strong features and distinctive rural setting.

Early Modern Population Estimates

“There should be a vigorous telling of noses,” stated Archbishop William Sancroft during the late seventeenth century, a phrase that did indeed reflect the country’s need to count those who populated England and Wales.⁴⁴ The action taken to satisfy this need resulted in the Compton Census, a detailed investigation drawn from the Protestation Returns of 1641-42, Hearth Tax Returns, and the Inquiries of 1603—which gives a broad account of Conformists, papists, and non-conformists.

On the basis of the Compton Census of 1676,⁴⁵ Oxfordshire had a total of 70,870 baptisms and marriages in 1670, and a total of 85,159 by 1700.⁴⁶ The

⁴³ Jennifer Sherwood, *Oxfordshire, The Buildings of England 45* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), 635.

⁴⁴ British Academy, *The Compton Census of 1676: A Critical Edition*, Records of Social and Economic History new ser., X (London: Published for the British Academy by the Oxford University Press, 1986), cvii.

⁴⁵ This evidence was usually collected at the parish level.

⁴⁶ *The Compton Census of 1676*, cvii.

county, as a whole, contained 43,770 persons over the age of sixteen.⁴⁷

These figures are the most accurate assessment for the period. Yet it is prudent to mention that oftentimes the estimated population based on the burial figures for a county is somewhat out of line with those that list baptisms and marriages and, frequently contested. Although these figures are considered by some to be problematic and should be interpreted with a certain amount of caution, they do give a fair sense of Oxfordshire's rural population and should be, to a certain degree, taken seriously.

The Compton Census population estimates of people over sixteen are as follows:

Burford

Conformists	500
Papists	0
Nonconformists	21

Chipping Norton

Conformists	809
Papists	0
Nonconformists	77

Henley-on-Thames

Conformists	1174
Papists	8
Nonconformists	76

⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 165-166.

The figures from 1676 provide a convenient yet rough indication of the size of each village at the beginning of this investigation, which offers a useful estimation of adult consumers within the study.

Geography of Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire has always had, from an agricultural perspective, a variegated and challenging geography. The region of the English Midlands contains a complex topography, which includes a notable “breckland”—an area buttressed by the southern wetland to the east, fielden area to the south, and *heathlands*⁴⁹ to the north. The breckland, which derives its name from an ancient farming term, is an area of thin and dry soil or sand and gravel, which lies directly in the chalk.⁵⁰ As a result, the breckland is not the most forgiving environment for the yeomen to create a stable, fruitful agricultural concern.

If one focuses on the areas surrounding the villages under study, it becomes clearer how prosperity grew within Oxfordshire’s patchwork of what Joan Thirsk refers to as the “sheep-corn” and “wood-pasture” landscape,⁵¹ and what Robert Morden referred to as a county that, “is generally plain and open, having but few Hills and Woods.”⁵²

⁴⁹ A landscape characterized by open, woody, low-growing vegetation on acidic soil.

⁵⁰ Jack Ravensdale and Richard Muir, *East Anglian Landscapes* (London: Michale Joseph, Ltd., 1984), 97.

⁵¹ *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*; General editor, H. P. R. Finberg (London: Cambridge U.P, 1967), 320.

⁵² Robert Morden, *The New Description and State of England, Containing the Mapps of the Counties of England and Wales, in Fifty Three Copperplates ...the Several Counties Described,*

Geology and Geographical Background of Oxfordshire

The most reliable approach to regional examination of agriculture and the growth of rural industry is through an examination of geographical elements. One of the most important factors that heavily impacted the growth of agriculture in Oxfordshire is the geographical and geological backdrop with which the yeoman had to work. The Northern Oxfordshire area, known as the “Limestone uplands,” experienced the most dynamic change with regard to agriculture. The region’s most distinguishing geographical feature is a belt of oolitic limestone, which extends into the northwest and northeastern tips of Buckinghamshire. Although limestone is the general geological characteristic, a variety of stonebrash⁵³ and cornbrash⁵⁴ soils (as well as a heavy element of clay) are also common to the area. Due to the presence of dry, thin soil, the area was initially a livestock breeding region where the use of leys, fodder in the open field system, was the norm from the late sixteenth century onward. After 1660, it is possible to see the introduction of ryegrasses, Dutch clover, trefoils⁵⁵ and lucern. These leguminous crops were more suitable for the thin, dry soils of the limestone area. Also, with the advancement of agricultural innovations, yeomen in the villages of Spelsbury

the Account of Their Ancient and Modern Names.: To Which Is Added, a New and Exact List of the House of Peers and Commons (London: R. Morden, T. Cockerill and R. Smith, 1701), 13.

⁵³ A subsoil consisting of loose, broken stone.

⁵⁴ A name for the coarse, brashy calcareous sandstone which forms the upper division of the Lower Oolite in various parts of England

⁵⁵ One of the artificial grasses whose cultivation in pastures and in an arable rotation was introduced from the continent in the seventeenth century.

and Fulwell were able to divide two and three arable fields into four and six to allow for more flexible rotations and to reduce the fallow land.⁵⁶ This system was a marked improvement over the two-field subdivisions, which had existed in the limestone region since the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁵⁷

Even with the concentration of animal husbandry in this particular region, the need to facilitate livestock actually contributed to the improvement of agricultural fertility. In the limestone uplands, there seems to have been an increase in the cultivatable wheat average between 1640 and 1750. In his research on open-field farming, H. A. Havinden, observed a doubling of the wheat's share of cultivated acreage from approximately 14% to 27% of the total.⁵⁸ Furthermore, pulses⁵⁹ increased from 15% to 20% at the expense of barley, which fell from 60% to 49%. The growth of the grain market was glaringly obvious to H. L. Gray, whose examination of yeoman farming in Oxfordshire observed that large, stately homes were more conspicuous in the limestone area and the farms were a good deal larger.⁶⁰

A relatively larger area than the limestone uplands is known as the great "Clay vale" of central Oxfordshire. It extends through the middle of the county, an area that includes both Chipping Norton and Burford, and continues well into central Buckinghamshire towards the northern area of

⁵⁶ *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, 321.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 325.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 322.

⁵⁹ The edible dried seed of a plant belonging to the pea family (bean, pea, lentil, etc.).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

Berkshire. Dairying was an important activity throughout the vale, yet there appears to have been a rather high proportion of arable land. Here, open-field farming seemed to have experienced little enclosure. Arable crops could easily be harvested from the nutrient-rich soils with little outlay on manure. Moreover, wheat's share of the cultivated acreage in the vale moved from 25% prior to 1640 to average 32% between 1690 and 1732.⁶¹ In a similar occurrence in the uplands, the overall wheat acreage increased along with that of beans and peas (21%-29%), at the expense of barley oats and rye, while farmers keeping sheep fell from 50% to 45%. Thus, between 1640-1740, small, open field farms grew wheat and barley, much of it for export to London.⁶² Contemporary William Ellis noticed this dramatic rise in his work *Chiltern and Vale Farming*. Writing in 1733, he believed that there had been a recent increase in the arable output of the vale between 1640 and 1750 that was "due to the increase of area in the Vale ... where husbandmen put on their Horse, Cow, and Hog Dung on the fallow ground for Wheat."⁶³

The vale, being larger than the limestone uplands, experienced a higher density of population migration. Population pressure created problems sometimes in the form of poor tenants or squatters, and usually translated into a reduction in the average size of farms. This inevitably cut into the yield per acre (and ultimately the rents) of Oxfordshire landlords. This was

⁶¹ Ibid., 324.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ William Ellis, *Chiltern and Vale Farming Explained According to the Latest Improvements. By the Author of The Practical Farmer; or, the Hertfordshire Husbandman: Truly Necessary for All Landlords and Tenants* (London: printed for T. Osborne, 1745), 22.

likely the case since comprehensive surveys taken between 1606 and 1650 show that the average holdings of 20 acres occupied 91.9% of the area, whereas in a 1728 survey, 90.6% of the surveyed acreage was still occupied by farms over 20 acres.⁶⁴ Overall, this small drop did not seem to inhibit the growth or importance of vale production of grain.

Lastly, the Chiltern Hills area is the final region to come under agrarian transformation. Originally a timber producing region, the hills themselves are composed of chalk, with an acidic soil content. However, with applications of lime, the soil tends to improve which make the pastures more amenable to rearing sheep and growing barley. Between 1640 and 1750, the emphasis on cereals became more pronounced and the move towards this specialization took the familiar path of the aforementioned regions. Between 1640 and 1729, cultivation of rye and maslin declined from about 14% to 5% while oats also fell from 21% to 11%.⁶⁵ Not surprisingly, wheat's share of acreage climbed from 19% to 34%. This is reflected in Burford yeoman John Burkin's "fifty acres of wheate" valued at 60 pounds,⁶⁶ and Henley yeoman John Freeman who had, "wheat sow'd on the ground," appraised at 13 pounds 4 shillings.⁶⁷ Animal husbandry was also low considering that after 1660, only 6% of a 66 sample of farmers kept more than ten cattle while

⁶⁴ *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, 326.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 327.

⁶⁶ John Burkin of Burford, will dated 1686, no. 107.241; 161/1/128, Oxfordshire Records Office, Oxfordshire, UK.

⁶⁷ John Freeman of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1722, no. 107.348; 165/4/12, ORO.

more capital was invested in horses than cattle “for the hauling of grain, malt and lime.”⁶⁸

The Chiltern Hills is a fine example of how the yeomen overcame agricultural adversity in order to partake in the lucrative market for wheat. Chiltern soil was poor, especially for wheat production. In fact, it took farmers more acreage to produce the same yield as the clay vale.

Nonetheless, the yeomen adopted technological improvements since according to William Ellis:

Our Chiltern country, With the help of Sowed grasses, turneps and the use of this my invaluable Liquor⁶⁹... get better crops of wheat than heretofore, and a little inferior, if not as good, as the vale.⁷⁰

Given the challenges confronted by the yeomen, it is not surprising that cultivation on a large scale was even possible in these Oxfordshire villages. And why did farmers continued to produce grain throughout the soils and fields of Oxfordshire given the gargantuan efforts to tame acidity and procure fertility? The answer lies in the Cherwell and Thames waterways. It was much cheaper to move arable produce by water than by land, and there was no better market to move it to than London.⁷¹ Hence, market conditions not only dictated a growing degree of specialization in the various regions of

⁶⁸ *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, 328.

⁶⁹ Ellis hawked an elixir of secret ingredients that supposedly “kept grain in for sowing” when added to unforgiving soil.

⁷⁰ Ellis, *Chiltern and Vale Farming Explained According to the Latest Improvements*, 15.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Oxfordshire and the development of a worthwhile market, but also the nature of agricultural output.

Oxfordshire Agricultural Systems

Presented with these challenging geological issues, there were a variety of agricultural systems practiced in Oxfordshire during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and as agricultural historians Jack Ravensdale and R. E. Prothero maintain, most farming methods were practiced in order to maximize the use of various soil types. Some settlements took place above the general water level in little fields and gardens while some called “hards” were dry pasture grounds commonly used for dairy cattle.⁷² Furthermore, detached islets were useful for milking livestock and “necklace hamlets” were small, settlements—most likely created during the Roman occupation—and suitable for small, arable plots. Nonetheless, farming in the types of soils that existed within the sample villages was challenging.

Ravensdale, Overton, and Lord Ernle maintain that towards the end of the Middle Ages, Oxfordshire yeomen used an “infield-outfield” arrangement, an agricultural method similar to those used in poorer soils of Scotland and Devon.⁷³ The system was quite simple: the nucleus of the village was the “infield” and was plowed in “ridge and furrow.” The infield was divided into

⁷² Ravensdale and Muir, *East Anglian Landscapes*, 96. R.E. Prothero (Lord Ernle) *English Farming, Past and Present* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961), 58. Mark Overton, “A New Perspective on Medieval and Early Modern Agriculture: Six Centuries of Norfolk Farming c. 1250-c.1850,” *Past and Present*, no. 141 (November 1993): 38-105.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 96-97

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 96-97.

furlongs (bundles of ridges running parallel to one another)⁷⁴ and the tenant holdings would be intermixed. Between the infield and the heath⁷⁵ was the “outfield” with a certain number of intakes or breaks (the probable source of the name breckland).⁷⁶ In order to create fertile soil, the bulk of the village livestock were “folded” or left in the fields for a certain period of time. Ravensdale adds, “the fertility of these would have been built up by folding all the beasts of the village on them at night during the previous year. After a few years, the intake fertility would fall and it would revert to pasture in the outfield until its turn for cultivation came round again.”⁷⁷

Some Oxfordshire villages had field systems similar to those found in the East Anglian fenland, yet most of Oxfordshire consisted of large fields. These were often called *precincts* and included furlong-type units called *stadia*. The strips that made up the holding or tenement were separate, small units averaging just over half an acre. But the most salient feature of Oxfordshire farming in the Middle Ages and beyond was the *foldcourse*. According to K. J. Allison, this system confined flocks to “strictly defined areas with various kinds of pasture—open field, arable land, heathland, and sometimes arable and pasture closes.”⁷⁸ Under this system, the lord of the manor had the right

⁷⁴ A furlong was originally the length of the furrow in a common field, which was theoretically regarded as a square containing ten acres.

⁷⁵ A heath of heathland is the term describing a low-shrub habitat found oftentimes in acidic, infertile soils.

⁷⁶ Ravensdale and Muir, *East Anglian Landscapes*, 97.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ K. J. Allison, “Flock Management in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” *The Economic History Review*, 11(January 1958): 98–112.

(or monopoly) to pasture sheep; thus, his flock used these arable strips whenever they were unsown. A frequent arrangement demanded that the lord, or his lessee, would pay compensation for any disturbance to the tenant's cropping from the exercise of foldcourse. Often this took the form of *cullet* right, by which the tenant was allowed to put a few sheep in with the lord's flock. Sometimes also, the tenant paid to have the flock folded on his land in order to gain the valuable dung. This appears in Burford yeoman Lewes Franklin's inventory where his testators commented on his "seven skore sheep wanting one with the fould" valued at 55 pounds.⁷⁹

This system was used extensively on the light soils of Oxfordshire, particularly the eastern edge of the shire, which Allison claims was "the basis for Norfolk [type] sheep-corn husbandry."⁸⁰ But even with this and the manure produced by the tenant's own sheep, horses and cattle, many villages with poorer soils were abandoned and much of the breckland and fen edge went out of cultivation when population pressure ceased after the Black Death of 1349. Yet, the testing issues that plagued Oxfordshire agriculture would be overcome with the introduction of new techniques, in what some of the early modern contemporaries referred to as "the age of the improver," and would translate quite successfully to Oxfordshire farming.

⁷⁹ Lewes Franklin of Burford, will dated 1636, no. 199.288; 22/4/20, ORO.

⁸⁰ Allison, "Flock Management in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," 98-112.

Agricultural Improvements and The Introduction of Revolutionary Crops

The development of English agriculture since the sixteenth century has been often referred to as “revolutionary.” Agrarian changes led to an increase in output, which, in turn, “transformed English agriculture from a subsistence economy to a thriving capitalist agricultural system.”⁸¹ This claim, although subject to questions regarding its productive significance and temporal characteristics, is crucial in comprehending the changes in English farming and marketing systems that occurred from the sixteenth century onward.

First, the “agricultural revolution” has been readily defined by a number of agricultural historians and observers over the past few centuries. Nineteenth-century figure R. E. Prothero argued that the agricultural advance was due to technological changes, which were fostered by the onset of the Industrial Revolution.⁸² More recently, Mark Overton claims there have been at least five separate transformations between 1560 and 1880. In addition, H. C. Darby argues that many have, albeit wrongly, hailed the eighteenth century as the great century of agricultural improvement, while there is sufficient evidence, particularly from the agricultural writings of J. Fitzherbert (1523) and Walter Blith (1649), that the revolution took place in

⁸¹ Mark Overton, *Agricultural Revolution in England: The Transformation of the Agrarian Economy 1500-1850*, Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 4.

⁸² R. E. Prothero, *English Farming, Past and Present* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961), 3.

the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁸³ There is also evidence from the three Oxfordshire villages that seems to suggest that the revolutionary improvements that convertible husbandry entailed were already being practiced in the 1660s.

These groundbreaking agricultural concepts are usually attributed to, or were disseminated by, Berkshire agriculturalist Jethro Tull. His work *Horse-Hoeing Husbandry* (1725) suggested innovative ideas with regard to, among other things, weed control, fertilizer and, his most notable achievement, improvement of the seed drill. Since the Roman era, broadcasting was the common method of sowing seeds, where Tull's drill avoided waste by setting seeds at regular intervals. In his work, Tull himself realized the benefit of his invention and contrasts the old methods of husbandry with his newer, contemporary outlook declaring, "By his calculation, the Profits arising from the New, are considerably more than double those of the Old."⁸⁴ The impact of these new "revolutionary" ideas upon open-field agriculture in the

⁸³ Walter Blith, *The English Improver, or, A New Survey of Husbandry Discovering to the Kingdome, That Some Land, Both Arable and Pasture, May Be Advanced Double or Treble Other Land to a Five or Tenfold, and Some to a Twenty Fold Improvement, Yea, Some Now Not Worth Above One, or Two Shillings, Per Acre, Be Made Worth Thirty, or Forty, If Not More*: Clearly Demonstrated from Principles of Sound Reason, Ingenuity, and Late but Most Certain Reall Experiences, Held Forth Under Six Peeeces of Improvement / by Walter Blith. [microform]□.; Early English Books, 1641-1700□; 525:5. (London: Printed for J. Wright ..., 1649). John Fitzherbert, *The Booke of Husbandry Very Profitable and Necessary for All Maner of Persons. Made First by the Author Fitzherberd, and Nowe Lately Correctedand Amended, with Diuers Additions Put Therunto. Anno Domini. 1568* (Imprynted at London: By Iohn Awdely, dwelling in little Britayn streete without Aldersgate, 1568), <http://gateway.proquest.com/open/:eebo:image:2414>.

⁸⁴ Jethro Tull, *A Supplement to the Essay on Horse-Hoing Husbandry. Containing Explanations and Additions Both in Theory And practice. Wherein All the Objections Against That Husbandry, Which Are Come to the Author's Knowledge Are Consider'd and Answer'd* (London: Printed for and sold by the author, 1740), vi.

seventeenth century was considerable, particularly in the Oxfordshire villages under examination.

The essence of the revolution was centered on the changes in crop rotation, which increased the quantity of cereal yields per acre. One of the sources of this higher yield was through the introduction of fodder crops⁸⁵ especially turnips, and legumes such as clover and peas. Sources from the seventeenth century confirm this, especially Samuel Hartlib and Sir Richard Weston's *A Discours of Husbandrie* (1650), where after travelling through Flanders, he advocated the crop rotation of turnips, clover and grasses.⁸⁶ Andrew Yarranton supported this view and stated in his work, *The Improvement Improved* (1663), that there is "a great improvement of lands by clover."⁸⁷ Yorkshire-born William Marshall, son of a yeoman farmer and author of *The Rural Economy of the West of England* (1796), a book that promoted farming standards, states that turnips and clover were important "cleaning crops," which, among other things, smothered weeds and supplied fodder for animals during winter months.⁸⁸

Turnips and clover grass were of great importance since being introduced from Holland in the sixteenth century. Although originally introduced as a

⁸⁵ Animal feeding crops.

⁸⁶ Samuel Hartlib and Richard Weston, Sir Agriculturist, *A Discours of Husbandrie Used in Brabant and Flanders; Shewing the Wonderfull Improvement of Land There; and Serving as a Pattern for Our Practice in This Commonwealth. [By Sir Richard Weston. Edited by Samuel Hartib.]* [Printed by William Du-Gard: London, 1605 [1650], 1605], viii.

⁸⁷ Andrew Yarranton, *The Improvement improved, by a second edition of the great improvement of lands by clover, etc.* (London, 1663), 75.

⁸⁸ William Marshall, *Rural Economy of the West of England (1796)* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1970), 20.

market garden crop destined for English tables, turnips were found to be valuable since they provided fodder and could be grown in relatively thin and somewhat infertile Oxfordshire soils. Both turnips and clover were introduced into Oxfordshire in the latter part of the sixteenth century. Robert Allen asserts that probate inventories from different parts of England with similar type of soil (Norfolk, Suffolk and parts of Cambridgeshire) show that the proportion of farmers growing turnips introduced from Holland “increased from less than 10 percent in 1680 to over 50 percent in 1710.”⁸⁹ Increasingly, observers commented on the proliferation of these agricultural elements, especially Sir Richard Weston whose 1605 work, *A Discourse of Husbandry*, details his experiences in Flanders where he observes that farmers from Holland turned heathland into arable acreage in flax, turnips, and clover grass,⁹⁰ and went on to advocate their use in England. Also, William Marshall, an eighteenth century agricultural writer, commented on the growing utilization of crop rotations including barley, turnips and clover grasses, and witnessed this phenomenon in 1795. Jethro Tull also commented on the use of turnips in the gravel-like East Anglian conditions as his examination and suggests “sand and gravel are the most proper soil for Turneps, because that is most easily pulveriz’d, and its warmth causeth the

⁸⁹ Robert C. Allen, *Enclosure and the Yeoman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 111.

⁹⁰ Sir Richard Weston, *A Discourse of Husbandry Used in Brabant and Flanders: Wherin are Bequeathed to the Common-Wealth of England More Outlandish and Domestick Experiments and Secrets in Reference to Universall Husbandry* (London: Printed by R. & W. Leybourn for Richard Wodnothe, 1652), 8.

Turneps to grow faster.”⁹¹ Also, in Arthur Young’s later descriptions of the southern counties in *A Six Weeks Tour of England and Wales* (1769) he remarked that turnips were still an integral part of East Anglian farms since:

The culture of turnips is here carried on in a most extensive manner; Norfolk being more famous for this vegetable than any county in the kingdom; but I have seen much larger turnips grow in Suffolk in gravelly loams than ever I saw in Norfolk. The use to which they apply their vast fields of turnips, is the feeding their flocks, and expending the surplus in fattening Scotch cattle.⁹²

Although this last example is used to describe the Suffolk region, Oxfordshire possesses similar geographic characteristics, especially loamy, *river gravels*, which are scattered along the existing rivers and around the southern edge of the Thames estuary. These soil conditions, according to H. H. Nicholson and F. Hanley, “give rise to soils that are gravelly, brownish grey to grey –black in color, and loamy sands to medium loams in texture,”⁹³ and constitute a good part of the fen edge around Henley-on-Thames and are frequent in the areas around Chipping Norton.

Meanwhile, clover grass, or *trefoil*,⁹⁴ a legume high in proteins and with the ability to grow in light soils, held a substantially high nutrition value for

⁹¹ Jethro Tull, *Horse Hoeing Husbandry*, 79.

⁹² Arthur Young, *A Six Weeks Tour, Through the Southern Counties of England and Wales Describing, Particularly, I. The Present State of Agriculture and Manufactures. II. The Different Methods of Cultivating The soil. III. The Success Attending Some Late Experiments on Various Grasses, &c. ... In Several Letters to a Friend. By the Author of the Farmer’s Letters* (London: printed for W. Nicoll, 1768), 25.

⁹³ British Association for the Advancement of Science. Meeting 1938 (Cambridge), *A scientific survey of the Cambridge District*: Prepared for the Cambridge meeting (1938) / and edited by H. C. Darby., 1938, 29.

⁹⁴ The characteristic form of the clover possess three leaves (trifoliate), hence the name “trefoil.”

Oxfordshire livestock. The combined effect of turnips and clover created an increase in available animal feed, which, in turn, allowed farmers to keep more livestock. Clover proved especially popular amongst the yeomanry since it was both easy to grow in a great range of soils and climates and it was kind to animal digestive systems. Evidence of yeomen utilizing clover grass and sainfoin⁹⁵ cultivation in Oxfordshire appears in various inventories, particularly within the village of Burford. John Burkin, a Burford yeoman held “fiftie loads of sain foin straw & clover grass” valued at 8 pounds 10 shillings, and “twelve quarter of sain foin seedd” valued at 12 pounds.⁹⁶

Oxfordshire farmers, particularly those in Henley and Burford, planted legumes, such as beans and peas, also known “catch” or “hitch” crops on fallow fields. This restored valuable nitrogen to the soil, which, in turn, increased fertility. Evidence is found amongst the Burford inventories, where yeoman John Burkin maintained, “ nine acres of peas in the ground” valued at 9 pounds,⁹⁷ while his neighbor John Freeman owned “a parcel of pease in the Barne & hooks”⁹⁸ worth thirteen pound and ten shillings. Additionally, William Elton’s probate accounts for “hops pease meale and barley valued at 2 pounds,”⁹⁹ and in a 1683 inventory, Henry Higgins of

⁹⁵ A low-growing perennial herb that is a drought resistant and deep-rooted member of the legume family.

⁹⁶ John Burkin of Burford, will dated 1686, no. 107.241; 161/1/28, ORO.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ John Freeman of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1722, no. 107.348;165/4/12, ORO.

⁹⁹ William Elton of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1674, no. 202.97; 20/4/1, ORO.

Chipping Norton owned “three loads of barley peas and hay in the barn” worth a respectable four pounds.¹⁰⁰ Peas and beans were usually mixed with other parcels of barley and oats and account for roughly seventeen percent of the inventories of the village of Henley.

Mark Overton asserts these new crops were integral in allowing English agriculture to break out of a “closed circuit” agricultural system and replaced fallows with a valuable fodder that introduced atmospheric nitrogen into the soil.¹⁰¹ He estimates that clover growing increased throughout the realm from ten to seventeen percent from 1680 to 1710.¹⁰² Thus, the replacing of unproductive fallow with clover grasses and turnips halted the conventional approach of a two and three crop rotation, and allowed a “revolutionary” increase in output through technological changes rather than by extending cultivated areas.

In addition, perennial herbs such as sainfoin and lucerne were highly valued and were known to boost crop yields by among other things raising the nitrogen content of the soil. Sainfoin in particular proved beneficial as a source of nutrition for working livestock. Translating from the Old French *sain foin*, which literally means “healthy hay,” it was celebrated by many agricultural improvers including Jethro Tull, who notably dedicates individual chapters to both “St. Foin” and lucerne. Tull fully defends the use of sainfoin since, based on his observations, “ [it] will, in poor Ground, make a

¹⁰⁰ Henry Higgins of Chipping Norton, will dated 1672, no. 33/4/9, ORO.

¹⁰¹ Overton, *Agricultural Revolution in England*, 3.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

Forty times greater Increase than the natural Turf, is the prodigious Length of its peculiar Tap-root: It is said to descend Twenty or Thirty Feet.”¹⁰³ Robert Morden notes the use of sanfoin in 1701, and remarked that “in Oxfordshire, sanfoin does wonderfully enrich the Dry and Barren Grounds of that county.”¹⁰⁴ Moreover, lucerne, a grass used during Roman antiquity and closely resembling clover, is seen by Tull to have the same if not equal characteristics to sain foin. It possesses a longer root system and “is the only Hay in the World that can pretend to excel or equal St. Foin, although it is much sweeter.”¹⁰⁵ Inevitably, some of Tull’s critics reasoned that a number of these grasses would not grow on land without a stratum of stone or chalk, which is an opinion he dismissed as “vulgar.”¹⁰⁶

Finally, marling, the process by which farmers counteract soil acidity, is another measure taken by East Anglian yeomen in an effort to develop and improve their farmland. The term is derived from *marle*, a fourteenth century French term for a mixture of clay and limestone;¹⁰⁷ yet it is used to describe lime-rich mud found in many of the clay vale and Chiltern areas of Oxfordshire. Marling is thought to be an ancient practice that survived throughout the medieval period and progressed steadily well into the 1800s. The process is recounted in a seventeenth century work, *The Great Diurnall*

¹⁰³ Tull, *Horse Hoeing Husbandry*, 15–16.

¹⁰⁴ Morden, *The New Description and State of England*, 13.

¹⁰⁵ Tull, *Horse Hoeing Husbandry*, 193.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 79.

¹⁰⁷ *The Chambers Dictionary*, New ed. (Edinburgh: Chambers Harrap Publishers Ltd, 1998), 472.

of *Nicholas Blundell of Little Crosby* (1669-1737). A member of the gentry who lived on the manor of Little Crosby in Lancashire, Blundell's work consists of observations of eighteenth-century society in which he specifically recounts the festivities that were held on his estate "in July 1712 when 14 marlers completed their work. The marl pit was dressed with garlands, eight sword-dancers performed to music in his barn, and the occasion was celebrated with feasting, dancing, and bull-baiting."¹⁰⁸

With regard to crop rotation, contemporary observers noted that Midland or more specifically Oxfordshire rotations consisted of "Marle, and break up for wheat. 2. Turnips. 3. Barley. 4. Laid down with clover and ray-gras for three years, or sometimes only two."¹⁰⁹ The crop was folded with dung for the winter-corn and it is believed that after a fresh marling, the yield was approximately four quarters of wheat per acre and five of barley. About fifteen to eighteen years after the marling, the yields fell to "three quarters of wheat, and four and a half of soft corn."¹¹⁰ Arthur Young found marling to be "the great foundation of their [yeomen's] wealth."¹¹¹ The Oxfordshire yeomanry had an alternative or failsafe system when marle had dissipated out of their soil. When "the marle begins to wear out of the soil, many of the great farmers have latterly got into a method of manuring with oil-cakes for

¹⁰⁸ Nicholas Blundell and The Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, *The Great Diurnal of Nicholas Blundell of Little Crosby, Lancashire* (Chester: Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 1968), 302.

¹⁰⁹ Young, *A Six Weeks Tour, Through the Southern Counties of England and Wales*, 24.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

their winter corn, which they import from Holland, and spread on their fields at the expence of about 15 s. per acre.”¹¹²

Arthur Young saw the rise in output by the new techniques and provides some literary evidence. His summation on Oxfordshire farming during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is indeed accurate:

There is no great conjuration necessary to discover the reasons of such large fortunes being made in this country by farmers; for hiring unimproved lands at a small rent, and finding very fine marle every where under them, they made therby such a vast improvement, that nothing less than a perpetual drought could prevent large crops.¹¹³

It is apparent from Young’s musings that agricultural innovation, particularly the use of new crops, contributed to the improvements of agriculture in Oxfordshire, especially in light of the evidence found within the yeomen inventories in the villages of Burford, Chipping Norton, and Henley. Even with the challenging geography and variegated soil conditions, these Oxfordshire communities realized the benefits of the agricultural revolution. Yet, one must also consider the organization of land, tenure, and field systems within these villages, in order to explain the development of the yeomen into wealthy farmers.

¹¹² Ibid., 26.

¹¹³ Ibid.

Land Organization and Field Systems

Land organization, or more specifically the field system, involving both landlord and cultivator, had taken a variety of forms in different parts of the country since the Middle Ages. By the early modern era, English farmland was organized into fields, which refers to the physical layout, and the organization of the system involves two aspects: the rules of cultivation and property rights of ownership and use.¹¹⁴

Although the topography of many field systems can be carefully reconstructed, late medieval and early modern field units cannot be generalized into a single type, since there were a variety of elements, especially regional variants, that contributed to their complexity. Nevertheless, most of the landscape looked very much the same as in present day: rectangular bands surrounded by hedges, ditches, or walls and sometimes separated by unplowed grass strips called “baulkes.”¹¹⁵ Larger fields were divided into strips and often grouped into units called “furlongs”¹¹⁶ or “lands,” which also contained subdivisions commonly called “open-fields.” Of course, the terminology differed with regard to region, since different areas held different relationships amid their various

¹¹⁴ Overton, *Agricultural Revolution in England*, 22.

¹¹⁵ Rosemary Milward, *A Glossary of Household, Farming, and Trade Terms from Probate Inventories* (Derbyshire Record Society Occasional Paper No. 1, 1977), 7. Balkes or bauks were oftentimes used as a boundary between two plowed portions of land.

¹¹⁶ The term “furlong” was originally derived from the Old English word for a “furrow length.”

topographical features. Medieval Oxfordshire maintained a “ridge and furrow” system or characteristic ridged pattern created by the system of plowing used during the Middle Ages.

Much of the land in sixteenth and seventeenth century England, including those in Oxfordshire, was not subject to private property rights, but to common property rights.¹¹⁷ Unlike the private property rights of today—which stipulate that no other person has the legal right to use land without express permission of the landowner—property rights were held “in common.” This implies that exclusive rights of ownership did not specify exclusive rights of use.¹¹⁸ It suggests that people living in the village community possessed special rights to the use of that land such as grazing animals or gathering wood for fuel.¹¹⁹ Thus, land under “common rights” was also referred to as *common land* or *common fields*.¹²⁰

Common field farming was a communal effort and regulations were needed to insure that it operated efficiently, and in a fair and neighborly fashion. Oxfordshire farmers using a collaborative approach would look after one another’s livestock, plow fields together, and work together during harvests. The legal term for taking in and pasturing of beasts of another owner was “agistment.” Common fields also held a fair amount of yeoman livestock. The village community organized the actual bylaws collectively,

¹¹⁷ Overton, *Agricultural Revolution in England*, 24.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ The right to remove wood from the commons for fuel was known as *firebote*.

¹²⁰ Overton, *Agricultural Revolution in England*, 24.

which ranged from the control of livestock grazing to the management of ditches and weeding. The manorial court, the legal body governed by public law and local custom, meted out the penalty for neglect of duty or other types of related violations, thus assuring that tenants rights, duties, and disputes were dealt within the manor. Like any legal body, it contained imperfections; nevertheless, it proved to be an effective system and most people abided by the rules.

Land Tenures

In England, during the middle ages and well into the early modern period, the holding of land was based on a tenurial system. This medieval framework operated on precedent and custom, which is derived from the five main forms of land tenure: knight service, socage, copyhold, frankalmoign, and serjeantry.¹²¹ However, it is necessary to focus solely on the tenures of *freehold*, *leasehold*, and *copyhold* in order to understand their relationship to the yeomen's rise.

¹²¹ Knight service, a form of feudal tenure that required a knight (tenant) to provide "a certain number of horsemen to fight for the king." It originated with William I who, by process of *enfeoffment*, rewarded his followers with grants of land (a knight's fee), which they held in return for knight service. By the early modern period, this service, particularly the acts of *homage* and *fealty* that so bound the knights to their lord, had lost their meaning. The tenures of Serjeantry—a type of medieval tenure similar to knight service—that could be both chivalrous and non-chivalrous—where land was held in return for a variety of personal services—and frankalmoign—an ecclesiastical arrangement that required prayers for the soul of the donor—had both outlived their purpose and fallen into disuse by the Elizabethan period.

Freehold is a tenurial status for property, which stipulates ownership of real property that includes both land and all structures upon that land for an indeterminate duration. Freehold was not subject to manorial customs as were copyhold or leasehold. A freehold was originally held either in knight service or in socage,¹²² and men aged between 21 and 70 with freehold property worth at least 40 shillings a year could vote at local and parliamentary elections.¹²³ From 1696 lists of these people were drawn up for each parish for jury service.¹²⁴

Leasehold is property tenure where one party buys the right to occupy land for a given length of time, typically ninety-nine years. Leasehold differed from freehold since property was leased for a determinant amount of time. The terms of the arrangement (length of tenure, rent, etc.) were contained in the lease. This method began to replace copyhold tenure in the early modern period.¹²⁵ Leasehold was also used for demesnes land that a landowner did not wish to farm himself, but which he could recover at the end of the term.

Copyhold was considered the most common form of "unfree" or *villein* tenure, and by its sheer resilience and adaptability, would eventually

¹²² Socage tenure is a form of feudal tenure where land was held, not by service, but by money rent. Socage, along with knighthood, was considered a "free" tenure, which meant that the "services to be performed were fixed both in their nature and duration." By the sixteenth century it was the most common free tenure since it "had a secure title, was governed by common law and not by custom, and gave the tenant the right to lease, sell and bequeath land as he wished.

¹²³ *The Oxford Companion to Local and Family History*, 302.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Ralph Davis, *The Rise of the Atlantic Economies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), 120.

contribute to the framework of modern land ownership.¹²⁶ The traditional peasant tenure of copyhold is the most customary form of tenure by which a tenant held a “copy” of the entry in the rolls of the manorial court baron on which was recorded his or her possession of a holding on agreed terms.¹²⁷ The terms usually required the tenant to perform services to the lord, but through a series of legal decisions in the royal courts from the 1540’s to the 1620’s these terms were slowly converted into money payments, involving large entry fines and nominal annual rents. This method of holding property was less secure than freehold and leasehold since the conditions attached to leases varied from manor to manor and the agreements ultimately gave all of the rights to one party.

Major issues with tenure did arise in the seventeenth century, especially concerning the structure of copyhold.¹²⁸ The copyhold held “in inheritance”

¹²⁶ Campbell, *English Yeoman*, 108.

¹²⁷ *The Oxford Companion to Local and Family History*, 110.

¹²⁸ It is important to mention *enclosure* and its overall impact in any discussion on land issues in English agrarian history. *Enclosure* is a general term—differing from region to region—that describes the act where common and open fields were enclosed by a hedge, fence, or wall. Sometime referred to as *inclosure*, the practice of enclosing land goes back to the early thirteenth century when Henry III authorized it in the Statute of Merton during the thirteenth century. Although its importance lies in its eventual development, clarification and legal right of land ownership (one of its original purposes was to establish deer parks) it stated that the landlord had the fundamental right to enclose some of his wasteland providing that sufficient pasture remained for his tenants. Between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, enclosure continued at a more rapid pace, particularly since Britain experienced a decline in population and open farmland in England had been commonly enclosed as pastureland for sheep during this period. Thus, the result was the replacement of communally administered land holdings with non-communal property by either a small group of farmers or a single individual. This process—which ended arable farming in open field systems and virtually guaranteed the exclusion of smaller land holders—required the deeding or entitling of an amalgam of land strips, which was done usually by one or two owners “by agreement, which took place during the rise in the profitability of land (particularly with regard to rising rents) between 1630-1750. These strips created a larger property in which to practice. J.R. Worde estimates that forty-five percent of land enclosed

was essentially like freehold, because it carried a fixed rent and allowed the tenant to pass it along to his heirs; thus it put the tenant at an advantage. Though with copyhold held as a “term of years or lives,” the landlord held the advantage since he could force the tenant to renew their terms at a higher rent than before. According to Mildred Campbell, the landlord could claim an increase in value of land that justified the increase in rents or fines, wherein the tenant had to either meet the new rental increase—which in some cases was much higher than his previous rent—or forfeit his tenancy.¹²⁹ Campbell points to a rise in “land greed,” a phenomenon that created an increase in demand with new buyers—mostly well-to-do yeomen—agreeing to higher rental terms. Michael Turner argues that “the reality was that neither landlord nor potential tenant had any theoretical guidelines or manuals from which they could extract working formulae for the setting rent levels.”¹³⁰ Thus, in England, the peasant was being converted into, or slowly driven out in favor of, the more commercially, oriented farmer.¹³¹

Further evidence points to a less than smooth transition for the rising yeoman. Campbell shows that this trend created disputes, which resulted in an increase in litigation. With regard to legal access, copyholders could bring their case into both the courts of equity and the common law. However,

in England rose to seventy one percent by 1700. Cited in Michael Edward Turner, *Agricultural Rent in England, 1690-1914* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 35.

¹²⁹ Campbell, *English Yeoman*, 121.

¹³⁰ Michael Edward Turner, *Agricultural Rent in England, 1690-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 15.

¹³¹ Davis, *Rise of the Atlantic Economies*, 120.

Campbell identifies a fair amount of cases dealing with land matters in the Star Chamber, the Court of Requests, and the Court of the King's Bench.¹³² Of 8,173 cases that went to Star Chamber during the reign of James I, yeomen appeared as either a plaintiff or defendant in a staggering 2,112 cases involving land disputes.¹³³ A large part of these were concerned with land issues, but most centered on debt.¹³⁴ Although it appears from the information that yeomen could take advantage of legal protection afforded His majesties' subjects, the staggering costs of litigation (especially fines, traveling expenses, etc.) left the small copyholder with little or no savings on which to draw scant opportunity to take advantage of the legal avenues available to him. Yet, this evidence establishes that the yeoman gained a certain amount of success in these courts as "it seems scarcely likely that he would have continued year after year to institute land suits if the landlord always got the better of the deal."¹³⁵ The prosperous yeoman was inclined to protect his interests, as, during this period, it was becoming a direct path toward economic gain.

In early modern Oxfordshire, some of copyhold's stipulations required a *heriot*¹³⁶ upon the death of the tenant. This late Anglo-Saxon custom allowed

¹³² Campbell, *English Yeoman*, 133.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 134.

¹³⁴ John H. Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History*, 2d ed. (London: Butterworths, 1979), 10.

¹³⁵ Mildred Campbell, *English Yeoman*, 134.

¹³⁶ A heriot or *heregeat* was a tradition that allowed the lord to reclaim loaned property at the death of a serf. This custom gradually gave way to a money payment or "best beast," and is considered the precursor to modern-day inheritance tax. Heriot was legally abolished in Britain in 1922.

the lord of the manor to seize payment, often the “best beast” or “best clothing,” upon death. Sir Richard Carew comments on this manorial right in his *Survey of Cornwall* (1602) since in his county, and quite predictably on his own estate, it “is usuall it is for all sorts of Tenants, upon death, as least, if not surrender, or forfeiture, to pay their best beast for a *Heriot*.”¹³⁷ He continues that this homage applies, not just to yeomen or husbandmen, but also to persons passing through the county: “if a stranger passing thorow the Countrey, chaunce to leave his carkase behind him, he also must redeeme his burial, by rendering his best beast ... or if he have none, his best Iewell [Jewell], or rather than fayle, his best garment then about him, in lieu thereof.”¹³⁸ This homage is evident in the inventory of Burford yeoman Greg Patey whose extensive husbandry includes a variety of livestock that lists separate animals for heriot that includes “2 showe piggs” at a value of 1 pound.¹³⁹

Accordingly, land law in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was born out of but still maintained some of their original, medieval idiosyncrasies. It had gone through some periods of modification. Though it was not until the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when the concept of land “ownership” as opposed to “holding” began to emerge out of the

¹³⁷ Richard Carew, *The Survey of Cornwall*, 1st ed. (London: Printed by S.S. for Iohn Iaggard, 1602), 38.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Greg Patey of Burford, will dated 1639, no. 200.296; 144/3/7, ORO.

traditional forms of freehold, copyhold and leasehold,¹⁴⁰ which worked to the benefit and prosperity of the landholding Oxfordshire yeoman.

Did land tenure within the Oxfordshire villages of Bruford, Chipping Norton, and Henley-on-Thames assist the yeomen with their rise in status? To find the answer, it is essential to assess the yeomen's tenure in the surviving records of Burford.

Freehold tenure is the most beneficial, as it specifies inheritable land and property ownership without limitations. It places the landholder in the most profitable situation, whereas leasehold is tenure by lease, either for lives, or for a stated term. At the onset of the early modern period, leasehold gradually began to replace copyhold tenure. Coincidentally, a good number of Oxfordshire yeomen were both freeholders and leaseholders and although Margaret Spufford claims, "every historian knows that real estate is not included in an inventory,"¹⁴¹ there is evidence taken from a variety of wills that show the lease amount and evidence from seized lands and property continuances that indicate very favorable terms for leaseholders. Burford yeoman Edward Beacham's inventory states that he owned a house known locally as World's End that "held a lease of 112 pounds."¹⁴² Or Greg Patey's simple "1 lease of five acres of meadowe being 10 yeares to come,"¹⁴³ valued

¹⁴⁰ Davis, *Rise of the Atlantic Economies*, 210.

¹⁴¹ Margaret Spufford, "The Limitations of Probate Inventory," in *English Rural Society, 1500-1800: Essays in Honour of Joan Thirsk*, Past and Present Publications (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 142.

¹⁴² Edward Beacham of Burford, will dated 1682, no. 91.320; 107.216; 7/2/43, ORO.

¹⁴³ Greg Patey of Burford, will dated 1639, no. 200.296; 144/3/7, ORO.

at 1 pound 5 shillings, which appears to be a simple lease agreement¹⁴⁴ for additional tillage.

The records of the ancient Corporation of the Bailiffs, Alderman, and Burgesses of Burford, offer a certain insight toward seventeenth-century Oxfordshire yeomen property arrangements. The Series of properties for Burford show a number of agreements that reveal the aims of the yeomen negotiation of Poole's Lands—property bequeathed in 1500 by Thomas Poole of London to the Burgesses. These charity lands were held in trust and administered by the Royal Commission, and ultimately leased out to those that could afford them. First, John Humfryes [Humphries] a yeoman of Burford, leased land and a house on Sheep street, for 21 years at 15s a year.¹⁴⁵ At the same time, Burford yeoman Thomas Smith leased a house on the south side of the same street that also held “a culverclose of two acres” at 4 pounds 10 shillings per year.¹⁴⁶ Also, yeoman John Linsey the elder held a lease on a house on the same street next to John Humphries at a cost of “2 pounds a year.”¹⁴⁷ And Thomas Newberry the elder, yeoman of Burford leased a home and land for “1 pound 10 shilling a year.”¹⁴⁸ It seems the aforementioned yeomen aimed at either additional tillage or a larger home in leasehold through negotiating for leases that allowed for an upgrade in living

¹⁴⁴ Leases on tracts of land (burgage plots) were normally 21 years in length.

¹⁴⁵ R. H Gretton, *The Burford Records, a Study in Minor Town Government* (Oxford: The Clarendon press, 1920), 356.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

space and more area under plow.

This data gives a better understanding of the propertied status of seventeenth century Oxfordshire yeomen and their families. Most of them, as it appears, were leaseholders that were granted some measure of protection by the royal courts and had control over the use of their property. Although some of these freeholders held copyhold lands, their freehold and leasehold position helped to reinforce their status as landed elite and gave them a large measure of independence in Oxfordshire during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

The Debate on the Rise of "Capitalist" Farming

At the turn of the century, historians attempted to explain the dramatic changes in English agriculture. R. E. Prothero produced the most comprehensive text on English farming that stressed the role of enclosure as a pivotal factor in the agricultural revolution. In his 1912 work, he highlighted the farmers who had raised output by enclosure, and transformed the agriculture with large-scale farming. The result was, from an economic standpoint, a good thing since it had encouraged capitalist farming "in response to the changing economic environment."¹⁴⁹ But Prothero espoused the idea that enclosure only helped spur revolutionary output in tandem with the Industrial Revolution. In his view, "farmers of the eighteenth century "lived thought and farmed like farmers of the thirteenth

¹⁴⁹ Michael Turner, *Agricultural Rent in England*, 231.

century.”¹⁵⁰ His argument further claimed that, after the accession of George III, the post-1760 Parliamentary Enclosure Act was spurred by both agricultural and mechanical innovations, thus introducing new scientific farming, which created an intensification of “enterprise and outlay streamlined by these new capitalist landlords and tenant farmers.”¹⁵¹

For many years, Prothero’s work remained the primary source to which academics turned when interpreting English agriculture. The first serious challenge came in the late 1960s, when Jonathan Chambers and G. E. Mingay reassessed Prothero’s argument. In their work, *Agricultural Revolution, 1750-1880*, they suggest that 1700 was more likely the start of the period that witnessed the beginning of the agricultural revolution.¹⁵² Both historians also insisted that Prothero’s revolution coincided with their time period,¹⁵³ but they continued to argue that there was a pronounced acceleration in the second half of the century that prompted this agricultural change.¹⁵⁴ Chambers and Mingay attributed the sudden rapid transformation to a variety of causes: new fodder crops and crop rotation, coupled with convertible husbandry,¹⁵⁵ field drainage, and parliamentary enclosure. They further argued that these changes were quite revolutionary

¹⁵⁰ Rowland E. Prothero, *English Farming, Past and Present*, New 6th ed. (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961), 220.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Jonathan David Chambers and G.E. Mingay, *The Agricultural Revolution, 1750-1880* (New York: Schocken Books, 1966), 3.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ The process where the farmer or landowner deliberately alternates between pasture and arable land.

since they estimate that an “additional 6.5 million people were being fed by English agriculture in 1850 compared with 1750.”¹⁵⁶ Although they did acknowledge enclosure as a factor, since more enclosed land was under cultivation, they drew attention to the fact that much of this extra food was the result of increases in output of corn yield per acre.¹⁵⁷

Before long, doubt was raised about Mingay and Chambers’ work by Eric Kerridge’s 1967 work *The Agricultural Revolution* where he argues that the rise of agrarian ideas took place in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In contrast to their theories, Eric Kerridge argues that a revolution in agriculture notably between 1560 and 1767 preceded the Industrial Revolution and that seven innovations, ranging from fen drainage to new fertilizers, facilitated the outcome.¹⁵⁸ This is the period, according to R. A. Bryer, when some farmers undertook enclosure and employed wage labour and resulted in what Marx termed, “the formation of modern capital.”¹⁵⁹ Bryer postulates that technological change in agriculture had been taking place in a number of local areas for two to three hundred years prior to the dates set forth by the Mingay, Chambers, and Kerridge.

The antagonism between these theories evoked a more comprehensive effort by Joan Thirsk who expounds a theory of “uneven development.” Her

¹⁵⁶ Chambers and Mingay, *Agricultural Revolution*, 4.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁵⁸ Eric Kerridge, *The Agricultural Revolution* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1967), 15.

¹⁵⁹ R.A. Bryer, “The Genesis of the Capitalist Farmer: Towards a Marxist Accounting History of the Origins of the English Agricultural Revolution,” in *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 17 (May 2006): 370.

edited work, *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, claims that innovation may have been adopted in some areas hundreds of years before the “revolutionary” improvements spread to other places. She believes that English agricultural history “should be analysed as a continuum to be divided between more and less rapid change” and that historians should eschew what she terms the “Agricultural Revolution.”¹⁶⁰

The issue is undoubtedly complex. Even if one cannot agree on the specific attempts to establish the temporal range of the agricultural revolution, enclosure was a dominant factor in the process of change. They were certainly used by the Oxfordshire yeoman during the seventeenth century as a means of breaking out of the perpetual poverty of subsistence farming. As Mildred Campbell observes, the yeoman, “suited by position, temperament, and ambition to carry on this kind of inclosing were probably the most numerous of all piecemeal inclosers.”¹⁶¹ By adopting the changes in agricultural processes and consolidating scattered holdings to create large, individual farms, the yeomen reaped the benefits of the population rise and demand for grains.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Joan Thirsk, *England's Agricultural Regions and Agrarian History, 1500-1750* (London: MacMillan Education, Ltd., 1987), 57.

¹⁶¹ Campbell, *English Yeoman*, 87.

¹⁶² Jack Ravensdale, *East Anglian Landscapes*, 112.

Conclusion

It appears that such factors as the size of land holding, the custom of English inheritance and enclosure were operated together to help the yeoman progress and spur their ideas for trade and commerce.

Campbell asserts that it was not that land became more important; however, it was the relationship that people had with the land and the growing significance of trade and industry, which redefined land as a commercial entity.¹⁶³ The freedom to improve one's condition encouraged small landholders to seek more land. R. E. Prothero observed that, "Medieval husbandmen were content to extract from the soil the food which they needed for themselves and their families; whereas Tudor families despised self-sufficing agriculture; they aspired to be sellers and not consumers only, to raise from their lands profits as well as foods."¹⁶⁴ Yet, Joan Thirsk realized this assertion was somewhat over simplified since she found that late Tudor and early seventeenth century yeomen were also commercially driven "cultivators and ... their enthusiasm for innovation as well as a crop's economic attractiveness demanded their technical skill, capital, and labour resources."¹⁶⁵

Although the slow transformation of tenant rights had an impact on the growing commercial opportunities in agriculture, another important feature

¹⁶³ Campbell, *The English Yeoman*, 65.

¹⁶⁴ Prothero, *English Farming, Past and Present*, 58.

¹⁶⁵ *Rural Change and Urban Growth, 1500-1800: Essays in English Regional History in Honour of W. G. Hoskins*, C.W. Chalkin, ed. (London□; New York: Longman, 1974), 76-77.

in the growth of this particular sector of the English agrarian economy was the relatively high average size of peasant land holdings. Twenty to twenty-five acres was a common size in practically most villages in the mid 1600's as compared to one to two and one half acre holdings of the peasants in France.¹⁶⁶ One reason for the sizeable holdings of English peasants was the terms of leasehold that allowed a peasant to work demesnes land, earn profit, and buy the lands of his less prosperous neighbors. They often bought strips in open fields in order to consolidate blocks of land, while turning waste into productive fields. Moreover, the "open field" arrangement of ½ acre strips of land distributed on a communal basis was also a lucrative opportunity if the peasant could get them in a row and get permission to enclose them. He could work them independently and realize a profit. For example, according to the leasehold document of yeoman landowner Roger Hilman, he awarded "his rights to lands to John Gylle in the open areas of Waymeton and Netherhill."¹⁶⁷ It is this activity that further enhanced the differentiation amongst the regular peasantry and the growth of the relatively prosperous peasants who were now designated as *yeomen*.¹⁶⁸

The custom of English inheritance further increased the growing differentiation amongst the seventeenth-century peasantry. Although the

¹⁶⁶ *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, 195.

¹⁶⁷ Thomas Robert Gambier-Parry, *A Collection of Charters Relating to Goring, Streatley And the Neighborhood, 1181-1546, Preserved in the Bodleian Library, with a Supplement*, The Oxfordshire Record Society . . . Oxfordshire Record Series vol. 13-14 (Oxford: Issued for the Society, 1931), 254.

¹⁶⁸ Davis, *Rise of the Atlantic Economies*, 196.

labor of several able-bodied sons and daughters was necessary in cultivation, the laws of primogeniture guaranteed that the eldest son would inherit the entire land holding while younger sons would become laborers or be given a small start in trade.¹⁶⁹ This dynamic was significant, even at the lowest level of peasant life, since it turned younger sons into wage earners rather than dividing the land holding. By contrast, partible inheritance, the division of land to all heirs practiced in France and parts of the Continent, would shrink the overall holdings, which would reduce the yield and allow younger sons to remain home and not take part in the growing ranks of wage labor. The tendency to enlarge farms and the replacement of small peasants by the “capitalist farm dynamic” was pursuing a distinct and profitable course.

Therefore, it has been entirely necessary to elaborate on the rural district that the yeomen thrived because the story of the yeoman’s rise to prosperity begins and ends in the English countryside. Since land was “the center and substance of their lives and their livelihood,”¹⁷⁰ the rural fortunes of the English yeomen are inherently linked to the changes in agricultural practices within the Midland region, which, in turn, impacted the county of Oxfordshire and the communities of Burford, Chipping Norton, and Henley-on-Thames. The land on which these villages were located—heavy clay, chalky clay, and gravel, and peat—was, geographically speaking, unremarkable. If anything it proved to be a challenge even to those seeking basic sustenance. To the

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Campbell, *English Yeoman*, 66.

casual observer of the time, the Midlands are a picturesque region that hides the fact that they required hard work and technological advance in order to achieve consistent fertility and abundant yields; it was not until the age of agricultural improvement that those with a sense of vision recognized that parts of Oxfordshire contained nutrient rich soil that could be brought under cultivation.

Fittingly, the yeomen of Oxfordshire whether or not it is considered by some as revolutionary embraced this advanced wisdom since there is, as this work has shown, ample evidence in their wills and inventories that illustrates their use of hitch or catch crops in order to improve yields. No longer were fields sitting fallow and, by extending the area of cultivation, output slowly increased. Thus, the cycle of “closed circuit” medieval farming was at this point permanently broken, which now along benefits of copyhold and freehold land tenure gave the market- oriented yeomen their opportunity to reap the economic benefits.

The following chapter will discuss the origins of agricultural trade within the towns and waterways of Oxfordshire, and to what extent agricultural changes impacted their growth and contributed to yeomen fortunes.

CHAPTER 2

“We cannot understand the English landscape and enjoy it to the full ... without going back to the history that lies behind it.”

W.G. Hoskins

This chapter provides a historical overview of the Oxfordshire landscape with regard to the villages of Burford, Chipping Norton, and Henley-on-Thames. It will examine the unique topography in which these towns and villages are located. It also suggests a close connection between patterns of conspicuous consumption and the location of the towns of Burford, Chipping Norton, and Henley-on-Thames to navigable waterways and ancient roads that, in turn, allowed access to the commodity exchange that occurred with regional and international markets.

The previous chapter examined the yeomen’s use of agricultural concepts that facilitated their technological and economic achievements. With the long-term growth of English agriculture and the commercially driven farmer en route to an atmosphere of financial success, one question emerges: what made the region of Oxfordshire, especially Burford, Chipping Norton, and Henley-on-Thames, particularly favorable localities for the rise of the prosperous yeoman? The answer, although somewhat complex and problematic, lies in a number of factors that include geographic location, specialized market growth, unique farming systems, and dredging and

drainage projects that enhanced the waterborne transport of goods. These various factors also rest solidly on the fact that Bruford, Chipping Norton, and Henley, all had one particular advantage—although subject to continual flooding during winter months, they are in close proximity to a variety of navigable waterways that are, in one way or another, accessible to larger river systems. Yet, with advantages come disadvantages and each town can also claim, because of uncooperative soil and unique, local geography, a challenging path to agricultural prosperity. It is necessary to become familiar with the towns under examination by providing a brief background of the unique regions, particularly the Chiltern Hills and the Cotswolds, in which they are located.

Henley-on-Thames

Situated in the southwest Chilterns in the county of Oxfordshire, the riverside market town of Henley-on-Thames is the largest of the communities under examination, and lies approximately 24 miles from the town of Oxford and 37 miles from central London. Surrounded by the four rural parishes of Bix, Harpsden, Rotherfield Greys, and Rotherfield Peppard, Henley is best known today as a fashionable nineteenth-century resort town and host to an annual Royal Regatta, established in 1839. Author and literary giant Charles Dickens described Henley as, “a comfortable, prosperous looking town, set down in a pleasant valley almost entirely surrounded by

well-wooded heights.”¹⁷¹ Yet, behind these picturesque scenes of modern English life that “is the Mecca of the rowing man and is pilgrimage for anglers,”¹⁷² Henley can trace its (very humble) origins back to the Middle Ages as an integral, if not vital, link to the increasing demand for grain and goods to the growing capital city.

From an etymological perspective, the name Henley means, “at the high (chief) wood pasture or clearing.”¹⁷³ The first element of the word *Henley* is probably derived from the old Anglo Saxon term *heah*—the dative of *hean* meaning “high,” and *leah*, meaning “pasture.”¹⁷⁴ There are other derivations in Somerset (*Henleighe*) and Suffolk (*Henleia*). A Warwickshire town, Henley-in-Arden, shares a similar name and is believed to be in reference to the medieval Forest of Arden (1088), which is derived from an ancient Celtic name meaning “high district.” The addition of “on-Thames” denotes placement or position of settlement and is derived from *Tamesis*, the Celtic root *tam*, meaning “dark,” or rather from a pre-Celtic root *ta*, meaning “to flow turbidly.”¹⁷⁵

As is typical of most towns in England, Henley possesses ancient Roman roots. Both literary and archeological evidence shows the town lies upon the line of a major Roman trading road that stretched from Dorchester to

¹⁷¹ Charles Dickens, *Dickens’s Dictionary of the Thames: From Its Source to the Nore: An Unconventional Handbook* (London: Macmillan, 1886), 102.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ A. D. Mills, *A Dictionary of British Place-Names* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 238.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 456.

Verulamium (what is now modern day St. Albans), and on towards Silchester and London.¹⁷⁶ In addition to numerous pottery fragments, a sizeable Roman building from the second century was found within the center of town, which seems to imply a permanent yet relatively small settlement.

Post-Roman occupation is somewhat narrowly documented. From the late Anglo-Saxon period, Henley was part of a royal estate, which was centered in the town of Benson, approximately ten miles away.¹⁷⁷ The Domesday Book in 1086 shows the estate had been divided and granted to local lords, possibly to a man named Robert de Harcourt in 1199.¹⁷⁸ Henley remained in royal hands, since evidence shows King Stephen issued a royal charter there in 1142, and it is believed that Henry II may have used it as a supply depot or hunting lodge when visiting his residences in Benson and Woodstock.

Henley's growth began in earnest during the early 1200s, when a development boom swept the English landscape. "Planned towns" or "new towns" were a deliberate creation across both England and Europe during the period between the Norman Conquest (1066) and The Black Death (1348-50). At a time of expanding trade and commerce as well as an expanding population planned towns were the brainchild of ecclesiastical and manorial lords who "hoped to increase their profits by attracting

¹⁷⁶ C. Moloney, "Excavations and Building Survey at Bell Street, Henley-on-Thames, 1993-4," *Oxoniensia* 62 (1997): 109-33.

¹⁷⁷ Katherine Tiller, ed. *Benson: A Village Through its History* (Wallingford, Oxfordshire: Pie Powder Press, 1999), 15-63.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

merchants and craftsmen and stimulating trade.”¹⁷⁹ According to M. W. Beresford, over 130 new towns were created in England between 1100 and 1300, and at least 66 in Wales.¹⁸⁰ Simon Townley describes the planned town phenomenon as similar to twentieth century planning initiatives¹⁸¹ enacted by the royal authority of King Henry II. Ultimately, the king set aside an unspecified amount of land in Henley “for making his new buildings” that included a rent allowance of “2s. 6d.,”¹⁸² and so began one of many permanent towns on the Thames River.

Appropriately, Henley’s origins reflect King Henry’s meticulous and rigid planning. The town’s basic layout, a large wedge-shaped market place and streets grouped around a central crossroads, makes “it abundantly clear that this a planned medieval town of familiar type.”¹⁸³ The size and shape of plots for new or existing streets, market squares, and house plots conformed to specific dimensions that were used to encourage urban stability. Henley’s development as a planned town began to pay dividends as it became a flourishing market center, and by 1250 the town had already become a major component in the expanding river trade.¹⁸⁴ It now served as a vital inland

¹⁷⁹ Simon Townley, *Henley-on-Thames: Town, Trade, and River* (Hampshire: Phillimore & Co Ltd, 2009), 11.

¹⁸⁰ M. W. Beresford, *New Towns of the Middle Ages: Town Plantation in England, Wales, and Gascony* (New York: Praeger, 1967), 43.

¹⁸¹ Townley, *Henley-on-Thames*, 9.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

port, funneling a variety of staple goods such as grain, wood, and malt into the expanding metropolis of London.¹⁸⁵

The agricultural prosperity of Henley lies in the combination of its geographical position and natural geology—a geology that Arthur Young referred to as, “The district of miscellaneous loams,”¹⁸⁶ while assessing the agricultural properties of Henley in his 1794 work, *The General View of Agriculture of the County of Oxfordshire*. The adjoining parishes stretch from the river to the Chiltern uplands, comprising a mixed landscape of wood pasture, small, hedged closes, and in the Middle Ages small open fields. Settlement is dispersed, and as elsewhere in the Chilterns the balance between crops, grazing and wood exploitation varied over time. Nonetheless, these miscellaneous circumstances allowed for a course of staple crops of barley, beans, and peas.

And these crops surely reached the thriving metropolis, since William Camden remarked in 1610 that:

Burcot [Oxfordshire] was the terminus for the great western barges, which were large sailing barges though on occasion they were towed by as many as three horses. They carried down stream ‘necessarie provisions’ for London, which certainly included large quantities of grain...Henley was mostly inhabited by watermen, who make their chiefest gaine by carrying downe in their barges wood and corne to London by water.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Jennifer Sherwood, *Oxfordshire, The Buildings of England* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), 635.

¹⁸⁶ Arthur Young, *General View of the Agriculture of Oxfordshire* (London: Printed for Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1813), 6.

¹⁸⁷ William Camden, *Camden’s Britannia* □: *Newly Translated into English: With Large Additions ...* (London: Edmund Gibson, printed by F. Collins, for A. Swalle; & A. & J. Churchill, 1695) 306.

Chipping Norton

Chipping Norton is a traditional market town situated in the northeastern end of the Cotswolds in northwest Oxfordshire, located 21 miles northwest of central Oxford and 60 miles west of London. It is a hill town sitting “astride the 600 foot contour on the east slopes of a valley that dip gently towards the southeast.”¹⁸⁸ The town’s name is derived directly from the Old English *ceping* meaning “market” or “market place.” It is followed by *Norton*, a common name in Old English that is comprised of the prefix *nor* and *tun*, which refer to its geographical and pastoral placement as a “north farmstead or village.”¹⁸⁹ Chipping Norton is mentioned in the Domesday Book in 1086 as “Nortone,” and, as early by 1224, it is thereafter referred to as “Chepingnorthona.”¹⁹⁰

Earthworks and archeological evidence points to a rich pre-historic, trading past. Scatterings of hill forts confirm that Iron Age settlements existed yet little has been uncovered and more evidence needs to be unearthed for a better understanding. Nonetheless, the district contains proof of early settlement. Evidence suggests that Neolithic farmers “cultivated the dry, limestone uplands, and erected a well-known stone circle

¹⁸⁸ John Howells, ed. *The Chipping Norton Area, The Changing Landscape of North West Oxfordshire*, (Chipping Norton: The Chipping Norton Museum of Local History, 2001), 21.

¹⁸⁹ Mills, *A Dictionary of British Place-Names*, 350.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

known as “The King’s Men,” and “The Hoar Stone,” a Neolithic burial chamber situated within the southern portion of the settlement.¹⁹¹

Seventeenth century chroniclers have described these as:

*Rollrick’s Stones, or Roul-rich Stones, which some suppose to be the remains of an old British temple, wilst others imagine they were set up in memory of Rollo, the famous Danish Commander. They are very lofty, and placed in a circular direction, with one taller than the other, which is vulgarly called the King.*¹⁹²

In addition to this geological evidence, remnants of Celtic invasion have been discovered several hill forts and ditches are evident in the southern part of the district, but peace and order seem to have been restored with the permanence of Roman settlement.

There is also good evidence of Roman sites, especially with regard to the outlying area of Alchester, Wilcote, and Asthall, which seems to have been home to a large fortress of both infantry and cavalry at approximately AD 50.¹⁹³ This early history points to a strategic importance as opposed to a commercial value since it lies along the main Roman road from St. Albans to Cirencester. Yet, it is also the site of a thriving Roman pottery production, providing red pottery and studded mixing bowls for trade to all parts of

¹⁹¹ British Geological Survey, *Geology of the Country Around Chipping Norton: Memoir for 1:50,000 Geological Sheet 218, New Series (England and Wales)* (London: H.M.S.O. [for the] Natural Environment Research Council, 1987), 1.

¹⁹² *A new display of the beauties of England: or, a description of the most elegant or magnificent public edifices, royal palaces, noblemen's and gentlemen's seats, and other curiosities, ... in different parts of the kingdom.* Adorned with a variety of copper plate cuts, neatly engraved. Volume the first. The third edition. (London: R. Goadby; and sold by J. Towers, 1776), 267.

¹⁹³ Howells, *The Chipping Norton Area*, 2.

southern Britain.¹⁹⁴ This industry flourished until the middle of the fourth century when the “collapse of the Roman administration brought an end to a prosperous way of life.”¹⁹⁵

A seventeenth century chronicler mentioned in his work, *A New Display of the Beauties of England*, that Chipping Norton, upon having such beauty and antiquity, appears to have been a market town at the time of the Saxons.¹⁹⁶ A prolonged Anglo-Saxon presence is definite since villages and towns that end in *-ford*, *-ham*, and *-tun* generally denote Anglo Saxon occupation.

The *Domesday Survey* shows Chipping Norton as part of the land of Ernulf de Hesding that was agriculturally active:

The same Ernulf holds Nortone [Chipping Norton]. There are 15 *h.* and 1 *v.* of land. (There is) land for 21 ploughs. Now in demesne (there are) 10 ploughs and 15 serfs; and 22 villeins with 16 bordars have 11 ploughs. There (are) 3 mills rendering (*de*) 62 *d.*, and 60 acres of meadow. Pasture 1 league in length and breadth. It was worth 16 *li.*; now (it is worth) 22 *li.* Ulward uuit and Aluric uuelp held it.¹⁹⁷

Medieval evidence shows that Chipping Norton was built upon the earthworks of a motte-and-bailey style¹⁹⁸ Norman castle. The town has a strong connection with the University of Oxford, as most Oxford colleges own land in Chipping Norton. This was a common occurrence with arable land in

¹⁹⁴ Sherwood, *Oxfordshire*, 411.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *A new display of the beauties of England*, 267.

¹⁹⁷ John Morris, ed., *The Domesday Book: A Survey of the Counties of England, Oxfordshire* (Chichester, Sussex: Phillimore & Co. Ltd., 1978), 40.

¹⁹⁸ The Normans introduced motte and bailey style castles in the eleventh century. It is comprised of both wood and stone palisades on an earthwork and was the preferred structure of its day since it could be erected quickly and easily by peasant labor with little or no skill.

the surrounding towns and villages, since it provided the colleges with both arable land and pasture that allowed them to obtain rent and supply foodstuffs to the fellows and members of the college. Brasenose, Christ Church, New, Oriel, St. John's and Wadham were a few of the prominent land holders, and many have estate maps that were commissioned by each college in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Brasenose had a particularly strong presence in the village, as enclosure documents indicates, "the Principal and Scholars of the *King's Hall*, commonly-called *Brazen Nose College*, in *Oxford* . . . are the Owners and Proprietors of all the said common Fields, commonable Lands, and Tythe ... and do enjoy common pasture for their cattle."¹⁹⁹

Chipping Norton's importance can be seen as early as 1360, as it is worthy of inclusion in a fourteenth-century map of the entire country.²⁰⁰ Roadmaps from John Ogilby's 1675 work, *Britannia*, features Chipping Norton as an integral part of the route between London and the Welsh town of Aberystwyth.²⁰¹ This western trade route seems to suggest that Chipping

¹⁹⁹ Chipping Norton,, Salford (Oxfordshire), and Great Britain, *An Act for Dividing and Inclosing Certain Open and Common Fields, Commonable Lands, and Waste Grounds, in the Parishes of Chipping Norton and Salford, in the County of Oxford* ([S.l.: s.n, 1769), 2.

²⁰⁰ R. J. P. Kain, *The Tithe Maps of England and Wales: a Cartographic Analysis and County-by-county Catalogue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 221.

²⁰¹ John Ogilby, *Britannia, Volume the First, or, An Illustration of the Kingdom of England and Dominion of Wales by a Geographical and Historical Description of the Principal Roads Thereof, Actually Admeasured and Delineated in a Century of Whole-sheet Copper-sculps: Accomodated with the Ichnography of the Several Cities And capital Towns, and Completed by an Accurate Account of the More Remarkable Passages of Antiquity: Together with a Novel Discourse of the Present State* (London: Printed by the author, 1675), 14.

Norton acted as an important locus of exchange and could also have acted as a re-victualling station for those travelling by coach or on horseback.

Geological Background

Chipping Norton's importance in trade and commerce is also linked to its exceptional geological characteristics. The salient geological facts, as John Steane points out, about North Oxfordshire are that it is an undulating region lying generally between the 400-500 foot contours but rising at Chipping Norton to above the 600 foot mark, divided by tributaries which flow down in a south easterly direction towards the river Cherwell in the east and towards the rivers Windrush and Evenlode to the South.²⁰² Within this region, the oolitic limestone has been weathered down to expose the sandy ferruginous ginger-colored limestone, known as the marlstone. This provides to be not only an excellent building material, but it can be used as low-grade ironstone. Chipping Norton limestone, which is found atop the marlstone, has been quarried at the villages of Chastleton and at Burford.²⁰³ All this building stone can be found in the medieval buildings, mainly churches, used as dressings for spires, quoins, and moldings, while the softer

²⁰² Chipping Norton Museum of Local History, *The Chipping Norton Area: The Changing Landscape of North West Oxfordshire* (Chipping Norton: Chipping Norton Museum of Local History, 2001), 14.

²⁰³ This is part of the Taynton Limestone Formation, a limestone that is characterized by shells and fossils, and which was used extensively in both Chipping Norton and Burford. The limestone was most famously used in the construction of All Souls and Merton College, Oxford.

rusty looking marlstone is used for walling, often in polychromatic contrast to the limestone freestone. The primary roofing material in this region is thatch.²⁰⁴

Chipping Norton is part of the Red-land District, and very nearly the whole range of country (13 miles from Banbury to Chipping Norton) was enclosed by Act of Parliament in the late seventeenth century.²⁰⁵ The majority of it is grass, but much, also, is arable field. It is all red-land on gritstone till within three miles of Chipping Norton, where the yellow limestone brash begins.²⁰⁶ It sits in a valley at the junction of oolitic limestone with underlying lias clays.²⁰⁷ The soil in the northern part of the county is rich red loam and sandy on a red gritstone rock, which “they break for the turnpike-roads, of which it makes execrably bad ones.”²⁰⁸

Chipping Norton Agriculture and the Black Death

In the early fourteenth century Chipping Norton experienced economic decline that was unconnected with the plague. The weather may well have begun to deteriorate as famine descended on the town in the years 1315-18. Poor crops meant undernourishment and vulnerability to disease for peasant cultivators. Consequently, the Black Death of 1349 caused substantial

²⁰⁴ *Chipping Norton Area*, 14.

²⁰⁵ This Act included dividing and enclosing open and common fields in the parishes of Chipping Norton and Salford, Oxfordshire in 1769.

²⁰⁶ Young, *General View of the Agriculture of Oxfordshire*, 4.

²⁰⁷ *Chipping Norton Area*, 21.

²⁰⁸ Young, *General View*, 4.

depopulation when Chipping Norton's death rate jumped sevenfold.²⁰⁹ Yet, the depopulation in the Chipping Norton countryside was the catalyst towards considerable change to the agricultural landscape, which was brought about through the rearrangement of fields and farms in reaction to the abandonment of the open field system. The arrangement of farms and fields in the countryside is governed by agricultural systems popular at the time and by patterns of ownership.²¹⁰ As long ago as the ninth century a system of communal farming based on open arable fields and common pastures had operated over much of lowland England, including the rich agricultural lands of Chipping Norton and Burford in northern Oxfordshire. The two-field system had long prevailed in Oxfordshire before 1350, which required assarting,²¹¹ an expensive and laborious process.²¹² The lack of labor, although the end result of a catastrophic event, forced abandonment of the two-field system and allowed northern Oxfordshire, including Chipping Norton, a chance to experiment, organize, and ultimately realize a more efficient method of farming.

The Agricultural Systems in Northern Oxfordshire (Chipping Norton)

The Chipping Norton system that evolved at the end of the Middle Ages was dependent on mixed farming with a balance between crops and

²⁰⁹ *Chipping Norton Area*, 19.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 39.

²¹¹ The process required bringing a piece of land, often of irregular shape, into cultivation from the waste. The term is usually applied to medieval clearance.

²¹² *Chipping Norton Area*, 15.

livestock, the latter providing power and manure to make the system effective, in addition to meat, milk and wool. The land in every parish was divided into huge areas of arable (often three fields, but sometimes two or four), plus further areas of pasture and meadow, referred to as “commons” because they were grazed in common by livestock belonging to all the householders, who also enjoyed the important right to gather fuel on the commons.²¹³ The way the system worked in Chipping Norton was typical of many parishes. To prevent overgrazing a jury²¹⁴ or committee of owners and tenants appointed by the manor court drew up regulations about the number of animals each householder could graze. Those who were also farmers with land in the open fields had a further allocation related to the size of their holdings. There were additional regulations about dates when grazing was permitted on each of the commons and when the meadows would be closed for growing a hay crop. Animals were also grazed on the arable fields after harvest in order to fertilize the soil with their manure. So important was the communal principle of shared benefit that there were even regulations about the amount of manure any householder could take from the common for use as fuel or fertilizer at home, specifying that only so much as could be carried away “on their heads or backs” was permitted to be taken.²¹⁵

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Jury service was dependent upon a property qualification defined in 1285 and extended in 1664 and 1692.

²¹⁵ *The Chipping Norton Area*, 15.

Crop Rotation

The rotation of crops in the arable fields of Chipping Norton, the dates of plowing, sowing and harvesting were agreed by the jury and, like their other regulations, enforced by fines in the manor court. These great fields were divided into many narrow strips grouped together in furlongs. One of the fields was left fallow each year and manured in order to restore its fertility. Traditionally, Oxfordshire farmers had strips scattered over all the fields ensuring a level of “fairness” that everyone would be subject to both good soil and, in some cases, wasteland. The fact that these strips were scattered rather than being joined together into compact holding was one of the characteristic features of the open field system. As David Eddershaw comments, “The original reasons for adopting this pattern can only be guessed at. Perhaps it was a way of ensuring a fair allocation of good and poor land, or it may have resulted from the allocation of strips of new land in rotation to each family as the land was first cleared from the waste.”²¹⁶ Neither the strips nor the furlongs were enclosed so that the landscape was truly an open one with only the large fields and the commons surrounded by hedges. The other landscape feature of Oxfordshire’s open field farming which survives in the modern countryside is the familiar pattern of ridge and furrow still to be seen where former arable strips had been continuously

²¹⁶ David Eddershaw, *Chipping Norton the Story of a Market Town* (Chipping Norton: Poundstone Press, 2006), 43.

ploughed in the same direction perhaps for centuries, piling the soil into ridges in the centre and leaving deep furrows at the edges of the strips.²¹⁷

Although this agricultural arrangement lasted for some time in Chipping Norton, there were always those who found the restrictions of the open field system irksome and sought ways of overcoming its inefficiencies or avoiding the controls of its communal jury.²¹⁸ The way round it was for groups of like-minded progressive farmers to exchange strips so that each ended up with at least part of their holding in a consolidated block. This could then be enclosed and farmed separately from the rest of the village land. An unusually extensive agreement of this sort happened at Charlbury in 1715 when 59 owners agreed to enclose most of one field.²¹⁹ More limited “enclosure by agreement: was common in most parishes from an early date so that the open field landscape of Oxfordshire would have been broken up by patches of small enclosed fields.

The problem was that the traditional system of open field farming with communal control did not encourage innovation. Any change from the usual crop rotation had to be agreed by the jury and the more enterprising farmers could find it difficult to persuade the others to try new ideas. David Eddershaw believes that in Chipping Norton there was progress being made before 1770 without abandoning the old system completely. The original three fields had been divided into four to allow a more varied rotation and

²¹⁷ Ibid., 42–43.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 43.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

the growing of legumes, which enriched the nitrogen content of the soil.²²⁰ As discussed previously, sanfoin, another improved grass crop was also being grown, sure signs that while still operating a communal system some improvements were possibly for the enterprising farmers of this area. Further problems remained because of the inefficiency of the pattern of scattered strips and the communal grazing of animals, which in particular prevented the raising of better livestock through selective breeding, although local men like Robert Fowler of Little Rollright were among the pioneers in this field.²²¹

The resolution was found through what has become known as the enclosure movement. The open fields and much of the commons, together with the system of communal management, were abolished and the land re-allocated among the owners in compact farms made up of small fields, which were immediately enclosed with hedges. Although this method is infamous among the small leasehold or copyhold tenants since it abolished the collaborative approach that had been practiced for generations, it created tensions in areas with neighboring townships that often shared commons, and resulted in destruction and, sometimes, outright violence.²²² Eddershaw argues that now Chipping Norton's owners and tenants could practice the

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 43–44.

²²² The Midland Revolt of 1607 was the most violent response to the enclosure of common land.

methods they thought best in order to maximize output to meet the demands of the expanding grain market.²²³

Chipping Norton provides an exception to the usual pattern in that when an enclosure award for the parish was under consideration the Corporation of the town took up the cause of the poorer inhabitants and sent a petition to Parliament objecting to the enclosure of the ancient commons. They argued that private acts of enclosure encroached upon their rights. The common had been given to the town by the Earl of Arundel, lord of the manor in the fourteenth century, “for the benefit of all the inhabitants of the town,” a benefit which they still enjoy today although some more was enclosed for private use in the nineteenth century.²²⁴

Burford

Its name suggests, from records 1086 onward, that Burford is derived from *Burh-furd*, a defended or fortified settlement by a ford, and not from “Guhr” or “Georg-,” a hill, which should give a modern form Borford or Barford.²²⁵ Burford, now on the borders of west Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire, was, in the days of the Saxon Kingdoms, an “antient market

²²³ Eddershaw, *Chipping Norton the Story of a Market Town*, 44. Eddershaw’s argument echoes Robert C. Allen’s work, *Enclosure and the Yeoman: The Agricultural Development of the South Midlands* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). Allen believes early enclosure, particularly that of the open field enclosure of the seventeenth century, brought great gains in productivity.

²²⁴ Eddershaw. *Chipping Norton the Story of a Market Town*, 44.

²²⁵ Mills, *Dictionary of British Place-Names*, 86.

town”²²⁶ in debatable territory between Saxon Wessex and Anglian Mercia.

The component *burh*- in its name suggests an element of defence or fortification and its frontier position on a ford on the north-south route may have given it an importance, which it lost after the unification of England under King Alfred’s successors.

Like the other two villages under examination, Burford has evidence of Roman occupation. The discovery of ancient coins and a Roman coffin on the lower road from Upton points to an early settlement.²²⁷ The Domesday Book in 1086 presents Burford as an undistinguished and somewhat unremarkable agricultural village, but early historians of Burford argue this may not always have been so. There is early evidence that a synod took place in 685, at which Berhtwald, a Mercian noble, conveyed land at Somerford to Aldhelm²²⁸, then abbot of Malmesbury, at a church council at *Berghford*.²²⁹ This, in some respects, may be the nascent realization of Burford’s fertility, and this simple conveyance may truly reflect an early acknowledgment of its agricultural potential.

Burford developed on a north-south route with a ford important enough to give the town its name. Since the Windrush River is easily fordable in many places, Burford’s importance, as Raymond Moody claims, may be more the

²²⁶ *A new display of the beauties of England*, 267.

²²⁷ Mary Sturge Gretton, *Burford, Past and Present* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1945), 13.

²²⁸ Aldhelm (639-709) obtained considerable grants of land for his Benedictine monastery that included Frome and Bradford-on-Avon in Wiltshire.

²²⁹ Raymond Moody, *Burford Through Time* (Stroud: Amberley, 2010), 3.

result of the Thames crossings to the south, especially at Radcot where the banks in the flood plain may have made the building of a bridge easier than of any special suitability here.²³⁰

As in most Oxfordshire villages located near rivers and streams, bridges help date Burford's settlement. There is evidence of a stone bridge that can be traced as early as 958, and then a wooden bridge some time before 1322, when Edward II granted "a toll on the goods to the town for the purpose of repairing the bridge."²³¹ Furthermore, Richard Gough's map from 1360 illustrates the main traffic routes of medieval England as they spread out from London. The drawings display worthy thoroughfares and clearly establish that the main road to Gloucester and St. David's passed through Oxford, Witney, and Burford.²³²

Additionally, when English cartographer John Ogilby made his survey of the main roads in *Britannia*, Burford occurred twice: once on the route from Salisbury to Chipping Campden and again on the route from Bristol to Banbury.²³³ This points to Burford's growth in both notoriety and importance as a crossroads and a historically vital junction that consisted of a wide market area in the sixteenth century.

A rough evaluation of Burford's medieval population is difficult, although possible. In 1086, the Domesday Book noted 43 tenants living on the manor

²³⁰ Moody, *Burford Through Time*, 3.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² *Ibid.*, 107.

²³³ John Ogilby, *Britannia, An Illustration of the Kingdom of England*, 14.

grounds, which according to historian Antonia Catchpole suggests a rough population of 200 persons.²³⁴ By the thirteenth century, many of the estimated 200 homes in Burford were possibly subdivided into smaller units to accommodate a growing public, which by Catchpole's estimation would suggest a population of 900 persons or more. She argues this is reasonable given that many typical fourteenth-century small towns had population in the region of 500-1000.²³⁵ Nonetheless, a poll tax list taken in 1377 shows only 343 souls, which suggests a smaller population than Henley-on-Thames, but a larger populace than Chipping Norton.²³⁶ Yet it would recover and the population would rise to roughly seven or eight hundred by 1500.²³⁷

Burford's Markets, Fairs, and Commercial Importance

One of the privileges given to the town by its charter, particularly since Burford can trace its origins as a planned town, was the right to hold a market, but there is no indication how often or when this should be. Evidence is provided by lord of the manor Robert Fitz-Hamon²³⁸ who, in 1088, allowed the dwellers of Burford to:

²³⁴ Antonia Catchpole, *Burford: Buildings and People in a Cotswold Town* (Chichester: Phillimore, 2008), 30.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

²³⁷ Gretton, *Burford, Past and Present*, 16.

²³⁸ Robert Fitz-Hamon (d. 1107), Anglo-Norman baron and kinsman to William the Conqueror, gained the manor in Burford, as well as the Castle of Gloucester and the mansion of Tewkesbury, when he stood against the rebellion of Odo, Bishop of Bayeux (1030-1097).

Hold your houses in more independence—be able to sell or bequeathe them; Also by permission have your own market—sell to strangers who cross Your ford or traverse your upland on their journeys to Oxford; moreover Set up a Gild?²³⁹

This was how the town Charter was granted, giving the men and women of Burford not only a weekly market and an incentive to trade, but also a remarkable measure of independence with regard to rights of property holding and commerce.

Nevertheless, the market was first held each week on Sunday, and this was in all likelihood the custom from the beginning. Burford's medieval market would have been comprised of rough carts, tumbrels, or pack animals from nearby villages that brought agricultural produce in season: corn, vegetables, dairy produce and meat, hides and wool. There were also notable luxuries of woven stuffs such as "samite,²⁴⁰ diaper²⁴¹ and baudekyn cloth;²⁴² silk fabrics with and without gold embroidery; linen cloths of Galway and Worstead."²⁴³ Raymond Moody stresses that, "The money gained from the produce would buy what a village could not supply for itself: material such as bar iron for village blacksmiths and necessities such as slate."²⁴⁴ The merchant properties that surrounded the market place would put out "shops" or temporary benches in front of their premises for the sale of cloth, leather

²³⁹ Gretton, *Burford, Past and Present*, 15.

²⁴⁰ Samite is a luxurious and heavy silk fabric worn in the Middle Ages that consisted of a twill weave with gold and silk.

²⁴¹ A white cotton or linen fabric with a geometric pattern.

²⁴² Baudekyn or Baudekin is a rich brocade; a fabric of silk and gold thread manufactured in Baghdad.

²⁴³ Gretton, *Burford, Past and Present*, 18.

²⁴⁴ Moody, *Burford Through Time*, 76.

goods, or clothing. As time went by these extensions became permanent, and to this day the older properties on the High Street have single story projections in front of the building. There would also be travelling traders, though probably the more exotic commodities appeared only at fair times.

A fair was a larger, more extensive market, and it was typically held on a yearly rather than a weekly cycle. Burford was granted a fair in 1322 by Edward II, who allowed the town the right to “levy tolls for three years of goods brought here for sale to finance the repair of the bridge.”²⁴⁵ Most importantly, Burford developed into an important center visited by foreign merchants and traders in the fourteenth century. This is readily apparent in the oldest of the Burford fairs, The Midsummer Fair. Noted as early as 1297, the royal grant of 1323 to the Lord of the Manor allowed a fair lasting for seven days before and eight days after St. John’s Day, June 24, the patron festival of the parish church. The Midsummer Fair was an important and monumental commercial event, especially for the cloth industry, which attracted business from abroad. The Cotswold wool clip for the year was marketed to representatives of the great Italian finance houses buying for the cloth industries of Tuscany, often purchasing in advance. The clip when it was ready would go by packhorse or wagon over Radcot Bridge to Southhampton to be shipped in Genoese carracks to Pisa and up the Arno to Florence.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 78.

Geologically speaking, Burford's soil composition represents challenges to successful agriculture. Surrounded by some of the most picturesque land in the country, Burford contains a curious geography of gravel and a subsoil of Oxford clay. The preponderance of oolitic limestone is found within the Taynton Limestone Formation, a Jurassic formation that makes up Burford's characteristic shell and fossil stone. Early observations of Burford's agricultural difficulties are evident in Arthur Young's observance of Oxfordshire:

Burford, located in the Stonebrash district and enclosed 13 years ago, is in general a stone brash; but there was a large tract of heath land, which is still of a more loose and hollow quality, and which demands a more attentive management. On this land the layers are always pared and burnt; but not on the brash, because too stony for the operation.²⁴⁷

Young further considered the area around Burford and Sherborn as "open, dull, and very disagreeable."²⁴⁸ Yet, with the aforementioned agricultural and technological advances, Burford's yeomen adapted, adjusted, and prevailed over the undulating limestone region, with "attentive management."²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ Arthur Young and Board of Agriculture (Great Britain), *General View of the Agriculture of Oxfordshire* (London: Printed for Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1813), 6.

²⁴⁸ Arthur Young, *A six weeks tour through the Southern Counties of England and Wales*. (London: Published by the Author, printed by W. Nicoll, 1768), 102.

²⁴⁹ Young, *General View of Agriculture of Oxfordshire*, 10.

Burford's Agriculture

Burford began as an agricultural village and, when it became a town, it provided the marketing and agricultural services that the surrounding area needed. As the Middle Ages progressed, this role flourished. While the great Midsummer Fair was of international importance, throughout its life the market offered basic services that included the sale of horses, cattle and especially sheep, dairy products and, most importantly, crops.²⁵⁰ As Raymond and Joan Moody claim, "The town never ceased to live in a close relationship with the land around it."²⁵¹

After the granting of the charter, the parish developed two entities, one based on the town and the other based on the manor. While the manor was almost entirely agricultural, the town with its free tenants and its commercial interest also had its farming side, with two great arable fields spreading east and south, a hay meadow by the river and downland for pasture on the eastern edge of the parish.²⁵² The rest of the parish, the hamlets of Upton and Signet, formed an agricultural manor with its centre in the later Middle Ages at Bury Barns, where the manor barns were built.

Much the same as Chipping Norton, Burford's countryside was divided more or less into rectangular blocks called furlongs, which were then divided by turf baulks or simple furrows into roughly parallel strips. There were

²⁵⁰ Raymond and Joan Moody, *A Thousand Years of Burford*, (Oxford: Hindsight Press, 2006), 99.

²⁵¹ Moody, *A Thousand Years of Burford*, 99.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

perhaps two thousand of these in the entire parish and any one man's holding of them consisted of a large number of scattered through the fields. As Raymond and Joan Moody suggest, in concurrence with Chipping Norton, "the dispersion of holdings was the most trying feature of the system for it was a great waster of time and frustrated agricultural progress."²⁵³

Yet, Arthur Young, the same man who lamented Burford's appearance and agricultural challenges, comments widely on its agricultural success. He describes the composition of the crops in the area of Burford and Sherborn and evaluates their composition:

Some fallow for wheat. 2. Dibbled pease. 3. Barley: others vary it, !
Wheat. 2 Beans dibbled, or barley 3. Pease. They lay down with ray-
gras and clover ... they reckon three quarters of wheat to be a very
good crop, and as much barley and beans.²⁵⁴

He adds that the farms to which these crops are grown are "in general large, indeed absurdly so," that a Burford farmer named Mr. Dutton, "a man of considerable fortune, can bear to live in the midst of such a vastly extensive property."²⁵⁵ By Young's account, Burford's early modern appearance is less than appealing, but aesthetics are secondary to the high farmer's status and the high quality of the wheat and legume crops that were grown with the obvious assistance of the aforementioned regenerative grasses.

Yet, it was neither the musings of Arthur Young or even other contemporary proponents such as Daniel Defoe or Samuel Pepys that would

²⁵³ Moody, *Burford*, 100.

²⁵⁴ Young, *A Six Weeks Tour Through the Southern Counties of England*, 102.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 103.

add to the arable acreage and successful grain trade in Oxfordshire; it would be men like Henley's Sir Bulstrode Whitelock and Burford's William Lenthall, men with considerable vision, wealth, and political connections—men who would not live to see the final completion of each town's development, but who would leave an indelible mark on the Thames valley region.

The towns of Burford, Chipping Norton, and Henley-on-Thames were early market towns, founded amongst a limestone upland, a clay vale, and loamy, natural marshland located, in some cases, below sea-level and subject to flooding, which stood in stark contrast to the rest of southeastern England, an arable farming territory. Each area was subject to the expensive and labor-intensive form of assarting²⁵⁶ and marling,²⁵⁷ and the ability to grow crops and produce foodstuffs (namely grass-like cereal crops) was limited to the small, non-flooding chalk and surrounding limestone uplands. These villages had immediate access to larger river systems and could move goods and livestock to market. Ultimately, the Thames River system of the Cotswolds, Chilterns hills and the Thames Valley would serve as a midwife to the growth of each town in this study.

Roman and medieval inhabitants struggled with various ways of reclaiming land from overflowing rivers that brought constant silting, consistent tidal surges, and heavy clay soils. Their efforts were to no avail as

²⁵⁶ To grub up trees and bushes from forest-land, so as to make it arable. "assart, v.". OED Online. September 2012. Oxford University Press.
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/11725?redirectedFrom=assarting> (accessed September 12, 2012).

²⁵⁷ To spread with lime.

reclamation was only transitory and led to the swift abandonment of large-scale agricultural projects. Agricultural and technological advancement finally allowed the landowning yeomen in these areas to overcome these rural deficiencies and to reap the benefits of their crops. It will be discussed in the following chapter that the silting issues within the river system were only temporarily ignored; there would be a massive thrust towards dredging and widening that would transform the Thames valley and English Midlands, including the towns of Burford, Chipping Norton, and Henley, from pastoral to arable farming. This alteration was due to the growing significance of grain markets, which produced cash crops such as wheat, barley, and rapeseed, all of which would be vital to England's rising population.

CHAPTER 3

The following chapter examines the impact of water transport on the Oxfordshire grain market, and how a growing population and the urgent monetary needs of the Stuart government and the implementation of various legislation that brought medieval pastoral farming, grain transport, and local markets into the early modern agricultural age.

The navigability of English inland waterways came into focus as the amount of goods to London and other major ports increased. According to David Hey, heavy, loose materials, such as coal, clay, lime, sand, gravel, salt, and grain and bulky goods such as pigs of lead were transported wherever possible by water rather than by land “since water transport tended to be much cheaper than road transport.”²⁵⁸ In order to accommodate the flow of dry goods, the Thames and its arterial rivers and canals required periodical dredging and maintenance since, like most waterways, they suffered from a variety of alluvial deposits. The navigability of the major rivers in England improved under the private Acts of Parliament during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Fortunately, the villages of Burford, Chipping Norton, and Henley-on-Thames were in the direct path of this undertaking, and would feel the full impact of this change. Therefore, it is practical to examine the region of the Thames Valley and the Chiltern hills with their

²⁵⁸ *The Oxford Companion to Local and Family History*, ed. David Hey (London: New York: BCA, 1996), 396.

geographical irregularities and incongruities with regard to river transport, and the difficulties that surfaced with the growing need for dredging schemes, water transport, and the irrevocable impact on the landscape.

The Growing Significance of Oxfordshire Grain Markets

The English yeoman's relative success in agricultural development was due to the demands of seventeenth-century population growth. During the period of 1600 to 1750, the population of England rose from about 4 million at the death of Elizabeth to an estimated 6.25 million.²⁵⁹ Predictably, London gained a fair amount of this population. The city had a population of one quarter of a million people in 1605, but by 1700, the inhabitants of the city had doubled.²⁶⁰

In addition, both large and small towns experienced similar population spikes that created a rising demand for goods. In 1524, Oxford was a small town of 3,000 inhabitants and ranked about twenty-ninth in wealth on the basis of the Poll Tax of 1523-27.²⁶¹ In 1580, the population had approached 5,000 and eventually grew to 9,000 by 1630. Although there was a temporary drop during the Civil War, Oxford achieved a population of

²⁵⁹ Norman Scott Brien Gras, *The Evolution of the English Corn Market from the Twelfth to the Eighteenth Century*, Harvard Economic Studies v.13 (Cambridge, [Mass.]: Harvard University Press, 1915), 75.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Mary Prior, "Women and the Urban Economy, 1500-1800" in *Women in English Society: 1500-1800*, ed. Mary Prior (London: Methuen, 1985), 93-117.

10,000, and ranked ninth in wealth amongst English towns.²⁶² Additionally, the dietary needs of a growing society (2.5 million in the mid-fifteenth century rose to five million by 1620)²⁶³ greatly assisted the yeoman concerned with those foods supplied by agriculture, especially with respect to the villages under study. It is necessary to recognize the importance of grain in the diets of European men and women and how it relates to the overall rise in the yeoman's standard of living.

In an effort to realize the significance of grain consumption in daily English life, its overall importance in European life must be observed. On the continent, grain represented approximately half a man's daily existence.²⁶⁴ Although grain crops had produced a relatively low yield since the Middle Ages, the popularity of bread and alcohol in both the upper and lower tiers of society contributed to its unswerving demand. Consequently, erratic swings in its price due to famine, bad weather, and speculation on wheat, provided large profits for some European "middle-men," yeomen, and merchants supplying grain to various parts of the continent.

In contrast to the European situation, England maintained a unique if not advantageous agricultural position during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Since the country had not been as badly impacted by most of the catastrophic events that engulfed Europe during the early modern period

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Jan de Vries, *The Dutch Rural Economy in the Golden Age, 1500-1700* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 101.

²⁶⁴ Fernand Braudel, *The Structures of Everyday Life: Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century* (London: Fontana Press, 1985), 133.

(famine, epidemics, foreign invasion as a result of the Thirty Year's War), it allowed agricultural improvements such as fen drainage and different types of manuring to carry on quickly and more consistently than in Western Europe (excluding perhaps the Netherlands).²⁶⁵ During the latter half of the seventeenth century, England produced a surplus of grain for its needs, which accounts for the success in feeding its growing population.²⁶⁶ Sir William Coventry remarked in the mid-sixteenth century that, "the great increase in the agricultural output of England all points to the improvements in farming techniques."²⁶⁷ Amy Louise Erickson states that coupled with a lessening reliance on Baltic grain imports and an engrossing surplus by mid-century, the large middling yeomen were moving up in status while the poorer husbandmen and cottagers who lost their land got poorer, sinking into the life of wage laborers.²⁶⁸

With the long-term growth of English agriculture and the commercially driven farmer on route to an atmosphere of financial promise, one question still remains: what made the region of Oxfordshire ripe for the rise of the prosperous yeoman? The answer, however complex and problematic, lies in the various factors that are inherent to the region: the development of

²⁶⁵ Ralph Davis, *The Rise of the Atlantic Economies*, World Economic History (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1973), 194.

²⁶⁶ John Morrill, ed., *The Oxford Illustrated History of Tudor and Stuart Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 116.

²⁶⁷ Keith Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680* (London: Routledge, 1982), 28.

²⁶⁸ Amy Louise Erickson, "Family, Household, and Community," in *the Oxford Illustrated History of Tudor and Stuart Britain*, 116.

specialized grain markets within close range of waterborne transportation and the governmental modification of river transport.

In order to understand the growth of grain and corn markets in the Oxfordshire area, it is essential to first look back to the Tudor period and the various issues that both hindered and helped the rise of agricultural prosperity. In the early sixteenth century, market towns still served a purely local area and few specialized in marketing any particular type of agricultural commodity. The increasing specialization of market towns emerges most distinctly in the east of England and a few Thames-side markets in Oxfordshire, Surrey and Berkshire.²⁶⁹ These towns were largely devoted to butter, cheese, poultry, fish, and cattle; however, they began to slowly develop a position in the corn trade. Specialization now created market areas that were not sharply defined or mutually exclusive. It was not unusual for villagers to sometimes frequent two or three markets, particularly the corn markets of Oxfordshire at Watling and Reading.²⁷⁰ Nonetheless, to meet the quantitative demands of a growing population especially in the riverside villages of Burford, Chipping Norton, and Henley-on-Thames there needed to be vital improvements in transport.

²⁶⁹ *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*; General editor, H. P. R. Finberg (London: Cambridge U.P, 1967), 491.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 500.

Grain and River Transportation

Improved transportation was an integral factor in “breaking out” of the traditional economic horizon of the local market town. The advances in shipping agricultural goods would allow the yeomen an opportunity to sell their product to more remote markets. N. S. B. Gras, writing at the early part of the twentieth century, reasoned that:

It is clear that London by 1565 had begun to look to the counties to the north as an important source of corn supply whether the route was through Lynn and then by sea, or over-land and down the Lea. This is particularly interesting when we remember that it is a return, in a magnified form, to the earlier conditions of the Middle Ages when London was in part supplied with corn from the north through the manorial marketing organization.²⁷¹

With the expanding economy and demand for foodstuff to the capital, England’s medieval road system had come under increasing strain. Medieval road maintenance was done on a piecemeal basis, leaving English thoroughfares, by the start of the early modern era, in a state of uneven disarray. This was particularly true of the main roads leading into London from the north and northwest. The Tudor government, in an effort to create a more efficient and workable road system, addressed the condition of English roads in the Act of 1555, which placed the responsibility of

²⁷¹ Gras, *Evolution of the English Corn Market*, 109.

maintenance on the parishes.²⁷² This required men of the parish to work an annual four-day shift on the roads, each an eight-hour day. As maintenance demands increased, the yearly requirement was raised from four to six days a year in 1563.²⁷³ Shirking this responsibility resulted in fines, which were then used to hire outside labor to complete the roadwork. This haphazard approach further contributed to the Elizabethan transport problem; the roads would remain usable, but they were hardly cost-effective with regard to bulk loads, making it difficult to promote and encourage the successful transportation of a widely dispersed grain industry.

Nevertheless, ground transport grew slowly in each of the villages, and developed somewhat later with the rise of coaching services. By the 1640s, the roads had been turnpiked from London to Henley, but they were still challenging, particularly in bad weather.²⁷⁴ Henley merchant and MP Sir Bulstrode Whitlock owned a private coach that could get him to London in a half day; yet, the dangers that characterized English road conditions are evident in his writing, where he complained of how the poor state of the lanes caused his carriage to topple over and “deposited his wife in a dirty hole at the brewhouse door.”²⁷⁵ Burford also grappled with the condition of its road transport, and ultimately benefitted from improvements; but these

²⁷² Thomas Stuart Willan, *The Inland Trade: Studies in English Internal Trade in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Manchester: Totowa, N.J: Manchester University Press; Rowman and Littlefield, 1976), 3.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ Simon Townley, ed., *Henley-on-Thames: Town, Trade and River* (Phillimore & Co Ltd, 2009), 98.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

would come in the early eighteenth century when coach services would link “Oxford with Gloucester, Bath and Bristol.”²⁷⁶ By the 1730s, services between Gloucester and London passed through Burford as an alternative to their main route through Lechlade and Abingdon, and turnpiking was finally completed in 1751.²⁷⁷ Yet, as these late refinements were not felt until the 1760s, the yeomen turned their attention to the adjacent river network.

Waterborne improvements characterized the technological, agricultural, and transportation advancements of the seventeenth century, and many new stretches of river were cleared for boat traffic; the Thames was slowly made fully navigable between London and Oxford between 1540 and 1635.²⁷⁸ Initially, Oxford, Abingdon, and Wallingford were localized markets, but given their navigable streams, they further developed into extensive inland grain entrepôts for the London market. Hence, much of the late sixteenth-century, inland-waterway corn traffic to London greatly exceeded that of the coastal trade.

N. S. B. Gras, in his work on English corn yields and the relation to consumption, estimates that London’s consumption of corn stoked the demand supplied from provincial sources since, in 1605, Londoners consumed 550,000 quarters,²⁷⁹ which is based on a population of 224,275

²⁷⁶ Antonia Catchpole, *Burford: Buildings and People in a Cotswold Town* (Chichester: Phillimore, 2008), 97.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁸ Joan Thirsk, *Economic Policy and Projects: The Development of a Consumer Society in Early Modern England* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978), 18.

²⁷⁹ A *quarter* of grain is equal to eight bushels. Each bushel weighs fifty-six pounds.

consuming 2 ½ quarters per head per annum, together with an additional 50,000 quarters to cover ship's provisions, horses, fodder and corn in beer exported.²⁸⁰ These numbers illustrate the expanding economic relationship between London and the remote town and village agricultural network.

Additionally, a good deal of the grain that helped satisfy metropolitan demand came from the counties of Oxfordshire, Berkshire, and Buckinghamshire, and was shipped from many grain producing towns strung along the Thames (Oxford, Abingdon, Reading, Kingston, and above all, Henley).²⁸¹ Out of 121 shipments received in London and recorded in the Bridgehouse *Corn Book* for 1568-73, as much as one-third came from Henley.²⁸² The years 1500-1640 seem to have witnessed a striking expansion of grain exports from the northern counties with the Netherlands as the principal destination of English grain.²⁸³ The opportunity to sell further afield contributed to the growth of yeoman prosperity.

Navigable waterways played an integral part in Oxfordshire's successful participation in the grain market. The movement of goods, especially grains and luxury goods, is vital to this discussion. Also, it is essential to pay particular attention to the networks of dispersion, the most reasonable and cost effective means of travel, and how the movement of these goods took place in early modern England. Thomas Birch's eighteenth-century

²⁸⁰ Gras, *Evolution of the English Corn Market*, 77.

²⁸¹ *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*; General editor, H. P. R. Finberg, 508.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 520.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 526.

publication, *The History of the Royal Society of London* (1760), issues an extract of these views of both by Irish Secretary of State and President of the Royal Society, Sir Robert Southwell. As a diplomat and former Customs Commissioner, Southwell extolled the virtues of navigable waters in his 1673 treatise to the Royal Society, “wherein the principal use of the sea and rivers is for easier carriage of commodities.”²⁸⁴ He recognized the advantages of waterborne transport as he compares the economic inequality between coastal and land delivery:

For we see, that a tun of twenty hundred of seacoal is brought near three hundred miles for about four shillings; or at six shillings and six pence per chalder²⁸⁵ which is in weight about thirty-three hundred: but the land carriage of the same by wagon would be about fifteen pounds, viz. seventy five times as much, and on horseback above an hundred times as much; horse carriage being in proportion to wheel carriage as three or two. Wherefore, more commonly and practically speaking, the ordinary proportion between ship and wheel carriage is about one to twenty, and of inland water-carriage to wheel carriage, as one to twelve.²⁸⁶

T. S. Willan asserts that the relative costs of different transport as outlined by Southwell “was valid for not only the later seventeenth century, but for the later sixteenth century as well.”²⁸⁷ Willan argues that, although far from being completely accurate, Sir Robert’s evidence illuminates the heart of the Elizabethan and Stuart transport issues: the ongoing relationship between

²⁸⁴ Thomas Birch, *The History of the Royal Society of London for Improving of Natural Knowledge: From Its First Rise. In Which the Most Considerable of Those Papers Communicated to the Society, Which Have Hitherto Not Been Published, Are Inserted in Their Proper Order, as a Supplement to the Philosophical Transactions* (London: A. Millar, 1756), 207.

²⁸⁵ A *chalder* is an ancient unit of measurement, most likely of Scottish origin, that refers to dry goods such as grain.

²⁸⁶ Birch, *Royal Society*, 207

²⁸⁷ Willan, *Inland Trade*, 1.

the cost of waterborne carriage and land carriage as it applies to weight and value of goods. Willan confides that bulk goods of low value, such as coal, were monumentally expensive to transport over land since the cost of transport grossly outweighed the value of the goods. These heavy commodities, as Sir Robert's figures certainly illustrate, were better suited for water transport. Bulk goods of high value, such as cloth, could invariably withstand the cost of expensive land delivery. This second example is also true of luxury bulk items such as "spices and drugs or silk thread and silver buttons."²⁸⁸

Condition of Roads v. Navigable Waterways

Late Elizabethan roads were described by various seventeenth-century contemporaries as "extensive and expensive."²⁸⁹ They were expensive with regard to the transport cost of raw and manufactured goods; yet they were an extensive network of horse trails and cow paths that etched their way to and from the capital. Road tables chronicling the network of routes branching out from London began to appear as early as the 1540s, quite possibly due to the population expansion of the 1520s. Willan insists that the population boom led to a growth in migration and the search for opportunity; thus both people and goods now moved along the artery of

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 2

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 4

English roads. These roads, he asserts, were used by merchants to develop England's inland trade in an effort to link capital with countryside. With the increase of economic activity along these routes, Craig Muldrew claims that "networks of distribution and marketing became more complex as traders took advantage of the profits which could be made by shipping goods to places where prices were high because demand was greatest."²⁹⁰

By the middle of the seventeenth century, agriculture became, in the words of Muldrew:

Very commercialized, with grain and meat being sold not only to local towns and labourers, but also to grain merchants in regional market towns who shipped it by river and coastal shipping to places where demand was high, such as London or the northern counties where sheep grazing was common and the land was too poor to support the population.²⁹¹

Late Tudor and early Stuart Oxfordshire roadwork, especially with regard to the towns in this investigation, was challenging. Prior to winter months, most villages sat upon dry land, but during particularly wet seasons those villages, principally Henley, were islands surrounded by rising tides and unpredictable flooding. Yet, even during the summer months, conditions could change with a long, wet spring or a rise in the water table. Boats were usually the preferred mode of transport, especially in the villages toward the upper part of the shire, since roads tended to be difficult and impassable.

²⁹⁰ Craig Muldrew, "Economic and Urban Development," in *A Companion to Stuart Britain*, ed. Barry Coward (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2003), 153.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

Although English roads were improving during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and most assuredly being utilized to move people and goods in most parts of the country, it seems that water transport may have been preferable to overland roads in Oxfordshire.

Shipping grain from Oxfordshire was not without its share of problems. After 1640, the rearing of livestock presented various troubles for the marketing of grain in the northern corner of the shire. As a rule, the pastures of the Cherwell Valley open-field system were difficult to enclose. After 1660, leys²⁹² were increasingly extended and the open field of wheat was used to provide additional fodder for livestock, lessening the need to enclose land for pasture.²⁹³ This lack of enclosure in the northern portion of Oxfordshire encouraged animal husbandry. Moreover, the Cherwell River was navigable by barges southward towards London but not to the north, hindering the grain trade between Banbury and Oxford. Since Oxford was the largest market town in the region, it was far less expensive to drive livestock and livestock products (particularly wool) thirty miles to market than carts filled with grain. This problem was observed by yeoman Andrew Yarranton, who urged in his 1677 publication, *England's Improvements by Sea and by Land*, that the Cherwell should be made navigable from Banbury to

²⁹² Individual arable strips were often converted to grass, on a temporary basis, in order to provide sufficient feed for livestock.

²⁹³ Joan Thirsk ed., *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1640-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 319.

Oxford, as part of his plan to increase the nation's cereal supplies.²⁹⁴

Moreover, studies show that, due to Yarranton's suggestion, wheat acreage increased at the expense of rye and maslin between 1666-1710 from 7% to 24%, while rye and maslin fell from 14% to 2%.²⁹⁵

The Thames and River Transport

As the most prominent geographical characteristic of Oxfordshire, the Thames River and its estuaries have consistently dictated the way local inhabitants have been forced to interact with the land. At a length of 215 miles, and with navigability for 191 miles, it is the longest river in England.²⁹⁶ For centuries, the Thames has influenced the course of human settlement and played a vital role in the movement of goods and people throughout the course of English history.

At a time when English roads were less than hospitable to coaching and moving heavy, loose material, the river systems provided a practical alternative to land transport. As previously mentioned, water transport was much cheaper than road transport, for "a horse could tow up to 30 tons on a navigable river."²⁹⁷ Above all, the Thames was the most adequate for the

²⁹⁴ Andrew Yarranton, *England's Improvement by Sea and Land: To Out-Do the Dutch Without Fighting, to Pay Debts Without Moneys, to Set at Work All the Poor of England with the Growth of Our Own Lands. . . with the Advantage of Making the Great Rivers of England Navigable* (London: R. Everingham for the Author, and are to be sold by T. Parkhurst, and N. Simmons, 1677), 53.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁶ Peter Ackroyd, *Thames: Sacred River* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2007), 3.

²⁹⁷ Hey, ed., *Oxford Companion to Local History*, 396

movement of goods, since William Harrison remarked that the Thames was superior to the other major rivers, including the Severn, “in length and course, bountie of water, and depth of channel.”²⁹⁸ But, this advantage would come with challenges that all rivers faced during the boom period of the seventeenth century.

Navigability and The Age of Improvement: Solutions to the Road and River Issues

Contemporaries believed that the key to successful movement of goods from Oxfordshire ultimately depended on the successful navigation of the River Thames. Thomas Bedeslade, writing quite accurately on the state of English river navigation in 1712, mentioned that:

The number of Inhabitants, the Value of Land, the Trade, the Riches, and the Strength of every Free-State, are great, in Proportion to their Navigable Rivers. For as People Increased, communities were formed; who took to manufactures, which began as first Domestick, then Foreign Trade and Commerce: This induced them to settle on navigable Rivers, whereby they might with most Ease and least Expence make their Exports and Imports. Foreign Trade advance their Wealth, and the Expectation of Profit increased the Number of Inhabitants of Such Towns; and with them advance Husbandry and Feeding, and the Value of Land; the Manufacturers also flourished with the Manufacturers, and Traffik with Domestic and Foreign Neighbours became more and more extended.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁸ William Harrison, *The Description of England*, Folger Documents of Tudor and Stuart Civilization, Georges Edelen, ed. (Ithaca, N.Y: Published for the Folger Shakespeare Library by Cornell University Press, 1968), 117.

²⁹⁹ Thomas Badeslade, *The History of the Ancient and Present State of the Navigation of the Port of King's-Lyn, and of Cambridge, and the Rest of the Trading-Towns in Those Parts: ... With the Method Propos'd for Draining the ... Fens, and Amending the Harbour of Lyn* (London:

Bedeslade correctly defined the region's economic activity and prosperity, especially the Thames estuary and its development as the nexus of a major local and international trading system.

Yet, the navigability of the Thames was always an issue not only with the local inhabitants, but also with bargemen, traders, innkeepers, country gentlemen, and merchants. The whims of the tides, the collection of surface water and the constant deposits of silt determined the success or failure of navigation. Efforts to improve river navigation were nothing new to the Thames, and most of the attempts prior to 1600 were done on a fragmented, local basis. Since the Roman occupation, settlers in and around Oxfordshire had forever tried to construct new canals, flood defenses, and dredging schemes in order to enhance the landscape. These methods realized limited success and may have been the impetus for larger projects, but they provided only temporary results, and without large outlays of capital and labor, piecemeal renovation against tidal problems was marginally successful and advantageous to only a few.

The first serious approach to river improvement came at different times from different directions. The earliest improvement scheme came from waterman John Taylor, an innkeeper, poet, and pamphleteer. He embarked on a pamphlet campaign that encouraged his countrymen to "imitate the industrious Netherlanders' and remove the obstructions from their rivers,

printed by J. Roberts, for the author: sold by Charles Harwick, at Lyn; Will. Thurlbourn, at Cambridge; Cotobed [sic] East, at Ely; Richard Standfast, [London], 1725), 10.

obstructions that he himself had seen and felt in his journeys of inspection up the Thames.”³⁰⁰ His drive to make the Thames more navigable was based clearly on economic principles, which are reflected in his declaration that:

Thus men would be employed, and horse preserve'd
And all the country at cheape rate be serv'd
I truly treat that men may note and see,
What blessings Navigable Rivers bee³⁰¹

His unsuccessful project was followed by Andrew Yarranton—a Worcestershire yeoman and part-time soldier with a background in navigation engineering. Yarranton had surveyed many rivers, including the Thames³⁰² and the Avon, and embarked on many small-scale projects that included river granaries, but his efforts gained limited traction. Still, through his pamphlets he stressed the need for larger scale projects that beckoned wealthy, private investors³⁰³ to acknowledge river improvement. Lastly, Francis Mathew a surveyor, pamphleteer, and staunch advocate of river navigation, set forth a radical new scheme to the Cromwellian government in 1655 where he claimed:

Such great and publick Works', are not to be attempted by private men, or any particular Corporations; But most fit it were that the State it self should be the sole Undertaker, performing all at its own proper

³⁰⁰ Thomas Stuart Willan, *River Navigation in England, 1600-1750* (London: F. Cass, 1964), 7.

³⁰¹ John Taylor, *A New Discovery by Sea, with a Vvherry from London to Salisbury. Or, a Voyage to the West, the Worst, or the Best That E're Was Exprest. By Iohn Taylor* (London: Printed by Edw: Alde for the author, 1623), 7.

³⁰² Andrew Yarranton, *England's Improvement by Sea and Land*, 53.

³⁰³ Private investors and wealthy land owners, sometimes referred to as Adventurers, formed companies or corporations for the sake of reclaiming land, dredging rivers, etc. in the hope of dividing up the acreage and selling to new investors. The original group of men would function as an organizational body with the power to oversee future maintenance of the project.

charge; and so may justly settle upon every such Passage, a Revenue to the Common-wealth for ever.³⁰⁴

Not only did he propose a navigational undertaking that would allow for the systematic joining of all major English rivers, but he also, quite shocking for the time, requested that the funding for this adventure should come directly from the government. The outlay would begin through an act of Parliament and the government would ultimately enjoy a portion of the revenues. He stressed the advantage of this would result in the “cheapness of transportation of Commodities, without so much grinding and plowing up our high-ways.”³⁰⁵

Mathew’s proposal, an unmistakably bold and intriguing attempt to connect the Thames and the Severn by way of the Bristol Avon, was as much against private enterprise as it was for raising revenues and improving trade. Unfortunately, the Protectorate government was busy not only fighting sporadic royalist insurrections, but also trying to maintain and perform the more practical and necessary functions of English government. Unsurprisingly, Cromwell disagreed with these proposals because “the state enterprise in the sphere of commerce and industry”³⁰⁶ was considerably less important than national security. With the onset of the Restoration government, four Bills were introduced, including Mathew’s 1662 petition,

³⁰⁴ Francis Mathew, *Of the Opening of Rivers for Navigation the Benefit Exemplified by the Two Avons of Salisbury and Bristol: With a Mediterranean Passage by Water for Billanders of Thirty Tun, Between Bristol and London, With the Results* (London: James Cottrel, 1655), 2.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁰⁶ Willan, *River Navigation in England*, 8.

but none became law and it relegated Mathew's promising navigation scheme to the dustbin.

Although the previous theoretical schemes to make the Thames more navigable had foundered, they would give new life to another such attempt. A few years later, a larger, more concerted effort by a group of dedicated parliamentarians would address the need for improved navigation.

Practical Acts of Parliament

Parliamentary activity that dealt with the improvement of river navigation was nothing new, especially in the seventeenth century.³⁰⁷ Statutes that called for attention to river issues date back to 1347 where a petition was presented to Parliament for the "removal of obstructions in all major rivers."³⁰⁸ This was followed by another statute in 1424 that included a variety of river and canal statutes that proposed the removal of the silting caused by mills. Yet, with the increase in trade activity in the seventeenth century, official reaction resulted in an assemblage of legislation that not only required the Thames and other major rivers to be available for trade, but asked the question: who is responsible for the undertaking? This inquiry was broached (bravely) by seventeenth century jurist Sir Matthew Hale who

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Thames Navigation Commission, *Thames Navigation Commission Minutes 1771-1790*, Berkshire Record Society, Vols. 11-12 (Reading, UK: Berkshire Record Society, 2008), viii.

argued that the “*Thames* is in truth *alta via regia* the king’s high stream,”³⁰⁹ but this *fluviae regales* should “not be in reference to the propriety of the river but to the publick use ... and under the king’s special care, whether the soil be his or not.”³¹⁰ He argued that the river is comprised of bridges and ports that are both public and private; nonetheless, they are used by the public (*juris publici*) and should remain as such. This is also reflected in *The Law of the Sewers*, which states, “so far as the sea flows and ebb, it is a Royal Stream, and the Fishing belongs to the Crown.”³¹¹ Willan explains that a tidal river, as far as the tide flowed, belonged to the Crown in the same sense as the highway, it was free and common to all.³¹² This idea of facilitating a use by the public of the Thames between Oxford and Burcot launched the first and most important Act of 1623/24 for maintenance of the Thames River.

The Act of 1623/4 was pivotal in that it broke new ground insofar as it required the appointment of Commissioners, four from the University and four from the city of Oxford. The formation of the Thames Navigation Commission included nominations for the Chancellor or Vice-Chancellor and the Mayor and Aldermen respectively. The following University nominations included men of gravity such as William Pearse, D.D., Dean of Peterborough

³⁰⁹ Matthew Hale, *A Methodical Summary of the Law Relating to the Pleas of the Crown, Written Originally by Sir Matthew Hale, ... The Seventh Edition, Continued to the Present Time. By a Gentleman of the Inner Temple* (London: printed by his Majesty’s law-printers; for B. Tovey, 1773), 535.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹¹ C. M., *The Laws of Sewers, as Far as They Relate to the Commissioner. Extracted from Callis 1685, Laws of Sewers 1726, and Compared with Other Books and the Statutes, by C. M. 1762* (London: printed for the author, 1762), 9.

³¹² Willan, *River Navigation in England*, 22.

and Prebendary of Christ Church, John Bancroft, D.D., Master of University College, and John Tolson, D.D., Provost of Oriel, and John Hawley, Doctor of Law, Principal of Gloucester Hall.³¹³ Although highly educated and in possession of weighty academic positions, these men owed their appointment less to any interest or expertise they had in navigational improvements to the river; yet individually they maintained powerful status in the University and held sway in the community as well as “eminence in other directions.”³¹⁴ Irrespective of their lack of navigational knowledge, Jeremy Sims concedes the appointment, “gave them the power to make the river navigable downstream from Oxford as far as Burcot, near Dorchester, including the power to open, prepare, and make all weirs, locks and *turnpikes* for the said passage.”³¹⁵

The Act differed from previous attempts at improvement since it established a permanent administration that, for the first time since the signing of the Magna Carta, could use its power to “effect improvements along part of the course of the river, but also for the type of works which it authorized.”³¹⁶ It was also the first time an Act of Parliament gave authority for the construction of turnpikes³¹⁷ on the Thames, which immediately

³¹³ Ibid., 52–53.

³¹⁴ The Turnpike Improvement Trust (for roads) was created by an Act of Parliament, which oversaw their management and upkeep. The road from Henley to London was turnpiked in the mid-1600s, and the trustees included eminent men such as the mayor of Henley as well as the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University.

³¹⁵ Thames Navigation Commission, *Thames Navigation Commission Minutes*, viii.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Turnpike or water turnpike is an antiquated term for pound locks.

brought about the production at the Iffley, Sandford and Abingdon quite soon thereafter.³¹⁸ These new locks were larger, seventy-five feet in length and twenty-five feet wide, and undoubtedly were capable of accommodating larger barges through the previously impassable stretches of river in northern Oxfordshire.

While barge activity increased, the number of Parliamentary Acts needed to improve the Thames decreased with the onset of the Civil War. During the Civil War and the Commonwealth, a total of two acts were passed (one of which included the widening of the Thames at Bristowe Causey) that pertained specifically to river improvement. It was not until the Restoration and the resumption of government business that river legislation resumed. Willan concedes that the period of 1662 to 1665 witnessed a flurry of activity to make up for the stagnant period and overall inactivity of river reform during the Cromwellian government.

Inevitably, the improvements of the Thames in Oxfordshire and the new “turnpikes” (locks) brought about the introduction of larger watercraft. These new larger “western” barges were visible in Henley and would be the primary craft from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. It was referred to as the ‘western barge’ because “it was operated inland west of Long Bridge”³¹⁹ on the upper part of the Thames. This type of vessel was also

³¹⁸ Frederick Samuel Thacker, *The Thames Highway* (Newton Abbot: Devon, David & Charles, 1968), i.

³¹⁹ Simon Townley, *Henley-on-Thames: Town, Trade, and River* (Phillimore & Co. Ltd, 2009), 108.

referred to as a “shout” from the Dutch *schuit* or *schuyt*, meaning a flat-bottomed riverboat that could negotiate shallows and carry a considerable load. Rigged with a square sail and a collapsible mast for negotiating low-slung bridges, these watercraft could average 15 to 20 meters long and would see an operational life of at least 65-70 years.³²⁰ The boat’s structure was capable of carrying 7.4 metric tons. Shouts could also transport 200 quarters of wheat.³²¹

Large barges could easily sail downriver, but the upriver journey brought about different challenges. Barges travelling upstream had to be hauled manually, which “was still done by teams of men known as haulers or halers.”³²² This proved to be back-breaking and sometimes treacherous work as most of the larger barges were towed by five or six men fitted with leather breast-straps and “with large ashen poles from 14 feet to 19 feet in length, with incredibly dexterity, keeping the barge in the proper navigation channel.”³²³ Any obstacle in a stream could prove time consuming and limit advancement, thus lessening obstructions and impediments in easily navigable rivers was vital to the haulers.

In 1635 following a period of general navigational acts that brought a series of improvements, the River Thames was re-opened to large barges below Oxford. Antonia Catchpole argues that it is this moment, the

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

³²¹ *Ibid.*

³²² *Ibid.*, 108–109.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 108. This work eventually relied on horses and oxen in the eighteenth century.

upgrading of transport by these acts, which contributed to the success of Burford by “restoring direct access to the London market for places around the Upper Thames.”³²⁴ The modern dredging techniques and wider flash locks (boats of 4.4 meter width fit easily through the new width of 5.5) allowed boats upriver to take advantage of the rising waterborne commerce. The trip from Henley to London varied considerably given factors such as low tides, inclement weather, and normal river traffic; nonetheless, the journey ranged from four to five days.

Further legislation came about in 1695 with an Act that addressed the growing issue of unscrupulous lock owners and rowdy, careless, uncharitable bargemen. The government realized that overpriced and unreasonable fees for lock usage was an impediment to the inland water trade, and the Act of 1695 addressed the need for standardizing rates as well as punishing non-cooperative bargemen. This Act followed a general survey by His Majesties’ Navy in 1683/4 that identified buildings and encroachments upon the River Thames west of the Tower Bridge that were thought to be, “judged most Prejudicial to Navigation and the River.”³²⁵ The Act provided sweeping powers for the justices of the peace in Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, Berkshire, and Buckinghamshire³²⁶ to “make orders for setting the dues which were to be paid by the owners of vessels to the

³²⁴ Catchpole, *Burford*, 96.

³²⁵ *A Survey of the buildings and encroachments on the River Thames, on both sides*, 1684, Document 2198:14. www.gateway.proquest.com/eebo:image: 37870.

³²⁶ These counties are all part of the Thames River corridor.

occupiers of locks.”³²⁷ The justices were also given the responsibility for opening and shutting locks and the behavior of bargemen. These acts were used “for better preventing damages and mischiefs done and committed by the rude and disorderly persons rowing and managing barges.”³²⁸ The Act of 1695 was hailed as a success since it was extended after 1730 and again in 1751. Thames barge owners were now held accountable for damage to installations by their crews. Ultimately, this helped to facilitate trade by protecting the navigability of the rivers.

The Increase in Trade Brought on by Navigational Improvement

At the time of river improvements, Burford’s declining medieval economy of wool and cloth trades was transformed and the “structural modifications to its economy arose from transport developments.”³²⁹ Catchpole estimates that the seventeenth century improvements to the River Thames apparently stimulated the development of small malting industry and coaching concern” driven by the rise in Burford’s population (estimated at 1000 persons by 1800). These figures suggest the town’s economic fortunes had recovered and it was now “modestly prosperous.”³³⁰

³²⁷ Thames Navigation Commission, *Thames Navigation Commission Minutes*, ix.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*

³²⁹ Catchpole, *Burford*, 92.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 94.

The true frontrunner with navigational improvements was Burford's long-established Saturday market. Catchpole estimates that in 1673, the market was well frequented. The principal traded commodity was corn, but livestock was also traded, notably sheep, cows, other cattle, and horses, making it one of the best livestock markets in Oxfordshire. The weekly market, so vital to both the local and London markets, was primarily "trading centres for corn and livestock, but as the demand for agricultural products grew, a hiring fair for agricultural workers began in the early 1700s."³³¹ This evidence is proof of Burford's active and vital link to the grain market and how the town relinquished its small-scale, medieval, specialized industry and allowed the Burford farmers and yeomen to participate across an extensive and growing agribusiness.

Henley, of course, continued its role dating back to the Middle Ages as a chief supplier of food and grain to London. Over one-third of London's recorded grain imports were shipped from there during the 1560s to the 1570s.³³² Yet, the opening of the upper Thames and the River Kennet did little to diminish Henley's hegemony over other Thames-side towns. Although Henley's river-borne transport was challenged, it was not exactly threatened, according to diarist Richard Blome, who published a depiction of the town in his 1673 work *Brittannia*:

Henley ... enjoyeth a considerable trade for malting; its inhabitants (which for the most part are bargement or watermen) gain a good

³³¹ Ibid., 95.

³³² Townley, *Henley-on-Thames*, 66.

livelihood by transporting of malt, wood, and other goods to London, and in return bring such commodities as they and the inhabitants of the adjacent towns have need of, at easy rates; and its market, which is on Thursday, is very considerable for corn, especially barley; which is brought them for their great malt-trade, ther being-oft-times in one day sold about 300 cart-load of barley.³³³

This descriptive summary tells of the expansion of London, and the importance placed on the Henley wood and grain stores. Similarly, author Daniel Defoe also reflects this impression in his *Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain* that described the frenzied state of Henley's "trade of malt and meal and timber for long which was shipped on great barges."³³⁴

Chipping Norton, although tucked safely up into the Cotswolds, enjoys access to two Thames tributaries: the Cherwell River to the east and the Evenlode River to the southwest. Even though these northern sections of the river experienced little early navigational improvement, they still actively participated in the grain trade to London, since the river could accommodate smaller barges that were able to negotiate shallow weirs. Evidence is found amongst the 1699 Exchequer Depositions where, "a miller in Upper Heyford in Oxfordshire, ground five loads of wheat for Chipping Norton corn-factor at

³³³ Richard Blome, *Britannia, or, A Geographical Description of the Kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland, with the Isles and Territories Thereto Belonging and for the Better Perfecting of the Said Work, There Is Added an Alphabetical Table of the Names, Titles, and Seats of the Nobility and Gentry That Each County of England and Wales Is, or Lately Was, Enobled with: Illustrated with a Map of Each County of England, Besides Several General Ones* (London: Printed by Tho. Roycroft for the undertaker, Richard Blome, 1673), 189.

³³⁴ Daniel Defoe, *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, Rev. ed., Everyman's Library no. 820-821 (London, New York: Dent; Dutton, 1962), 298.

his mill in Standlake, which is near Upper Thames wharf at Newbridge.”³³⁵ After this the grain was loaded onto a larger boat and carried downriver twenty miles to Abbingdon, and from there, “it was trans-shipped by two Abbingdon bargemasters, William and John Ayris, who carried it to London for delivery to a Piccadilly baker.”³³⁶ This scenario illustrates the complexity of shipping from the Upper Thames, but it also proves that the yeomen’s valuable corn amongst the arable fields of Cotswold Hills was able to make it, albeit through a variety of transactions with forwarding agents, to London.

As complex and circuitous as the shipping of grain appears, it could not have taken place on water without the governmental implementation of river navigability. This intercession provided, particularly in the early part of the Stuart reign, a fluid means for the transport of goods to and from the capital, and a better alternative to the creaky, crowded, challenging and somewhat overworked road system. It did not entirely replace transport by land, as David Hey would argue that as difficult as some roads and turnpikes were, the “road and water systems were complementary rather than rivals, and river traffic was sometimes seasonal because of summer droughts.”³³⁷

Nevertheless, water was still the cheaper and quicker alternative, especially for heavy goods. Throughout the seventeenth century, the efforts to aid commerce and eradicate navigational impediments by companies authorized

³³⁵ Mary Prior, *Fisher Row: Fishermen, Bargemen, and Canal Boatmen in Oxford, 1500-1900* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 130.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 130–131.

³³⁷ Hey ed., *Oxford Companion to Local and Family History*, 396.

by private Acts of Parliament on all major English rivers proved successful since, by 1730, about 1,160 miles of English rivers were navigable for light craft.

Other Issues with Trade and Transport

The increase of agricultural specialization, productivity and scale of transactions highlighted the apparent inadequacies of the late-Tudor, early-Stuart economy. With the move towards wheat, the peasant economic structure primarily geared towards self-sufficiency rather than a national market needed to restructure itself towards market-oriented business methods. Hence the issues of credit, business ideals, crime, shortage, and attempts at regulation were some but not all of the sometimes unwieldy manifestations of an antiquated, post-medieval economy.

Of all the issues under consideration, credit is the most crucial. Up until the early Elizabethan period, the absence of formal, banking institutions meant that the personal conception of credit upon which private trading was based consisted of a man's "worth" or standing in the local community.³³⁸ When shipping goods and traveling to various parts of the country, the conception of worth was unimportant and held relatively no legal significance. Also, monetary fluctuations caused problems concerning the availability of credit since English silver coinage issued was, until 1630,

³³⁸ *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*; General editor, H. P. R. Finberg, 567.

based on the silver to gold ratios as compared to other countries.³³⁹

Furthermore, “losing one’s reputation” (not following through with a bond or promise) could mean not only the loss of one’s status or caste, but entire business interest as well. For example, Stephen Greene, an Ipswich yeoman who “in the habit of exporting grain to Bruges, went bankrupt and fled from his native town, leaving many debts behind him.”³⁴⁰

The most complex problem brought about by the antiquated nature of the Tudor and Stuart economic system was the conflicting ideals of the market town yeoman and private urban trader. A clash of ethos can be seen between the yeoman and merchant and sometimes the peasant towards “private gain” and “just price.” The overall theory was that every agricultural transaction both could and should be “equitable.” The conflicts over excessive cupidity and social responsibility are best seen in the various lawsuits of the period. A merchant in the habit of transporting barley from Ipswich to Ireland was said to be man of a “greedy and covetous humour ... who being willing to take all extremities, is contented to colour his unconscionable desire to gain with a supposition of great loss.” Also, a corn merchant of Burnham Deepdale in Norfolk was said to be “a man of very covetous mind and desire, and hunting exceedingly after gain and bargains, and engrossing of corn.”³⁴¹ Thus, to some of the merchants and successful yeoman trading in the emerging wave

³³⁹ J.D. Gould, “The Royal Mint in the Early Seventeenth Century,” in *The Economic History Review*, 5 (1952), 241.

³⁴⁰ *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, General editor, H. P. R. Finberg 567.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 569.

of the agrarian economy, the notions of social responsibility and just pricing were of little, legal importance.

Crime made for a frequent source of trouble, especially because of the lawlessness of the countryside. The main routes of trade, especially within the Oxfordshire vale and uplands, were inhabited by “said riotous person ... most of them are vagrant and wandering, and cannot easy be found.”³⁴² The passages outside of London were no safer from highwaymen who robbed two London merchants when, traveling with two packhorses, they were accosted by “a company of bandits who took violently [his] cloak, he stood greatly in fear that they would presently have taken [his] life.”³⁴³ This type of behavior upset trade a good deal and exposed the seller and buyer to delayed deliveries and broken agreements.

Although the late seventeenth century was a period of abundance and prosperity, dearth created serious problems in the late Tudor economies. A poor or outright failure of harvest was an all-encompassing problem that neither the government nor the yeoman could disentangle. Poor harvests usually prompted legal disputes since farmers pleaded their inability to fulfill their agreements. In one instance in 1596, yeoman Thomas Packer was unable to complete delivery to a Marlborough maltster since “by the will of

³⁴² Ibid., 574.

³⁴³ Ibid.

Almighty God and the unseasonable weather and scarcity of the year, the grain of barley did forthwith grow to only 6 or 7 shillings a bushel.”³⁴⁴

Dearth was also caused by unforeseeable delays due to storms at sea or on land. This created inevitable problems for grain shipped to certain areas and most frequently these conditions further provided an opportunity for devious traders to exploit. They could either force up the price at home until only the wealthy could purchase, or they could send their corn to wealthy customers overseas.³⁴⁵ Quite a large amount could and was shipped overseas and still more was sold to provincial maltsters, brewers and innkeepers who bargained some time before harvest and exacted their full orders because of the insatiable demands of the brewing industry. A fair amount of corn was held up in Henley in 1559, where the London Mayor and aldermen demanded that, “corn held up at Henley should be released to the great relief of the City, which is at this time in great scarcity.”³⁴⁶ The corn supplies were diverted to the brewing industry and away from the open market where the miller could scarcely buy any to supply his poorer clientele.

Finally, the times of dearth or expected shortage prompted both late Tudor and early Stuart governments to make a serious attempt at establishing standardized regulatory procedures. In an effort to regulate the open market, the government looked to safeguard the interests of the

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 576.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 583.

³⁴⁶ Townley, *Henley-on-Thames*, 66.

consumer—particularly the poor.³⁴⁷ Therefore, as trade increased, various measures were enacted to provide restraint on the process of both open and private trade and to provide the poorer consumer with some form of state protection. One of the initial enactments was *The Book of Orders*, a thirty-three article regulatory document issued in 1587 by the privy council to justices of the peace that called upon local magistrates to “enquire into the corn supplies in every farmer’s, factor’s, maltster’s, and baker’s hands in each county division; to restrict and regulate malting, brewing and corn selling; to force the owners of grain to supply the markets with corn at low prices for the benefit of poor artificers and labourers.”³⁴⁸ Although a somewhat complicated plan, *The Book of Orders* was the first considerable step towards balancing the laws of supply and suppressing violent upheavals due to starvation.

Also, in the early part of the reign of James I, the special powers of the Clerk of the Market were revived. By proclamation on 1619, the clerk was required to enquire into the “abuse of weights and measures; ensure that provisions sold were of good quality; punish forestallers, engrossers, and regrators.”³⁴⁹ Prior to this, local magistrates exercised quality control for shipments of grain home and abroad. For example, Henley borough records show the Warden’s Council appointing two men, John Golston and Thomas Goldyn, as *tastatores omium victualium* or charged “as tasters of all kinds of

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 578.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 581.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 578.

victuals.”³⁵⁰ This 1493 document ordered that this examination was required of “all foreign buyers or sellers of grain ... especially that they bring to the granaries there sold to London.”³⁵¹

Nevertheless, by reviving the Clerk of the Market, James I re-established a proclamation for relief of the poor while addressing the high price of corn, which the King saw as “an innovation and abuse, lately crept in and grown frequent,”³⁵² and was to “carefully provide for relief of his poor sort of Subjectes.”³⁵³ This decree commanded all Sheriffs, Justices of the Peace, and bailiffs to ensure that the markets be supplied with plenty of corn at reasonable prices. Additionally, Charles I set forth *A Proclamation Prohibiting the Exportion of Corne and Graine* set forth in 1629 clearly states:

Wee do hereby straitly charge, prohibite and commande that no person or persons whatsoever, shall from henceforthe attempt, presume or goe about to transport, export, or send awaye any Corne or Graine whatsoever, out of this Our Realme of England, or from any the Ports, Havens, or Creeks or the same.³⁵⁴

³⁵⁰ J. H. R. Weaver and A. Beardwood, eds., *Some Oxfordshire Wills, Proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, 1393-1510*, Oxfordshire Record Society Publications, vol. 39 (Oxford: Oxfordshire Record Society, 1958), 109.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*

³⁵² *By the King, A Proclamation for Relief of the Poor, and remedying the high price of Corne* (London: by Bonham Norton, and Iohn Bill, Printers to the Kings Most Excellent Maiestie, MDCXXII (1622), STC/1686:67, 1.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁵⁴ *By the King, A Proclamation Prohibiting the Exportation of Corne and Graine*. (London: by Bonham Norton, and Iohn Bill, Printers to the Kings Most Excellent Maiestie. Anno MDCXXIX (1629), STC/1876:115.

Finally, the Act known as the *Commission for the Restraint of the Grain Trade*, was applied principally during years of dearth and allowed the government to intervene when control was necessary.³⁵⁵

Overall, according to N. S. B. Gras, Tudor and Stuart policy was relatively successful since a “good deal of transportation of grain to the areas of most acute dearth was encouraged.”³⁵⁶ Regulation, as a whole, prevented starvation for the time being and large-scale rebellion. In 1623 four Kentish judges declared “the corn and grain which before was concealed was now discovered, the prices somewhat abated, and much more plenty appear in the market, to the great benefit of the poor.”³⁵⁷ This statement from the justices seems to outline the importance, understanding, and willingness of the government to modify late-Tudor-early-Stuart economic policy. Although policy was spotty and still relatively ineffective in some remote areas particularly with respect to the subsistence crisis of the late 1590’s it was an important step in enforcing fairness and towards fighting the imbalance and corruption that appeared with the inherent changes in the English rural economy.

³⁵⁵ These statutes prohibited grain speculation as early as 1552. The statutory offenses were based on three common law violations: (1) forestalling—the purchase of grain outside of a market and a subsequent sale in the market; (2) regrating—the purchase and resale of grain in the same or nearby market; and (3) engrossing—the purchase of grain before harvest for the purpose of reselling after harvest. Stuart Banner, *Anglo-American Securities Regulation: Cultural and Political Roots 1690-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

³⁵⁶ Gras, *The Evolution of the English Corn Market*, 585.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 586.

Therefore, it was quite possible during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries for the yeomanry of Bruford, Chipping Norton, and Henley-on-Thames to ferry agricultural goods such as wheat, rye, and barley to various local and outlying locations. This was due, in part, to the Tudor and Stuart efforts to aid commerce on all rivers and streams through acts that brought about the improvement of navigation. These improvements (removal of obstructions, construction of new locks, etc.) facilitated passage and commerce.

This chapter has been both descriptive and exploratory. First, it recounted the importance of both the Thames and the English turnpikes and their impact on the growth of towns, particularly with regard to the transportation of goods. Second, it recounted the painstaking task of large-scale improvements of the Thames estuary and to its ancillary rivers and canals, which, although ongoing and contentious at times, proved lucrative to the Oxfordshire yeomen. Finally, it examined the villages of Burford, Chipping Norton, and Henley, and illustrated their unusual historical and geographical advantages that placed them in an advantageous position for waterborne transportation of goods. Yet, it has also drawn attention to the process by which their natural topography was altered, “disfigured” some might say, in order to forge a new set of navigational structures that would create opportunities and ultimately access, a brave new world of goods. This success of the grain markets would cause some issues with engrossment and hoarding that required governmental intervention, but it is the result of

economic growing pains. The following chapter will assess the evolution of the yeomen household and the outward expression of their newfound wealth.

CHAPTER 4

The Evidence of Yeoman Wealth (Architecture)

With the growing demand for grain and the transport mechanisms in place, the Oxfordshire yeomen acquired wealth and achieved a new economic and social position within English rural society. The main point of this chapter is to examine the architectural evidence of yeoman wealth, as well as the various motives behind the outward expression of their prosperity. It begins with an evolutionary examination of the typical yeomen household, the changes in room use, and how the use of space served different social functions. This chapter illuminates how their affluence allowed them to take advantage of artisanal and architectural innovations with regard to the utility and comfort of interior space.

As Arthur Young, essayist and author of *A Six Weeks Tour Through England and Wales*, made his journey through the East Anglian countryside, he paused and commented on the level of wealth amongst the yeomanry. He believed this dramatic change was best exemplified within the holdings of Mr. Mallet, a Norfolk yeoman who:

Has lately purchased estates in the parishes of Middleton, Testerton, and Hockham, to the amount of 1700 l. per annum: this remarkable person has made his fortune in less than 30 years, and on a farm consisting of not above 1500 acres of land, which is by no means the largest in this county. Let me further add, that, since the above was wrote, I am informed, on undoubted authority, that Mr. mallet, in

Januar, &c. 1768, had 280 steers fating on turneps, and artificial grass hay. And this on a corn-farm!³⁵⁸

Young's views are important since they substantiate, as much as evaluate, the growing wealth of yeomen during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The Evidence of Yeoman Wealth (External) in Probate Inventories

The wealth that Arthur Young described is evident in both the interior and exterior of the Oxfordshire yeoman's home as found in the probate inventories. These documents contain a quantitative and qualitative description of a deceased yeoman's goods, and they allow a measurable reconstruction of a home and its furnishings. When a person died or "was passed into the hands of Almighty God" in early modern England, the executor or administrator listed and assigned appropriate value to the deceased's personal effects. As Jan de Vries states, "probate inventories ordinarily were drawn up only from decedents leaving sufficient moveable assets to make the exercise worthwhile."³⁵⁹ He argues that, "the social depth to which they reach is not everywhere the same, but rarely comprehends

³⁵⁸ Arthur Young, *A Six Weeks Tour, Through the Southern Counties of England and Wales Describing, Particularly, I. The Present State of Agriculture and Manufactures. II. The Different Methods of Cultivating The Soil. III. The Success Attending Some Late Experiments on Various Grasses, &c. ... In Several Letters to a Friend. By the Author of the Farmer's Letters* (London: printed for W. Nicoll, 1768), 30–31.

³⁵⁹ Jan de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behavior and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (Cambridge, MA; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 126.

true proletarians.”³⁶⁰ Therefore, an inventory sample can present a wealth of valuable information and, at the same time, exclude some members of the community, creating difficulties for modern analysis. It is therefore, important to realize there are practical limitations to the data, and that problems do arise from incomplete information. The villages under examination were chosen with regard to their inventories: each set is relatively complete and has not been broken up between dioceses and various county archives.

In addition, this research has used the entire range of yeomen wills and inventories from Burford, Chipping Norton, and Henley-on-Thames from approximately 1600 to 1725. They originated in a county that experienced great changes, and played an important part in the economic behavior and social climate of early modern England.

Margaret Spufford sheds light on the numerical evidence found in wills and inventories, and illustrates how the yeomen wealth continued to rise with the growth in population. Although her research is concerned with rural East Anglia, she examines yeomen with similar agricultural structures and water transport access to Oxfordshire. Spufford measured the impact of wealth in the county of Suffolk³⁶¹ during two periods, 1570-1599, and 1680-1700. She hypothesized that groups of yeomen or husbandmen for the earlier period showed the whole group to have a median wealth of 55

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Suffolk and Oxfordshire share some similar geographic characteristics, especially with regard to river access.

pounds sterling in the 1570's and 80's, compared with 114 pounds sterling in the late 1680's."³⁶² This shows a projected increase in wealth of approximately 107% over the century.

In the Oxfordshire communities of Burford, Chipping Norton, and Henley, the yeomen (some described as yeoman/husbandman) the mean wealth matched or, in many cases, exceeded Spufford's Suffolk figures during the period 1600-1660 and again from 1660-1730.³⁶³ The average wealth for Chipping Norton's yeomen from 1600-1660 was 55 pounds sterling; Burford's was higher at 76.1 pounds sterling, and Henley showed a markedly higher average of 122.9 pounds sterling. Chipping Norton and Burford's average wealth grew substantially during the remainder of the period under examination. From 1660-1730 Chipping Norton's average wealth for yeomen was 130.57 pounds sterling per household, while Burford's reflected a rise with an average of 113.2 pounds sterling. Henley's average seems to have reached a plateau during the same period since its average yeomen wealth adjusted to 128.75 pounds.³⁶⁴

For all three communities there is a solid percentage of inventories that show a prosperous amount of yeomen were in the 30-60 pound range and a firm percentage were above the 100 pound sterling range for the period of

³⁶² Margaret Spufford, *The Great Reclothing of Rural England: Petty Chapmen And their Wares in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Hambledon Press, 1984), 116-117.

³⁶³ Although the Oxfordshire wills begin in 1553, the inventories are only active from 1660 onwards.

³⁶⁴ These figures are derived by adding the totals from wills of Chipping Norton, Henley, and Burford and dividing by the number of yeomen for each particular town.

1600-1730. According to the *Table 1*, the number of inventories in Burford's 30-60 pound category is 29%, and those yeomen inventories exceeding 100 pounds is 21%. This is a substantial departure from the subsidy and taxations lists of Burford from 1523-1544. During the Tudor era, the assessed wealth of 85% of those listed 69 names out of 81 in Burford was less than 10 pounds sterling, with nine percent valued at 20-40 pounds sterling.³⁶⁵ In 1554, the wealthiest Burford man, John Jones, was worth about 90 pounds sterling.³⁶⁶ Thus, this illustrates a considerable shift in the range of living standards that Burford experienced over the century. Similarly, Chipping Norton (*Table 2*) shows an expected weight of established yeomen with seven inventories in the 30-60 pound sterling range at 28%, and a further 20% of inventories over the 100 pound sterling mark. Henley (*Table 3*) contains a solid 30% and 33% of inventories in the 30-60 and 100 pound sterling range, respectively. These charts confirm that ¼ to 1/3 of the yeomen in Burford, Chipping Norton, and Henley held gross assets in the 30-60 pound sterling range and some that exceeded 100 pounds sterling, which reflects a relative prosperity and sturdy economic base—not to mention a higher purchasing power—for over half the Oxfordshire yeomen from 1600-1730.

³⁶⁵ Antonia Catchpole, *Burford: Buildings and People in a Cotswold Town* (Chichester: Phillimore, 2008), 86.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

Table 1 – Burford 1553-1700

Value in Pounds	No. of Wills	Percentage
1 to 30	4	29
30-60	4	29
60-80	1	7
80-100	2	14
Over 100	3	21

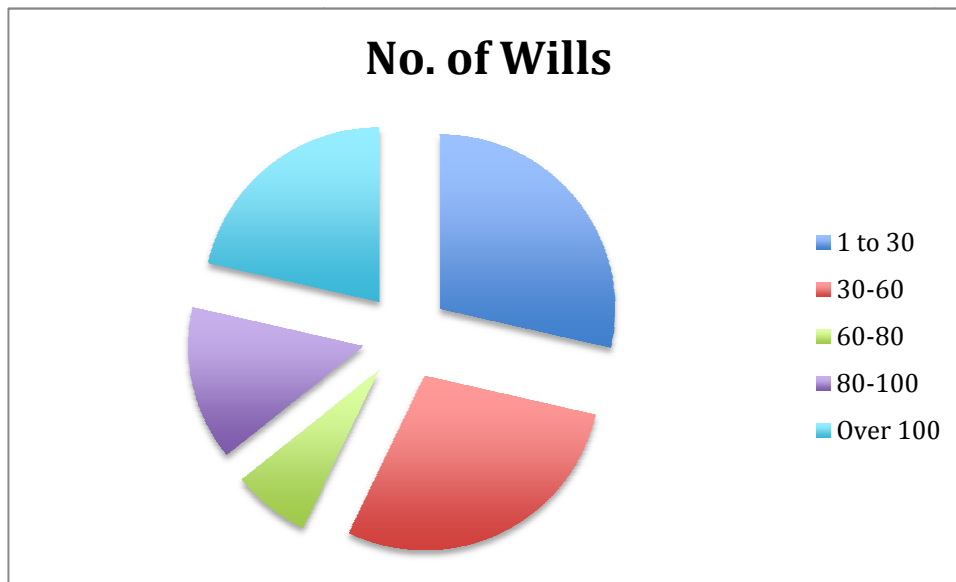


Table 2 – Chipping Norton 1553-1700

Value in Pounds	No. of Wills	Percentage
1 to 30	11	44
30-60	7	28
60-80	2	8
80-100	0	0
Over 100	5	20

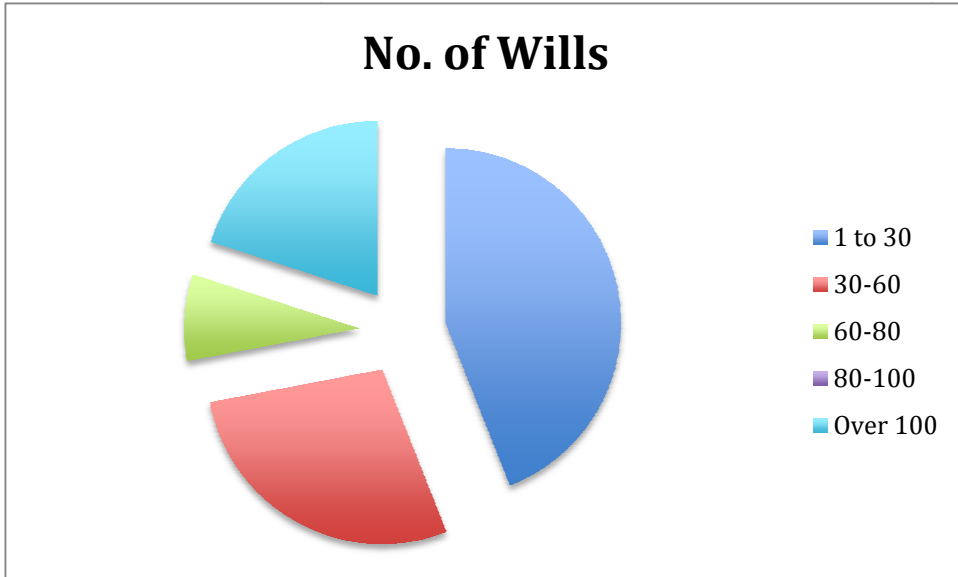
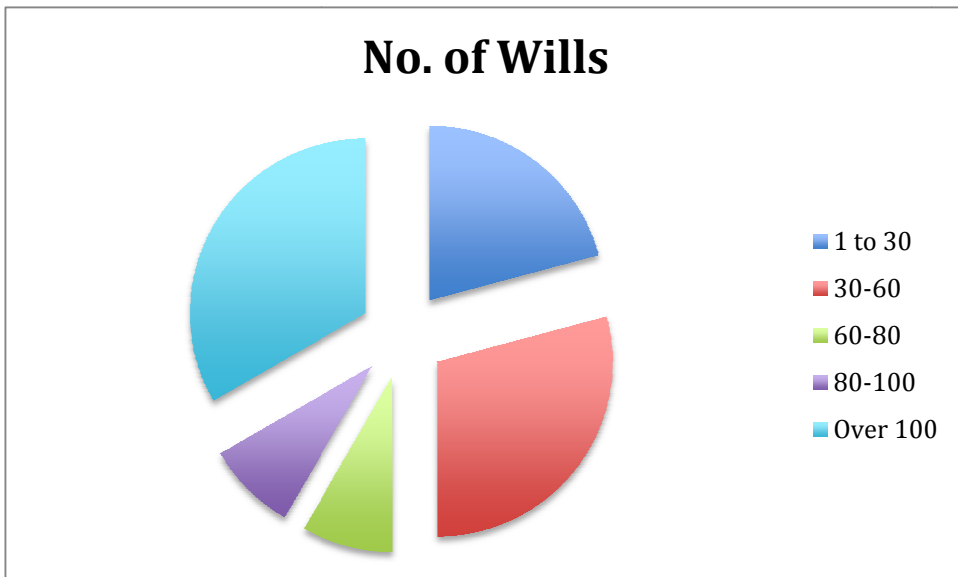


Table 3 – Henley-on-Thames 1553-1700

Value in Pounds	No. of Wills	Percentage
1 to 30	5	21
30-60	7	30
60-80	2	8
80-100	2	8
Over 100	8	33



These figures are the first conclusive evidence of a significant increase in yeomen wealth, and the beginning of a move towards domestic comfort.

Architecture

The changes in the rural economic climate were never more apparent than in the living spaces inhabited by the yeoman. There is ample evidence that the seventeenth-century Oxfordshire yeoman expanded his house for both utility and comfort. According to W.G. Hoskins, “a housing revolution occurred in England between the accession of Elizabeth I and the outbreak of the Civil War, that not only initiated a substantial modernization of existing structures, but also triggered a remarkable and simultaneous increase in household furnishings and equipment.”³⁶⁷

Jeremy Black believes that this spate of rebuilding continued after the Civil War and that “the stately homes of the period were a testimony to wealth, confidence, the profits of agricultural improvement, the greater social stability that followed the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, and the increased political stability of the eighteenth century.”³⁶⁸ The yeomanry were active agents in this development as Christopher Clay states in his work on seventeenth-century economic expansion in England that “even the

³⁶⁷ W. G. Hoskins, “The Rebuilding of Rural England, 1570-1640,” *Past & Present*, vol. 4 (November 1, 1953): 44–59.

³⁶⁸ Jeremy Black, *Eighteenth-Century Britain, 1688-1783*, Palgrave History of Britain (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave, 2001), 163.

yeomen are sometimes found buying hundreds of acres or complete manors.”³⁶⁹

Contemporary observers, such as Nicholas Barbon, noticed the benefits of building and commented during the late seventeenth century that, “building, which is natural to Mankind, being the making of a nest or Place for his Birth, it is the most proper and visible Distinction of riches, and Greatness, because the Expences too Great for Mean Persons to follow.”³⁷⁰ From the various wills and probate documents in the villages of Burford, Chipping Norton, and Henley, it is possible to observe the transition and modernization of the fifteenth-century hall house.

With regard to the most notable or notorious yeomen extravagance, the accounts of Admiral Edward Russell who later became the Earl of Orford and whose family was originally yeomen stock, showed lavish sums spent on the purchase of his Chippenham Estate, which he acquired from various wealthy yeomen that held farms from “120 to 150 acres apiece.”³⁷¹ His expenditure was “16,250 pounds, which was used as the purchase money.”³⁷² Also, Henley resident Sir Bulstrode Whitelocke, an MP and Keeper of the Great Seal, had yeoman ancestry and made his fortune by patenting a malt kiln. He

³⁶⁹ C.G.A. Clay, *Economic Expansion and Social Change: England 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 151.

³⁷⁰ Nicholas Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade* (London: Tho. Milbourn, 1690), 67.

³⁷¹ Margaret Spufford, *Figures in the Landscape: Rural Society in England, 1500-1700*, Variorum Collected Studies Series CS666 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 138.

³⁷² *The Acct of the Right Hono[ra]ble Admiral Russell, 1690*, The Estate Papers of Sir Edwin Sandys, Document 144, Cambridgeshire Public Records Office.

acquired a sizable Henley manor and according to his 1662 Hearth Tax, his house at Phyllis Court showed an astounding total of “17 hearths.”³⁷³

Unsurprisingly, Margaret Spufford found that the Hearth Tax return of 1664 indicates that “half of the houses in the village of Chippenham had only one hearth, against just under a third with three or more hearths ... in Cambridgeshire at this date, the occupancy of a house with one hearth indicated a status and wealth not much higher than that of the average labourer, whereas a house with three or more hearths was usually occupied by a yeoman.”³⁷⁴ More hearths, in her opinion, meant a larger home and higher tax rate, resulting from a higher income.

The period of The Great Rebuilding, an era that highlights the growing yeoman concern for architectural form and decoration, emerged during the period of transition from a church-dominated medieval world to a growing secular society. Lucy Archer believes that Christian dogma was now undermined by a new culture that was primarily inspired by the study of the classical past; moreover, these influences, she claims, are readily apparent in Tudor architecture.³⁷⁵ The rise of a prosperous merchant class meant that for the first time the laity began to rival the clerics in undertaking new architectural projects. William Harrison’s observations in 1598 provide an example of that transformation. He noted that:

³⁷³ Townley, *Henley-on-Thames: Town, Trade and River*, 90.

³⁷⁴ Spufford, *Figures in the Landscape*, 138.

³⁷⁵ Lucy Archer, *Architecture in Britain and Ireland, 600-1500* (London: Harvill Press, 1999), 309.

A multitude of chimneys lately erected, whereas in their young days there were Not above two or three, if so many, in most uplandish towns of the realm (the Religious houses and manor places of their lords always excepted, and Peradventure some great personages).³⁷⁶

In addition, W. G. Hoskins asserts, “The Great Rebuilding took two forms—either a complete rebuilding of the old house (possibly in a new material and a new style) or a reconstruction and enlargement on such a scale as to make it virtually a new house.”³⁷⁷ During this period, there was construction in every county save for the four northern ones.³⁷⁸ Further along in the late seventeenth century, Sir Josiah Child commented on the proliferation of new housing twenty-five years after the Great Fire of London: “The speedy and costly buildings of London are a convincing (and to strangers an amazing) argument of the plenty, and late encrease of money in England ... houses newly built in London yield twice the rent they did before the fire; and houses generally immediately before the fire yielded about one fourth part more rent than they did twenty years past.”³⁷⁹

Reconstruction of dwellings was expensive and usually took the form of inserting a ceiling in the medieval hall, thus creating an increase in living

³⁷⁶ William Harrison, *The Description of England*, Folger Documents of Tudor and Stuart Civilization (Ithaca, N.Y.: Published for the Folger Shakespeare Library by Cornell University Press, 1968), 235.

³⁷⁷ Hoskins, “Rebuilding of Rural England, 1570-1640.” 44-59.

³⁷⁸ Albert J Schmidt, *The Yeoman in Tudor and Stuart England*, Folger Booklets on Tudor and Stuart Civilization (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1961), 17.

³⁷⁹ Josiah Child, *A New Discourse of Trade: Wherein Is Recommended Several Weighty Points Relating to Companies of Merchants, the Act of Navigation, Naturalization of Strangers, and Our Woollen Manufactures, the Ballance of Trade ...: And Some Proposals for Erecting a Court of Merchants for Determining Controversies* (London: Printed and sold by Sam. Crouch, Tho. Horne, and Jos. Hindmarsh, 1694), xxxii.

space with a parlour on the ground floor and bedrooms above.³⁸⁰ Hoskins found a description of such construction in the diary of Devonshire yeoman, Robert Furse. Furse wrote in 1593 about his successful attempts to add a ceiling, construct a massive granite stairwell and glaze the window to his fifteenth-century ancestral dwelling.³⁸¹

In addition, the home of Gregory Patey a prosperous yeoman from Burford, contained goods and chattels in “the newe chamber” and also “in the newe buttery” points to a recent addition that was obvious to his testators. Patey’s add-ons held quite an assemblage of fashionable furniture, especially the new room, which contained “1 standinge bedsted 1 truckle bed 4 stooles 1 chayre, 6 cushions and 3 curtaynes.”³⁸² This indicates that he included a fireplace for heating his new chamber and enough seats to accommodate visitors and family alike. Also, his chamber over the new room held “one truckle bed 1 cheste, 1 flocke bedd 1 ffeather bed 1 ffeather boulster & blanckett.”³⁸³ Later, yeoman William Huggin’s will mentions a wealth of luxury items in his “new Best chamber” that features:

One bedstead & feather bed 3 bolsters two pillows one quilt two blankets one chest of drawers, sixe cane chairs, one table, one looking glass, ffyer shovel and tongs andiorns two silver tankerds two salts two spoons.³⁸⁴

³⁸⁰ Hoskins, “Rebuilding of Rural England, 1570-1640,” 35.

³⁸¹ Hoskins, *Rural England*, 46.

³⁸² Gregory Patey of Burford, will dated 1639, no. 200.296; 144/3/7, ORO.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁴ William Huggins of Chipping Norton, will dated 1710, no. 206.39;133/3/35, ORO.

The goods in Huggins' room totaled eighteen pounds, which added to his already substantial inventory worth 770 pounds.

"So lived our yeomanry and our gentry of old," commented Whitaker in the *History of Whalley* where he compares the two strata of rural inhabitants while discussing the wave of stone buildings erected by yeomen in parts of Lancashire. The yeoman's financial independence enabled him to live better than his predecessors and "his individualistic inclinations whetted his appetite for privacy, which had been, of course, an impossibility in the medieval hall."³⁸⁵

Yet, Singleton found an ebbing of enthusiasm for rebuilding in a report by Francois Du Bois, who felt that some changes in domestic architecture were less than appropriate. In 1715, he wrote:

We see so many bungled houses and so oddly contrived that they seem to have been made only to be admired by ignorant men and to raise the laughter of those who are sensible of such imperfections. Most of them are like bird cages, by reason of the largeness and too great number of windows; or like prisons, because of the darkness of the rooms, passages and stairs. Others, through the oddness of some new and insignificant ornaments, seem to exceed the wildest Gothic. It were an endless thing to enumerate all the absurdities which many of our builders introduce every day into their way of building.³⁸⁶

This hostile attitude was also shared by John Evelyn, who indicated his distaste for, "a certain and licentious manner of building which we have since called *Modern* (or *Gothic* rather) congestions of heavy, dark, melancholy and

³⁸⁵ Cited by A.J. Schmidt, *Yeoman in Tudor and Stuart England*, 18.

³⁸⁶ Esther Singleton, *French and English Furniture; Distinctive Styles and Periods Described and Illustrated by Esther Singleton* (New York: McClure, Phillips & Co., 1903), 115.

monkish piles without any just proportion, use or beauty.”³⁸⁷ Or Evelyn just may have been echoing the nervousness of the elite when they felt encroached upon by “new wealth.”

The rebuilding in the towns under investigation is readily apparent. The rebuilding of Burford’s pokey, cruck-framed, cottages was assumed to have started in the late sixteenth century. Stone now replaced timber and the most salient change in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was the addition of floor over medieval open halls, and the erecting of chimneys and fireplaces to contain the smoke from cooking and heating.³⁸⁸ Catchpole has evaluated Burford’s building surge with stonework and architectural samples from around town that reflect the dates of surges in building activity.

As the medieval form of building subsided, classical ideas came to inform English architecture, especially new aspects of style and taste that essentially re-defined the old. Inigo Jones and Andrea Palladio espoused new ideas of Classicism. Exponents of Gothic and English Baroque, Sir John Vanbrugh (1664-1726) and Colin Campbell (d. 1729), had a similar impact on the architectural landscape. Vanbrugh, an adherent to the style and approach of Christopher Wren and Nicholas Hawksmore, and one of the first to design informal parks and gardens, helped bring respectability to Gothic

³⁸⁷ Singleton, *French and English Furniture*, 115.

³⁸⁸ Catchpole, *Burford*, 125.

architecture and eventually brought it to the same level as Classicism.³⁸⁹ Hampton Court and Winstead House, homes built by the affluent gentry, would allow those of lesser financial and socio-cultural backgrounds, to emulate and reflect, to a lesser extent, “the motifs, and styles of greater works.”³⁹⁰

Jean Andre Rouquet stated in his treatise on English art and architecture that, “The English have no national architecture in what regards the decoration of their buildings ... like other nations, they take their models from Italy and from antiquity.”³⁹¹ Nonetheless, architecture in England developed according to local tastes and materials. This is particularly true for smaller and less pretentious dwellings,³⁹² especially in Oxfordshire where R.B. Wood-Jones suggests that by the sixteenth century the yeomen were concerned about the disappearance of woodland. Thus, by the seventeenth century the good local stone, a middle *lias* that formed a hard stratum of shale, was to become the exclusive building material.³⁹³

Local stone was integral in the Oxfordshire building process, particularly for those inhabitants seeking to construct additional rooms and levels. With the availability of limestone quarries around Burford and Chipping Norton,

³⁸⁹ Jeremy Black, *Eighteenth Century Britain*, 163.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁹¹ Jean André Rouquet, *The Present State of the Arts in England. By M. Rouquet* (London: Published by J. A. Rouquet, printed for J. Nourse, 1755), 95.

³⁹² Mildred Campbell, *The English Yeoman Under Elizabeth and the Early Stuarts*, Reprints of Economic Classics (New York: A. M. Kelley, 1968), 222.

³⁹³ Raymond B. Wood-Jones, *Traditional Domestic Architecture of the Banbury Region* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1963), 102.

stone replaced and in some instances was used in conjunction with wood as the re-building material of choice. The large quarries at Burford, mentioned around 1435, produced an orange hue and brownish ironstone. It is a “stone that gives Burford its special character.”³⁹⁴ The combination of oolitic limestone and crushed ashlar allowed the yeomen to rebuild without the structural limitations that cruck and timber framing presented.

Mildred Campbell points out that elsewhere in the southeast, including the Thames Valley, yeomen homes differed widely from most other locales since they contained the greatest variety in both style and materials as a result of continental influences.³⁹⁵ Variety is indeed apparent, since there was some difficulty building on the “springy turf of the Thames Valley, thus forcing creativity in construction. Mary Evelyn Jones adds that traditional homes usually consisted of “wattle and daub and thatched with a small garden of herbs.”³⁹⁶ Yet, yeomen edifices were most likely a “long room with stone pillars ... an alcove built out at right angles with a privet parlour.”³⁹⁷

According to W.G. Hoskins the Spartan image of the country cottage can be seen in Sir Richard Carew’s 1580 *Survey of Cornwall* where he observes the houses of husbandmen as:

Walls of earth, low thatched roofs, few partitions, no planchings or glasse windowes, and scarcely any chimnies, other than a hole in the

³⁹⁴ Mary Sturge Gretton, *Burford, Past and Present* (London: Faber and Faber limited, 1945), 23.

³⁹⁵ Mildred Campbell, *The English Yeoman*, 223.

³⁹⁶ Mary Evelyn Monckton Jones, *Life in Old Cambridge* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, Ltd, 1920), 88.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 89.

wall to let out the smoke: their bed, straw and a blanket: as for sheets, so much linen cloth had not yet stepped over the narrow channelle between them and Brittain (in France)³⁹⁸

Additional visual evidence is apparent in Jan Van Aken's 1650 portrait, *Grace Before a Meal*. Van Aken, an artist known for depicting country life, captures a family, quite possibly a local husbandman, gathered for a meal, their heads bowed in prayer. Yet, the most telling issue is not the piety and thankfulness of his subjects, but the striking lack of comfort, the bareness of the floors and walls, as well as a complete absence of silverware, curtains, and wall hangings.³⁹⁹

Yet if one goes by this depiction of a "middling sort" household, it might seem that country dwellers did not embrace the building associated with economic well being. Fortunately, there is artistic evidence of a yeomen's dwelling that contrasts with the aforementioned evidence. *The Tea Table*, a print measuring 6 ¼ by 5 3/8 and published in London about 1710, displays a room that is "richly but sparsely decorated."⁴⁰⁰ This artistic rendering is what most observers feel to be an accurate depiction of a Queen Anne interior of a wealthy yeoman's home. Displayed in the picture are a floor or "foot" rug (somewhat rare at this time as most rugs were hung as wall décor or used on tables), a sideboard and shelving used to display china, high back,

³⁹⁸ Richard Carew, *The Survey of Cornwall*, 1st ed. (London: Printed by S. S. for Iohn Iaggard, 1602), 367. Hoskins, *The Rebuilding of Rural England*, 45.

³⁹⁹ Jan van Aken, Dutch (1614-1661), *Grace Before a Meal*, 1650 (oil on canvas), Ashmolean Museum, Oxford University.

⁴⁰⁰ Ralph Fastnedge, "Furniture," in *The Connoisseur's Complete Period Guides to the Houses, Decoration, Furnishing and Chattels of the Classic Periods* (London: The Connoisseur Publishing, 1968), 334-335.

cane chairs, and a looking glass in the background. These goods made up the backbone of consumer luxury goods during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

Hoskins explains that, although not every yeoman, husbandman, or peasant found themselves in a new house. He asserts that a large amount of the rural population enjoyed a higher level of domestic comfort with regard to furniture and household equipment “on the eve of the Civil War than their grandparents had done seventy years earlier.”⁴⁰¹ Yet, “All this affected yeomen and husbandmen principally.”⁴⁰²

In *The Midland Peasant* (1957), Hoskins effectively connects Hearth Tax entries with probate inventories for the Leicestershire town of Wigston Magna in an effort to emphasize the impact of the Great Rebuilding on rural housing. He argues that the number of rooms in relation to the number of hearths, when cross referenced with the corresponding probate inventories, could be used as a somewhat accurate guide to the number of rooms in rural homes.⁴⁰³ This was taken a step further by Margaret Spufford who examined both Hearth Tax and probate documents and applied this idea to houses in Cambridgeshire. Spufford built on Hoskin’s example, which she claims could accurately determine the size and wealth of rural homes during the Great Rebuilding. She further argues that not only were Hearth Tax entries

⁴⁰¹ Hoskins, “The Rebuilding of Rural England, 1570-1640,” 49.

⁴⁰² Ibid., 50.

⁴⁰³ W. G. Hoskins, *The Midland Peasant: the Economic and Social History of a Leicestershire Village* (London, New York: Macmillan; St. Martin’s Press, 1965), 307.

particularly useful, but when coupled with probate records, they reflected personal wealth and social status, and therefore functioned as a general “rough and ready” social and economic guide.⁴⁰⁴

Although this study does not consider the Hearth Tax assessments, Spufford’s work is of considerable value when considering the average number of rooms, especially those that were considered “new” during the Great Rebuilding. Spufford finds that five-roomed houses “formed the largest single class in Cambridgeshire and were occupied by the biggest group of husbandmen, some craftsmen, and some yeomen, who usually had goods from under 10 to 70 pounds [of value].”⁴⁰⁵ She adds that such houses were also occupied by a select group of wealthy individuals, whose wealth, particularly moveable goods and chattels, was valued in the 100 to 400 pound sterling range. From her sample of various villages, Spufford concluded that a full 30% of the Cambridgeshire yeomen lived in five and six roomed houses.

Yet does this apply to Oxfordshire as well? The results from a collective evaluation of all three Oxfordshire communities seem to substantiate Spufford’s assertions. When all 63 inventories from Burford, Chipping Norton, and Henley are analyzed, it appears the median for the Oxfordshire yeomen was a four to seven room dwelling with a gross worth of approximately 50-60 pound range. A substantial thirty-three inventories or

⁴⁰⁴ Margaret Spufford, “The Significance of the Cambridge Hearth Tax,” in *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society* 55 (1962), 53.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 56.

52 percent of the yeomen were in this range. The highest percentage of yeomen lived in four room homes (21 percent) and a substantial percentage (14 percent) lived in seven room houses. Additionally, the table shows that there were a fair number of yeomen (13 percent) living above the median in the eight to eleven room ranges, whereas, on the other side of the scale, most of the one to three bedroom ranges comprised 25 percent of the entire inventories. Surprisingly, there were eleven yeomen (4 percent) whose wealth exceeded 200 pounds and a single one in the highest range over 700 pounds. Thus, this data confirms previous scholarship and also illuminates the fact that the wealthier Oxfordshire yeomen were living in larger homes that reflected their economic position.

Margaret Spufford remarks that a house with three hearths might have from six to eleven rooms, but over three-quarters had six, seven, or eight rooms.⁴⁰⁶ The people in these dwelling were amongst these with personal wealth of 30 to 500 pounds, most of them yeomen. Such houses contained a good number of service rooms; Spufford notes that, “most of the eight roomed houses had three or four.”⁴⁰⁷ The inventory of yeoman Solomon Sewen of Henley indicates a house of approximately eight rooms, including a hall, best chamber, other new chamber, as well as chambers over the kitchen, and a buttery.⁴⁰⁸ His inventory is particularly revealing since some rooms are used as service rooms, especially next to the dairy and buttery where

⁴⁰⁶ Spufford, *Figures in the Landscape*, 85.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ Solomon Sewen of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1631, no. 60/3/17, ORO.

candlesticks, chafing dishes, and linen were located. On the whole, service rooms are a good indicator of additional storage rooms and sometimes additions, but they rarely reveal many luxury items—if any at all.

Randle Holme's 1688 treatise on contemporary dwellings described the term "house" or "dwelling house." His description refers to a basic cottage or the ubiquitous two-room home that Spufford insists was still common in England at this time. He affirms that dwellings that have been, "Slated, Tyled, slated, or Roofed is likewise termed an House of one Bay, or a Countrey house, or a Farmers house, or a Dary house, or a Cottage."⁴⁰⁹ Yet, he also refers to dwellings inhabited by prosperous yeomen, and asserts that the several rooms inside of a proper dwelling consisted of: "Entry, Buttery, Stove, Pastery, Hall, Seller, Wash, Skullery, Parlar, Pantrey, Larder, and Brew-house."⁴¹⁰

In addition to examining the size of houses, it is necessary to look at household size in order to reconstruct yeomen living arrangements. Lorna Weatherill asserts that households were "of modest size" and that most "early modern homes in both England and Scotland had between four and seven people living in them, and the houses for which there is evidence surviving contained between three and seven rooms."⁴¹¹ Further, she adds

⁴⁰⁹ Randle Holme, *[The] Academy of Armory 1688* (Menston: Scolar Pr., 1972), Book III, 450.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 451.

⁴¹¹ Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760* (London: Routledge, 1988), 94.

that the households of London in the 1690's "record an average of as high as seven in one parish, whereas Cambridge averaged about four."⁴¹²

Inventories for Burford, Chipping Norton, and Henley reveal the number of rooms is equal to or exceeds Wetherill's average and comes close to the previous calculations made by Margaret Spufford. According to *Table 1*, Burford exhibits a higher average of seven rooms (23 percent) from a total of fourteen inventories, which includes 23 percent of homes with nine or more rooms. Also, Henley-on-Thames (*Table 3*) reveals a high average of four rooms (30 percent), which also includes double figures for six rooms (13 percent) and seven rooms (17 percent). In summary, Chipping Norton (*Table 2*) falls into the four-room average (20 percent); yet it shows a strong percentage of five (12 percent) and six (8 percent) rooms among the twenty-five inventories.

Table 1 - Burford

Rooms	No. of Rooms In Inventory	Percentage
Dubious	0	0
1	1	6
2	1	6
3	3	23
4	1	6
5	0	0
6	1	6
7	3	23
8	1	6
9 and over	3	23

⁴¹² Ibid.

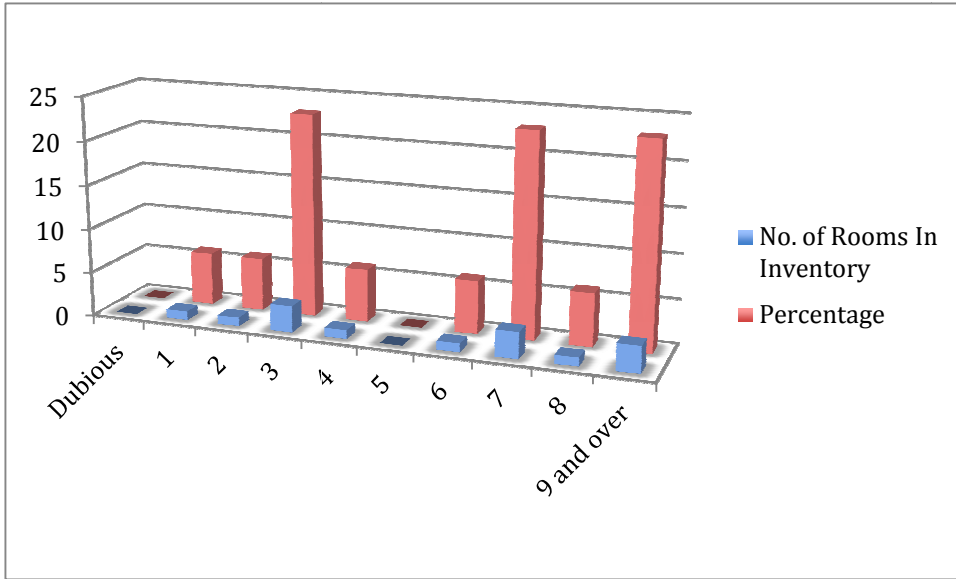


Table 2 – Chipping Norton

Rooms	No. of Rooms In Inventory	Percentage
Dubious	0	0
1	4	16
2	5	20
3	2	8
4	5	20
5	3	12
6	2	8
7	2	8
8	1	4
9 and Over	1	4

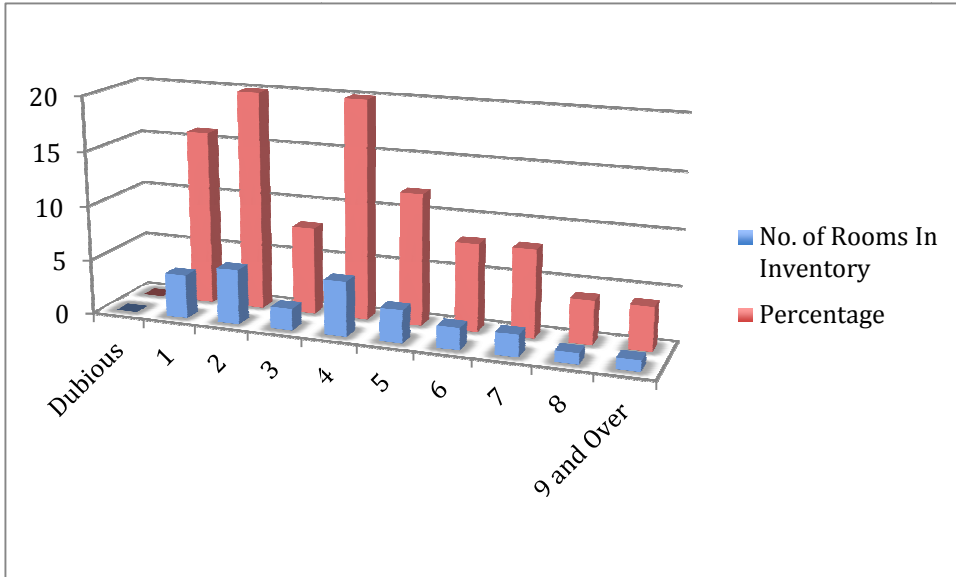
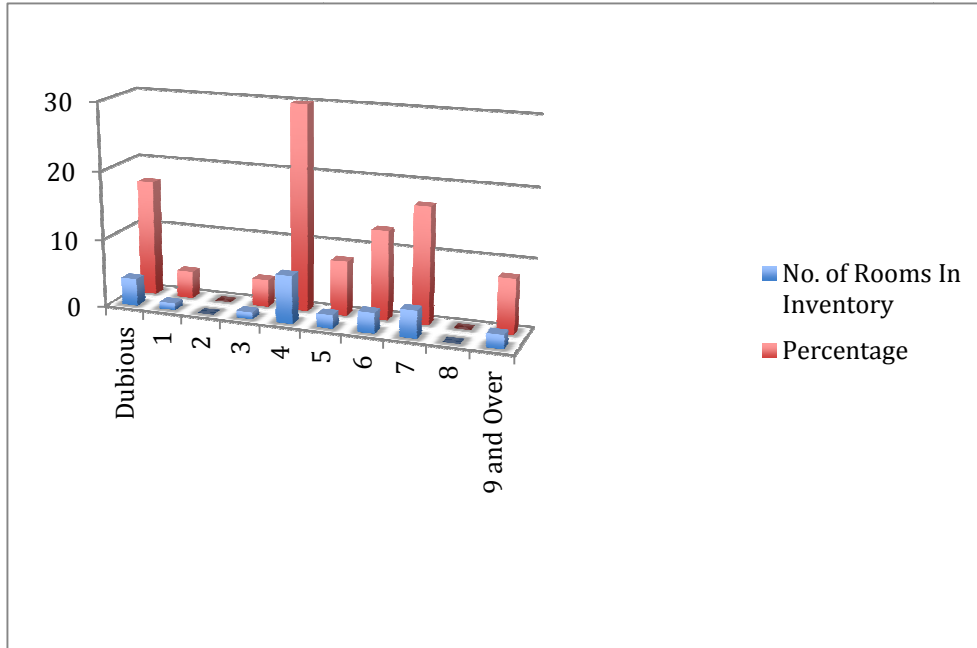


Table 3 – Henley-on-Thames

Rooms	No. of Rooms In Inventory	Percentage
Dubious	4	17
1	1	4
2	0	0
3	1	4
4	7	30
5	2	8
6	3	13
7	4	17
8	0	0
9 and Over	2	8



Still, during the early modern period, rooms were also developing different purposes. Stafford and Middlemas found that in the seventeenth century, “families retired from the great hall to smaller dining rooms.”⁴¹³ The following is a survey of various chambers in the early modern house and how their size and function adapted to the changes and demands of wealthy yeomen eager to display their economic fortunes.

Halls

In the Middle Ages, the hall, or “open hall” was the largest room in both large and small houses. In larger homes, it served as a meeting room and communal dining area and, upon entrance, visitors found themselves viewing “a table set on a dais, or platform, and a screen cut off the entrance to the

⁴¹³ Maureen Stafford and R.K. Middlemas, *British Furniture Through the Ages* (London: Barker, 1966), vii.

kitchen.”⁴¹⁴ John Hunt maintains that the most imposing feature was “the large chair of the master of the house standing upon the dais or raised platform at the top of the room.”⁴¹⁵ And in smaller country homes occupied by the lesser gentry or the well-off yeomanry, the great hall was the focal point of the house, but “without the interposition of a screen between the body of the hall and the entrance.”⁴¹⁶ Singleton remarks that, up until the dawn of the architectural revolution, the great hall was the most important room in the house where guests were received, and meals were generally served.⁴¹⁷

With the coming of the early modern age, the hall’s original function and size began to change, especially in regard to the country home. Contemporary evidence points to a change in attitude toward the hall’s comfort and appearance, which might have contributed to its transformation. Francis Bacon remarked in Roger North’s *Of Building* that “Houses are built to live in and not to look on; therefore let use be preferred before uniformity.”⁴¹⁸ These words were published in 1625 and reflect what Whinney sees as the great hall being placed “across, and not along, the main axis of the house, and thus permitting a more symmetrical arrangement of

⁴¹⁴ Singleton, *French and English Furniture*, 40.

⁴¹⁵ John Hunt, “Furniture,” in *The Connoisseur’s complete Period Guides to the Houses, Decoration, Furnishing and Chattels of the Classic Periods*, ed. Ralph Edwards and L. G. G. Ramsey (New York: Bonanza Books, 1968), 46.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁴¹⁷ Singleton, *French and English Furniture*, 40.

⁴¹⁸ Roger North, *Of Building: Roger North’s Writings on Architecture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 60.

the rooms on either side of it."⁴¹⁹ Thus, rooms were now small suites, each with its own character and function. This, she believes, is a clear reflection of Bacon's statement that "symmetry is agreeable, but use or convenience is now more important."⁴²⁰

The hall also enjoyed a transformation with regard to floors and use of flooring. To those such as Erasmus of Rotterdam, the lack of cleanliness in the hall was cause for alarm. His observations of English hall flooring are recorded and he described them as:

Covered with rushes, of which the upper layers were renewed with Reasonable regularity. The lower, however remained undisturbed sometimes For as much as twenty years, and harbored in their depths the abominations That should by rights have been swallowed by the cess-pit.⁴²¹

Yet, well into the late seventeenth century, stone flagged or wooden floors were still covered with straw "in farms and smaller manor houses long after that insanitary habit had been abandoned in town houses."⁴²²

Nevertheless, the great hall was to experience a most dramatic change during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. By the latter part of the Stuart period, "a bay window was added at the dais end of the hall, which formed a private retiring-place for conversation while the table was being cleared." This is confirmed in John Evelyn's *A Journey to England*:

⁴¹⁹ Margaret Whinney, "Architecture," in *The Connoisseur's Complete Period Guides to the Houses, Decoration, Furnishing and Chattels of the Classic Periods*, 277.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Cited by Hunt in "Furniture," *The Connoisseur's Complete Period Guides*, 46.

⁴²² John Gloag, *The Englishman's Chair; Origins, Design, and Social History of Seat Furniture in England* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1964), 91.

for either being mingled in a Room, the *Gentlemen* separate from the Conversation of the *Ladies*, to Drink as before I related; or else to Whisper with one another at some Carner, or *Bay Window*, abandoning the *Ladies* to Gossip by themselves, which is a Custom so strange to a *Gallant* of our *Nation*.⁴²³

Prior to the parlor or sitting room, the hall was normally a place for positioning luxury goods, which included fine furniture, expensive objects, and art. Evidence of this is seen in a few examples in the villages under study, particularly in yeoman John Burkin's Burford home. His great hall contained joined furniture that included "one table board and frame, a glass safe and one klock" valued at 14 pound 10 shillings.⁴²⁴ Also, upon entering William Huggin's eight bedroom home in Chipping Norton, one would immediately see his consumer finery since his hall boasted "19 pewter dishes 15 plates 2 candlesticks a clocke 6 chaires 2 tables a glass case and other Things."⁴²⁵ Nonetheless, the hall would become much smaller and would change through the work of such architects as Indigo Jones and Sir Roger Pratt into "something of a grand entrance vestibule."⁴²⁶

The Bedchamber

The great bedchamber or bedroom of the master and mistress of the house was, while being a place for sleep, also a means of escape. The bedchamber

⁴²³ John Evelyn, *A Journey to England, With Some Account of the Manners and Customs of that Nation. Written at the Command of a Nobleman in France. Made English* (London: Printed and Sold by A. Baldwin, near the Oxford-Arms-Inn in Warwick-Lane, 1700), 21.

⁴²⁴ John Burking of Burford, will dated 1686, no. 107.241 ORO.

⁴²⁵ William Huggins of Chipping Norton, will dated 1710, no. 206.39; 133/3/35, ORO.

⁴²⁶ Whinney, "Architecture," in *The Connoisseur's Complete Period Guides*, 277.

served as a dedicated room for the heads of household and, for the prosperous yeoman, comfort was essential. Large beds represented both comfort and elegance, and, during the seventeenth century, most of the elite still utilized the four-poster Elizabethan bed. For the wealthy or those of elevated status, this ornately carved durable still existed during the Stuart period. Esther Singleton claims they “died hard” even as new styles of lighter beds were being introduced.⁴²⁷

Visually speaking, the bedchamber contained a variety of movables and, most importantly, a chest in which to store valuables.⁴²⁸ This item, vital to housing cherished goods or family heirlooms, is recorded during the Elizabethan period:

In cypress chest my arras counterpoints,
Costly apparel, tents, and canopies, Fine linen,
Turkey cushions boss'd with pearl,
Valance of Venice gold in needlework,
Pewter and brass, and all things that belong
To the house or housekeeping.⁴²⁹

The country bedroom of the elite typically contained front-stage objects⁴³⁰ and colorful draping and fabrics. Also, there were such items as chairs, stools, cushions, table-carpets and cupboard cloth and cushions that

⁴²⁷ Singleton, *French and English Furniture*, 55.

⁴²⁸ This was called a *trussing* chest and was used as a receptacle for bed clothes, however there was usually another chest used specifically for valuables and the preservation of wearing apparel.

⁴²⁹ William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew A comedy*. By Shakespear (London: printed by R. Walker; and may be had at his shop, 1735), Act II, Scene III.

⁴³⁰ Front-stage objects were considered valuable or luxurious and deserved a place at the forefront of the home. Lorna Weatherill used this term in her work, *Consumer Behavior and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760* (London: Routledge, 1988), 29.

were made of fine cloths such as silk and linen.”⁴³¹ The inventories of Oxfordshire yeomen also reflect this trend. For example, the bedchamber of John Bray, yeoman of Burford contained “2 joyned Bedsteeds, one joyned tableborde & frame, 3 joyned stooles, 1 ffetherbedd 2 bolsters 1 pilowe one coverlet & one blanket.”⁴³² Also, the bedroom of John Burkin, another Burford yeoman, contains “one ffether bed boulster pillows coverings bedsteed Curtaines & valances, a pare of bookes, and one looking glass.”⁴³³ William Atkin’s 1692 inventory lists “one fether bed and bedsteed too bblanket one boulster two pillows one coverled curtins and valians and one needle work box.”⁴³⁴ Lastly, James Henshewe, yeoman of Chipping Norton, owned “one high bedsteed with 1 payre of green curtaynes & valances that is coupled with 1 round table a drawinge table with 1 green Cubbard Cloth.”⁴³⁵ The materials chosen for the curtains were usually, as Singleton claims, the same as the cushions and cupboard cloth, which gives an idea of colour and appearance of the interior.⁴³⁶ It is clear within the Oxfordshire yeomen bedchamber that luxury had indeed taken hold with regard to modern conveniences since chamber pots are visible, especially within the homes of yeoman William Hunt who owned “one chamber pott of pewter,”⁴³⁷ and

⁴³¹ Singleton, *French and English Furniture*, 57.

⁴³² John Bray of Burford, will dated 1623, no. 106.127:295/2/83, ORO.

⁴³³ John Burkin of Burford will dated 1686, no. 107.241;161/1/28, ORO.

⁴³⁴ William Atkins of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1692, no. 204.208; 13/4/6, ORO.

⁴³⁵ John Henshewe of Chipping Norton, will dated 1639 no. 107.52(2), 56;298/1/43 a-b, ORO.

⁴³⁶ Singleton, *French and English Furniture*, 57.

⁴³⁷ William Hunt of Burford, will dated 1613, no. 106.75;297/4/58, ORO.

William Atkins who owned “three chamber pots valued at 8 shillings.”⁴³⁸

Admittedly, the evidence reaffirms the old adage that “a Jacobean bedroom is lacking neither in beauty nor richness.”⁴³⁹

The Parlor

During the architectural reorganization of the Stuart period, the great hall and great chamber gave way to the *privée parlour*, a small sitting room built at the end or side of the hall. In the Tudor era, the parlor is described in probate inventories as a ground floor sitting room and bedroom, and it was a private room or rooms for the family reached by a short passage beyond the main living quarters. Yet, by the dawn of the eighteenth century, the parlor or “parlour chamber” became a secondary room for the showing of front stage goods. As defined by Thomas Dyche in his *General English Dictionary* (1744) a parlour, “among the *Architects*, is a convenient lower room, appropriated to the use of entertaining visitors.”⁴⁴⁰ Jean Andre Rouquet describes the parlour as “always on the ground floor; here they take their repasts, and indeed it is not the least convenient, nor the least elegant room in the house that they pitch upon for this important operation.”⁴⁴¹ Beds were

⁴³⁸ William Atkins of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1692, no. 204.208; 13/4/6, ORO.

⁴³⁹ Singleton, *French and English Furniture*, 57.

⁴⁴⁰ Thomas Dyche, *A New General English Dictionary; Peculiarly Calculated for the Use and Improvement of Such as Are Unacquainted with the Learned Languages. To Which Is Prefixed, a Compendious English Grammar. Together with a Supplement Of the Proper Names of the Most Noted Kingdoms, Provinces, Cities, Towns, Rivers, &c. As Also of the Most Celebrated Emperors, Kings, Queens. Originally Begun by the Late Reverend Mr. Thomas Dyche and Finished by the Late William Pardon* (London: Printed for C. and R. Ware, J. Beecroft [etc.], 1771), 616.

⁴⁴¹ Rouquet, *The Present State of the Arts in England*, 102.

common in the parlor since it remained the best bedroom in the house, long after the introduction of upstairs chambers. William Smythe's 1628 inventory shows that "2 fether beeds 2 beedsteeds & 2 Blankets 4 bolsters 4 pyllowes and other furniture praysed at 9 pounds,"⁴⁴² were maintained with other furniture in his parlour. Finally, the parlour could also be a final resting place. Yeoman John Marsey's last will and testament claims that he owned two beds with other furniture, and two chests in "the parler where he died!"⁴⁴³

In addition, William Huggins, a prosperous Chipping Norton yeoman, had a "first parlour with a bedsted and fether bed three bolsters two pillows one quilt, six cane chares, one looking glass, two silver tankerds and other small things"⁴⁴⁴ totaling eighteen pounds. Yeoman William Atkin's 1692 inventory notes items in his parlor or "best chamber" contained an assortment of beds, bedding and chairs, whereas the items in the second chamber or "new parlour" listed quite extravagant luxury items such as "Curtins and valians, twenty one parie of sheets six pillow bears 13 table clothes and one quilt rug, in plate one tanker one bowle one smale cupp, seaven silver spoons." totaling fifteen pounds.⁴⁴⁵ Similarly, James Henshewe's testators record items in both the best parlour as well as the parlour that contained "1 paire of green curtaines & valence, 1 high beddsteed with curtaine roddes, 1 drawinge

⁴⁴² William Smythe of Chipping Norton, will dated 1628, no. 60/2/3, ORO.

⁴⁴³ John Marsey of Whittlesey, will dated March 3, 1707, no. 621, box 454, ORO.

⁴⁴⁴ William Huggins of Chipping Norton, will dated 1710, no. 133/3/35, ORO.

⁴⁴⁵ William Atkins of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1692, no. 204.208; 13/4/6, ORO.

table, 2 feather beddes, six stripte Cushions,” valued at 11 pounds.⁴⁴⁶ His “other parlour” held his effects, which contain another “payer of greene Curtaines & valences, [another] drawing table, 1 Bible, 2 payer of windowe Curtaines & 2 Iron roddes.”⁴⁴⁷ Yet testators referred to them as “the little parlour” and “the great parlour,” respectively.⁴⁴⁸ Also, front stage luxury items emerge in Thomas Eeles’ records, which describe goods in the “best palor” that included “a Rugg, 3 joined stooles, 13 pewter dishes, 3 table Clothes, and 1 dozen & five napkins”⁴⁴⁹ valued at 22 pounds.

Parlors also appeared to have been updated along with the owner’s growing wealth, which reflected a yield to greater comforts, especially to the visitor or guest, since yeoman William Elton’s inventory mentions that his parlor, or best chamber, which could very well have previously functioned as a formal parlour contained more comfortable items such as “tables, 12 paire of sheets, 2 beds 2 bedsteds 8 pillowbears and blankets, pillows, and curtains,” that comprised an inventory worth 320 pounds.⁴⁵⁰ John Bray’s little parlour was less formal than the main parlour, which contained, “one round Table one ffoorem Benches and Wynescott;”⁴⁵¹ yet it contained “2 dozen of pewter and other small peeces of pewter” valued at 46 shillings.⁴⁵²

⁴⁴⁶ James Henshewe of Chipping Norton, will dated 1639, no. 107.52(2), 56;298/1/43 a-b, ORO.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ Thomas Eeles of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1670, no. 107.152;164/5/4, ORO.

⁴⁵⁰ William Elton of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1674, no.202.97/20/4/14, ORO.

⁴⁵¹ John Bray of Burford, will dated 1623, no. 106.127;295/2/83, ORO.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

Parlors could also house less conventional, yet valuable goods. Edward Beacham, yeoman of Burford, has goods in the little parlour that include “pictures, two barrels, two half hoggesheads, five pounds of malt, and wheat & four pounds of masseldine.”⁴⁵³

Brew House

Mildred Campbell claims, “Drink held an important place in the yeoman’s fare.”⁴⁵⁴ She adds that “white wine, Rhenish wine, malmsey, muscatel, and many other wines were highly esteemed, and now and then one encounters yeomen drinking them.”⁴⁵⁵ She points out that England was not a grape growing country and that wine was “usually beyond their purses.”⁴⁵⁶ Thus, they drank beer, ale, mead, and cider brewed in their own homes. Home brewing was widespread in seventeenth century Oxfordshire, and most yeomen houses contained special rooms devoted to it. Prosperous yeomen sold, consumed, and used home brew at meals, possibly as a way for entertaining guests. A good percentage of yeomen—Burford 71 percent, Chipping Norton 32 percent, and Henley-on-Thames 46 percent had brew houses or malthouses that produced beer since evidence is found in the numerous staves or hogshead barrels that house beer and cider to be taken

⁴⁵³ Edward Beacham of Burford, will dated 1682, no. 91.320;107.216;7/2/43, ORO. Messeldine or meslin was flour produced from mixing rye and wheat. It was used to make a popular bread known as “yeoman bread.”

⁴⁵⁴ Campbell, *English Yeoman*, 250.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

to market. These containers were valuable. Burford yeoman John Bray held “Barrells keevers & other wooden vessels” valued at an impressive 20 shillings.⁴⁵⁷

Although a fair number of yeomen maintained brew houses or brewing chambers, lesser well-to-do yeomen ran alehouses and were licensed as tavern landlords. This was a necessary situation, especially in Burford toward the end of the sixteenth century because of the depleted wool trade that financially impacted most of the population of the Cotswold region, and forced many to supplement their income. Although beer and ale are not considered luxury items, home brewing and the addition of these chambers serves as proof that the yeomen were adding earnestly to their homes.

Contents of the Yeomen Interior

Movables

As the prosperous yeoman hall-house grew with its new additions various fixtures such as loose floorboards, window frames, transoms, wainscoting, stairs, and partitions creating smaller rooms could be separately bequeathed if so desired. Evidence of this lies in the decision of testators, who listed these items separately from the house itself.

⁴⁵⁷ John Bray of Burford, will dated 1623, no. 106.127;295/2/83, ORO.

Wainscoting was considered an important movable, particularly since it provided wealthy homeowners with a highly elaborate, yet decorative solution to the ever-growing number of rooms in the English household. J.H. Pollen says “room paneling [wainscoting] was introduced into England during the reign of Henry III, that king having ordered a room at Windsor Castle to be paneled with specially imported Norway pine.”⁴⁵⁸ Since paneling was initially imported at great expense from the Baltic region, wainscoting was for the well-to-do, a circumstance that caused William Harrison to remark, “it was brought hither out of Dansk [Denmark], for our wainscot is not made in England.”⁴⁵⁹ The high point of ornate paneling came during the Renaissance when Flemish and Italian craftsmen carved intricate designs of lion’s heads, cupids, satyrs, and leaves, to mention just a few. It quickly grew fashionable amongst the English elite as a decorative architectural addition. English carvers imitated continental workmanship, which can be seen in Hampton Court where Henry VIII employed many artisans to embellish the interior. Such designs and ideas would eventually filter down to the gentry and wealthy yeomen.

In Oxfordshire, wainscoting appears in various inventories, such as Hugh Owen’s 1603 probate that lists the Burford yeoman’s “waynscott about the

⁴⁵⁸ J. H. Pollen, *Ancient & Modern Furniture and Woodwork in the South Kensington Museum* (London: Published by South Kensington Museum, afterwards Victoria and Albert Museum, 1874), 49.

⁴⁵⁹ Harrison, *The Description of England*, 278.

hall with the benches Payntal clothes and the portal.”⁴⁶⁰ This alludes to the fact that the entryway held an eye-catching cloth with a colorful design, and the wainscoting was possibly composed of ornate or intricately carved wood. Richard Granger, yeoman of Henley, possessed a similar design in his entry hall with “one joined Cubberd, one framed benche, and a back of wainscot.”⁴⁶¹ Also, John Temple’s testators mention “wainscot & bords praised at 20 shillings.”⁴⁶² Wainscot also arises in a slightly different form yet somewhat more exotic in the inventories of Burford yeomen, John Bray and Lewes Franklin. Bray 1623 inventory cites “one wynescott settle in his chamber over the hall,”⁴⁶³ and Franklin’s 1636 will lists a “waynscott Cupboard there” valued at 15 shillings.⁴⁶⁴ This alludes to the yeoman’s penchant for customizing of furniture, which is also seen in Francis Jackley’s 1636 inventory that includes “an old wainscot chaire.”⁴⁶⁵

The Yeomen’s Growing Visibility

These external refinements are only the beginning of the yeomen’s statement that they possessed the means to live comfortably and luxuriously. Their homes, although an expression of their growing wealth and taste, were

⁴⁶⁰ Hugh Owen of Burford, will dated 1603, no. 191/410;49/1/19, ORO.

⁴⁶¹ Richard Granger of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1612, no. 106.71; 80/1/12, ORO.

⁴⁶² John Temple of Burford, will dated 1626, no. 66/1/9, ORO.

⁴⁶³ John Bray of Burford, will dated 1623, no. 106.127;295/2/83, ORO.

⁴⁶⁴ Lewes Franklin of Burford, will dated 1636, no. 199.288; 22/4/20, ORO.

⁴⁶⁵ Francis Jackson of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1636, no. 107.36; 298/3/26, ORO.

merely vast storage receptacles for the variety of luxury items they collected and admired. The real ostentation, as we shall see in the following chapter, lies within. Schmidt's work on the history of the yeomen sums it up appropriately when he stated, "The yeoman's daily existence and the prosperity which he enjoyed from his fields is best revealed in the contents of his farmhouse."⁴⁶⁶ Hoskins also echoed these sentiments when he proclaimed, "The mere list of contents of farmhouses and cottages in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries is sufficiently conclusive; there is more of everything and better of everything, and new-fangled comforts (like cushions and hangings) as well."⁴⁶⁷

Also, writing about the increasing visibility of household luxuries, the perceptive William Harrison acknowledged that costly furnishings were once part of the wealthy merchant or noblemen's houses; but, it now seemed that this exclusivity was being usurped by different social groups ranging from merchants to artisans and, most notably, to farmers since:

The furniture of our houses also exceedeth and is grown in manner even to passing delicacy; and herein I do not speak of the nobility and gentry only buy likewise of the lowest sort in most places of our south country...in noblemen's houses it is not rare to see abundance of arras, rich hangings of tapestry, silver vessels, and so much other plate as may furnish sundry cupboards...now it is descended yet lower, even unto the inferior artificers and many farmers, who, by virtue of their old and not of their new leases, have for the most part learned also to garnish their cupboards with plate, their joint beds⁴⁶⁸ with tapestry and silk hangings, and their tables with carpets and fine

⁴⁶⁶ Albert Schmidt, *Yeoman in Tudor and Stuart England*, 16.

⁴⁶⁷ Hoskins, "Rebuilding of Rural England, 1570-1640," 49.

⁴⁶⁸ Beds made by joiners. These creations were far more ornamental than the average carpenter's work

napery, whereby the wealth of our country (God be praised therefore and give us grace to employ it well) doth infinitely appear.⁴⁶⁹

Harrison's lament is born out of his belief and alarm that the now costly movables possessed by farmers were a result of long leases and lower rents.

It will be evident, with evidence from yeomen wills and inventories that the cost of living extended beyond the architecture and exterior design.

Indeed, Levy Peck states that Jacobean "aspirations to splendor and magnificence extended to interior furnishings as well."⁴⁷⁰ And with this, it will become more apparent that the evidence suggests that the increase in wealth and refinement is reflected in the quantity of napery the yeoman owned: linen, napkins, pillow bears, etc.⁴⁷¹

Much can be learned from the evolution of the yeoman cottage into a larger or grander type of dwelling. The changes in room use and the allocation of space to serve different social functions illustrates the enrichment of the country farmer and his ability to outwardly express his economic fortunes. Yet, in the following chapter, there will be an interior analysis of yeomen consumption that will increase our understanding towards the motivation and meaning of owning certain luxury goods.

⁴⁶⁹ Harrison, *The Description of England*, 200–201.

⁴⁷⁰ Linda Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendor: Society and Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 216.

⁴⁷¹ Schmidt, *Yeoman in Tudor and Stuart England*, 21.

CHAPTER 5

The first part of this chapter is concerned with the theoretical assessments of luxury good consumption and its impact on the English yeomen. When discussing the yeoman's active role as a consumer, it is necessary to explore the wider concept of luxury, particularly by juxtaposing scholarship that emerged during the consumer revolution of the early modern period with that of the last few decades. It is prudent to define the term luxury⁴⁷² both clearly and unambiguously. This will not only help to recognize the interplay between notions that constitute the societal definition and perception of luxury consumption, but it will also identify luxury goods as a crucial—if not somewhat inevitable—component in early modern English society.

The second half of this chapter illustrates the material culture of the yeomen's domestic lives. It begins with an exploration and explanation of luxury household items. This leads to a discussion of fine furniture, *objets de art*, textiles, and drinking vessels that reveal the transformation of yeomen consumerism. It describes the ownership patterns of luxury goods and explains the evolution of furniture and how craftsmen's innovations specifically the ornamentation of durable goods created new luxury items that successfully combined the ideas of utility and comfort. Most importantly, it illustrates the Oxfordshire yeomen's appreciation for finery

⁴⁷² Christopher J. Berry defines a luxury good as "a widely desired (but not yet widely attained) good that is believed to be 'pleasing,' and the general desirability of which is explained by it being a specific refinement, or qualitative aspect, of some universal generic need," in Christopher J. Berry, *The Idea of Luxury: A Conceptual and Historical Investigation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 9.

and the way in which these items populated the interior of their homes and reveals the effort put forth to showcase their newfound wealth.

The Debates

Since this work is concerned with the growth of luxury consumerism among the yeomanry in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, it is prudent to evaluate the debates regarding luxury consumption, a variegated assemblage of explanations that build on the nascent beliefs that defined luxury goods and practices. Through these ideas and theories, it is possible to gain insight into the development of the institutions and infrastructure that helped facilitate the acquisition of luxury goods by English yeomen. A cursory examination of the debates will also allow us to evaluate the mindset of country-dwelling consumers, and to understand that the underlying measures of acquisition, ownership, and use were driven by a combination of ideas and events. These included new attitudes and mentalities, the decline of luxury's moral stigma brought about by the growing recognition of commerce and trade, social emulation and competition, and a spatial component that facilitated the availability of goods.

The Early Modern Debates and the Definition of Luxury

The first debates on the economic benefits of luxury spending and conspicuous consumption emerged during the late seventeenth century against the backdrop of the consumer revolution and demonstrate a considerable shift toward the acceptance of trade and free-market forces that drove luxury consumerism.

Throughout the classical and medieval eras conspicuous consumption of luxury goods was seen as ruinous, a fixation that if not controlled would, in the words of Livy, “sow *semina futurea luxuriae*” or the “seeds of future lust.”⁴⁷³ Edward III spoke of luxurious clothing as “a contagious and excessive apparel of diverse people, against their estate and degree.”⁴⁷⁴ And, quite notably, St. Augustine’s theological musings associated luxury with avarice, ambition, and sensual indulgence.⁴⁷⁵ Since early on, luxury consumerism has been credited with many social maladies that include declining health, sexual immodesty, and decaying political morality.

These ideas were displaced with the onset of the consumer revolution,⁴⁷⁶ when the rise of trade changed these antiquated perceptions and lessened the ambivalence toward luxury consumerism. In the late seventeenth

⁴⁷³ Livy, *The History of Rome*, Bohn’s Classical Library (London: H. G. Bohn, 1853), 39.6.

⁴⁷⁴ Berry, *The Idea of Luxury*, 30.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁴⁷⁶ A period between the late sixteenth and early eighteenth centuries that witnessed an aggregate consumption of services and goods. Although the existence of this event is still debated, it is argued that this rise in consumerism grew in the shadows of the Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions.

century, contemporary writers departed from the traditional opinion that luxuries led to social corruption, and embraced the idea that spending on life's frivolities is, for the most part, socially beneficial. Evidence of this can be found in Nicholas Barbon's *A Discourse of Trade* (1690), a work that contributed directly to the foundation of modern economics. Although trained as a physician, Barbon's *Discourse* extolled the virtue of free trade and argued that commerce especially that concerned with luxury goods should "flow freely."⁴⁷⁷ He urged people to habitually purchase goods regularly. This, he reasoned, would create a constant demand for products. Barbon also argued against the control of luxury items by stating, "The freer the trade, the better the nation will thrive."⁴⁷⁸ The true genius of Barbon's work manifests itself in the segment, which ignores the moral aspects of luxury consumption and articulates trade as a necessary function:

Trade Increaseth the Revenue of the Government, by providing an imploy For the people: For every Man that Works, pay by those things which he Eats and Wears, something to the Government. Thus the excise and custom Are Raised, and the more every Man Earns, the more he consumes, and the King's Revenue is the more increased.⁴⁷⁹

He goes on to assert that those "expences that most promote Trade, are in Cloaths and Lodging: In Adorning the Body and the House, there are a Thousand Traders Imploy'd in Cloathing and Decking the Body, and Building,

⁴⁷⁷ Nicholas Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade* (London: Tho. Milbourn, 1690), 37.

⁴⁷⁸ Nicholas Barbon, *A Discourse Concerning Coining the New Money Lighter. In Answer to Mr. Lock's Considerations About Raising the Value of Money* (Westmead, Farnborough, Hants., England: Gregg International Publishers, 1971), 59.

⁴⁷⁹ Barbon, *Discourse of Trade*, 64.

and Furnishing of Houses.”⁴⁸⁰ Indeed, Barbon draws a connection between society’s need to fulfill private desires with expenditure on luxury goods in a virtuous and benevolent manner, of course, and economic support for the established government. Christopher Berry surmises that through Barbon’s argument “fashion and luxury goods can be justified by their instrumental promotion of trade.”⁴⁸¹

Barbon trumpets the “theory of accumulation,” and fully agrees with his contemporary, free-market proponent John Houghton (1681), a theorist who describes consumers as “those guilty of Prodigality, Pride, Vanity and Luxury created wealth for the Kingdom while running down their estates.”⁴⁸²

Similarly, Blaise Pascal, eminent mathematician and philosopher commented in his *Pensees* (1669) that the vanity of man “has taken such firm hold in the heart of Man ... pride does balance all our Miseries, for either it hides them, or if it discovers them, it boasts in having them known.”⁴⁸³

Bernard Mandeville, a jurist and political economist, echoed the sentiments of Barbon in his work, *The Fable of the Bees* (1724), an early discussion of the notions of buying and selling that extols the virtues of

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ Berry, *Idea of Luxury*, 125.

⁴⁸² Cited by Joyce Oldham Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth Century England* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), 171.

⁴⁸³ Blaise Pascal, *Monsieur Pascall's Thoughts: Meditations and Prayers, Touching Matters Moral and Divine, as They Were Found in His Papers After His Death. Together with a Discourse Upon Monsieur Pascall's Thoughts, Wherein Is Shewn What Was His Design. As Also Another Discoure on the Proofs of the Truth of the Book of Moses. And a Treatise, Wherein Is Made Appear That There Are Demonstrations of a Different Nature, but as Certain as Those of Geometry, and That Such May Be Given of the Christian Religion* (London: Printed for Jacob Tonson, 1688), 251.

luxurious living. Like Barbon, Mandeville was a trained physician who believed that luxuries stimulated capital, which encouraged commercial progress. He argued:

The Root of Evil, Avarice That damn'd ill natur'd baneful Vice,
Was Slave to Prodigality, That noble sin; whilst Luxury Employ'd a
Million Of the Poor, and odious Pride a Million more; Envy itself, and
Vanity Were Ministers of Industry; Their darling Folly, Fickleness In
Dyets, Furniture and Dress, That strange ridic'lous Vice, was made the
very Wheel that turn'd the Trade⁴⁸⁴

The basest and vilest behavior will ultimately produce the most positive overall economic effect. His work for the time was also ground breaking; however, it did catch the eye (and ire) of various essayists, moralists, and church officials who attacked his idea on luxury and his encouragement of other significant evils.

The eighteenth century was a period of debate on the meaning and value-laden status of luxury. Scottish philosopher David Hume defined luxury consumption in his work *Of Refinement in the Arts* (1752). He states simply that “luxury is a word of very uncertain signification, and may be taken in a good as well as a bad sense. In general, it means great refinement in the gratification of the senses; and any degree of it may be innocent or blamable, according to the age, or country, or condition of the person”⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸⁴ Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees: Or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits* By Bernard De Mandeville, Another edition. *The Fable of the Bees: or, Private vices publick benefits. Containing several discourses, to demonstrate that human frailties. . . may be turn'd to the advantage of the Civil Society, etc.* [In prose and verse.]. (London: J. Roberts, 1714), 10.

⁴⁸⁵ David Hume, *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*, New ed. (London: pr. for T. Cadell: and A. Kincaid, and A. Donaldson, Edinburgh, 1772), v. II, part II, 25.

Hume's work was a response to Mandeville. Yet he employs both the extreme example of moral condemnation of luxury and the liberal idea of consumption to discuss luxury's impact on civil government. He claims that in order to reconcile the two, he would endeavor to:

Prove that, *first*, the ages of refinement are both the happiest and most virtuous; *secondly*, that where-ever luxury ceases to be innocent, it also ceases to be beneficial; and when carried a degree too far, is a quality pernicious, tho' perhaps not the most pernicious, to political society.⁴⁸⁶

Contemporaries such as Barbon, Pascal and later Hume sought to explain the benefits of luxury through the example of trade and its growing impact on a commercial society. Generally speaking, trade will expand and luxury, in its innocence, will be an advantage rather than a moral hazard to society. Also, it is important to note that in these theories, the term luxury has changed from being essentially a negative term, throughout the early Augustinian attack on pagan vices and *luxuria*, which threatened social virtue, to a new understanding that deemed it a fundamental part of the commercial society of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Christopher Berry sees this understanding as the inevitable "drift toward luxury acceptance, which eventually transformed into a deceitful ploy that aids and abets consumptive behaviour where wants and appetites are multiplied."⁴⁸⁷ This behavior is typical, in his opinion, of contemporary society. Nonetheless, this consumer

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., 27.

⁴⁸⁷ Berry, *Idea of Luxury*, 132.

“acceptance” allowed those with disposable income, particularly the yeomen, to enjoy a conscious-free foray into the world of luxury goods in the late early modern period, where “desire, and its gratification via rising personal consumption, were not, after all, a dangers to the soul.”⁴⁸⁸

Modern Debates

Modern arguments about consumerism oftentimes reflect the impact of the agricultural and industrial revolutions, events that fall within and extend beyond the scope of this study. These debates are useful towards shedding light on the trajectory of consumerism and how social emulation communicates a visible statement of wealth, status, and taste. Nonetheless, there are other schools of thought concerning consumer behavior that are applicable to the study of the English yeoman and are a better fit for the villages under study.

Lorna Weatherill has written extensively on the English and American early-modern consumerism. She believes the word “luxury” should be normally used to convey the idea of costly and high-quality goods, food, or services. Weatherill, however, believes the word can also carry some implicit judgment that luxuries are immoral. The word also means something that is desirable but not indispensable, although possibly of higher quality and price than other goods of a similar nature. Also, Weatherill uses data tables in order to illustrate the qualitative features of people’s possessions. She

⁴⁸⁸ John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds. *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London: Routledge, 1993), 65.

believes that data gleaned from taxation and probate records shows the extent of household purchases amongst various occupations, particularly yeomen. She argues that the cultural aspects of luxuries are also recognized in their ability to mark the rank of the owner and thus communicate social position in a non-verbal way. She concludes that consumerism is an eighteenth century phenomenon. Although consumption of luxury goods was experienced in the late seventeenth century, she claims the “consumerist” approach is not appropriately applicable to the earlier period.⁴⁸⁹

Linda Levy Peck combines both quantitative data and social behavior to draw her conclusions. Peck views the process of consumption as a social action. It is essentially a typified response to an often-repeated social situation, such as shopping for goods. She also argues that luxury consumption impacted culture and aesthetic standards long before the eighteenth century where most scholars believe the consumer revolution originally occurred. Levy Peck cites both social and economic factors for the growth of consumer behavior and luxury good consumption. Her research into gender and shopping reveals evidence of women as luxury consumers, especially when making decisions with regard to how the household which they ran should look. She has also noted the prominent theme of women as shoppers who succumb to the seduction of merchants in eighteenth century

⁴⁸⁹ Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760* (London: Routledge, 1988), 16.

literature. Levy Peck defines luxury items as “the habitual use of, or indulgence in what is choice or costly, whether food, dress, furniture, or appliance ... or surroundings.”⁴⁹⁰

Lastly, and somewhat contrary to the previous historiographical assessments on consumer studies, Jan de Vries argues that consumer behavior during this period did not amount to a “consumer revolution,” nor did it:

Jump start the growth of production of the leading sectors of the Industrial Revolution, nor was the consumer demand driven primarily by emulation, where rising incomes allow progressively lower socio-economic strata to adopt, and be incorporated into, the material world of their social superiors.⁴⁹¹

For de Vries, consumer demand of this era was a simple matter of choice, broadened within the selection of “consumer technologies.”⁴⁹² The demand itself developed or was born out of the interaction between maturation of market and household economies. The marriage of these two components provided individuals with an expanded range of goods that thereby “led to a more frequent exercise of individuated choice.”⁴⁹³ These arguments will help illuminate the following evidence on luxury consumption of goods found within the yeomen household.

⁴⁹⁰ Linda Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendor: Society and Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 5.

⁴⁹¹ Jan de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behavior and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 124.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, 122.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*

The External and Internal Signs of Yeoman Wealth and Household Luxury Goods

The Restoration of Charles II was a pivotal time not just for the reconfiguration of the English polity, but also for innovations in furniture form and style. After the grim years of war and enforcement of strict rules and behavior between 1642 and 1660, the aesthetic emphasis on extravagance and beauty was a natural response to the end of Cromwell's military dictatorship. John Gloag states that, "The King came back and it was safe to smile, wear extravagant and beautiful clothes, to order carved and gilded furniture, to indulge a taste for delightful inutilities, and to flout every Puritan sentiment."⁴⁹⁴ It should be evident from this statement the English were rediscovering a taste for finery after years of cultural concealment. The production and consumption of luxury goods revived and, by all accounts, they appear regularly in the household inventories of the Oxfordshire yeomanry.

Local and global factors enabled the emerging appreciation of luxury goods among the yeomanry. Because of the ever-increasing growth of agricultural trade, a noticeable transformation occurred in both the appearance and contents of yeoman cottages. Early Tudor cottages contained furniture that usually consisted of some rough carpentry work, often constructed by the owner himself, and was of little value. Before 1550,

⁴⁹⁴ John Gloag, *The Englishman's Chair; Origins, Design, and Social History of Seat Furniture in England* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1964), 76.

most houses contained the basic furniture: benches, a table, stools and beds, essential cooking and eating vessels. But by the reign of Charles I in the early 1600's, the neighbors who drew up the yeoman's inventory now stated that "many farmers possessed at least one article of joined⁴⁹⁵ furniture, properly constructed by a trained craftsman that gave a new touch of modest luxury to his home."⁴⁹⁶ Clay illustrates the distinction and location of this trend:

However the prosperity of the commercial farmers did not mean simply a growing market for capital goods, for associated with the marked improvement in their accommodation there is evidence ... from the Oxford region...of a greater accumulation of personal possessions. Inventories attached to the wills left by members of this section of rural society show that the value of their clothes, bedding, furnishings, kitchen and tableware was rising faster than prices, and was coming to form a larger proportion of their total wealth.⁴⁹⁷

Now goods came on the market in greater quantity than ever before. Accordingly, by the time of Charles II, multiple pieces of joined furniture, tailored clothing and textiles, books, clocks and looking glasses could be found among the yeomen's effects. More and more, the evidence demonstrates that the prosperous yeoman farmer was intent on showing his capacity to utilize his ever-growing disposable income.

While these capitalist farmers climbed their way up the social ladder, their now sizeable land holdings allowed them to profit from the opportunities of the age. They added new rooms to their cottages, invested an increasing

⁴⁹⁵ Furniture comprised of jointed frames.

⁴⁹⁶ *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*; General editor, H. P. R. Finberg (London: Cambridge U.P, 1967), 454.

⁴⁹⁷ C. G. A. Clay, *Economic Expansion and Social Change: England 1500-1700* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 24.

proportion of their income in domestic comforts, and purchased a few pieces of joined furniture that they left to their sons and widows.⁴⁹⁸ An early witness to this social change was William Harrison, a gentleman who discussed with a group of contemporaries the economic fortunes of the yeoman during his lifetime. He pointed to various changes in his town that not only included “a multitude of chiminies lately erected;” but also “a great amendment of lodging [by which he meant better bedding]; the exchange of vessel [that is tableware] from wood to pewter and even silver.”⁴⁹⁹

Evidence of rising living standards can be found in the rise of various yeomen families such as the Bartholomews, the Taylors, the Silvesters, and the Webbes, who are singled out in the Burgage Rent Rolls as men of means. This is particularly true of the Webbe family of Burford. In only two generations, the Webbe family rose in social status from husbandman to gentleman. In the mid seventeenth century, William Webbe of Burford was listed as yeoman, and by 1620, his son William Webbe the younger, Gentleman of Clifford’s Inne London,⁵⁰⁰ reflected the process of this rising circle. Also, marriage into a more notable family enhanced a yeoman’s social standing. William Brayne the elder, yeoman of Chipping Norton, and his son William, are identified on the title deed in a pre-nuptial settlement with

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., 462.

⁴⁹⁹ William Harrison, *The Description of England*, Folger Documents of Tudor and Stuart Civilization (Ithaca, N.Y: Published for the Folger Shakespeare Library by Cornell University Press, 1968), 239.

⁵⁰⁰ R. H Gretton, *The Burford Records, a Study in Minor Town Government* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1920), 214.

regard to “the intended marriage of William Brayne (the younger) to Mary Diston, daughter of Giles Diston, gent[leman] of Chipping Norton.”⁵⁰¹ The Webbe family and the Brayne family—like many other yeomen families in the villages under examination—accomplished this social and economic transformation because they were able to specialize in the production of crops (namely wheat and barley), which were in strong demand in the London market.⁵⁰²

The Webbes are one example of social transformation. Their inventory is substantial since it reflects both the basic goods needed for everyday use and costly luxury items. But the question remains: what type of luxury goods appeared among the yeoman’s effects? Luxury goods are simply those items that were acquired (and admired) by not only the enlightened elite, but also by those who made up fashionable society. These items were never deemed “essential” to daily living. Examples include books, silver, pewter, textiles (linen and silk in particular), and furniture.

The following charts represent a broad assessment that contrasts the percentage of luxury items and durable goods in the homes under examination (against the total number of inventories for each community). Henley-on-Thames (*Chart 1*) has a large amount of luxury items such as pewter (43 percent), pewter dishes (21 percent), table linen (10 percent), looking glasses (4 percent), silver plate (8 percent), and books (3 percent)

⁵⁰¹ Pre-Nuptial Settlement and Messuage where (1) live and lands in Over Norton & Chipping Norton, dated 15 December, 1666, Ref. SL30/2/D/1, ORO.

⁵⁰² Keith Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680* (London: Routledge, 1982), 135.

compared to saucepans (2 percent) and cooking pots (4 percent). Chipping Norton (*Chart 2*) also contains a strong percentage of luxuries such as pewter dishes (42 percent), table linen (10 percent), books (3 percent), looking glasses (1 percent), and silver plate (3 percent). Lastly, Burford (*Chart 3*) contains a large percentage of pewter (41 percent), pewter dishes (10 percent), silver plate (6 percent), table linen (13 percent), books (3 percent), and gold (1 percent) as compared to essentials such as cooking pots (11 percent) and saucepans (6 percent).

Chart 1 – Henley

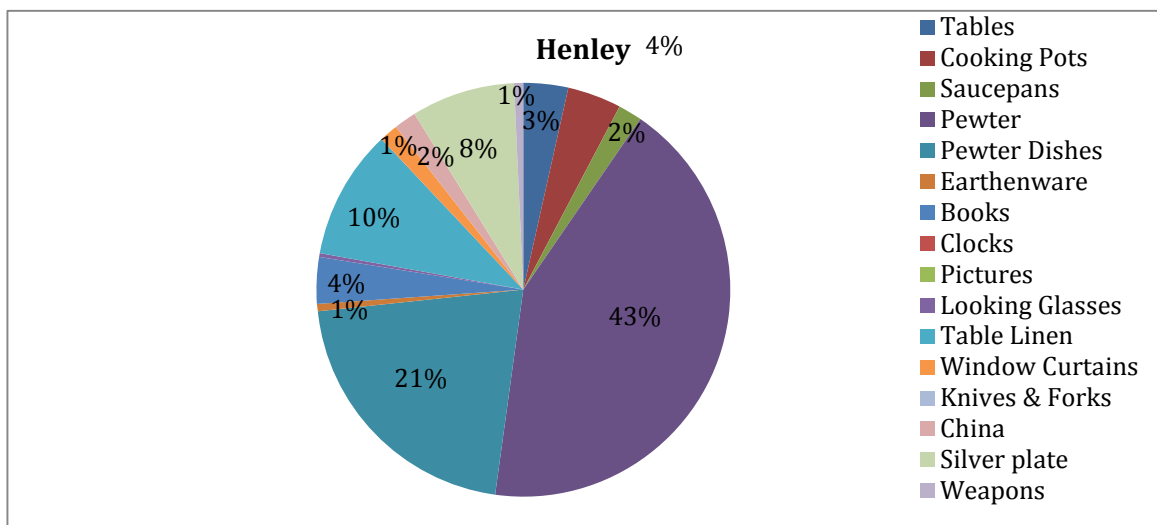


Chart 2 – Chipping Norton

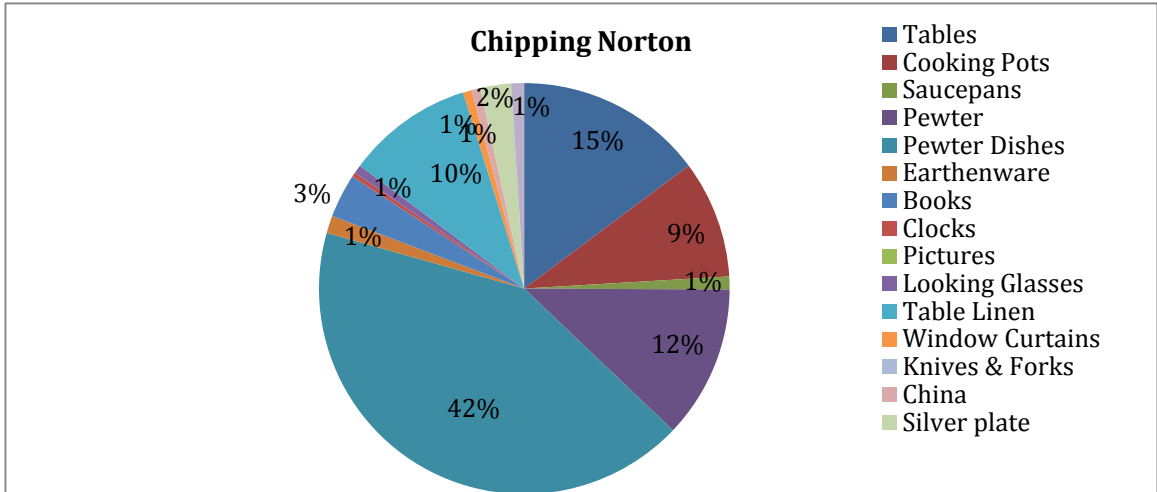
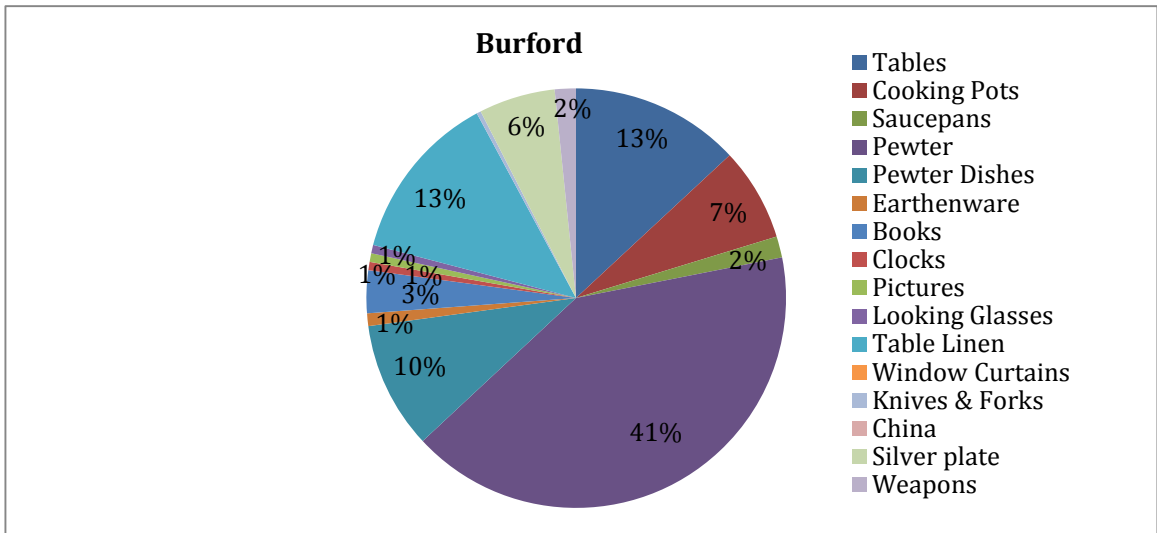


Chart 3 – Burford



Lorna Weatherill regards luxury items as, “surviving objects or artifacts that are those of the highest quality and greatest aesthetic appeal.”⁵⁰³ In the seventeenth century, the decoration of the house among the gentry

⁵⁰³ Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, 21.

“sacrificed everything to fashion, to social significance.”⁵⁰⁴ Decorative furniture (buffets, heavily carved sideboards) now supported decorative pieces of silverware and plates, dishes and pictures. Moreover, luxury items are easily distinguished from basic goods (pans, benches, jugs, chamberpots), or what Weatherill defines as “household durables”⁵⁰⁵ and were considered to be frivolous and unnecessary, unfit to attract the attention of honest Englishmen.⁵⁰⁶ Although goods like tobacco, fruit, vinegar, and tea fall into the category of luxury items, it will be necessary to adhere to the basic, non-perishable goods in this study.⁵⁰⁷

Pots! Pots! Good Pots and jars!

These are all earthen vessels and all first class.⁵⁰⁸

(Hereward the Exile, 11th century)⁵⁰⁹

China

Porcelain, like silk and glass, was beautiful and refined, its manufacture secret, and its desirability great.⁵¹⁰ Maureen Stafford and Keith Middlemas

⁵⁰⁴ Fernand Braudel, *The Structures of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible*, 1st U.S. ed., Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century, v. 1 (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), 307.

⁵⁰⁵ Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, 40.

⁵⁰⁶ Joan Thirsk, *Economic Policy and Projects: The Development of a Consumer Society in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 78.

⁵⁰⁷ Although tea and tobacco will be assessed later in this work, they will be mentioned specifically because of their impact on luxury items in the yeoman household.

⁵⁰⁸ Janet Fairweather, ed., *Liber Eliensis: A History of the Isle of Ely from the Seventh Century to the Twelfth* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005), Book II, 217.

⁵⁰⁹ Hereward the Wake or Exile (1035-1072) was an Anglo-Saxon ruler from the Cambridgeshire, East Anglia who resisted Norman rule. He disguised himself as a simple potter and pretended to sell his wares in the king's court in order to uncover information about plans against him.

⁵¹⁰ Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 50.

claim that cabinets, particularly those displaying earthenware and glass luxuries, became more common in houses because of “porcelain imported from the East.”⁵¹¹ Early examples of Chinese porcelain reached Europe through the Portuguese trade, most notably in 1514. The demand for traditional blue and white porcelain, although relatively small during the sixteenth century, did not go unnoticed by Chinese Emperor Wan Li (1573-1619) and a full exploitation, through the network of Dutch East Indian Company traders, occurred during the seventeenth century. As a result, most of the Chinese porcelain before the turn of the eighteenth century arrived in England via the Netherlands. Yet the English were soon to enter the market. In 1703, an English East India Company ship *Fleet Frigate* held a “full ship and laden with goods, namely: 205 chests of China and Japan ware, porcelain and a great deal more loose China and Japan earthenware, which was packed up on board.”⁵¹² John Evelyn’s astute opinion of Oriental ware appears in his *Diary* (1664) when,

“A Jesuite shewed me such a collection of rarities sent from ye Jesuites of Japan and China to their order at Paris, as a present to be received in their repository, but brought to London by the East India ships for them, as in my life I had not seen.”⁵¹³

⁵¹¹ Maureen Stafford and Keith Middlemas, *British Furniture Through the Ages* (London: Barker, 1966), vii.

⁵¹² R. J. Charleston, “Pottery, Porcelain, and Glass,” in *The Connoisseur’s Complete Period Guides to the Houses, Decoration, Furnishing and Chattels of the Classic Periods* (London: The Connoisseur, 1968), 384.

⁵¹³ John Evelyn, *Diary and Correspondence of John Evelyn ... to Which Is Subjoined the Private Correspondence Between King Charles I and Sir Edward Nicholas and Between Sir Edward*

During the Protectorate, Oliver Cromwell had taxed Oriental wares including china quite heavily. It was not until the Restoration when this assessment was eased. As the second half of the century progressed, the demand for china throughout England is evident with the granting of patents to produce “earthenware.” In 1671, a patent was granted to a certain Mr. John Dwight for the “Mistery of Transparent Earthenware, Comonly knowne by the Names of Porcelain or China, and Persian Ware, as alsoe the Misterie of Stoneware vulgarly called Cologne Ware.”⁵¹⁴ John Dwight, an ecclesiastical lawyer and fellow of the Royal Society, showed talent in not only the arts and sciences, but also had continual success in selling china during the late seventeenth century.⁵¹⁵

China shops became popular during the Restoration, but quickly “became the lounging-places of fops and curiosity hunters, and the appointments made there caused them to fall into bad repute.”⁵¹⁶ Nonetheless, china appears among the goods of country yeoman. In the little parlor of Robert Norman in 1726, there were “ten table Cheania [China] tea spoons one table two other tables six chairs a glass one grate and fender.”⁵¹⁷ It is apparent that Norman used his vessels for tea drinking, a custom that emerged at the same time as the import of porcelain. Although decoration is not mentioned,

Hyde, Afterwards Earl of Clarendon, and Sir Richard Browne (London, New York: G. Routledge & sons, limited; E. P. Dutton & Co, 1906), 264.

⁵¹⁴ Charleston, “Pottery,” in *The Connoisseur’s Complete Period Guides*, 378.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁶ Esther Singleton, *French and English Furniture* (New York: McClure, Phillips & co, 1903), 113.

⁵¹⁷ Robert Norman of Cottenham, will dated 1724, no. 429/30, box 464, ORO.

the subject matter on Chinese porcelain ranged from birds to deer and other animals depicted in outdoor scenes. Despite the high price of porcelain, “an enormous quantity was absorbed by Europe during the second half, and particularly the last quarter of the seventeenth century.”⁵¹⁸ This was due to the court of William and Mary, whose courtiers showed an insatiable appetite for porcelain. This was especially true of Mary, whose passion for china developed while living in Holland. It is also believed that Christopher Wren, architect of such notable buildings such as St. Paul’s, was commissioned to design cabinets and shelves exclusively for her china in Hampton Court Palace.⁵¹⁹

The growing passion for porcelain⁵²⁰ was evident in the countryside. It is famously mentioned in William Wycherly’s *The Country Wife* (1724).

Wycherly wrote comedic plays with satirical dialogue that lampooned the political and social events of the day. When the character, Lady Fidget, a woman most familiar with India houses, the contemporary name for Oriental ware emporiums, enters the room with a piece of china in her hand and exclaims to Mrs. Squeamish and Mr. Horner that:

⁵¹⁸ Charleston, “Pottery,” in *The Connoisseur’s Complete Period Guides*, 384.

⁵¹⁹ Singleton, *French and English Furniture*, 113.

⁵²⁰ The demand for china was realized by Thomas Frye Bow, who founded porcelain works in 1740 close to Bow Bride, London. It was the first to produce porcelain in Britain and mixed cattle bones from the local slaughterhouse with clay to create “fine porcelain.” Known as the *Bow China Works*, it employed some three hundred artists until 1770, most of who were proficient in “japanning and modeling clay.” Elizabeth Adams, *Bow Porcelain*, Faber Monographs on Pottery and Porcelain (London; Boston: Faber, 1981), 18.

I have been toying and moyling, for the pretty'st Piece of China, my Dear. What d'ye think if he had any left, I would not have had it too, for we Women Of Quality never think we have China enough.⁵²¹

Since china was intended for display and presented as a front stage item, it influenced the way architects approached interior design. Singleton claims that both D'Aviler and Marot's book of designs employed "a most lavish use of china as an integral part of the interior decoration." "He piles up his chimney-pieces with tier on tier shelves loaded with porcelain of all shapes and sizes, arranged, however, with an eye to symmetry."⁵²² Singleton continues that most of the Queen Anne rooms reflect the china craze and how "one of Marot's plates shows more than 300 pieces of china on the chimney-piece alone."⁵²³

As cabinetmakers revolutionized furniture making during the early eighteenth-century, they created a new style of cabinet called a *Buffet* from the French term *Beaufait*: a separate, wooden-columned apartment for display of table service. It is defined in Thomas Dyche's *English Dictionary* (1744) as: "A handsome open cup-board, or repository for plate, glasses, china, &c. which are put there either for ornament or convenience of serving the table."⁵²⁴

⁵²¹ William Wycherly, *The Country Wife. A Comedy Acted at the Theatre-Royal. Written by Mr. Wycherly*: London: Printed for Sam. Tooke and Ben. Motte, at the Middle Temple-Gate, in Fleet-Street, 1724, Act IV. Scene I, 76-77.

⁵²² Singleton, *French and English Furniture*, 116.

⁵²³ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁴ Thomas Dyche, *A New General English Dictionary; Peculiarly Calculated for the use and Improvement of such as are Unacquainted with the Learned Languages. To Which is Prefixed, a Compendious English Grammar. Together with a Supplement Of the Proper Names of the*

This trend did not escape Oxfordshire since there is evidence of china and cupboards in yeomen households. John Burkin of Burford and Richard Granger of Henley provide an excellent example of the proper setting in which to entertain guests and showcase one's china. It seems that towards the latter part of Burkin's life, he and his family concentrated less on agriculture. In his inventory, the household furnishings, but not the livestock and crops, account for approximately two thirds of his wealth. His parlor contained: "one feather bed & flockbed blankets & covering, once couch four green cheares, carpets and earthen ware [tea things] and glass bottles."⁵²⁵ In addition, there were six Turkey work chairs and a featherbed to provide comfort for family and guests at tea. His china is duly displayed on the corner cupboard or buffet with a glass front panel known as a "glass safe." Granger displays his "7 china [china] dishes, 3 saucers, two porringers and dozen of spoones" alongside pewter plater & 5 other small pewter dishes."⁵²⁶

The "Delph Basons" mentioned in the inventory quite possibly refer to Delftware, a type of pottery first produced in Delft, Holland, early in the seventeenth century. This pottery, reproduced in the method of the Italian majolicas of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, was highly valued, particularly for its craftsmanship and unique blue colouring.⁵²⁷ Yet, this may

Most noted Kingdoms, Provinces, Cities, Towns, Rivers, &c. As Also of the Most Celebrated Emperors, Kings, Queens. Originally Begun by the Late Reverend Mr. Thomas Dyche, And now Finished by the late William Pardon (London: C. and R. Ware, J. Beecroft [etc], 1771), 117.

⁵²⁵ John Burkin of Burford, will dated 1686, no. 107.241; 161/1/28, ORO.

⁵²⁶ Richard Granger of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1612, no. 106.71; 80/1/12, ORO.

⁵²⁷ *Collins Encyclopedia of Antiques* (London: Collins, 1973), 115.

or may not be a type of English Delftware, which was produced in Lambeth, Liverpool, and Bristol. This imitation is thought to be much “coarser” in both finish and color than its Dutch counterpart. Yet it was still sought and collected as a luxury item. This is found in the inventory of Burford yeoman William Pytham, who owns “one earthen potte and a painted cesterne.”⁵²⁸ This also emerges in the inventory of yeoman William Turner, whose hall entry contains, “one Tableboard 1 forme 1 cupbord 1 chaire 7 platters and 2 fruit dishes and a Boefet,” which contains both “a parcel of delph and china ware” valued at 2 pounds.⁵²⁹ Additionally, Michael Fletcher, a yeoman of Henley, also displayed his goods in the hall, where he had “2 tables, 4 joined stooles, 4 mated chears, a Cubord and a parcel of earthenware” valued at 12 shillings.⁵³⁰

More earthenware appears in the inventory of Henley yeoman George Cranfield. It is found in the kitchen and included, “earthen porringers & saucers & plates.”⁵³¹ Thomas Brinthow, yeomen of Henley, has “earthenware on hangers”⁵³² curiously next to his “vest and sword.”⁵³³ And finally it surfaces again in Michael Fletcher’s best chamber where he displayed his

⁵²⁸ William Pytham of Burford, will dated 1606, no. 106.11; 299/4/11, ORO.

⁵²⁹ William Turner of Chipping Norton, will dated 1617, no. 194.372; 153/3/34, ORO.

⁵³⁰ Michael Fletcher of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1676, no. 107.183; 165/2/19, ORO.

⁵³¹ George Cranfield of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1667, no. 107.139; 162/4/28, ORO.

⁵³² These could be either teacups or porringers with curved handles.

⁵³³ Thomas Brinthow of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1680, no. 203.119; 7/2/8, ORO.

“looking glass, and parcel of Earthen Ware” amongst “one chest of drawers, one chest, and one side cuberd and 2 leather chaires.”⁵³⁴

Books

Book collecting illustrates the growth in wealth, literacy, and luxury good consumption during the seventeenth century. In Oxfordshire, a case in point is the probate of Burford yeoman John Burkin. Burkin’s wealth is a bit more conspicuous than that of his neighboring yeomen as his goods total a healthy 449 pounds. And among his effects in the best chamber are, “a pare of bookes, one brass watch one gold ring,” that were valued at 25 pound 5 shillings.⁵³⁵ The importance of books is shown within the context of the household setting: they are displayed prominently in a favored room among other luxury items, such as a watch, a gold piece, and silver spoons and cups. Not only does this highlight the social and intellectual value of reading, but it also signifies the economic importance of his purchase. This is a remarkable find as books, at this time, were still considered luxury items in view of the workmanship and price. Most books found in the homes of yeomen were Bibles, “how-to-manuals” typically concerned with gardening, or a basic grammar. Additionally, Oxfordshire yeoman John Bray’s inventory reflects the trend of religious literature since his 1623 inventory contained “one

⁵³⁴ Michael Fletcher of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1676, no. 107.183; 165/2/19, ORO.

⁵³⁵ John Burkin of Burford, will dated 1686, no. 107.241; 161/1/28, ORO.

Bible 1 servis booke 2 other small bookes and one deske.”⁵³⁶ John Temple of Burford also held, ”1 Bible and other books praised at 20 shillings.”⁵³⁷ Also, William Turner, bequeathed several books to his family, which included “1 Bible, 1 *Epitome of English Chronicles*, *The Heavenly Sale of Salt*,⁵³⁸ with other Bookes.”⁵³⁹

Books were also found in the little parlour chamber of Henley yeoman George Cranfield.⁵⁴⁰ Yet, due to the lassitude or general disregard of the testators, there was no description of titles or subject matter. Also, yeoman John Avery of Henley had “Sixe books” valued at 12 shillings and “Twoe Bibles” that were strangely juxtaposed with “one owld sord [old sword]” valued at 2 shillings within the cozy confines of his little parlor.⁵⁴¹ Also Francis Jackley of Henley had “one Byble with other books” in the hall.⁵⁴² Reading was not confined to the parlour or hall, since the inventory of William Smith Jr. of Chipping Norton contains “a cow and fore bookes”⁵⁴³ in his barn.

Although books made up a significant number of luxury items, they were seldom accurately described and, with the exception of Bibles, were usually

⁵³⁶ John Bray of Burford, will dated 1623, no. 106.127; 295/2/83, ORO.

⁵³⁷ John Temple of Burford, will dated 1626, no. 66/1/9, ORO.

⁵³⁸ This is quite possibly *The Sale of Salt or The Seasoning of Soules* by John Spicer, a work published 1611 as a form of Puritan propaganda. Interestingly, this shows Turner’s predilection for contemporary religious reading from a minister in neighboring Buckinghamshire.

⁵³⁹ William Turner of Chipping Norton, will dated 1617, no. 194.372;153/3/34, ORO.

⁵⁴⁰ George Cranfield of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1667, no. 107.139; 162/4/28, ORO.

⁵⁴¹ John Avery of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1624, no. 197.35; 1/5/20, ORO.

⁵⁴² Francis Jackley of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1636, no. 107.36; 298/3/26, ORO.

⁵⁴³ William Smith, Jr. of Chipping Norton, will dated 1618, no. 194.386; 59/3/22, ORO.

assessed in bundles, which tends to hamper their importance in probate inventories. Nonetheless, a pattern of conspicuous accumulation can be more carefully realized in the following items.

Silver and Pewter

In 1652, Thomas Fuller remarked:

In his house he is bountiful both to strangers, and to poor people. Some hold, When Hospitality died in England, she gave her last groan amongst the Yeoman. And still at our yeoman's table you shall have as many joynts as dishes.⁵⁴⁴

The yeoman's penchant for hospitality, and desire to display his finery, is clearly illustrated in the use of drinking vessels and dishes made of silver or pewter. They occupied a central position within the home of the Oxfordshire yeomen, who were now in a position to afford such luxuries to demonstrate their wealth and position in the community.

Silver in early modern England was an "essential" luxury, sometimes found alongside, or often replacing regular pewter dinnerware and drinking vessels.⁵⁴⁵ The enthusiasm for silver has always been, from a practical and material perspective, a distinct part of English life. It was used as the ultimate display on sideboards, buffets and dinner tables, but "was given

⁵⁴⁴ Thomas Fuller, *The Holy State* (London: Printed by R. D[aniel] for J. Williams, 1652), Book II, 106.

⁵⁴⁵ Philippa Glanville, "A Treasured Inheritance" in *Oxford Today*, Vol. 16 no. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 33-34.

pride of place because it was not only a luxury good but easily convertible to ready money.”⁵⁴⁶

Silver has always been a staple among the wealthy and upwardly mobile. Playwright Ben Jonson used silver, among other things, in the dialogue of *Epicoene* or *The Silent Women* (1620) to highlight the importance and possible angst among the newly rich of displaying luxury goods within the proper setting:

Where she must have that rich gown for such a great day; a new one for the next; a richer for the third, be serv'd in silver; have the chamber fill'd with a succession of Grooms, Footmen, Ushers, and other messengers; besides Embroyderers, Jewellers, Tyre-women, Sempsters, Fether-men, Perfumers; while she fees not how the Land drops away; nor the Acres melt; nor foresees the change, when the Mercer has yuour Woods for her Velvets; never weighes what her Pride costs.⁵⁴⁷

Although Jonson's work is best described as an attack on conspicuous consumption and the participation of both men and women in the “shopping culture,” his satire on the love of finery deals with a major theme of the early seventeenth century and does, in many ways, reflect the growing importance of fashion.

Silver can be found in various wills and inventories and its rising importance can be seen in comparing yeoman inventories in late Tudor period with those of the seventeenth century. For example, Richard Busbye, a recently deceased yeoman in the Bradford parish of Enstone whose goods

⁵⁴⁶ Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 29.

⁵⁴⁷ Ben Jonson, *Epicoene or The Silent Woman A Comoedie*. Act II, Scene II, lines 101-109. The Author B. Ionsen. (London: William Stansby), 1620.

in 1589 amounted to over 100 pounds, owned “eight silver spoons assessed at 1 pound six shilling and eight pence.”⁵⁴⁸ However, when we compare it to John Bray’s 1623 inventory, the value of such goods had risen considerably since “one Silver Bowll 4 spoones and other Silver” valued at 4 pounds.⁵⁴⁹ This amount pales when compared to Henley yeoman William Jennings, whose 1634 inventory lists, “two silver bolles one silver salt & one dozen silver spoones”⁵⁵⁰ appraised at an astounding 18 pounds. Additionally, William Atkin’s 1698 inventory shows “in plate [silver] one tanker one bowle one smale cupp seaven sylver spoons” at a total of eight pounds 3 shillings 6 pence.⁵⁵¹ With this rise silver was placed amongst the finer objects in the Oxfordshire home, especially in yeoman William Huggin’s 1710 will that lists “two silver tankerd and two salts, two spoons”⁵⁵² in “the Best chamber.”⁵⁵³

Although pewter production began in England towards the middle of the fourteenth century, its manufacture grew during the 1660s⁵⁵⁴ and it becomes a presence in yeoman effects, especially in the form of personal drinking vessels and chargers. Pewter, now seen as a utility item, was sought as a luxury item to grace English tables during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. English households sought French and German

⁵⁴⁸ Michael Ashley Havinden, *Household and Farm Inventories in Oxfordshire, 1550-1590* (London: H. M. S. O, 1965), 312.

⁵⁴⁹ John Bray of Burford, will dated 1623, no. 106.127;295/2/83, ORO.

⁵⁵⁰ William Jennings of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1634, no. 199.74; 136/3/39, ORO.

⁵⁵¹ William Atkins of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1692, no. 204.208; 13/4/6, ORO.

⁵⁵² William Huggins of Chipping Norton, will dated 1710, no. 206.39; 133/3/35, ORO.

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁴ This was due to the establishment of the Cornish tin mines, reputedly the largest in Europe during the seventeenth century.

artisans, who produced elaborate buffet dishes “that showed mold making and casting at its most skilled.”⁵⁵⁵ Superfine pewter containing the “touchmark” of the artisan was the chief tableware listed in inventories since the lower quality allow—known as *laymetal*—was poisonous and forbidden “in flatware such as plates, dishes, or porringers.”⁵⁵⁶ Pewter was also used in aristocratic households during the Elizabethan era to serve food. German diarist Thomas Platter remarked in his *Travels in England* (1599) that, “Straightway all maner of lavish dishes were served more decorously ... and there were two servers or carvers who removed one plate after another from the table to anther covered table near by ... they laid the food in small pewter bowls, placing these before each person upon plates.”⁵⁵⁷

The rising importance of pewter meant a departure from wooden vessels and can be found among the yeomen inventories. The inventory of Thomas Brinthow of Henley contained “pewter, thirty peeces greate and small,”⁵⁵⁸ while his neighbor Humphrey Parks displayed “12 pewter platters 50 plates of pewter 12 porringers of pewter.”⁵⁵⁹ The mammoth inventory of Burford yeoman John Burkin listed “pewter dishes with two Basons & other small

⁵⁵⁵ <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/b/collections-brass-pewter-cutlery>. Accessed 6/30/2011.

⁵⁵⁶ <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/b/collections-brass-pewter-cutlery>. Accessed 6/30/2011.

⁵⁵⁷ Thomas Platter, *Thomas Platter's Travels in England, 1599*, ed. Clare Williams (London: J. Cape, 1937), 158.

⁵⁵⁸ Thomas Brinthow of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1680, no. 203.119; 7/2/8, ORO.

⁵⁵⁹ Humphrey Parks of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1658, no. 51/4/24, ORO.

pieces of pewter.”⁵⁶⁰ Also, the will of yeoman Samuel Harris taken in 1616 listed “eighteen pieces of pewter” valued at 1 pound 5 shillings.”⁵⁶¹ Chipping Norton’s Henry Russell owned “23 platers and sawsers of pewter and 2 pewter candlesticks and 4 saltesellers of pewter,”⁵⁶² and Thomas Eeles of Henley showed an impressive assemblage of tableware that included “13 pewter dishes.”⁵⁶³ A fine example of the average cost of pewter flatware can be seen in the inventory of Henley’s Francis Jackley, whose goods included, “72 pounds of pewter of all sorts at 10d. 10 pounds.”⁵⁶⁴ The totals of these goods are impressive when the average wealth of an English yeoman during the same period was approximately 40-50 pounds.⁵⁶⁵

Linen and New Draperies

Textiles, especially linen and silk, were part of the growing spread of luxury items in the seventeenth century. Dutch linen was a novelty on the London market as early as the 1560’s when Edmund Howes commented in *Sow’s Annals* that “new fine linen fabrics, lawn and cambric, were sold by Dutch merchants in yards and half-yards.”⁵⁶⁶ Furthermore, Joan Thirsk

⁵⁶⁰ John Burkin of Burford, will dated 1686, no. 107.241; 161/1/28, ORO.

⁵⁶¹ Samuel Harris of Chipping Norton, will dated 1616, no. 194.302; 30/2/34, ORO.

⁵⁶² Henry Russell of Chipping Norton, will dated 1629, no. 106.168; 172/4/31, ORO.

⁵⁶³ Thomas Eeles of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1670, no. 107.152; 164/5/4, ORO.

⁵⁶⁴ Francis Jackley of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1636, no. 107.36; 298/3/26, ORO.

⁵⁶⁵ Amy Louise Erickson, “Family, Household, and Community” in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Tudor & Stuart Britain* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 114.

⁵⁶⁶ Thirsk, *Economic Policy and Projects*, 85.

states that linen had a particularly dramatic impact on the tastes of the consumer population, and by the end of the seventeenth-century, people had a choice of “so many different types of linen for domestic use and personal wear that it is impossible to count them.”⁵⁶⁷ The growth of Irish linen production, in heated competition with English and Scottish output, added to the variety available to consumers who now sought quality goods and satisfactory prices. William Hunt of Burford owned “small wearing clothes of Lynen and other dyvers peeces prised at 30 shillings.”⁵⁶⁸ In his 1612 probate, yeoman Richard Granger of Henley owned “Lynnen, made of Coeten [cotton], table napkins, & half a dozen drawing cloths” valued at the substantial amount of 40 shillings.⁵⁶⁹ Linen is conspicuous in William Huggin’s effects, as the inventory lists “Linnen 19 payer of sheets 30 napkins 6 table cloths” valued at 7 pounds and 10 pence.⁵⁷⁰ And yeoman Richard Parke’s 1612 inventory listed linen “cubberd cloth of Holland,”⁵⁷¹ valued at 2 shillings 7 pence. John Burkin may have used his “new Linen cloth”⁵⁷² as a cupbord or chest cloth since it is inventoried along with rugs, tables, and chests. It is apparent that John Temple used linen to cover his furnishings since he owned “2 holland cubord cloths and 6 Holland pillow beers, with 2

⁵⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁵⁶⁸ William Hunt of Burford, will dated 1613, no. 106.75; 297/4/58, ORO.

⁵⁶⁹ Richard Granger of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1612, no. 106.71; 80/1/12, ORO.

⁵⁷⁰ William Huggins of Chipping Norton, will dated 1710, no. 206.39; 133/3/35, ORO.

⁵⁷¹ Richard Parke of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1612, no. 195.123; 50/3/34, ORO. Holland cloth or simply Holland is a plain woven or dull-finish linen.

⁵⁷² John Burkin of Burford, will dated 1686, no. 107.241; 161/1/28, ORO.

pair of Holland sheets.”⁵⁷³ Apart from a few articles of clothing, the bulk of linen wares were napkins, tablecloths, and wall hangings. William Turner’s inventory contained “1 joyned stoole and 1 linnen wheele”⁵⁷⁴ which was possibly used to produce this luxury in an effort to accommodate the growing tastes of the mid-seventeenth century yeoman.

New Draperies (Window and Bed Curtains)

Yeoman inventories also point to other lavish accessories that were undeniably the brunt of England’s increasing trade and wealth. In this instance, the availability of this item, particularly with regard to Oxfordshire, is the result of its local manufacture. The phenomenon of new draperies is an instance where the product actually came “to the yeoman doorstep” from the Continent.

New draperies, so called because of their lighter weight and cheaper price, were introduced in the sixteenth century by what D.C. Coleman refers to “as one example of the several contributions ... specifically from the Low Countries, to English industry.”⁵⁷⁵ The growth of new draperies in England can be linked in some ways to the decline of “old draperies,” which consisted of a dense, short-stapled carded wool in both warp and weft” whose weave was best known for its sturdiness “and thoroughly felted to give an enduring,

⁵⁷³ John Temple of Burford, will dated 1626, no. 66/1/9, ORO.

⁵⁷⁴ William Turner of Chipping Norton, will dated 1617, no. 194.372; 153/3/34, ORO.

⁵⁷⁵ D. C. Coleman, “An Innovation and Its Diffusion: The ‘New Draperies,’” *The Economic History Review* 22, New Series (December 1, 1969): 417–429.

strong weather-resistant fabric.”⁵⁷⁶ New draperies, on the other hand, were a mixture of wool-worsted or half-worsted fabrics that made new draperies lighter. The new fabric was not only lighter, but it could be produced at a lower cost, which made it cheaper than traditional forms of broadcloth.⁵⁷⁷ For example, the names stammets, freseados, and rashes referred to new draperies and implied a mixture of various fabrics, specifically “the worsted yarn that was spun using a spindle and distaff.”⁵⁷⁸

The majority of these draperies were made in the East Anglian county of Norfolk, especially around the city of Norwich. In fact, T. S. Willan claims they “indeed were often described as Norwich stuffs.”⁵⁷⁹

Also, variations on new fabrics were created by weavers whose names were connected to their invention such as Mr. John Hastings’ creation, known simply as “Freseadoes of Hasting’s makyng.” Mr. Hastings obtained a grant for the monopoly and manufacture of “a particular type of freseado, which he had introduced to England—the double piece measuring 24 yards by a yard, the single piece 12 yards by a yard, ‘which frezeadowes do varye in makinge and workemanshipp from all sortes of clothes heretofore usuallye made within our Realme.”⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁷ T. S. Willan, *The Inland Trade: Studies in English Internal Trade in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976), 128.

⁵⁷⁸ Coleman, “The New Draperies,” 420. A distaff is the rod on which wool, etc is held ready for spinning. It is designed to hold unspun fibers, keeping them untangled and thus easing the spinning process.

⁵⁷⁹ Willan, *Inland Trade*, 128.

⁵⁸⁰ N. J. Williams, “Two Documents Concerning the New Draperies,” *The Economic History Review* 4, New Series (January 1, 1952): 353–358.

In addition, changes led to the outright decline in the traditional textile industry in the latter part of the sixteenth century in such places as Lombardy, Florence, and Antwerp as a result of competition. The largest component of this shifting market (a shift that was to give a distinct advantage to English markets) was the transfer of technical expertise by “alien” settlers in Eastern England. Members of the Dutch and Walloon congregations, driven to re-settlement by the Protestant Reformation, brought New Draperies to England, which were now mixed with light English kersey, silks, and linen. The contribution of these immigrants cannot be ignored: in the record of *Aulnager’s Account* for all the New Draperies (kept by the authorities of the City of Norwich),⁵⁸¹ aliens dominated the manufacturing. N.J. Williams finds in a year-long period ending 20 April 1585, of the “total of 43,371 cloths made there ... 38,092 were alien made.”⁵⁸² As Coleman asserts, “the horrors of warfare and the insistent persecutions peculiarly associated with religious or racial bigotry were virtually essential ingredients of the effective and rapid diffusion of the new textile techniques and thus of economic benefits derived in England.”⁵⁸³

Not only did innovations associated with this product, particularly with its brighter colors and lighter weight, fit the changing tastes of English

⁵⁸¹ Authorities William Fitzwilliam and George Delves, who were appointed by the Lord Treasurer, kept annual accounts of cloths entered by members of the Dutch and Walloon congregations for sealing and measuring at Bay Hall, Norwich. Coleman, “An Innovation and Its Diffusion,” 417-429.

⁵⁸² Williams, “Two Documents Concerning the New Draperies,” 358.

⁵⁸³ Coleman, “An Innovation and Its Diffusion,” 428.

consumers, it also coincided with an expanding overseas market. The Spanish and Dutch truce of 1614-21 aided the growth in the international market for New Draperies. The demand for English New Draperies began somewhat earlier, particularly with the growth of the English Levant Company whose business concerns in the Mediterranean created a competition with both the Venetian and Dutch cloth industries. Peace between England and Spain in 1604 improved commercial prospects by opening up trade with the Mediterranean. As a result, according to C.G.A. Clay:

Throughout most of the seventeenth century...exports from London of the Traditional types of woolens (broadcloths, kerseys and dozens, which were coming to be known collectively as old draperies ... averaged about 106,000 cloths a year.⁵⁸⁴

The disruption of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) impacted the demand for new draperies severely, particularly with the interruption of supplies to overseas customers. The once thriving export stations of Leiden and Germany fell heavily during this stressful, war-torn period. The impact was so crucial that it forced some English merchant clothiers, such as Walter Morrell, to appeal to the crown for official backing of "a project to establish the manufacture of new draperies."⁵⁸⁵ Morrell saw the need for developing cloth manufacture in his native Hertfordshire and it was also, so he claimed, a

⁵⁸⁴ Clay, *Economic Expansion and Social Change*, v. 2, 118.

⁵⁸⁵ Michael Zell, "Walter Morrell and the New Draperies Project, c. 1603-1631," *The Historical Journal* 44, (2001): 651-675.

plan to provide the idle poor with an alternative to agrarian work. In Morrell's view it was both a business venture that tried to escape the dominant agrarian model of the time as well as a "type of punitive instrument ... to force sturdy beggars to work."⁵⁸⁶ It also provided private profit with public benefit, which Michael Zell determines allowed the entrepreneur the benefits of increased employment and the production of commodities for import.⁵⁸⁷

Additionally, the dominant areas of cloth trade and the once fine quality of the fabric fell into decline. English merchants complained of flawed workmanship and sub-standard product that did not warrant an acceptable price-level. Although the traditional cloth trade was in noticeable decline, "the same was not true of the exports of 'new draperies' with their predominantly southern markets, for these continued to expand steadily."⁵⁸⁸

A new standard was set, with Morrell petitioning the Privy Council to allow him to oversee the manufacture of new draperies and maintain standards by "laying out procedures for ensuring quality control in the weaving, dyeing and dressing of cloths."⁵⁸⁹ According to Zell, Morrell found much of the problem with reduction of standards and inferior cloth arose from the fall in demand and the temptation of manufactures to avoid loss by lowering standards.

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁸ Clay, *Economic Expansion and Social Change*, v. 2, 121.

⁵⁸⁹ Zell, "Walter Morrell and the New Draperies Project, C. 1603-1631."

During the 1620's Norwich was the traditional center of the manufacture of new draperies, and was consulted by JP's and parliamentary regulatory committees regarding the correct size and quality of all manner of draperies. Norfolk itself was a nexus for trade and was described by Daniel Defoe, who praised its many towns, as "industrious and filled with trade and prosperity."⁵⁹⁰

With the influx and prosperity of Dutch and Flemish, the refugees that settled in East Anglia found that rules and restrictions on their activities became more pronounced. In Norwich, "foreigners were not allowed to sell their goods at retail level except to other foreigners," and "were not allowed to operate more than one loom each, or to transport their yarn without special permission from the mayor."⁵⁹¹ As much as luxury cloth was in demand during this time, the regulatory impositions reflected the unease in which volatile industries reacted.

Market for New Product (Draperies)

Luc Martin argues that probate inventories from Norwich and Norfolk in the early seventeenth century give "the impression that it was the richer clientele [of London, East Anglia, and the Midlands] who were able to make the greatest use of the variety of fabrics being woven in the Norwich looms.

⁵⁹⁰ Craig Muldrew, "Economic and Urban Development," in *A Companion to Stuart Britain*, Blackwell Companions to British History (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2003), 163.

⁵⁹¹ Robert Winder, *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain* (London: Little, Brown, 2004), 57.

New draperies were particularly prominent among the furnishings of the local gentry.⁵⁹² He also claims “another group that certainly used the products of the industry in their homes were those described in inventories as yeomen.”⁵⁹³ This evidence shows that although draperies were now cheaper, lighter, and possibly more accessible to a wide cross-section of local society, their overwhelming presence in affluent home still qualified them as a luxury.⁵⁹⁴

The introduction of new draperies to the English market attracted new buyers, particularly yeomen with increased incomes. The Oxfordshire villages under examination reflect this trend as inventories from Henley show a solid 50 percent ownership of curtains. Subsequently, yeomen households in Chipping Norton carried 40 percent and Burford carried 43 percent. Burford yeomen Greg Patey held bed “3 curtaynes in his new chamber” and a further “4 Curtaynes in the little chamber.”⁵⁹⁵ Used for both warmth and decoration, draperies can be found in additional Oxfordshire yeomen inventories. John Burkin’s impressive inventory contains “bedsteed Curaines valiants [valances]”⁵⁹⁶ in the best chamber. James Henshewe’s parlour contains, “1 paire of greene curtaines & valence and curtainne

⁵⁹² Luc Martin, “New Draperies in Norwich, 1550-1622,” in *The New Draperies in the Low Countries and England, 1300-1800*, Pasold Studies in Textile History 10 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 262.

⁵⁹³ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁴ Luc Martin reinforces this fact since he shows that “the inventories of lesser farmers or husbandmen in Norfolk list even fewer varieties of cloth, and the more expensive textiles are notably absent from the lists of their goods,” in “New Draperies in Norwich,” in *New Draperies in the Low Countries*, 263.

⁵⁹⁵ Greg Patey of Burford, will dated 1639, no. 200.296; 144/3/7, ORO.

⁵⁹⁶ John Burkin of Burford, will dated 1686, no. 107.241; 161/1/28, ORO.

roddees” that matched those in two additional rooms valued at 1 pound 6 pence.⁵⁹⁷ Henshewe’s color theme stretched throughout the house since cushions and even painted furniture reflected this green color scheme. Described in detail in most inventories, but also referred to as simply “window cloath” or “windowe Curtaines” as in the inventory of Oxfordshire yeomen, Henry Howse, where his curtains are described simply as “one hanging for the windowe,”⁵⁹⁸ draperies have a substantial presence in the household effects of the farming community of the English Midlands.

The mixing of textiles changed the structure of traditional English manufacturing that stimulated a new direction in fashion and luxury. As D.C. Coleman notes, by the end of the seventeenth century, the fashions of wool, silk, and linen were going in a new direction: lighter, flimsier, and more colourful fabrics.⁵⁹⁹ This can be seen in the new cottons from India and silk whose demand fueled both a colonial and domestic enterprise.

Beds and Bedding

Although normally thought of as an essential item, luxurious beds became more common in the yeoman house. Between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it was usual for Europeans to sleep on sacks of straw with planks

⁵⁹⁷ James Henshewe of Chipping Norton, will dated 1639, no. 107.52(2), 56; 298/1/43 a-b, ORO.

⁵⁹⁸ Thomas Howse of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1637, no. 199.367; 31/4/37, ORO.

⁵⁹⁹ Coleman, “An Innovation and Its Diffusion,” 429.

for support. This trend changed towards the latter part of the seventeenth century and John Gloag claims that early eighteenth century “beds were a minor exercise in architectural composition.”⁶⁰⁰ David Linley asserts that beds were a significant and monumental item of furniture, and that “lavish hangings and testers proclaimed the wealth and status of a household.”⁶⁰¹ Furthermore, in the late seventeenth century, the chief use of fabric in the home was “as bed coverings and drapery, providing much needed warmth and privacy.”⁶⁰² Ralph Fastnedge asserts that by the late Stuart period, the “value of the four-post bed then lay almost entirely in its often very costly clothes and hangings—curtains and fringed valances of rich materials, and tester head-cloth; silk or linen inner curtains; blankets, rugs, quilts and couterpane; and flock, feather or down mattresses.”⁶⁰³ The bed itself, noted some early modern contemporaries, was almost completely invisible given the amount of fabric contained within.

Invariably, late Stuart beds were not the product of the cabinetmaker or joiner, but the upholsterer since the exhibited slender bedposts and the headboard were usually covered with fabric.⁶⁰⁴ Nevertheless, “the carving of the bed could very well indicate the wealth and position of a household.”⁶⁰⁵ M. T. W. Payne finds that in an inventory taken after the death of Queen Anne,

⁶⁰⁰ John Gloag, *A Social History of Furniture Design*, 2.

⁶⁰¹ David Linley, *Classical Furniture* (London: Pavilion, 1998), 146.

⁶⁰² *Ibid.*

⁶⁰³ Ralph Fastnedge, “Furniture,” in *The Connoisseur’s Complete Period Guides to the Houses, Decoration, Furnishing and Chattels of the Classic Periods*, 334.

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁵ Linley, *Classical Furniture*, 59.

wife of James I, in 1619 reveals that in addition to her tastes for Persian and Turkish carpets, she packed Denmark House with “elaborate upholstery for her beds with matching chairs and stools, such as a field bed of carnation satin wrought with gold and silver with a broad lace of gold with spangles, a counterpoint wrought in flowers suitable to the bed.”⁶⁰⁶ Taking their cue from the royal court, yeoman households witnessed the introduction of extravagant, coloured canopies and patterned hangings, particularly striped coverings. This is evident in James Henshewe’s 1639 inventory that lists “1 paire of greene curtaines & valence” accompanied by “6 stipted Cushions and 4 damaske Cushions”⁶⁰⁷ situated in a high bedstead and feather bed. Francis Jackley of Henley adds color to his parlour with, “five curtaines and vlaences of yellow kerse” that were accompanied by “one yellow rug one carpitt, one cloth of striped stuffe, sixe greene cushins, two thrummed cushins”⁶⁰⁸ valued at 6 pounds 17 shillings. Edward Joy remarks, “The bed was the most valuable piece of furniture on account of its costly hangings and bedding.”⁶⁰⁹

Margaret Spufford found convincing evidence on the importance of bedding in probate inventories within the neighboring county of Suffolk for two periods, 1570-99 and 1680-1700. She also found that “Suffolk men described as ‘yeomen’ or ‘husbandmen’ for the earlier period showed a

⁶⁰⁶ M. T. W. Payne, “An Inventory of Queen Anne of Denmark’s Ornaments, Furniture, Householde Stuffe, and Other Parcells’ at Denmark House, 1619,” *Journal of the History of Collections*, 13 (May, 2001), pp. 23-44.

⁶⁰⁷ James Henshew of Chipping Norton, will dated 1639, no. 107.52(2), 56;298/1/43 a-b, ORO.

⁶⁰⁸ Francis Jackley of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1636, no. 107.36; 298/3/26, ORO.

⁶⁰⁹ Edward Thomas Joy, *The Country Life Book of English Furniture* (London: Country Life, 1964), 15.

growth in median wealth that coincided with an increase in the value of their bedding linen from 1 pound 16 shilling 10 denarius in the late sixteenth century to 3 pound 18 shilling in the late seventeenth.”⁶¹⁰ The village of Chipping Norton is consistent with this rise as its average linen count is 3 pounds 5 shillings; however, Henley and Burford show much higher averages of 8 pounds 12 shillings and 6 pounds, respectively.

The beds and bedding of the Oxfordshire yeoman reflect the same changes, with a wide assemblage of beds and bedding that coincided with a growing taste for luxury. The table below reflects the sleeping arrangements that were found in both private chambers and parlors throughout the homes of Henley during the late seventeenth century. There are a total of 68 beds of eight different varieties that calculates to 2.83 beds per household. A fair number—roughly 15 percent of the yeomen beds—were joined. Another was listed as “wainscoted,” which denotes ornamentation or a Half-headed bedstead that required specialized woodworking craftsmanship. With regard to bedding, a generous 50 percent of the homes utilized a featherbed and a further 50 percent contained curtains that detail the yeoman’s awareness and need for comfort. Interestingly, the bedding reflects an eclectic taste amongst the Henley yeomen, since there are expensive Holland pillow bears, buckram sheets, and twelve rugs. Most notably, there are imported damask sheets, indicating that yeomen were interested in imported

⁶¹⁰ Margaret Spufford, *The Great Reclotting of Rural England: Petty Chapmen And their Wares in the Seventeenth Century*, History Series, vol. 33 (London: Hambledon Press, 1984), 117.

linen and flaxen sheets (42 pair), although some were tempted by the basic “coarse” or “hempen” shrouds that catered to a large home market in

Oxfordshire.⁶¹¹

Beds/Bedsteads

Unspecified	28
Joined	10
Standing	3
Board	2
Wainscot	1
Truckle	6
Trundle	9
Half-headed	7
Cradle; crybbe	2

Bedding

Unspecified	1
Feather b.	24
Flock	43
Straw	2
Mat	6
Rug	12
Blankets	60
Bolster	56
Flock Bolster	23
Pillow	57
Pillowbeare	75
Coverlet	27
Quilt	2
Curtains	13
Rods	3
Valence	12
Bed cords	5
Child bed	
linen	1
Nightcap	2

Sheets

Unspecified	119
Hempen	33

⁶¹¹ Spufford, *The Great Recloning*, 91. According to Spufford, a study of linen-weaving in the pastoral regions of Norfolk and Suffolk emphasizes the growth of the industry in the seventeenth century.

Flaxen; linen	42
Ordinary	20
Holland	1
Cotton	6
Buckram	1

Also, Chipping Norton has a good number of beds and bedding, with a percentage of 2.48 beds per household. Approximately 56 percent of the homes utilize a featherbed, and a solid 40 percent contain curtains. The most prominent features of Chipping Norton's yeomen bedding were the 41 pairs of pillowbears [pillowcases] and 133 pairs of sheets from 25 households.

Beds/Bedsteads

Unspecified	39
Joined	7
Standing	2
High	3
Truckle	9
Trundle	2

Bedding

Unspecified	2
Feather b.	27
Flock	23
Wool	2
Mat	8
Rug	2
Twill cloth	3
Blankets	65
Bolster	37
Flock	
Bolster	11
Pillow	34
Pillowbeare	41
Coverlet	25
Quilt	1
Curtains	18
Rods	5
Valence	7
Bed cords	5

Sheets

Unspecified	133
Hempen	4
Coarse	1

And finally in Burford, the average of beds is 3.5 per household with a full 48 percent of the households possessing curtains and valances, and 71 percent utilizing the comfort of featherbeds, and the testators note that six homes or 43 percent contain curtains.

Beds/Bedsteads

Unspecified	23
Joined	5
Standing	10
Board	2
Truckle	6
Trundle	3

Bedding

Unspecified	5
Feather b.	18
Flock	21
Wool	1
Mattress	1
Mat	4
Rug	12
Twill cloth	3
Blankets	35
Bolster	41
Flock Bolster	5
Pillow	27
Pillowbeare	43
Coverlet	22
Quilt	
Curtains	15
Rods	2
Valence	2
Bed cords	3
Pyllan cloth	2

Sheets

Unspecified	66
Flaxen;linen	5
Canvas	5
Ordinary	14
Holland	2

The change in yeoman wealth can be seen in the growing trend to joined beds and linen bedding in various rooms. One salient example is found in yeoman Hugh Owen's probate that lists no fewer than eight beds (including two standing bedsteads, a truckle bed, and two feather beds in the parlor alone) valued at 14 pounds.⁶¹² Bedding had grown so significant in the mindset of the yeoman that Lewis Hughes includes flock beds when advising Englishmen in 1614 about necessities for settling in Bermuda, which, due to the climate, are better than featherbeds.⁶¹³

Silk

Silk has always been considered an important luxury good. Since the days of the ancient Silk Road, a vast network of roads with a number of branches stretching westwards from the great ninth century court of Xi'an to Venice and Rome, it has been heralded as a mechanism not just for trade, but other precious items such as the expansion of religious ideas, arts and the exchange of opinions. Nonetheless, it is no surprise that silk is prevalent among even

⁶¹² Hugh Owen of Burford, will dated 1603, no. 191.410; 49/1/19, ORO.

⁶¹³ Cited by Thirsk in *Economic Policy and Projects*, 49.

the earliest yeoman inventories. Yet, its rise in popularity demands closer historical inspection: with the development of textile weaving and dyeing in ancient China, silk maintained a luxury pedigree since, it was produced specifically for kings and emperors because of its texture and luster. It became a great “staple” of pre-industrial international trade when Chinese merchants made it accessible to European traders. By the Middle Ages, Venetian merchants were the first Europeans to trade extensively in silk, since the Italian textile manufacturing centers of Florence and Lucca provided skilled artisans with the technological expertise.

Linda Peck reveals that during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the practice of silk weaving and embroidery grew in popularity, particularly among aristocratic English women. Silk’s origins within English households are clearly revealed within examples of cloth regulation; as early as 1455, silk is mentioned in a statute that included “a company of silk women.”⁶¹⁴ Raw silk imports, which “totaled perhaps 12,000 pounds around 1560, grew to about 120,000 pounds by 1621, although a significant part of this total was still being brought in from the Near East by way of Northern Europe.”⁶¹⁵ Robert Brenner estimates that, in addition to olive oil and yarn, roughly “62,000 pounds worth of luxury silk fabrics had been imported into England from Italy by 1630.”⁶¹⁶

⁶¹⁴ Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 107.

⁶¹⁵ Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London’s Overseas Traders, 1550-1653* (London; New York: Verso, 2003), 25.

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

The increase in European demand for silk did not go unnoticed by James I whose ideas with regard to increasing commerce and merchant activity are widely considered a cornerstone in the development of English commercial enterprise. James was known to have a passion for horticulture and his first attempt at establishing a domestic silk production resulted in the planting of mulberry trees to encourage the breeding of silk worms within the grounds of Hampton Court Palace. As this proved to be a monstrous failure (a different species of mulberry trees were planted), he urged the planting to commence both at home and in the overseas colony of Virginia. Nonetheless, James held a tireless belief in the cultivation of silk, and his undeterred enthusiasm manifested itself in a treatise *Instructions for the Increasing of Mulberry Trees and the Breeding of Silk Worm for the Making of Silk*, which required those “of ability to plant mulberry trees” and required the landowners “to purchase and plant 10,000 mulberry trees that will be delivered to purchasers in March or April next, at the rate of six shillings the hundred.”⁶¹⁷

The most important component of the campaign for promotion of the silk industry is derived from two tracts on silkworm development by Olivier de Seres and Nicholas Geffe’s English translation of that work. De Serres work *The Perfectt Vse of Silk-Wormes and their Benefit* (1607) expounded upon the care for silkworms as well as the most effective way to harvest “the most admirable & beautifullest cloathing creatures of this world: but also the

⁶¹⁷ Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 93.

exactest & best means to preserve and susteine them with no less affection to make good & profitable use of both ... whereunto having in some small measure attained, am willing for the publike benefit of so many of my countrey men.”⁶¹⁸ De Serres’s treatise and Nicholas Geffe’s translation of his work (that includes an annexed discourse of his own) extol the virtues and uses of silk, and it also conveys a simple argument: private desires for luxury promote the public good. This is never more obvious in George Carr’s introductory poem, which celebrates his close friend’s efforts:

Hath made us free-men, of thy rich found trade,
And freely hast imparted unto all;
The arte, skill, meanes, and way hast open laid
For to enrich the great ones and the small.
Spaine shall hence forward keep her silks at home,
And Italy disperse hers where she may;
The Merchant shall not need to farre to rome,
Since thou hast shewen a short and cheaper way.⁶¹⁹

This hinted towards a positive social impact on both the elite and the laboring sort. Geffe intimates that his design would benefit landowners, consumers, and the poor. The growing of mulberry trees would, in fact, create not only profit, but “nourish infinite numbers of people of her proper inhabitants, and poore and miserable folks, which flocke thither from all the Provinces of the Realme.”⁶²⁰

⁶¹⁸ Olivier de Serres, *The Perfect Vse of Silk-Wormes, The English Experience, Its Record in Early Printed Books Published in Facsimile no. 345*, trans. Nicholas Geffe (Amsterdam: New York: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum; Da Capo Press, 1971), 1.

⁶¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶²⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

From this, agricultural practitioners published a variety of pamphlets offering advice and methods to assist with the cultivation of trees. Among the most notable is Frenchman John Bonoel, who, as a former vintner from Languedoc, is credited, much like Geffe before him, with advancing the practice of sericulture towards a larger economic and global context. At his post as Keeper of Silkworms at Whitehall and Greenwich, he tried to stress the importance of silk as a substitute for tobacco and encouraged the cultivation of mulberry trees both at home and in the Americas, since there already were, “such a store of sweet woods in Virginia as you have there.”⁶²¹ The combined success of domestic silk markets along with those in the overseas colonies was, in his opinion, the key to development of England as a major silk exporter.

Additionally, both King James and Sir Edwyn Sandys, understanding the importance of cloth export trade, wholeheartedly endorsed Bonoel’s ideas on cultivation.⁶²² Most notably, he set forth the distinction with regard to tree quality in his *Observations* (1620) that “The blacke Mulberry tree leafe makes grosse and course silke; but the white Mulberry tree leafe makes fine & high prized, for according to the finenesse of the leaf, will the finesse and goodness of the silke be.”⁶²³ Advice continued on with Samuel Hartlib’s A

⁶²¹ John Bonoel, *Observations to Be Followed, for the Making of Fit Roomes, to Keepe Silk-Wormes in as Also, for the Best Manner of Planting of Mulberry Trees, to Feed Them. Published by Authority for the Benefit of the Noble Plantation in Virginia* (London: Felix Kyngston, 1620), 20.

⁶²² Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 101.

⁶²³ Bonoel, *Observations to Be Followed*, 8.

Rare and New Discovery (1652) and Edward Williams' tract *Virginia's Discovery of Silke-worms and the Implanting of Mulberry Trees* (1650). Both contain the usual instruction for increasing the planting of Mulberry trees and how the eggs of the silk worm are to be hatched, suggesting, given the delicate nature of the prized commodity, one might go as far as to "put the worms in a little safebox or between two warm pillows."⁶²⁴ Hartlib's target audience was the planters of Virginia who were to undertake the breeding of silk worms with the understanding that they "benefit themselves and the Nation thereby ... not conceal the Advantages which may be reaped by singular industrious Attempts or Experiments of profit, but desires the benefit of others, even of all to be increased."⁶²⁵

As a result, the research undertaken by historian Robert Brenner illustrates that given the inflation within the first four decades of the seventeenth century, there was a significant increase in luxury imports, particularly in manufactured Italian silk.⁶²⁶ As the domestic silk industry took hold, there was an impressive and somewhat dramatic rise; thus "between 1621 and 1640 raw-silk imports nearly doubled, increasing from

⁶²⁴ Samuel Hartlib, *A Rare and New Discovery of a Speedy Way and Easie Means, Found Out by a Young Lady in England, She Having Made Fullprooffe Thereof in May, Anno 1652. For the Feeding of Silk-Worms in the Woods, on the Mulberry-Tree-Leaves in Virginia* (London: Printed for Richard Wodenothe in Leaden-hall street, 1652), 4. Edward Williams, *Virginia's Discovery of Silke-vworms, with Their Benefit and the Implanting of Mulberry Trees: Also the Dressing and Keeping of Vines, for the Rich Trade of Making Wines There: Together with the Making of the Saw-mill, Very Usefull in Virginia, for Cutting of Timber and Clapbord, to Build With-all, and Its Conversion to Other as Profitable Uses* (London: Printed by T.H. for John Stephenson, 1650).

⁶²⁵ Hartlib, *A Rare and New Discovery of a Speedy Way and Easie Means, Found Out by a Young Lady in England, She Having Made Fullprooffe Thereof in May, Anno 1652. For the Feeding of Silk-Worms in the Woods, on the Mulberry-Tree-Leaves in Virginia*, 2.

⁶²⁶ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution Commercial Change*, 42.

125,000 pounds to 213,000 pounds. As one contemporary remarked in 1617, “there is such a madness to be clothed in silk that we cannot endure our home made cloth.”⁶²⁷ As a result, demand in silk continued to climb, and by the 1660s, raw silk imports had increased to about 283, 000 pounds annually.⁶²⁸

Some Oxfordshire yeomen found silk to be a useful fabric covering for furnishings James Henshewe , yeomen of Chipping Norton, owned “4 silk damaske Cushions” in the best parlour and four more in the other parlour valued at 1 shilling.⁶²⁹ Henshewe also had “1 payer of silke garteres”⁶³⁰ valued at 2 shillings 6 pence in his wardrobe. In addition, William Hunt, yeoman of Burford owned a “silke band, and handkarcheffe” valued with other items at 30 shillings.⁶³¹ Joan Thirsk finds a healthy number of Spanish silks graced the wardrobe of yeomen Henry Sidney, who in 1557, owned numerous pairs of silk stockings priced at 35, 40, 50, and 53 shillings, and whose wife Mary acquired a scarf of green striped silk that cost 16 shillings.⁶³² They are an outstanding, early example of the growing trend of wealthy men’s fashion for Spanish silk stockings. As time progressed, silk’s importance did little to subside as contemporary diarist Jean Rouquet divulged that:

⁶²⁷ Ibid. Cited by Brenner.

⁶²⁸ Ibid.

⁶²⁹ James Henshewe of Chipping Norton, will dated 1639, no. 107.52(2), 56; 298/1/43 a-b, ORO.

⁶³⁰ Ibid.

⁶³¹ William Hunt of Burford, will dated 1613, no. 106.75; 297/4/58, ORO.

⁶³² Thirsk, *Economic Policy and Projects*, 120.

Besides the dearness of a commodity is naturally a damp to its sale. Some few perhaps whose station requires they should distinguish themselves by expence, may prefer this piece: but it is a thing well known that the manufacturer's advantage lies rather in a large and constant consumption of a commodity, on which he gets but a moderate profit, than in the exorbitant price of an article for which there is but a very small demand, tho' he gains more upon it. He is to remember that his profit is to be founded on the fabric and not on the materials, especially when they are such costly materials as silk.⁶³³

The Yeoman's Wearing Apparel

I am an English man, and naked I stand here
Musing in my mind what raiment I shall wear;
For now I will wear this, and now I will wear that;
Now I will wear I cannot tell what.
All new fashions be pleasant to me.⁶³⁴

Although traditionally viewed with a penchant for somber attire, Thomas Fuller claims that a yeoman wears "russet clothes, but makes golden payment, having tinne in his buttons, and silver in his pocket."⁶³⁵ Well-to-do yeomen seemed eager to wear their success. Karin Calvert notes that a "man of wealth could be identified by the wealth he displayed and an important part of that display was costume."⁶³⁶

In an effort to maintain English social identity, sumptuary legislation⁶³⁷ was reinforced periodically throughout the middle ages and up until the

⁶³³ Jean André Rouquet, *The Present State of the Arts in England*. By M. Rouquet (London: J. Nourse, 1755), 74.

⁶³⁴ Andrew Boorde, *The Fyrst Booke of the Introduction of Knowledge Made by Andrew Borde, of Physycke Doctor. A Compendyous Regyment; or, A Dyetary of Helth Made in Mountpyllier*, Early English Text Society. Extra Series no. 10 (London: Pub. for the Early English Text Society, by N.T. Trübner & Co, 1870), 22.

⁶³⁵ Fuller, *Holy State*, Book 2, 106.

⁶³⁶ United States Capitol Historical Society, *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century, Perspectives on the American Revolution* (Charlottesville: Published for the United States Capitol Historical Society by the University Press of Virginia, 1994), 254.

⁶³⁷ Statutes that regulated the dress code according to social station.

Elizabethan era to ensure that “no man under the degree of a knight’s eldest son could wear velvet in his jerkin, hose, or doublet, nor any satin, damask, taffeta, or grosgrain in his Clokes, Coates, Gownes, or other uppermost garments.”⁶³⁸ Although these laws were promulgated periodically, they had lost most of their authority and influence by the dawn of the early modern era. Nonetheless, to ensure social order and safeguard the traditional status quo, an Elizabethan statute issued at Greenwich on 15 June, 1574 stated:

The excess of apparel and the superfluity of unnecessary foreign wares thereto belonging now of late years is grown by sufferance to such an extremity that the manifest decay of the whole realm generally is like to follow (by bringing into the realm such superfluities of silks, cloths of gold, silver, and other most vain devices of so great cost for the quantity thereof as of necessity the moneys and treasure of the realm is and must be yearly conveyed out of the same to answer the said excess) but also particularly the wasting and undoing of a great number of young gentlemen, otherwise serviceable, and others seeking by show of apparel to be esteemed as gentlemen, who, allured by the vain show of those things, do not only consume themselves, their goods, and lands which their parents left unto them, but also run into such debts and shifts as they cannot live out of danger of laws without attempting unlawful acts, whereby they are not any ways serviceable to their country as otherwise they might be.⁶³⁹

This “visual system” of classification communicated useful information such as the “wearer’s gender, marital status, age, military rank, religious or political office, occupation and, most importantly, social position.”⁶⁴⁰ It gave one the capacity to distinguish the humble laborer from the erudite gentleman. Without this type of conformity, traditional society—as most

⁶³⁸ Campbell, *The English Yeoman Under Elizabeth and the Early Stuarts*, 252.

⁶³⁹ United States Capitol Historical Society, *Of Consuming Interests*, 253.

⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 252–3.

individuals at the time passionately and unquestioningly believed—would be both confused and chaotic, relegating social order into mere chaos. Hence, the changes in visual understanding harkened that transformation was imminent and would involve a reorganization of traditional social position.

Campbell finds evidence that some yeomen and other farmers were less likely to adopt changes in dress and manners than others. She finds that “countryfolk are an ever conservative lot and custom was often a more active agent of social control in rural communities.”⁶⁴¹ However, the relaxation of sumptuary laws coincided with growing wealth of the seventeenth century,⁶⁴² and the wives and daughters of prosperous merchants and well-to-do yeomen were able to dress according to their income rather than their social station.⁶⁴³ Social and economic forces were now affecting changes within a community once confined to conventional “felts, petticoats and wastcoates.”⁶⁴⁴ Nicholas Barbon who, in his treatise *A Discourse of Trade* (1690), reasons that:

Fashion, or the alteration of Dress, is a great promoter of Trade, because It occasions the Expence of Cloaths, before the Old ones are worn out: It is the Spirit and Life of Trade; It makes a Circulation, and gives a Value by Turns, to all sorts of Commodities; keeps the great Body of Trade in motion.⁶⁴⁵

⁶⁴¹ Campbell, *English Yeoman*, 112.

⁶⁴² The Statute of 1579-80 was modified to allow men and women such dress if they possessed a personal wealth of one-hundred pounds per annum.

⁶⁴³ Campbell, *English Yeoman*, 112.

⁶⁴⁴ Adam Martindale, *The life of Adam Martindale / written by himself*; edited by Richard Parkinson (Manchester: Chetham Society, 1845), 253.

⁶⁴⁵ Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade*, 65.

His insight makes it possible to understand the attitudes that emerged during this period regarding the growing significance of and attention to clothing, style, and “bodily” fashion. He concludes by stating that, “The Promoting of New Fashions, ought to be Encouraged, because it provides a Livelihood for a great Part of Mankind.”⁶⁴⁶

With the growth of silk imports and the indigenous schemes proposed under James I, it is not surprising that large amounts of silk appeared on the backs of Englishmen. Unsurprisingly, male fashion was becoming ornate. As Peck recounts, “the male costume was every bit as elaborate as women’s attire.”⁶⁴⁷ This is also recorded by John Evelyn who thought little of men’s ostentatious and somewhat feminine fashions:

It was fine silken thing which I spied walking th’ other day through Westminster Hall, that had as much ribbon on him as would have plundered six ships, and set up twenty country peddlers. All his body was dress’t like a may pole ... whether he were clad with his garment, or (as a porter) only carried it was not to be resolv’d ... Behold we one of our silken chameleons and aery gallants, making his addresses to his mistress, and you would sometimes think yourself in the country of the Amazons, for it is not possible to say which is the more woman of the two.⁶⁴⁸

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid., 67.

⁶⁴⁷ Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 66.

⁶⁴⁸ John Evelyn, *Tyrannus, or, The Mode: In a Discourse of Sumptuary Lawes* (London: G. Bedel, & T. Collins; and J. Crook, 1661) 11.

Once again, James Henshewe of Chipping Norton shows he is on the forefront of luxury fashion since his inventory lists “1 payer of silke garteres, 2 hattes, one payer & 3 old payer of Stockins [silk] & 2 old girdles.”⁶⁴⁹

Bernard Mandeville illustrates the shortcomings and social dangers of disregarding fashion in his 1724 treatise *The Fable of the Bees*. He warns that, “how mean and comically a Man looks, that is otherwise well dress’d, in a narrow brim’d Hat when every body wears broad ones, and again, how monstrous is a very great Hat when the other Extreme has been in fashion for a considerable time?”⁶⁵⁰

Stylish hats were certainly in demand amongst the English. The French hat-making industry that made towns such as Caudebed in Normandy the center of production moved wholesale to England and met this demand. Discrimination against Huguenots in France precipitated this move. This caused a somewhat alarmed Louis XIV to send an emissary named Bonrepuas to London in order to assess the extent of the damage. After visiting the Huguenot strongholds in London and Ipswich, his report, dated 1685-6, states that he was sorely grieved to see that our best manufacturers are being established in this kingdom as “a result in the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685.”⁶⁵¹

⁶⁴⁹ James Henshewe of Chipping Norton, will dated 1639, no. 107.52(2), 56; 298/1/43 a-b, ORO.

⁶⁵⁰ Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees*, 376.

⁶⁵¹ Cited by Singleton, *French and English Furniture*, 110.

Evidence of this rise in fashion, especially the presence of silk and variegated wardrobes, is documented in certain Oxfordshire inventories. Dunt Maynard's wealth reflects his wardrobe evaluation with "One suite of aparerell one cloacke two pair of silk stockinges one paire of showes [shoes] one hatt foure bandes three shirts appraised at 40 shillings."⁶⁵² Yeoman James Henshewe of Chipping Norton bequeathed to a close relative in 1639 his "2 dublettes and one Jerkine & payer of breeches with 3 shirtes & sixe old bandes and 1 payer of old bootes & a knife."⁶⁵³ Also, Hugh Owen's articles of clothing were listed with weaponry as it shows, "the testate's apparel, raper, dagger & bootes"⁶⁵⁴ valued at a noteworthy 5 pounds. Henshewe's neighbor and contemporary William Heidon left "His Cloues [clothes], dublet, silk hose and two clokes in his lodggin chamber."⁶⁵⁵ In Burford, yeoman William Hunt, a man of substantial means whose "apparele was valued at 4 pounds," owned "a linen smocke, sylke bande, handkarcheffe, girdle and such things" that were listed along with "the wearing clothes of his late wyves."⁶⁵⁶ The English girdle refers to a man's belt or sash, which, in some cases, is made much more ostentatious using silver as opposed to the common brass.

Nicholas Hilton, yeoman of Henley, has a list of articles that were well worn, but they were fashionable and respectable nonetheless. He most

⁶⁵² Dunt Maynard of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1628, no. 198.94; 44/2/1, ORO.

⁶⁵³ James Henshewe of Chipping Norton, will dated 1639, no. 107.52(2), 56; 298/1/43 a-b, ORO.

⁶⁵⁴ Hugh Owen of Burford, will dated 1602, no. 191.410; 49/1/19, ORO.

⁶⁵⁵ William Heidon of Chipping Norton, will dated 1628, no. 106.166; 297/5/18, ORO.

⁶⁵⁶ William Hunt of Burford, will dated 1613, no. 106.75; 297/4/58, ORO.

assuredly transcends the myth of seventeenth century farmers having one set of clothing since he left “a paire of hose & Jerkyn & dublet, an old paire of leather hose an old Jerkyn and old dublet and wastecote & hatt, cloake, two parier of shooes & a pair of boots.”⁶⁵⁷ His inventory also includes “two shirts, two paire of stockings,” and “a pair of new silke stockings,” valued at 2 shillings. His total wardrobe valued at 4 shilling 10 pence outweighed the cost of his furniture and farming implements combined.

Yeomen wives were also known at the forefront of fashion although there is little evidence in the Oxfordshire probate. Yet, there is written evidence found in yeoman Adam Martindale’s diary from the seventeenth century. He expresses with some regret, yet not without an underlying sense of gratification, that his wife and daughters were beginning to wear “gold or silver laces about their petticoats, and bone laces or works about their linens.”⁶⁵⁸ Thus, this small bit of evidence shows the way in which the Oxfordshire yeoman used clothing as a visible expression of status.

The Trouble with Oxfordshire Inventories and Clothing

Margaret Spufford finds that Gregory King’s *Annual consumption of Apparell* of 1688 estimates that among the 1.36 million families within the kingdom, there were no less than ten million shirts and smocks.⁶⁵⁹ Margaret

⁶⁵⁷ Nicholas Hilton of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1613, no. 106.72; 297/4/56, ORO.

⁶⁵⁸ Martindale, *The life of Adam Martindale*, 6.

⁶⁵⁹ Margaret Spufford, *Great Reclothing of Rural England*, 126.

Spufford indicates “every family in the kingdom was acquiring over seven new shirts or smocks a year, which makes such garments then commonplace . . . and easier for appraisers to ignore.”⁶⁶⁰ As clothing is a vital sign of social degree and value, the Oxfordshire inventories are sometimes silent regarding basic clothing, and dreadfully uneven at mentioning even rare and colorful wardrobes. Spufford comments that ubiquitous objects would attract little attention; this possibly explains why basic clothing is mentioned in non-descript bundles in some Oxfordshire probate inventories. She adds that most of the rural inventories she has analyzed lack “specific information and conclude the category of other lining.”⁶⁶¹

Although lacking description, the amount the Oxfordshire yeomen spent on clothing can be deduced from the monetary evaluations. The following figures evaluate the apparel averages among the Oxfordshire communities. Chipping Norton’s average is 4.32 pounds per yeoman; Henley’s average clothing assessment is 3.75 pounds per yeoman; and Burford shows an average percentage of 3.57 pounds per yeoman.

Predictably, there are some striking examples of expenditure on clothing. Wearing apparel for yeoman William Smith Jr. of Chipping Norton is valued at an impressive 40 pounds.⁶⁶² John Temples’ s 1626 inventory lists his apparel worth 13 pounds, 13 shillings, 4 pence.⁶⁶³ And George Cranfield, a

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid., 126.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid., 127.

⁶⁶² William Smith Jr. of Chipping Norton, will dated 1618, no. 194.386; 59/3/22, ORO.

⁶⁶³ John Temple of Burford, will dated 1626, no. 66/1/9, ORO.

Henley yeoman, owns apparel that was valued at 8 pounds, which exceeds the town average and is somewhat appropriate amount for a man with a 384 pound estate.⁶⁶⁴ Chipping Norton yeoman Samuel Harris had his wearing apparel valued at 3 pounds 6 shillings; yet he also possessed “five yards of new cloth” that he might have used for a new set of clothes valued at 1 pound.⁶⁶⁵ As these were located in a chest away from his other clothing, it can be assumed that they were either bedclothes or fashionable undergarments. In summary, it is difficult if not somewhat impossible to judge the change in the yeoman wardrobe over the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, based on their final bequests. Thankfully, there are other items that can tell the story.

Thus, the luxury items found within the home offer a spectrum of tastes and, fittingly, ideas with regard to comfort and practicality. The country yeoman’s desire for finery extended to furniture, and the decorative development of the early eighteenth century facilitated that growth. Therefore, the following chapter discusses the yeomen taste in furniture and how manufacture and design gained a following and appreciation by the Oxfordshire yeomen.

⁶⁶⁴ George Cranfield of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1667, no. 107.139; 162/4/28, ORO, Cranfield’s inventory is valued at 384 pounds, 14 shillings.

⁶⁶⁵ Samuel Harris of Chipping Norton, will dated 1616, no. 194.302; 30/2/34, ORO.

CHAPTER 6

This chapter will continue the discussion of the increase of luxury consumption during the late seventeenth century and how luxuries were disseminated to the yeomen and other social elite. It describes the ownership patterns of luxury goods and explains the evolution of furniture and how craftsmen's innovations, specifically the ornamentation of durable goods, created new luxury items that successfully combined the ideas of utility and comfort. Most importantly, it illustrates the Oxfordshire yeomen's appreciation for the finery, which populated the interior of their homes and reveals the effort put forth to showcase their newfound wealth.

Furniture

For the majority of the English yeomanry, an ancient manor or a country estate was unattainable because it was unaffordable, but it is evident that room additions and new ideas in architecture provided the yeoman with a considerable amount of extra space. More living space equates to more empty space, and faced with an increase in square footage, and as some historians claim in an effort to compensate for this residential shortcoming the yeoman focus on luxury turned towards furniture.⁶⁶⁶

⁶⁶⁶ Fernand Braudel, *The Structures of Everyday Life: Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), 309.

The history of furniture in early modern England, as well as the last four hundred years, is “a reflection of society and domestic habits.”⁶⁶⁷ In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the very best furniture was expensive and created for a certain clientele: the gentry, who populated their homes with the newest and finest of European influenced decor. From a stylistic perspective, Ralph Fastnedge contends that English seventeenth-century furniture can be divided into two main groups:

First, joined furniture, which developed slowly on established lines from that in use during the Elizabethan period, comprising useful, solid, enduring articles, such as press cupboards, settles⁶⁶⁸ and joint stools, made usually of oak or indigenous woods; secondly, post-Restoration furniture, the design of which was strongly influenced by contemporary models from France and Holland.⁶⁶⁹

This post-Restoration furniture was refelected in the tastes of the court of Charles II in London. It was seen by many as a reaction to the staid and utterly conservative styles maintained during the Cromwellian era, a reaction that would have a profound impact on yeoman tastes. Oxfordshire yeomen acknowledged this trend since joined tables, chairs, cupboards, and beds populated the interior of their various rooms.

English furniture makers in the post-Restoration period started to specialize, creating, as Edward Joy claims, a “subdivisions of labor such as cabinet makers, chair makers, clock-case makers, upholsterers, japanners,

⁶⁶⁷ Maureen Stafford, *British Furniture Through the Ages* (London: Barker, 1966), v.

⁶⁶⁸ A wooden bench.

⁶⁶⁹ Ralph Fastnedge, “Furniture,” in *The Connoisseur’s Complete Period Guides to the Houses, Decoration, Furnishing and Chattels of the Classic Periods* (London: The Connoisseur, 1968), 321.

gilders, carvers, etc.”⁶⁷⁰ Given the inevitable reaction to the Commonwealth and Protectorate period, there was a demand for luxury evidenced by the introduction of new specialized pieces of furniture such as “the bureau, dressing glass and candle-stand,” which Fastnedge considers an inevitable and critical “break with tradition.”⁶⁷¹ These developments are the product of skilled technique and decorative art, talents unknown to the medieval joiner that grew into what has been described as “the art and design and the search for fashion.”⁶⁷² This late seventeenth century craft specialization was especially true with regard to joined furniture. London cabinet makers were now the true arbiters of high quality furniture, replacing the simple woodworking craftsman. Maureen Stafford and Keith Middlemas argue that the seventeenth century was the crucial point in furniture and fabric innovation since it ushered in a simpler carving of furnishings in an effort to curb the wasteful use of wood, and more upholstery and comfort were utilized that was no doubt influenced by the “effeminate court of James I.”⁶⁷³

The middling sort now aspired to the same high standards of the elite.⁶⁷⁴ The Oxfordshire yeomen now had an affinity for finely wrought, delicate pieces, less clumsy than the old furniture, adapted to the new dimensions of

⁶⁷⁰ Edward Thomas Joy, *The Country Life Book of English Furniture* (London: Country Life, 1964), 23.

⁶⁷¹ Fastnedge, “Furniture,” in *The Connoisseur’s Complete Period Guides*, 321.

⁶⁷² Stafford, *British Furniture Through the Ages*, v.

⁶⁷³ *Ibid.*, vii.

⁶⁷⁴ David Linley, *Classical Furniture* (London: Pavilion, 1998), 63.

the boudoir, drawing room, and bedchamber.⁶⁷⁵ Cabinets, simple wooden structures in the previous century that held crockery and were normally found in the kitchen, were now decorated with narrow mouldings, two-dimensional finishes, marquetry and dovetailing. This became an essential in the yeoman's house.⁶⁷⁶

Cabinet-makers also introduced new techniques such as veneering⁶⁷⁷ that "resulted in lighter, more varied furniture."⁶⁷⁸ Although painted furniture would not become popular until the latter part of the eighteenth century, veneering was a useful and decorative way of enhancing the finish of wood furniture, and it provided a convenient way to manipulate decorative wood. In England, banding, the practice of "using narrow strips of veneer often in contrasting colours--gave a crisp outline to drawers, tops and panels."⁶⁷⁹ Marquetry, a process of veneering that involves intricate design and the meticulous piecing together of various craftwork, was practiced in Venice and the Netherlands during the sixteenth century. It is defined by Thomas Dych as, "inlaid work or fineering being a plane of oak or well dried firr, covered with several pieces of fine hard wood, of various colours, in the forms of birds, flowers, knots, &c. and sometimes intermixed with tortoise

⁶⁷⁵ Braudel, *The Structures of Everyday Life*, 309.

⁶⁷⁶ Linley, *Classical Furniture*, 66.

⁶⁷⁷ The process of gluing thin slices of wood onto core panels of doors, furniture, etc. in an attempt to enhance pattern and colour to an existing structure.

⁶⁷⁸ Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760* (London: Routledge, 1988), 33.

⁶⁷⁹ Linley, *Classical Furniture*, 72.

shell, mother of pearl, silver, &c.”⁶⁸⁰ Eventually, it made its way to English households. Since this new method required “special preparation and execution, it gave birth to a new class of specialist craftsmen—the cabinet makers.”⁶⁸¹

Craftsmen also utilized use new woods such as mahogany⁶⁸² and walnut during the years 1660 to 1750.⁶⁸³ This period is particularly associated with walnut, which, due to its malleability and forgiving nature, made the process of veneering a realistic possibility. Walnut was used in England as both a solid and as a veneer. Both the *Juglans regia*⁶⁸⁴, and the *Juglans negra*, or “black wood,” was grown in limited amounts on English soil during the latter half of the seventeenth century. John Evelyn remarks on the use of walnut, which he claims was an excellent wood that French craftsmen employed in their country’s furniture. He also notices that the impending shortage of domestic walnut caused craftsmen to use beech wood in its place. This wood, Evelyn maintains, “is indeed good only for *Shade* and for the *Fire*, as being brittle and exceedingly obnoxious to the worm.”⁶⁸⁵ Nonetheless, it was used as a veneer and could be transformed by cabinetmakers to appear as

⁶⁸⁰ Thomas Dyche, *A New General English Dictionary; Peculiarly Calculated for the Use and Improvement of Such as Are Unacquainted with the Learned Languages. To Which Is Prefixed, a Compendious English Grammar* (London: Printed for C. and R. Ware, J. Beecroft [etc.], 1771), 500.

⁶⁸¹ Joy, *Country Life Book of English Furniture*, 23.

⁶⁸² The period of c.1725-55 is known as “The Early Mahogany Period.”

⁶⁸³ The period of c.1660-1750 is sometimes referred to as “The Walnut Period.”

⁶⁸⁴ A pale English walnut.

⁶⁸⁵ John Evelyn, *Sylva, or A Discourse of Forest-Trees, and the Propagation of Timber in His Majesties Dominions / Also, Kalendarium Hortense* (London: pr. by Jo. Martyn, and Ja. Allestry, 1664), 47.

walnut since, “they have a way to make it as black as *Ebony*, and with a Mixture of *Soot* and *Urine*, imitate the *Walnut*.”⁶⁸⁶ He concluded, if more walnut could be procured from such outposts as Virginia in the American Colonies, “we should have better utensils of all sorts for our Houses, as *Chairs, Stools, Bedsteads, Tables, Wainscot, Cabinets, &c.*, instead of the more vulgar *Beech* ... I say if we had store of this material, especially of the *Virginian*, we should find an incredible improvement in the more stable furniture of our houses.”⁶⁸⁷

The early Walnut Period (1660-1690) is a notable landmark in the history of English furniture. The Restoration of Charles II introduced continental elegance that grew out of the influence of his years in exile. As a result, Joy contends that English men and women sought different styles with more luxury and comfort. This period coincided with the rise of yeomen wealth, and the desire or need to make a fashionable statement with one’s domestic interior.

The late Walnut Period during the reign of William and Mary, 1689-1702, introduced the restrained “buffs and browns and arabesques” of the Dutch influenced cabinetmakers of the royal court.⁶⁸⁸ Additionally, the “Mahogany Period” of the early half of the eighteenth century proved vital to the luxury trade since it introduced mahogany wood from the West Indies to the English consumer and also established the architect as furniture maker. With the

⁶⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid., 59.

⁶⁸⁸ Joy, *Country Life Book of English Furniture*, 30.

influx and availability of this new material, a growth in artistic experimentation emerged among cabinet, chair, and other furniture makers. This creative surge could not have happened without the support of the Whig government, whose commercial and financial policies resulted in an increase in mercantile activities. “Luxury furniture” eventually found its way to yeomen households.

Tables

Trestle tables, a board or massive wooden plank on trestle supports, were common during the late medieval and Tudor periods and were used continually up until the early modern era. These tables were “kept in position by one or two stretchers⁶⁸⁹ which passed through the trestles and were fastened outside them by oak wedges.”⁶⁹⁰ Early trestle table tops were not permanently joined to the underside—giving the owner the option of disassembling the piece, but, with the growing use of joining, the tops were fixed permanently to the undersides or side framing.

The seventeenth century saw “a proliferation of table types, and the variety of terms gives a vivid picture of the range of interest and pursuits of the time”⁶⁹¹ that the Oxfordshire yeoman-consumer could employ to make a fashionable, contemporary statement. Tea, dining, and gaming tables became much more popular as well as oval tables, writing tables and “desks.”

⁶⁸⁹ These are cross rails.

⁶⁹⁰ Joy, *Country Life Book of English Furniture*, 14.

⁶⁹¹ Linley, *Classical Furniture*, 116.

Successful yeomen decorated their homes with multiple pieces of attractive furniture. Esther Singleton notes that late Jacobean elites decorated their homes with movables “that consisted of one large table, several small, round or oval tables and side tables.”⁶⁹² Evidence of oval, square and tea tables are found in the 1682 effects of Burford yeoman Edward Beacham whose fashionable parlour contained: “one desk and looking glass and one round table.”⁶⁹³ Although they may not be considered luxury goods in and of themselves, some warrant attention because of size and purpose. Also, they were used to display “front stage” items in halls or parlors.

Given the growth of tea as a luxury consumable, the ceremony and importance of tea drinking impacted the design and purpose of furniture. Not surprisingly, a good number of Oxfordshire yeomen who drank tea, found it necessary to provide an appropriate table for its consumption. For example, the tea table can be found among prosperous yeomen’s effects, such as John Burkin’s 1686 inventory that lists a hall chamber that purposefully front stages “one clock, one looking glass, a tea table, a pare of bookes, & one box.”⁶⁹⁴ The box might have been a tea caddy or tea safe, a safeguard that ensured the protection of an expensive comestible against theft by questionable household staff. Tea, tea tables, and stands were prominent

⁶⁹² Esther Singleton, *French and English Furniture* (New York: McClure, Phillips & co, 1903), 45.

⁶⁹³ Edward Beacham of Burford, will dated 1682, no. 91.320; 107.216; 7/2/43, ORO.

⁶⁹⁴ John Burkin of Burford, will dated 1686, no. 107.241; 161/1/28, ORO.

representations of luxury that provided the yeomen, and those who entered their houses with a visible statement of wealth and luxury.

Cupboards

As taste in luxury furniture began to permeate the countryside. Oxfordshire yeoman inventories begin to reveal numerous amounts of cupboards. These can be found throughout the house, but mostly in larger rooms such as the hall or large parlor that gave them a purposeful and commanding position amongst the yeomen's effects. At first glance, it is easy to assume that they performed a regular function. Even the definition given in Thomas Dych's piece is fairly pedestrian since "it is a convenient place with shelves, doors, &c. to put pans, dishes, &c. in or upon."⁶⁹⁵ Conversely, these were not "the doored structures as now understood for in its original meaning, but a 'cup-board' was a table or shelf for displaying the family plate to visitors."⁶⁹⁶ As time progressed, some of these pieces were enclosed with small doors creating multiple compartments that would transform them into the familiar modern structure.

Another important piece of yeoman furniture was also to emerge from the cupboard's evolution. The press cupboard, a tall version of the late Tudor and early Stuart cupboard, contained long doors and interior shelves, which were used specifically for fine linen, napkins, tablecloths, and clothing. Most

⁶⁹⁵ Dyche, *A New General English Dictionary*, 201.

⁶⁹⁶ Joy, *English Furniture*, 15.

importantly, it provided a decorative storage space for valuables and fine items in yeomen parlors and entry halls. It also offered an important, enhancing addition to tables and chairs. This is evident in John Temple's home where, in the main hall, he had "one table board and frame, six joined stools, and two press Cubbards."⁶⁹⁷ The press seems to have been a decorative supplement to the well-furnished entrance of his six-bedroom home, while his neighbor Thomas Smith's 1684 inventory lists an especially decorative piece that may have functioned as a display case and is described as "a side cupboard with glass."⁶⁹⁸ Also, in the well-decorated parlor of Henley yeoman Humphrey Parks, a "purple cubbord" is surrounded by "6 joined stooles and 2 carpetts" valued at 2 pounds.⁶⁹⁹ In Chipping Norton, yeoman James Henshewe's entry included "one green Cubbard, one cort Cubbard, and 1 rownd table."⁷⁰⁰ His neighbor William Huggins uses his glass cupboard to show, "19 pewter dishes 15 plates, 10 porringers 2 candlesticks, and a some turn ware."⁷⁰¹ This allowed the finery to be protected while also enabling the yeoman to furnish the interior with a decorative fixture.

Cupboards are well represented among the chattels of the Henley yeomen. There are a total of 60 cupboards listed in a total of 24 inventories. This equates to a sizable average of 2.5 cupboards per yeoman household. The

⁶⁹⁷ John Temple of Burford, will dated 1626, no. 66/1/9, ORO.

⁶⁹⁸ Thomas Smith of Burford, will dated 1684, no. 107.236; 86/4/21, ORO.

⁶⁹⁹ Humphrey Parks of Henley, will dated 1658, no. 51/4/24, ORO.

⁷⁰⁰ James Henshewe of Chipping Norton, will dated 1639, no. 107.52(2), 56;298/1/43 a-b, ORO.

⁷⁰¹ William Huggins of Chipping Norton, will dated 1710, no. 206.39; 133/3/35, ORO.

cupboards in this sample are diverse and a good many are unspecified with regard to basic style. As shown by the table below, there was a range in variation, and most were colorfully decorated or contained glass to display “front stage” objects. The date to the right denotes the first year these appeared in the Henley inventories.

Cupboard	Amount
Unspecified	21
Press	5
Press c.	3
Joined	2
Glass c.	3
Linen c.	1
Safe	4
Green c.	1
Hanging	
Press	5
Dresser	
board	3
Purple c.	1
Small c.	1

The village of Chipping Norton held a simpler mix of basic presses, but still indicate a respectable proportion of press cupboards and other decorative examples from 25 inventories that averaged 1.32 cupboards per household.

Finally, Burford

Cupboard	Amount
Unspecified	14
Press	8
Press c.	1
Glass c.	1
High c.	1
Oaken press	1
Side c.	2
Cort c.	4
Little c.	1

exhibits a suitable amount of cupboards, especially one that is decorated with a wainscot design, that number 27 out of 14 inventories for an average of 1.93 per yeoman household. Yet, Burford yeoman Thomas Smith felt that cupboards were essential and should be used in every chamber since his testators list “one cupboard, table and other furniture”⁷⁰² in his outhouse!

Cupboard	Amount
Unspecified	12
Press	2
Press c.	1
Wainscot c.	1
Joined c.	2
Glass c.	1
Safe	1
Cort c.	3
Side c.	3

Thus, the number of cupboards (both basic and decorative) illustrates their importance within the yeomen household since they provided the prosperous owner with a decorative piece of furniture and, at the same time, allowed him to stage, and in some cases store, the luxury goods he consumed.

Chests and Chests of Drawers

Largely considered a staple item, chests held a luxurious position amongst yeoman furnishings. They deserve mention if only because of their utility, particularly since they were often used to house valuables and luxury items that were significant for household style and decoration. Chests and cabinets

⁷⁰² Thomas Smith of Burford, will dated 1684, no. 107.236; 86/4/21, ORO.

also had an aesthetic appeal since, according to Maureen Stafford and R. K. Middlemas, chests now contained “decorative motifs associated with the Renaissance, which began to replace the simple Gothic style.”⁷⁰³ In addition, the Jacobean chest, according to Singleton,⁷⁰⁴ “was decorated with carved panels and mouldings, and was usually rendered secure with a lock and great iron hinges that were extremely decorative.”⁷⁰⁴ A surviving example in the Victoria and Albert Museum contains a standard brass drop-handle and “the date and the initials of the owner were carved on it, as well as a fanciful motto or legend.”⁷⁰⁵

This trend is noticeable in the Chipping Norton inventories, which list a number of chests, particularly specialty chests that held corn. Most of these were found in the parlor or bedchamber suggesting both adornment and utility.

Chest	Amount
Unspecified	16
Coffer	36
C. of Drawers	2
Corn Chest	1
Joined chest	2

Henley’s inventories reveal a large number of chests and a greater variety than Chipping Norton. They list 46 unspecified chests and an additional 18 coffer (large chests), 3 chests of drawers, and two undeniably ornate wainscot chests (see table below). With three additional great joined chests,

⁷⁰³ Stafford, *British Furniture Through the Ages*, vi.

⁷⁰⁴ Singleton, *French and English Furniture*, 59.

⁷⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

this gives a total of 73 chests in a sample of 24 inventories, averaging 3.04 chests per yeoman lodging.

Chest	Amount
Unspecified	46
Coffer	18
C. of Drawers	3
Wainscot c.	2
Great Joined	3

Burford shows an amount almost equal to that of Chipping Norton, but it contains a smaller sampling of yeomen wills. Yet, it lists 30 chests against a sample of 14 inventories. This averages 2.14 chests per household that seemed to be less exotic, but still provided a unique form of storage.

Chest	Amount
Unspecified	16
Coffer	36
C. of Drawers	1
Joined	1

Desks

Desks, known also as bureaus or secretaries, were a seventeenth-century development. They were essentially small writing tables that included “secret drawers that were small-scale beautifully decorated pieces to suit the new mood of court life.”⁷⁰⁶ Desks are present amongst the yeomen inventories, but somewhat limited to one of the communities under examination. Burford’s inventories list two, which includes Edward Beacham’s home known as *World’s End* that lists “one cupboard, one forme, a

⁷⁰⁶ Linley, *Classical Furniture*, 94.

desk, and looking glass” in the hall valued at 1 pounds 11 shillings.⁷⁰⁷ Also, the inventory of John Bray shows “one deske in the hall chamber” on which he placed “a Bible and some small bookes.”⁷⁰⁸ Although few, they are nonetheless included in the front or staging areas of the home.

Chairs

“Chairs,” claims David Linley, “almost more than any other type of furniture, reveal social preoccupations” and during the course of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, “chairs became simpler and more elegant, while all seat furniture showed a new concern for comfort.”⁷⁰⁹ Gone were the days during the late Middle Ages where the “lord of the manor sat in a chair with arms, in the middle of the communal table, while his retainers used the crude benches at the side.”⁷¹⁰ As a result, individual chairs and stools appear in a large segment of the yeomen inventories. The “stool”⁷¹¹ or “back stool” was an armless chair that was further developed during the seventeenth century. With the introduction of the use of mahogany, chairs could be strengthened and were, due to the amenable nature of the wood, open to new expressions of design. John Gloag believes

⁷⁰⁷ Edward Beacham of Burford, will dated 1682, no. 91.320; 107.216; 7/2/43, ORO.

⁷⁰⁸ John Bray of Burford, will dated 1623, no. 106.127; 295/2/83, ORO.

⁷⁰⁹ Linley, *Classical Furniture*, 104.

⁷¹⁰ Stafford, *British Furniture Through the Ages*, v.

⁷¹¹ A “stool” was the normal term for a seat for one person, particularly during the Tudor era.

that chairs gained a growing popularity and purpose, and he reasons that chair making, at or about the 1670's, became a distinct craft that "united the skills of a joiner, turner, carver and upholsterer."⁷¹² Chair makers, joiners and upholsters constructed even numbers of chairs, "perhaps to include a pair of elbow chairs that reflect the new emphasis on dining."⁷¹³

Upholstered furniture appeared during the early part of the seventeenth century in homes of the well off. Once again, Oxfordshire yeomen appreciated the importance of luxury and comfort based on the evidence contained in their wills. The inventory of William Jennings, yeoman of Henley, lists "six greene stooles with greene cloth" in his parlor.⁷¹⁴ Also, Solomon Sewen of Henley chose to exhibit his finest "two chares and two small stooles covered with blew [blue] cloth" in his best chamber.⁷¹⁵

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, joined chairs were made with paneled backs and columnar legs, which supplanted the traditionally chunky, massive carved legs of the Elizabethan era. Examples of mid-century joined chairs are included in yeoman Thomas Eeese's inventory as he possessed goods that were appraised in the hall as "one table 5 joyned stooles, one joined forme one little table & fframe."⁷¹⁶ And John Bray's parlour included "2 joyned Bed steeds, one joined table borde & frame, 3 joyned stooles, one

⁷¹² John Gloag, *The Englishman's Chair; Origins, Design, and Social History of Seat Furniture in England* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1964), 77.

⁷¹³ Linley, *Classical Furniture*, 104.

⁷¹⁴ William Jennings of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1634, no. 199.74;136/3/39, ORO.

⁷¹⁵ Solomon Sewen of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1631, no. 60/3/17, ORO.

⁷¹⁶ Thomas Eeles of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1670, no. 107.152; 164/5/4, ORO.

low chayer.”⁷¹⁷ Additionally, the low-backed farthingale chair, so named because it was allegedly designed to accommodate ladies wearing the farthingale,⁷¹⁸ attained a notable following during the rule of James I. The chair’s most notable feature was its wide and generously stuffed seat cushion, which was covered in Turkey work, the course stitching thought to imitate a Turkish carpet.

Ownership of Turkey work emerges within a variety of yeomen homes. First, John Burkin of Burford owned “two rugs one little table 6 turkey work cheares”⁷¹⁹ in the hall chamber while his fellow Burfordian John Temple had “one turkie work carpet,” and “7 turkieworke qusions [cushions],” in his parlor.⁷²⁰ Also, William Atkins had “one chest of drawers, one Turkish chair”⁷²¹ surrounded by seven “stooles” in his best chamber.

As the century progressed and the makers of English furniture absorbed more and more ideas from French and Dutch chair makers, a new conception in design gave chairs a different appearance. In the reign of Queen Anne, a new curvilinear pattern was introduced that gave the appearance, most notably in the legs, of a transition into less-rigid, softer, more comfortable shape. This motif, also known as a cabriole leg, or sometimes as the Dutch cabriole leg, is described as a gently curved leg ending in a flat toe. It was

⁷¹⁷ John Bray of Burford, will dated 1623, no. 106.127; 295/2/83, ORO.

⁷¹⁸ A structure worn under the skirt by women in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries to give the shape of a cone, bell, or drum.

⁷¹⁹ John Burkin of Burford, will dated 1686, no. 107.241; 161/1/28, ORO.

⁷²⁰ John Temple of Burford, will dated 1626, no. 66/1/9, ORO.

⁷²¹ William Atkins of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1692, no. 204.208; 13/4/6, ORO.

modeled after the “legs of a beast,” which was formed by a characteristic scroll or gently curved leg. Although the cabriole leg provided chairs with a new shape, it also provided “a new understanding of stability, and ... fresh aspects of elegance.”⁷²²

The first forty years of the eighteenth century, sometimes referred to as the Cabriole Period,⁷²³ witnessed further modifications and signified a further move towards the evolution of chair making. Since the cabriole leg was advanced in both construction and design, it allowed for more ornamentation than straight-legged chairs. Previously, chairs were decorated on the back panel or front stretcher rail, which were the few places that could accommodate crests, scrolls, or floral patterns. During the early Georgian period, new bends in legs appeared and could accommodate further decoration. Ornamentation such as lions’ heads were carved into the curvature of the legs; Singleton adds that the “legs of the furniture are slightly curved and not so heavy as the Louis XIV furniture, however they retain a look of solidity.”⁷²⁴ Also, claw-and-ball feet or talon-and-ball feet were visible at the base of the leg where simple “flat toe” and “hoof toe” legs once stood. Most importantly, the most obvious change in style came with the need for comfort. The curvilinear design called for a scroll over arm or elbow, which, as previously stated, was absent from early Jacobean and Caroline chairs. According to John Gloag, this allowed “a curve to flow into

⁷²² Gloag, *The Englishman’s Chair*, 91.

⁷²³ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁷²⁴ Singleton, *French and English Furniture*, 141.

curve.”⁷²⁵ This harmonious unity of complementary arcs also allowed a more bended back that, in marked contrast to previous furniture, allowed a person to sit back without loss of dignity.

The innovation in furniture, especially in ornamentation, provided Oxfordshire yeomen with a means of household adornment. Furniture made of cane, joined chairs, upholstered seats, and contemporary laquerwork were the perfect vehicle for the yeomen of Burford, Chipping Norton, and Henley to highlight their domestic interior refinements. By stylizing basic furnishings, artisans had supplied the yeomen with necessary objects of luxury consumption.

Cane chairs are an addition to Oxfordshire inventories and can be seen among the yeomen furnishings. The import of cane from the East Indies to England most likely occurred in the 1650’s, and the product was possibly acquired through trade with the Dutch given the role of the Dutch East India Company. Yet most scholars agree that cane chairs were first produced in England during the reign of Charles II. There is evidence of a petition to Parliament by the cane chair makers in the 1680’s:

That about the Year 1664, Cane-Chairs, &c. came into use in England, which gave so much Satisfaction to all the Nobility, Gentry and Commonality of this Kingdom, (for their Durableness, Lightness, and cleanness from Dust, Worms and Moths)⁷²⁶

⁷²⁵ Gloag, *The Englishman’s Chair*, 90.

⁷²⁶ Ralph Fastnedge, “Furniture,” in *The Connoisseur’s Complete Period Guides*, 331.

Cane was an appealing alternative to leather or tufted fabric chairs and gained popularity from the Restoration into the early eighteenth century. John Gloag states that “medieval stiffness that survived from the early sixteenth century, was replaced by a new flexibility of line, and early in Charles II’s reign the seats and backs of chairs acquired a new and comfortable resiliency from cane work.”⁷²⁷ Chipping Norton yeoman William Huggins possessed many chairs in his six-bedroom abode including a best chamber with “one chest of drawers and six cane chairs,”⁷²⁸ with other items such as silver tankards and a looking glass valued at 18 pounds. Some historians argue that although cane provided a suitable and cost efficient alternative to expensive and limited woods, it was, to some experts, a short-lived, over-priced fad that went out of fashion in the 1720s. Contrary to this, most historians argue that the cane furniture trade flourished until 1740.⁷²⁹

Lacquerwork, or oriental lacquer furniture, was a successful import supplied by the East India Company since Asian luxury goods after the Restoration gave consumers a choice of style with international character. David L. Porter contends that while the fashion of *chinoiserie* is normally ascribed to the eighteenth century, the Earl of Somerset’s inventory reflects the early demand for lacquered furniture that would soon emanate towards

⁷²⁷ Gloag, *The Englishman’s Chair*, 90.

⁷²⁸ William Huggins of Chipping Norton, will dated 1710, no. 206.39; 133/3/35, ORO.

⁷²⁹ Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, 33.

the rest of consumers.⁷³⁰ Somerset's inventory from 1615 lists many carpets from Persia, Turkey, and Egypt and imported lacquered chests, including a cabinet of ebony with a frame ... furniture and hangings of china work, including six pieces of hangings of crimson China velvet embroidered China fashion, a China chest, one oval china table, a little china table, and a china chest gilt and painted."⁷³¹

Oriental lacquer had an appearance of smooth, hard polish. It was generally black, but it could be a variety of different colors including red or reddish-orange, and became highly popular during the early eighteenth century. The varnishing process was referred to as "Japanning" and can be found in John Stalker and George Parker's *Japanning and Varnishing* (1688), which expounds on the range of techniques and colors, especially the traditional "original rich black of the original oriental product that can be applied to furniture, tables, stands, boxes, and looking-glass frames."⁷³² Japanning consisted of covering wood, painted or unpainted, with an opaque, Lacc-Seed varnish and lampblack. A lofty opinion of this art is asserted in the work of Stalker and Parker:

Let no the Europeans any longer flatter themselves with all the empty notions of having surpassed all the world beside in stately Palaces,

⁷³⁰ David L. Porter, "Monstrous Beauty: Eighteenth-Century Fashion and the Aesthetics of the Chinese Taste," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 35 (2002), 395-411.

⁷³¹ Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 217.

⁷³² John Stalker and George Parker, *A Treatise of Japanning and Varnishing: Being a Compleat Discovery of Those Arts of Making Varnishes for Japan, Wood, Prints or Pictures, Guilding, Burnishing and Lackering, Separating and Refining Metals, Painting Mezzo-Tinto Prints, Counterfeiting Tortoise-Shell and Marble, Staining or Dying Wood, Ivory and Horn: Together with Over 100 Patterns for Japan-Work Engraved on 24 Large Copper Plates* (Reading: Alec Tiranti, 1688), 6.

costly Temples, and sumptuous Fabricks; Ancient and modern Rome must now give place. The glory of one Country, Japan alone, has exceeded in beauty and magnificence all the pride of the Vatican at this time and the Pantheon heretofore.⁷³³

In the Oxfordshire inventories, some lacquer work is found. Mr. Francis Bortley, a prosperous yeoman of Chipping Norton, owned “1 Redden Chaire” valued at 1 pound 6 shillings in his best chamber, which was quite possibly lacquerwork that sat along side a comfortable amount of “bedsted pillows, 1 feather bed, 2 pillows 1 bedsteede Curtaines and vallions.”⁷³⁴ In addition, William Jennings’s 1634 inventory lists “three coffers and one reddden chaire” in the little chamber⁷³⁵ and Richard Parke has a “Redde chaire next to a joined bedsted”⁷³⁶ in his chamber over the hall. These chairs were certainly distinct from covered chars and stools of the period, and normally held a prominent, singular place within the chamber. This is evident in yeoman Solomon Sewen’s best chamber where he has, among other décor, a “greater redd chaire [and] a greate press cubbord.”⁷³⁷

The Looking Glass

A mirror or looking glass gained its popularity as a luxury item during the Renaissance. Glassmakers in sixteenth-century Venice had perfected the

⁷³³ Ibid., 3.

⁷³⁴ Francis Bortley of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1673, no. 107.172; 295/5/16, ORO.

⁷³⁵ William Jennings of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1634 no. 199.74; 136/3/39, ORO.

⁷³⁶ Richard Parke of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1612, no. 195.123; 50/3/34, ORO.

⁷³⁷ Solomon Sewen of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1631, no. 60/3/17, ORO.

technique of coating glass with a tin mercury amalgam. Edward Thomas Joy reveals that English mirrors were made at the Duke of Buckingham's Glass House at Vauxhall shortly after 1660, and, although no longer frequently imported, they were still expensive.⁷³⁸ Mirrors, like other furnishings, were often decorated with veneers and marquetry, "sometimes with tortoiseshell and ebony enrichments."⁷³⁹ Additionally, they had square or rectangular frames, which held a forty-five inch convex segment. Venetians were now framing looking glasses with exotic woods such as ebony. John Evelyn notes this in his effort to purchase mirrors for John Hobson, consul of the Levant Company in Venice.⁷⁴⁰ Above all, they were required for the proper furnishing of a provincial gentleman's house in the late seventeenth century, as Randle Holme comments in his *The Academy of Armory* (1688). The dining room should have a "Flowere potts, or Allabaster figures to adorn the windows, and glass well painted and a large seeing Glass at the higher end of the Rome."⁷⁴¹

Predictably, there are a good number in the inventories from the three communities. Edward Beacham of Burford, a yeoman of substantial means had a "looking glass cupboard and one forme"⁷⁴² in his kitchen. John Burkin

⁷³⁸ Joy, *Book of English Furniture*, 30.

⁷³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁰ Cited by Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 251.

⁷⁴¹ Randle Holme, *The Academy of Armory, or, A Storehouse of Armory and Blazon: Containing the Several Variety of Created Beings, and How Born in Coats of Arms, Both Foreign and Domestick*; with the Instruments Used in All Trades and Sciences, Together with Their Terms of Art: Also the Etymologies, Definitions, and Historical Observations on the Same, Explicated and Explained According to Our Modern Language (Chester: Printed for the author, 1688), 16.

⁷⁴² Edward Beacham of Burford, will dated 1682, no. 91.320; 107.216; 7/2/43, ORO.

of the same village had “one gold ring and silver cupp six silver spoones & forke, [and] one looking glass with some other odd things valued at 25 pounds 5 shillings in his best chamber.”⁷⁴³ Once again, yeoman Richard Parke’s 1612 inventory lists “ a brushe, [and] a looking glass” valued at 12 shillings while and William Huggins of Chipping Norton claims ownership of “A looking glass and lumber”⁷⁴⁴ that resides in his “Staire Head” Chamber. Finally, in Michael Fletcher’s chamber over the shop there is, “one looking glass [with] 2 leather chaires, 2 mated chares, and an earthenware pot.”⁷⁴⁵

Towards the end of the Restoration, looking glasses, although still quite expensive, were becoming more affordable, but they were still found primarily among persons of means. They still had a square or rectangular shape, but also contained a semi-circular hood. As this was the Walnut period—and most looking-glass frames were constructed of this material—the cabinetmaker or joyner applied a cross banded veneer. Since the method of Japanning or varnishing as a decorative application was fashionable, it was most likely used on looking glasses during the late seventeenth century.

As English furniture became more ornamental, contemporaries would take a differing view of its ostentation, or lack thereof. In 1755, Jean Andre Rouquet applauded English handiwork and argues that English furniture is extremely well finished. At the same time, he finds it lacking in elegance:

⁷⁴³ John Burkin of Burford, will dated 1686, no. 107.241; 161/1/28, ORO.

⁷⁴⁴ William Huggins of Chipping Norton, will dated 1710, no. 206.39; 133/3/35, ORO.

⁷⁴⁵ Michael Fletcher of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1676, no. 107.183; 165/2/19, ORO.

“notwithstanding its extreme neatness, [it] makes a dull appearance in the eyes of those who are unaccustomed to it.”⁷⁴⁶

Clocks

A new luxury item found in the late Stuart yeoman’s effects is the long-case clock. G. Bernard Hughes comments that Tudor clocks were “costly pieces of mechanism and poor timekeepers, since the balance had no natural period of vibration and in consequence never swung freely.”⁷⁴⁷ Most Tudor clocks were constructed, albeit crudely, of brass and iron. When one needed to keep time during this period, an hourglass was usually employed. By 1631, the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers was founded, and it set the standards for the timekeeping industry.⁷⁴⁸ During the Cromwellian Protectorate, Dutch clockmaker and *émigré* Ahasuerus Fromanteel produced the first pendulum regulated clock in Britain.⁷⁴⁹ In the 1650s, there were more than “forty members of the Worshipful Company (of Watchmakers) along with numerous watchmakers, which included James Letts who, they thought, produced the first watch to show the day of the month in 1656.”⁷⁵⁰ Clockmakers during the Restoration introduced the long-case clock, a sophisticated invention of both artistic decoration and mechanical

⁷⁴⁶ Jean André Rouquet, *The Present State of the Arts in England*. By M. Rouquet (London: printed for J. Nourse, 1755), 104.

⁷⁴⁷ G. Bernard Hughes, “Domestic Metalwork” in *The Connoisseur’s Complete Period Guides*, pp. 127-166.

⁷⁴⁸ Robert Winder, *Bloody Foreigners*, 85.

⁷⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁷⁵⁰ Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 237.

innovation. With the arrival of French Huguenot artisans, clock making in England began to flourish. The clock itself, enhanced by the improvement in brass making and cases supplied by cabinetmakers, consisted of a long pendulum and “greatly increased the accuracy of time-keeping and, by some accounts, ushered in the golden age of English clock-making.”⁷⁵¹

Both clocks and watches are found among goods of the Chipping Norton yeomen. Yeomen such as William Huggins owned a clock positioned in his entry hall. It was placed among other fine goods such as “19 pewter dishes, 15 plates, 10 porringers, a clocke, 6 chaires 2 tables a glass case and other things”⁷⁵² valued at 9 pounds 5 shillings.

Further, John Burkin of Burford boasts a substantial 449-pound will and inventory that lists in his hall chamber “a glass safe, one klock, and gun (with holsters),” and in his best chamber “a pare of bookes, and one brass watch.”⁷⁵³

The timepieces found among each of the yeomen’s effects were in prominent places: entry halls, parlours, and well furnished chambers that intimates the yeomen’s awareness of staging this rare and expensive luxury good.

⁷⁵¹ Joy, 30.

⁷⁵² William Huggins of Chipping Norton, will dated 1710, no. 206.39; 133/3/35, ORO.

⁷⁵³ John Burkin of Burford, will dated November 26, 1686, no. 107.241; 161/1/28, ORO.

Jean Rouquet, a member of the Royal Academy of Portraiture and Sculpture, comments on the state of English painting in 1755,

In England, religion does not avail itself of the assistance of painting to inspire devotion; their churches at the most are adorned with an altar piece which no body takes notice of; their apartments have no other ornaments than that of portraits or prints; and the cabinets of the virtuous contain nothing but foreign pictures, which are generally more considerable for their number than their excellence. The English painters have one obstacle to surmount, which equally retards the progress of their abilities, and of their fortune.⁷⁵⁴

Regardless of this perceived handicap, art historians have argued that production and acquisition of paintings in Early Modern England was “unlike several other types of conspicuous consumption since collecting was associated with virtue, learning, and discernment rather than with decadence.”⁷⁵⁵ The age of the Stuarts, as Oliver Millar claims, “is a rich and fascinating period in the history of painting in England and the development of English connoisseurship ... and by the time of the Hanoverian succession, taste in this country had undergone a radical transformation.”⁷⁵⁶ Thus, scholars claim that portraiture and paintings were considered a luxury and were consumed by English yeomen.

⁷⁵⁴ Rouquet, *Present State of the Arts in England*, 22.

⁷⁵⁵ David Ormrod, “Art and Its Markets,” *The Economic History Review* 52, no. 3, New Series (1999): 544–551.

⁷⁵⁶ Oliver Millar, “Painting and Portrait Miniatures” in *The Connoisseur’s Complete Guides to the Houses, Decoration, Furnishing and Chattels of the Classic Periods*, ed. Ralph Edwards and L. G. G. Ramsey (New York: Bonanza Books, 1968), pp. 337–352.

As indicated by both professional art historians and European historical researchers, portraiture or decorative pictures were both absent and abundant in the early modern English home. Writings that describe the Glorious Revolution, especially by statesman Horace Walpole in his *Anecdotes of Painting* (1762), seem to suggest that absence was predicated on the tastes of the royal court since William of Orange, although born in the Dutch Republic, home to some of the greatest painters of the seventeenth century, "contributed nothing to the advancement of arts ... since he was born in a country where taste never flourished, and nature had not given it to him as an embellishment to his great qualities."⁷⁵⁷

Walpole's comments that a lack of demand was directly related to a lack of taste in the royal court are misleading. The English thirst for European painting, as John Brewer argues, was hamstrung by legal controls over the trade. These restrictions as Brewer explains, "stunted the art market until the eighteenth century where the pent-up demand for European painting and an acquisitiveness were satisfied only when controls were lifted."⁷⁵⁸ He reinforces this belief with evidence that suggests that "as many as 50,000 paintings were imported between 1720 and 1770."⁷⁵⁹ Once again, Horace Walpole, an avid collector and connoisseur of fine art and architecture,

⁷⁵⁷ Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting: In England; with Some Account of the Principal Artists; and Incidental Notes on Other Arts; Collected by the Late Mr. George Vertue; and Now Digested and Published from His Original MSS. by Mr. Horace Walpole*, The third edition, with additions. (London: J. Dodsley, 1782), 136–7.

⁷⁵⁸ John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London: HarperCollins, 1997), 204.

⁷⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

commented about the commercial migration of European painting and portraiture: “Commerce, which carries along with it the Curiosities and Arts of countries, as well as the Riches, daily brings us something from Italy. How many valuable Collections of Pictures are there established in England on the frequent ruins and dispersion of the fines Galleries in Rome and other Cities!”⁷⁶⁰

It is believed that Amsterdam fueled a large part of this market as Jan de Vries finds that Dutch art was well know and morphed form an old luxury after the Reformation into a “new luxury” that was supported by elite patronage. Similarly, he finds: “By developing both product innovations (new themes in paintings) and process innovations (new techniques of painting), Dutch artist opened new markets, allowing by mid-century some 700 to 800 masters to be active simultaneously, producing over the course of the century many millions of paintings.”⁷⁶¹ As early as the 1620s, galleries in the Netherlands sold pictures, sculpture, and decorative arts, especially by contemporary painters. This is evident in playwright James Shirley’s comedic work *The Lady of Pleasure* (1637). Shirley’s work is a satirical attack on luxury consumption, whose main character, Artentia, is caught up in the need for new portraiture. Early in the text, Sir Thomas Bornewell remarks to her:

⁷⁶⁰ Horace Walpole, *Ædes Walpoleanæ: Or, A Description of the Collection of Pictures at Houghton-Hall the Seat of Sir Robert Walpole*, 2nd ed., with additions. (London: J. Hughs, 1752), viii.

⁷⁶¹ Jan de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behavior and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 55.

Obedyed no modest counsell to effect.
Nay study wayes of pride and costly ceremony
Your change of gaudy furniture and pictures,
Of this Italian Master, and that Dutchman,
Your mighty looking-glass like Artillery...
Antique and novel, vanities or tires,
More motley than the French, or the Venetian.⁷⁶²

By the middle of the seventeenth and well into the early eighteenth, art dealers in the Netherlands targeted both the rich and less well off.⁷⁶³ This new era in Dutch artistic genius was both appreciated and fuelled by a new consumer culture that recognized the innumerable choices in artwork. This fresh and eager segment of an enlarged population was, most importantly, in a position to consume since they were newly endowed with discretionary income.⁷⁶⁴ On a visit to Rotterdam in 1640, John Evelyn visited the annual art fair and sent home pictures of “landskips, and drolleries as they call those clownish representations, as I was amazed.”⁷⁶⁵ Yet, some thought the Dutch market too saturated and its subject matter and quality rather rough and unworthy of collecting. Astonishingly, Walpole felt generally that Dutch artists lacked a seductive vision, “And as for the Dutch Painters, those drudging Mimicks of Nature’s most uncomely coarsenesses,” and they lagged

⁷⁶² James Shirley, *The Lady of Pleasure: A Comedie, as It Was Acted by Her Majesties Servants, at the Private House in Drury Lane* (London: Tho. Cotes, 1637), 10.

⁷⁶³ Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 172.

⁷⁶⁴ De Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, 54.

⁷⁶⁵ John Evelyn, *Diary and Correspondence of John Evelyn to Which Is Subjoined the Private Correspondence Between King Charles I and Sir Edward Nicholas and Between Sir Edward Hyde, Afterwards Earl of Clarendon, and Sir Richard Browne* (London, New York: G. Routledge & Sons, Limited; E. P. Dutton & Co., 1906), 39.

behind the skills of the Venetian School since “their idleness seems to have been in the choice of their Subjects.”⁷⁶⁶

Mark Ormrod suggests that Brewer’s view regarding the stagnation of the English art market prior to 1720 is doubtful, since “the growth of the London art market was well under way before the Glorious Revolution.”⁷⁶⁷ He asserts that home-produced work of immigrant artists along with “the rise of specialist art dealers in London, economic growth, and a low taxation of personal wealth contributed to the growth of the fine and decorative arts, and in general, though I believe his majesty patronized neither painters, nor poets.”⁷⁶⁸ Similarly, Brian Cowan argues that by the 1670’s there was an active if not flourishing market for portraiture and prints and that “both shops and auctions sold pictures in England.”⁷⁶⁹ In London there were “extraordinary sales of pictures and curiosities, which are a kind of market for the productions of the art ... and within these twenty or thirty years they have built several halls or auction rooms in London, which are set aside for the sale of pictures.”⁷⁷⁰

These assertions seems to hold true, since the research of Tom Wilks affirms that the Restoration period was truly an active time for purchasing

⁷⁶⁶ Walpole, *Ædes Walpoleanæ*, xi–xii.

⁷⁶⁷ David Ormrod, “Origins of the London Art Market, 1660-1730,” in Michael North and David Ormrod (eds.), *Art Markets in Europe, 1400-1800* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 1988), pp. 167-186.

⁷⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶⁹ Brian Cowan, “Arenas of Connoisseurship: Auctioning Art in Later Stuart England,” in *Art Markets in Europe, 1400-1800*, pp. 153-166.

⁷⁷⁰ Rouquet, *Arts in England*, 121.

and collecting. It appears that Charles II “displayed impressive resolve to reconstitute the Stuart royal collection; first, by retrieving what had been lost, to the extent that was possible, and then by buying anew.”⁷⁷¹ For this, the monarch created the Committee for the Recovery of Goods, which existed until 1672 and, by most accounts, enjoyed some success in recovering important royal portraits, especially those that had been taken to France by his mother, Queen Henrietta Maria.

In addition to recovery, Charles assembled a collection of high-quality portraiture through the work of William Frizell, an art dealer who helped King Charles I build his initial collection. Dutch contemporary work made up the bulk of this addition; yet there were also paintings and sculpture from the old Italian Masters.⁷⁷² Acquisition of new work was crucial to the collection, some of which because of its religious themes that were deemed “idolatrous” and “superstitious,” had fallen under the destructive hands of anti-royalists and religious zealots during the Civil War.⁷⁷³ Thus, the royal actions toward collecting paintings could have influenced the English populace.

Evidence from probate shows that pictures were used with a conscious decorative effect and sometimes hung directly on the tapestry or wall hangings of late Stuart and early Queen Anne rooms. Not surprisingly, there are some rather exceptional examples of pictures and maps used as décor in

⁷⁷¹ Tom Wilks, “Art and Architecture in Politics,” in *A Companion to Stuart Britain*, Blackwell Companions to British History, ed. Barry Coward (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2003), pp. 187-213.

⁷⁷² Ibid.

⁷⁷³ Ibid., 199.

yeoman households. Edward Beacham hung pictures in the entryway to his parlor, which also contained two table two forms and six stools one settle.⁷⁷⁴ The sum total of Beacham's his goods and chattels in his six-bedroom edifice reached a very respectable 49 pounds. Additionally, Hugh Owen's inventory contains a healthy array of furniture in his hall that reveals "two joined tables, wynscott with benches and paynted cloths next to his glass windows."⁷⁷⁵ These could very well be tapestries or textile art made of cotton or wool given the Burford's heritage of wool trading during the late middle ages. This work seems to have been painted as a "hung cloth," but may have served the same decorative purpose as a woven tapestry.

As wealth increased, so did the number of pictures that hung on yeoman's walls. Critics complained that this new wealth brought about a "self-styled connoisseurship," a symptom that prompted Horace Walpole to famously exclaim, "the Restoration brought back the Arts, not Taste."⁷⁷⁶ One thing is certain: interest in art among the landed gentry and urban elites increased and, as the century progressed, so did the growth of pictures as an art form, wall hanging and decoration in yeoman households in this remote, but visually perceptive area of Oxfordshire.

⁷⁷⁴ Edward Beacham of Burford, will dated 1682, no. 91.320; 107.216; 7/2/43, ORO.

⁷⁷⁵ Hugh Owen of Burford, will dated 1603, no. 191.410; 49/1/19, ORO.

⁷⁷⁶ Horace Walpole, *Ædes Walpoleanæ: Or, A Description of the Collection of Pictures at Houghton-Hall ... the Seat of ... Sir Robert Walpole*, 2nd ed., with additions. (London: pr. by J. Hughs, 1752), 136.

Tea and Tobacco.

Food can be considered both a basic necessity and a luxury item depending on the context. Craig Muldrew estimates that importation of foodstuffs, most notably fresh fruit, rose dramatically in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. He claims that:

In 1581, 21,000 oranges and lemons reached Norwich in time for Barthlomew Fair, and possibly over 1,000 tons of foreign, fruit, spices, and groceries were being shipped into East Anglia each year by 1590s. The popularity of foreign groceries is shown by the fact that this represents possibly between 7-8.5 pounds per person in Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. In 1660, there were also 200,000-300,000 pounds of pepper being imported into London per year, or about 6 ounces for every household in England.⁷⁷⁷

Tea vessels were apparent in homes of the English gentry, and the yeoman household was no exception. Teapots became quite popular in the late seventeenth century. James Morley, a potter based in Nottingham, advertised his wares that included a decantor, a mogg, a flower-pot, and a large carved teapot which he claimed: "Such as have occasion for these sorts of pots commonly called Stone-Ware, or for such as are of any other shape not here Represented may be furnished with them by the maker James Morley at the Pot House in Nottingham."⁷⁷⁸

⁷⁷⁷ Craig Muldrew, "Economic and Urban Development," in *A Companion to Stuart Britain* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2003), 151.

⁷⁷⁸ Copperplate advertisement of the Nottingham stoneware potter, James Morley, 1700. The Bodleian Library, Oxford.

Also, tea caddies, in both earthenware and silver, were found throughout homes in both urban and rural settings. Tea tables can be found such as “one drinckstand”⁷⁷⁹ among other earthenware, silver cups and large and small spoons in the inventory of Henley yeoman Francis Jackley.

In 1599, Thomas Platter observed the English relationship with tobacco when he noticed that in the many inns, taverns and alehouses scattered about London that

“tobacco or a species of wound-wort are also obtainable for one’s money, and the powder is lit in a small pipe, the smoke sucked into the mouth, and the saliva is allowed to run freely, after which a good draught of Spanish wine follows...[tobacco] they regard as a curious medicine for defluitions, and as a pleasure, and the habit is so common with them, that they always carry the instrument on them, and light up on all occasions ... and I am told the inside of one man’s veins after death was found to be covered in soot just like a chimney.”⁷⁸⁰

Yeomen contributed greatly to the development of English colonial tobacco production during the seventeenth century. Robert Brenner claims that the West Indies economy had been dominated almost exclusively by tobacco, produced on small plots by a yeoman population.⁷⁸¹ The first shipment arrived in London in 1617.⁷⁸² Craig Muldrew notes a striking growth in tobacco imports. Tobacco imports went up 36 times in just 20

⁷⁷⁹ Francis Jackley of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1636, no. 107.36; 298/3/26, ORO.

⁷⁸⁰ Thomas Platter, *Thomas Platter’s Travels in England, 1599*, trans. and ed. Clare Williams (London: J. Cape, 1937), 170–171.

⁷⁸¹ Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London’s Overseas Traders, 1550-1653* (London; New York: Verso, 2003), 161.

⁷⁸² John E Kicza, *Resilient Cultures: America’s Native Peoples Confront European Colonization, 1500-1800* (Upper Saddle River, N.J: Prentice Hall, 2003), 130.

years, from 50,000 pounds in 1618 to 1,800,000 pounds in 1638, and then rose to 9,000,000 pounds in 1668.⁷⁸³

Coincidentally, yeoman William Atkin's inventory reveals that among the books, candlesticks, looking glasses and chairs were a parcel of "tobacco stockes" in his old chamber valued at 1 pound 10 shillings and 6 pence," and in the mill house there appeared "horse hay and tobacco."⁷⁸⁴ Also, in the inventory of Michael Fletcher "62 pounds of tobacco" is listed as items in his upstairs chamber valued at 2 pounds 15 shilling, which is sitting amongst "tobacco pipes" valued at 8 shillings.⁷⁸⁵

Tobacco, apart from saving Jamestown from imminent failure, became an important luxury good in England. Its use and abuse was of concern, especially with regard to the King's *A Proclamation Concerning Tobacco* (1624) where:

Hereas Our Commons, assembled in Our last Sessions of Parliament became humble petitioners unto Us, That for many waightie reasons, much concerning the Welfare of our Kingdome, and the Trade thereof, We would by Our Royall power utterly prohibite the use of all foraigne Tobacco, which is not of the growth of Our own Dominions.⁷⁸⁶

⁷⁸³ Craig Muldrew, "Economic and Urban Development," in *A Companion to Stuart Britain*, pp. 148-165.

⁷⁸⁴ William Atkins of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1692, no. 204.208; 13/4/6, ORO.

⁷⁸⁵ Michael Fletcher of Henley-on-Thames, will dated 1676, no. 107.183; 165/2/19, ORO.

⁷⁸⁶ By the King. *A Proclamation concerning Tobacco*. Given at Our Honour of Hampton Court, the nine and twentieth day of September, in the tow & twentieth yeere of Our Reigne of England, France and Ireland and of Scotland the eight and fiftieth. Imprinted at London by Bonham Norton and Ion Bill, Printers to the Kings most Excellent Maiestie. 1624, (Society of Antiquaries, STC/1876:09), 1.

The crown only grudgingly approved its use since it had “upon all occasions made known our dislike, we have ever had of the use of tobacco, as tending towards the corruption of both the health and manners of our people.”⁷⁸⁷ In the end the king was unable to stem the demand for tobacco among his subjects.

How Did Goods Get to Consumers in Oxfordshire or Vice Versa and What Type of Infrastructure Developed to Facilitate the Sale of Luxury Goods?

During the seventeenth century, England’s consumers gradually emerged from the craftsmen’s house-front scheme of purchasing that so pervaded the custom of shopping throughout the Middle Ages. The process of accessing luxury goods, as Linda Levy Peck claims, “Within England, goods were dispersed through petty chapmen and retail shops that spanned the countryside and catered to the desire of all who had disposable income for luxury goods such as expensive textiles and housewares.”⁷⁸⁸ In fact, London mercers sold luxury goods in the countryside—as did local mercers, and petty chapmen who carried goods on their backs. Nonetheless, it is the development of the exchange that would allow specialist suppliers and tradesmen to satisfy a remarkable range of wants.

⁷⁸⁷ *Proclamation concerning Tobacco*, 1.

⁷⁸⁸ Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 33.

Finally a Place to Shop

With the eradication of envy, covetousness, and greed in the process of attaining luxury goods, the transformation of shopping, as Roy Porter sees it, “rendered material acquisition and visible consumption highly eligible activities.”⁷⁸⁹ Free from the moralizing tones of St. Augustine, the opportunity to accommodate the need to participate in the commerce of goods materialized with the founding of The City of London’s Royal Exchange in 1570. Modeled after the famous Dutch Bourse in Antwerp, the Exchange provided a medium in which merchants and tradesmen could conduct business. Sir Thomas Gresham, founder and member of the Worshipful Company of Mercers, proposed that the association should facilitate the export of wool and importation of luxury goods such as velvet and silk.⁷⁹⁰ By the end of the century, the shop spaces were filled to capacity and—rumoured to have impressed Queen Elizabeth at the opening festivities—included tenants like Thomas Deane, a haberdasher who sold “ribbons, silk thread for embroidery, and linen for seams”⁷⁹¹

As with any business venture, competition would appear a short time later in the form of the New Exchange. Opened by Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury in 1609, the New Exchange provided the latest in luxury goods that suitably

⁷⁸⁹ Roy Porter, “Consumption: Disease of the Consumer Society?” in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, eds. John Brewer and Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 58-81.

⁷⁹⁰ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, 55–6.

⁷⁹¹ Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 46.

reflected England's recent authority in international trade. The purpose was to showcase current luxury goods and global commodities, as well as to provide access to a private shopping mall closer to the western part of London, where the new "elite" maintained their homes. By bringing goods to a more accessible locale, Salisbury shrewdly acknowledged the geographical shift of King James' court and correctly assumed that important luxury tradesmen such as jewelers, goldsmiths, and mercers would move there as well.

The New Exchange provided not only direct competition with Gresham's Royal Exchange, but also a rather global selection of goods. Accordingly, there were purveyors that dealt in "Indian toys, China cabinets, looking glasses, crystal globes, and waxen pictures."⁷⁹² Porcelain from China—a new item introduced and controlled by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century—had appeared only as a rare item and circulated through the nobility through gift giving.⁷⁹³ The Dutch East India Company assumed control of the trade route in the early part of the seventeenth century. According to Peck, a shipment of perhaps "100, 000 pieces in its distinctive blue and white colours arrived in Amsterdam in 1604"⁷⁹⁴ and quickly found its way to merchants in London.

⁷⁹² Ibid.

⁷⁹³ An increase of titles and honours by James I resulted in what Linda Peck calls practicing the "life of the aristocracy," which included a culture of gift giving and acknowledging patronage.

⁷⁹⁴ Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 47.

Praise came from all who witnessed the abundance on display in The New Exchange including playwright Ben Jonson, who claimed the exchange to be the “greatest magazine in Europe.”⁷⁹⁵ Playwright William Wycherley’s character, Mrs. Margery Pinchwife, asks where the best walks in London. Alithea replies, “*Mulberry Garden, and St. James Park; and for close Walks, The New Exchange.*”⁷⁹⁶

Salisbury’s format was quite basic in that he required each shopkeeper to specialize in just one, single trade. These included haberdashers, seamstresses, booksellers, confectioners, stationers, silk mercers, linen drapers, and stocking sellers. Although there is evidence of “overlap,” most merchants adhered to these wishes. Trading hours were from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. during the summer and 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. during the winter hours that are similar and comparably more generous than contemporary malls and shops.⁷⁹⁷

Salisbury’s grand idea to bring luxury shopping to a new, sophisticated level was quite possibly due to the influence of his father William Cecil, Lord Burleigh. As Elizabeth took the throne in 1558, the future Lord Burleigh made it his mission to balance England’s trade deficit by both encouraging the importation of foreign luxury goods and importing artisans from the Continent who could establish industries from Spain, Holland, and France.

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid., 50.

⁷⁹⁶ William Wycherley, *The Country Wife. A Comedy Acted at the Theatre-Royal in Drury Lane*. Written by Mr. Wycherley (London, Printed for T. Becket and P. A. De Hondt, 1724), Act II, Scene I, 21.

⁷⁹⁷ Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 52.

Therefore, he allowed such “foreign luxuries as hats (8000 pounds per annum), satin (10,000 pounds per annum) and pins (3,000 pounds).”⁷⁹⁸ Then, Robert Winder explains that Salisbury balanced the trade deficit by “importing people.” He continues that first “Italian silk weavers were invited from Geneva with an offer they could hardly refuse: freedom from customs, protection from competition, a house, a church, a school.”⁷⁹⁹ These terms were then extended to other foreign-born artisans ranging in areas from soap manufacturing to gunpowder. It was his hope that this knowledge would be disseminated to English apprentices, who would then utilize these skills to establish large, indigenous, luxury-manufacturing concerns.

The establishment of these commercial affairs facilitated what Robert Brenner refers to as the development of the consumer industries, most notably the specialized areas of stocking knitting, ribbon making, linen, thread, and lace production.⁸⁰⁰ Imports were driving demand, especially for the middling sort who made up a vital middle class market and also witnessed a burgeoning lower class demand. Brenner states, “As early as 1578, in as remote a spot as Kirkby Lonsdale, a small market town in Lancashire, retail shops could stock a wide variety of both native and imported goods.”⁸⁰¹ The first several decades of the seventeenth century saw

⁷⁹⁸ Winder, *Bloody Foreigners*, 54.

⁷⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰⁰ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, 41.

⁸⁰¹ *Ibid.*

a continuation of the same development; highlighted now by the emergence of dynamic industries in pin making, starch making, and vinegar making.⁸⁰²

The Royal and Central Exchanges presented luxury goods to the English populace and made shopping an integral social “event” that allowed both men and women the chance to gossip, flirt, mingle, and shop within an enclosed, public space. Peck claims the opportunity to appear in public gave both men and women the power to make their own purchases while, at the same time, “to see and be seen.”⁸⁰³ This is especially true for women who were able to make decisions and contracts “outside the usual constraints of patriarchal control.”⁸⁰⁴ Most assuredly, the creation of these exchanges established what Jurgen Habermas would consider a new public sphere that encouraged new practices and garnered new relationships.⁸⁰⁵

⁸⁰² Ibid.

⁸⁰³ Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, 52.

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁵ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, MIT Press paperback ed., Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1991), 44.

CONCLUSION

The preceding chapters chronicled the rising wealth of the yeoman and his social transition in seventeenth-century Oxfordshire. By using wills, inventories, land records, and personal diaries, it is possible to assess the increase in yeoman wealth and their growing impact as consumers. Furthermore, by concentrating on the communities of Burford, Chipping Norton, and Henley-on-Thames, and by establishing the existence of various, causal factors such as land organization, the grain market, geography, and trade, it is possible to witness and understand the process that transformed the East Anglian yeoman from a practical, humble farmer into a luxury goods consumer.

The seventeenth century was a time when the yeomen grew wealthy and, in the view of Martin Daunton, “had greater security, which contributed to their willingness to raise yields by improving land in the ‘yeoman’s agricultural revolution’.”⁸⁰⁶ He adds that many prosperous yeomen families did not survive the eighteenth century. With the onset of the Industrial Revolution, the holdings of the prosperous yeomen were often transitory as they were soon acquired by large landowners.⁸⁰⁷ The nature of the land market eventually changed since the pool of affordable smallholdings that the yeomen originally acquired to take advantage of the agricultural expansion had depleted. Arnold Toynbee echoes this sentiment and

⁸⁰⁶ Martin Daunton, *Progress and Poverty: An Economic and Social History of Britain, 1700-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 75

⁸⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

concluded, “the process of the disappearance of the small freeholder had been continuous from about 1700 to the present day [but] ... it was not until about 1760 that the process of extinction became rapid.”⁸⁰⁸ By the latter part of the eighteenth century, the yeoman had either completed his rise into the position of the gentry or had been relegated to a small landholder who eventually sold out to join the ranks of the industrial workforce.

Initially, this study charted the rise of the yeoman from his beginnings in the medieval, feudal land structure to his general participation in the English luxury goods economy. It has also been argued that there were initial social and economic factors—low population, a slackening land market, falling rents—that facilitated the emergence of this new, rural class. By the sixteenth century, it was, as Margaret Spufford and Keith Wrightson argue, possible for this class to take advantage of the renewed growth of population and rising prices of agricultural produce.⁸⁰⁹

Since land was “the center and substance of their lives and their livelihood,”⁸¹⁰ the rural fortunes of the English yeomen were inherently linked to the changes in agricultural practices within the English Midlands, which, in turn, impacted Oxfordshire and the communities of Burford, Chipping Norton, and Henley-on-Thames. The land on which these

⁸⁰⁸ Arnold Toynbee in H. L. Gray's, “Yeoman Farming in Oxfordshire from the Sixteenth Century to the Nineteenth,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 24, no. 2 (February 1, 1910): 295.

⁸⁰⁹ Keith Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680*, Hutchinson Social History of England (London: Routledge, 1982), 135; Margaret Spufford, *Figures in the Landscape: Rural Society in England, 1500-1700* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2000), 72.

⁸¹⁰ Mildred Campbell, *The English Yeoman Under Elizabeth and the Early Stuarts*, Reprints of Economic Classics (New York: A. M. Kelley, 1968), 66.

communities were located—heavy clay, chalky clay, gravel, peat and silt—were, geographically speaking, unremarkable. If anything, they proved to be a challenge even to those seeking basic sustenance. To the casual observer of the time, the Thames Valley was a forbidding wasteland that was best left abandoned. It was not until the age of agricultural improvement that those with a sense of vision recognized that parts of the fenland contained nutrient rich soil that could be brought under cultivation.

Fittingly, the yeomen of Oxfordshire embraced this change that is indicated in their wills and inventories. No longer were fields allowed to sit fallow and, by extending the area of cultivation, output slowly increased. The cycle of “closed circuit” medieval farming was permanently broken, and leasehold and freehold land tenure gave the market-oriented yeomen an opportunity to expand their crops and reap the economic benefits.

Close inspection of the unique topography in which these three communities chosen for study are located suggests there was a close connection between patterns of the yeoman’s conspicuous consumption and the location of Burford, Chipping Norton, and Henley-on-Thames close to navigable waterways that, in turn, allowed access to trade in local and regional markets.

The archeological and topographical evidence demonstrates that these communities, while typical by contemporary standards, maintained a long and active history in the trade of agricultural goods. Despite being deep in the northeast end of the Cotswolds, the village of Chipping Norton had long

been part of the financially successful Oxford colleges, medieval institutions such as Oriel, St. John's, and Brasenose that maintained an efficient money economy and managed the land like most monastic estates at the time. Similarly, Burford, a Cotswold market town, was one of the largest ancient market towns and a crossroads to other important trading centers. After the dissolution, it maintained a large population and, because of its proximity to Oxford University, provided an important avenue of exchange. Henley, tied to a royal estate and located directly on the River Thames, attributed much of its success to accommodating a good deal of water bound traffic. Ultimately, these areas were established as early trading towns and centers, and maintained well-worn trade routes and merchant activity into the period under examination.

The most telling event is the improvement of river transportation and how the vision of English merchants and politicians brought medieval pastoral farming and trade into the early modern agricultural age. Waterborne improvements characterized the technological, agricultural, and transportation advancements of the seventeenth century, and many new stretches of river were cleared for boat traffic. The Thames was slowly made fully navigable between London and Oxford between 1540 and 1635. If it were not for government foresight and merchant ambition, the villages of the Chiltern Hills and Cotswolds would have remained an agricultural backwater and cultural afterthought until the early part of the nineteenth century, when

steam engines and pumping apparatus would have been employed to make the upper part of the Thames navigable for grain merchants.

After establishing the agricultural aspects of the yeomen ascent, it was necessary to illustrate the architectural evidence of yeoman wealth as well as the various motivations that facilitated their decision to outwardly express their new economic fortunes. The manifestation of building and architectural refinements helped to identify their economic and social success through external means. Beginning with an evolutionary examination of the typical yeomen household made it easier to clarify the changes in room use, ornamentation, and how the use of space served different social functions.

The best evidence for the growing wealth of yeomen is found in the inventories of their goods and in the commentaries of the day. The wills attest to the average size of the yeoman house and to the growing importance of room use. The rooms now focused on comfort and style. It was no longer the frugal, independent yeomen's hall, barn, and brewhouse that dominated the living space. Parlors with multiple chairs and cushions, wainscoting from Flanders, and bedchambers with multiple, ornate beds colonized his dwelling. Now, livability was the key function for most new and additional rooms that had been added to accentuate and expand the yeoman's new lifestyle.

The main point of this work was to illustrate the material culture in the domestic lives of the yeomanry. By exploring luxury household items during

the time of the Restoration, it is possible to see the response that followed years of repressive military rule and forced austerity of the Cromwellian age. China made its appearance in yeomen households despite a heavy tax levied by the Cromwell administration. Other luxury staples such as silver, pewter and fine new draperies now populated the Oxfordshire yeoman's domestic interior. His wearing apparel, although described haphazardly in the wills and inventories, were costly and buttressed the fact that the yeomen dressed well. By following the advent of fine furniture, *objets de art*, textiles, and drinking vessels, it is possible to determine how, within the sphere of seventeenth-century English country life, the presence of these goods revealed the spending habits that embodied the transformation of yeomen consumerism.

The evolution of furniture and craftsmen's innovations, specifically through ornamentation, created new luxury items that successfully combined the ideas of utility and comfort. Tables were no longer simple furniture, but now ornately veneered pieces that had been crafted to display front-stage luxury items. Chairs, previously stiff and uncomfortable, were now upholstered and designed to accent and compliment other pieces of furniture within a room. English artisans embraced new ideas in interior design, mostly from France, Holland, and Asia, as a way to satisfy consumers, including yeomen. Also, pictures, paintings and wall coverings are evidence that this type of conspicuous consumption, as most art historians argue, is associated with virtue, learning and discernment rather than with decadence

or folly. Most importantly, luxury consumption illustrates the Oxfordshire yeoman's appreciation for finery. The way in which these luxury items populated the interior of yeoman homes reveals the effort made to showcase their newfound wealth.

Finally, the Oxfordshire yeoman, whether consciously or not, played a large part in the theoretical debates concerning luxury good consumption. When discussing the yeoman's active role as a consumer, it was necessary to explore the wider concept of luxury, particularly by juxtaposing scholarship that emerged during the consumer revolution of the early modern period with more modern ideas. It was prudent to define the term "luxury" both clearly and unambiguously. This approach helped to reveal the interplay between notions that constitute the societal definition and perception of luxury consumption, and allowed the identification of luxury goods as a crucial, if not somewhat inevitable, component amongst the yeomen within early modern English society.

Throughout the classical and medieval eras, conspicuous consumption of luxury goods was seen as ruinous—a fixation that would, in the words of Livy, *semina futurea luxuriae* or the "seeds of luxury" would "erode social virtue" while Edward III spoke of luxurious clothing as "a contagious and excessive apparel of diverse people, against their estate and degree. These attitudes changed at the onset of the seventeenth century since contemporaries such as Nicholas Barbon, Blaise Pascal and, later, David Hume sought to explain the benefits of luxury through examples of trade and

its growing impact on a commercial society. Generally speaking, these theorists argued that when trade expands luxury would be an advantage rather than a moral hazard to society. This essentially put to bed the notion that luxuries were inherently linked to avarice, greed, and other church sanctioned deadly sins.

With a clear conscience, the yeomen had at their disposal a network of merchants supplying luxury goods to the metropolis and further. This network took the shape of the Earl of Salisbury's New Exchange, which provided the latest in luxury goods that suitably reflected England's recent authority and dominance in international trade. The purpose was to showcase current luxury goods and global commodities, as well as to provide access to a private shopping mall closer to the western part of London, where the new "elite" maintained their homes. By bringing goods to a more accessible locale, Cecil shrewdly acknowledged the geographical shift of King James' court and correctly assumed that important luxury traders such as jewelers, goldsmiths, and mercers would move there as well. This meeting of goods and consumers slowly replaced the petty chapman and peddler as the tradition purveyor of local and regional goods, and allowed the wealthy country yeoman into the "see and be seen" atmosphere of London. If a trip to the capital was out of reach, goods still found their way to Thames ports through a thriving coastal trade that included London and Antwerp. There was no shortage of choice and some of these goods included "glassware, playing-cards, paper, straw hats, ribbons, combs, and penny ware looking

glasses.”⁸¹¹ Imports were driving demand where even the smallest retail shops stocked and showcased a variety of both native and imported goods. There was supply to fit the most discerning yeomen tastes in the legitimate pursuit of, what Neil McKendrick refers to as “a whole new class of consumers.”⁸¹²

The ascent of the yeomen did not last forever. Boom periods of sustained economic growth are normally followed by downturns, corrections, or declines, and according to Martin Daunton, many yeomen farmers did not survive the latter part of the eighteenth century. He agrees there was a period during the seventeenth century of remarkable growth “when yeomen farmers had greater security, which contributed to their willingness to raise yields by improving land during the yeoman’s agricultural revolution.”⁸¹³ Many yeomen family landholdings were eventually acquired by larger landowners “rather than by a gradual move of the yeomen upwards into the gentry.”⁸¹⁴ Land consolidation slowed towards the 1780’s and now the holdings of the prosperous yeomen were often transitory.⁸¹⁵ Gone were the days of the wealthy husbandman, peasant, or yeoman purchasing land. The gentry now initiated a “top-down” process of land consolidation. The nature of the land market changed, checking the ability of yeomen to rise into the

⁸¹¹ Neville Williams, *The Maritime Trade of the East Anglian Ports, 1550-1590* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1988), 71.

⁸¹² Neil McKendrick, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Europa Publications Ltd., 1982), 1.

⁸¹³ Daunton, *Progress and Poverty*, 75.

⁸¹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸¹⁵ *Ibid.*

gentry by reducing the pool of smallholdings within their means. The route of consolidation, lucrative crops, and favorable leases would come to an end during the advance of industrialization in the late eighteenth century.

In sum, the complexities of the three Oxfordshire towns of Burford, Chipping Norton, and Henley-on-Thames illuminate the new distinctions in attitudes and manners. Most importantly, they accurately reflect the rise of the yeoman. Through the analysis of agricultural transformation and rural wealth, it is possible to view the general reasons for change in the structure of English rural society in the seventeenth century. Here, in these villages located on the northern Chiltern and Cotswold parts of the county, was a group that clearly developed differently (both socially and economically) from those in the rest of the country; nonetheless, they reflect the economic impact that is truly evident in the rise of the yeoman farmer as a luxury goods consumer.

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