

A LOCAL MARKET SYSTEM

Melton Mowbray and the Wreake Valley

1549-1720

by

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ABBREVIATIONS

<u>A.H.E.W.</u>	<u>The Agrarian History of England and Wales, IV, 1500-1640.</u>
<u>Farnham</u>	G.F. Farnham, <u>Leicestershire Medieval Village Notes.</u>
L.R.O.	Leicestershire Record Office.
<u>Nichols</u>	John Nichols, <u>The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester.</u>
P.R.O.	The Public Record Office.
S.P.	State Papers Domestic, P.R.O.
<u>T.L.A.S.</u>	<u>Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society.</u>
<u>V.C.H.</u>	<u>Victoria County History.</u>

I

INTRODUCTION(i) A quest for a local market system

The search by sociologists for acceptable definitions of the term 'community' has been long, tortuous and inconclusive. Whether a consensus will ever be reached remains to be seen, but much of the discussion has concerned the territorial factor - there can be little doubt that communities or 'local social systems', whichever term one prefers, are likely to transcend demographic or administrative boundaries.¹ The introduction of the concept of 'social network' has facilitated the analysis of communities in that it recognizes that they have no fixed external boundaries.² The degree of boundedness varies - as one authority says: "Networks for some people will be locality bound, for others less so" - but no network, no community, no local social system has any strict territorial limits.³

Nevertheless, according to many sociological definitions it is the social relations within a particular geographical area which may constitute the "ideal" typical community or local social system.⁴ If we are to recognize and study local social systems, then, the initial identification of the geographical areas with which we

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1. Colin Bell and Howard Newby, Community Studies: An introduction to the sociology of the local community (1971), pp. 24-5, 27-30; Margaret Stacey 'The myth of community studies', British Journal of Sociology, XX (1969), pp. 134-47; Alan Macfarlane, Reconstructing Historical Communities (1977), pp. 9-13.
 2. J.A. Barnes, 'Class and Committees in a Norwegian Island Parish', Human Relations, VII (1954), pp. 39-58.
 3. Bell and Newby, op.cit., p. 53.
 4. Stacey, loc.cit., pp. 135-40.

believe them to be conterminous can be seen as a highly productive exercise. Here some approaches and research by geographers, anthropologists and sociologists are relevant and useful.

In the urban context the work of geographers has suggested that it is the town - as a centre for marketing and services - plus its 'urban field' or 'sphere of influence' upon which sociologists ought to concentrate their analysis. The growth of interest in the social geography of England and Wales, in part responsive to the planning of administrative divisions, resulted in an increased study of the relationship and delimitation of urban fields in the pre- and post-war period, and it was in this atmosphere that in 1947 one geographer concluded that "town and surrounding region are inseparable - both geographically and socially."¹

Chinese sociologists in the 1920s and 1930s were the first to relate market areas to social systems.² Other scholars have since

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1. E.g. R.E. Dickinson, 'The Regional Functions and Zones of Influence of Leeds and Bradford', Geography, XV (1929-30), pp. 548-57, 'The Markets and Market Area of Bury St. Edmunds', Sociological Review, XXII (1930), pp. 292-308, and 'The Distribution and Functions of the Smaller Urban Settlements of East Anglia', Geography, XVII (1932), pp. 19-31; Arthur E. Smailes, 'The Urban Hierarchy in England and Wales', ibid., XXIX (1944), pp. 41-51, 'The Urban Mesh of England and Wales', Institute of British Geographers, Transactions and Papers, No. XI (1946), pp. 87-101, and 'The Analysis and Delimitation of Urban Fields', Geography, XXXII (1947), pp. 151-61; H.E. Bracey, 'Towns as Rural Service Centres: an Index of Centrality with special reference to Somerset', Institute of British Geographers, Transactions and Papers, No. XIX (1953), pp. 95-105; Harold Carter, 'Urban Grades and Spheres of Influence in South West Wales: an historical consideration', Scottish Geographical Magazine, LXXI, No. 1 (April, 1955), pp. 43-58; Peter R. Odell, 'Urban Spheres of Influence in Leicestershire in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', Geographical Studies, III (1956), pp. 30-45.
 2. G. William Skinner, 'Marketing and Social Structure in Rural China', Part 1, Journal of Asian Studies, XXIV (1964-5), pp. 3-43.

recognized that social systems consisting of town and country together may exist: Betty Starr saw the cabacera or head town as the nuclear centre of the Mexican urban-rural community which she called the municipio.¹ Börje Hanssen's concept of the "activity-field" concerned urban-rural relationships in eighteenth century Scandinavia, and while he pointed out that different economic groups within a town would have separate activity-fields, he also stated that some groups in the town would have more intimate connections with the rural population than with other urban residents.²

William Skinner recalled the early work on Chinese social systems and re-emphasized the role of the market town as a nucleus.³ Skinner claimed that "marketing structures inevitably shape local social organization" and he opened up the possibility of extending this approach to historical communities by suggesting that "marketing structures of the kind described here in China [twentieth century, pre-civil war] appear to be characteristic of the whole class of civilizations known as "peasant" or "traditional agrarian" societies."⁴ Skinner described the Chinese "standard market" as "the starting point for the upward flow of agricultural products and craft items into the higher reaches of the marketing system, and also the termination of the downward flow of imported items destined for peasant consumption."; the site of a standard market he termed a "standard market town".⁵

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1. Robert Redfield, The Little Community (1957), pp. 122-3.
 2. Ibid., pp. 125-6; Börje Hanssen, 'Fields of Social Activity and Their Dynamics', Translations of the Westermarck Society, II (1953), pp. 99-133.
 3. Skinner, loc.cit.
 4. Ibid., p. 3.
 5. Ibid., p. 6.

Skinner went on to agree with Martin Yang, who stated of the standard market town that "although there is no clear cut line of demarcation, each market town has a definite and recognizable area, and looks upon the people of certain villages as its primary customers; in turn, it is regarded by the villagers as their town."¹ From this premise Skinner further went on to claim that the discrete market area around each standard market town comprised the effective social field for the villagers - and townsfolk - living within it. He described the standard marketing area as the standard marketing community, a social system outside which only the local elite habitually operated.² In terms of kinship and friendship connections, religion, recreation, membership of voluntary associations, dialect and folklore, Skinner's market communities could clearly be differentiated, one from another.

Although at first sight the cultural differences between twentieth century China and early modern England seem formidable, Skinner's descriptions of marketing in the Szechwan region of China strike a familiar note to the student of the Tudor and Stuart economy. In terms of size, geographical spacing and periodicity of markets, too, there are great similarities between the Szechwan market towns and English market towns in the seventeenth century. This need not surprise us, of course, because marketing patterns in predominantly rural economies where modes of transport are similarly primitive and in which nucleated settlement is the norm will always have a good deal in common.

Without a thorough analysis of the economic and social relationships which existed between and within a market town and all the villages in its

1. Ibid., pp. 17-8.

2. Ibid., pp. 32, 41.

marketing area it is not possible to test fully the hypothesis of the marketing community; still less can the discreteness of such a community be assessed. The historian does not share the advantage enjoyed by the sociologist and the anthropologist in being able to test a hypothesis in the field: he is limited by the survival and value of documentary evidence, and it is extremely doubtful whether historical market communities could ever be located from documentary evidence alone, no matter how pertinent and indicative that evidence might be. That said, however, it is the intention of the present study firstly to contend that current notions of 'market community', 'urban field', 'activity field' and 'social network' are closely related concepts which may be associated with the pre-industrial English market town and its area; secondly, that any attempt to study either the town's or the villages' economic development without prime regard for their function within a mutually inclusive economic context is bound to founder; and thirdly, that to differentiate between the villages themselves - to study them in isolation - is to ignore the possible existence of a socio-economic market system.

The present aim, then, is to try to recognize a field of activity, a 'local market system', which centred on the market town of Melton Mowbray, and within which the component parts operated. It is not proposed strictly to delineate the field in question nor to describe it exhaustively, for such tasks are too mammoth even to attempt. Nor will any attempt be made to demonstrate that the inhabitants of Melton's market area exhibited or felt either any "sentiment of attachment" or that hostility to outsiders which Julian Pitt-Rivers saw as indicators of "community".¹ In view of the oblique nature

1. Julian A. Pitt-Rivers, The People of the Sierra (1971 ed.), pp. 6-12.

of most of the extant documentary evidence any such suggestion would only be speculation.

It has been shown that the parish in English rural society was an important social unit to villagers: "The parish framework in Shropshire might have been in some respects an arbitrary one, but for many purposes it was the one that mattered."¹ Both attendance at the parish church and the open field farming system would have helped implant the mentality of "belonging" to the parish unit. Within its marketing area, too, it might be imagined that the market town fulfilled a similar role, both as a central social concourse and as a service centre - the focus of a common interest in the fortunes of the local agrarian economy. Any such "community" of Melton, however, is hardly provable, and we must therefore leave aside these considerations as to whether a socio-economic system centring on the town deserves this ambiguous description.

In Chapter II and Chapter III it is suggested that in economic terms town and country comprised an indivisible unit - an elemental economic system. Melton's farmers played an integral and indeed a crucial part in the Wreake Valley's food production, both for internal consumption and for export. Living in Melton by the seventeenth century were all the biggest arable farmers and some of the biggest graziers. While most meat sales in the valley were in the hands of villagers, much of the baking and all the large scale brewing were concentrated in Melton. Although the town undoubtedly played a special role in the valley - as the provider of specialist services, inns, alehouses and retail shops, as the local administrative

1. David G. Hey, An English Rural Community: Myddle under the Tudors and Stuarts (1974), p. 4.

and religious centre, and as the centre of the valley's leather crafts, malting and brewing - Melton was, nevertheless, so enmeshed in the production of foodstuffs that to differentiate between an 'urban' and a 'rural' economy makes no sense at all.

It is this intimate economic relationship between town and country that provides a structure for the social relationships which we consider in Chapter IV. In this chapter Melton's social structure is analyzed, highlighting both the fluidity of the town's society (a fluidity which helped to unify the town with the surrounding area) and the effective division of the society into two parts: those with common rights and the right to take part in local administration, and those with neither right. The early dominance in local government by Melton's farming dynasties gave way as the prosperity of retailing and the redirection of the farmers' interests into the enclosed pasture grounds of the surrounding villages were reflected in the make up of the town's ruling elite. Finally, a survey of the social and cultural relationships between Melton and the villages in the Wreake Valley produces some evidence for a wider field of social activity encompassing both town and country which we might perceive as a local social field or system.

A recent historical work has described a "local social system" at some length, but the system was that seen as pertaining to a single village only: the admission that in spatial terms both the core and the penumbra of this system were triangular and dependent upon the respective sites of six market towns does not seem to have raised any doubts in the authors' minds that it was, perhaps, the market towns rather than the village which represented the significant points in any social systems which might have been present.¹ Without a serious

1. Keith Wrightson and David Levine, Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525-1700 (1979), Ch. 4.

consideration of economic linkages the analysis of a local system lacks the framework required to explain the social relationships enjoyed outside a settlement by its inhabitants. Even within a recognizably discrete market area there may be numerous economic differences between villages: one settlement may have three open fields, another may be entirely enclosed and given over to pasture; one may have stone quarries, another salt pits; one may have a resident, dominant lord, another may contain large numbers of freeholders; one may be sited on a major thoroughfare with large amounts of traffic passing through; another may be well away from any such routes. As a result, economic and social linkages between these villages and others, and between them and the market town may differ considerably. In any normal marketing system these linkages will invariably focus on the local market, and it may be there that an analysis of any local system should begin.

In the present context fifteen villages have been chosen to exemplify the developments which took place in Melton's market area over the period.¹ These villages all lie within four miles of the market town and they probably represent most of the different types of rural settlement to be found in the Wreake Valley at the time. The overall agrarian, demographic and economic experience of the villages is compared and contrasted with that of Melton in both Chapter II and Chapter III in order to emphasise the constant urban-rural interplay.

In Chapter IV, as in Chapter III, there is a definite emphasis

1. They are Abkettleby, Asfordby, Brentingby, Burton Lazars, Great Dalby, Little Dalby, Eyekettleby, Freeby, Holwell, Kirby Bellars, Scalford, Sysonby, Welby and Wyfordby.

on the study of Melton, an emphasis which is inevitable within the scope of this work. While the intention is to demonstrate the validity of the concept of the local market system, the most coherent and straightforward method is to concentrate upon the settlement at the nucleus of the system, namely the market town itself. Although at least one casualty of this is the detailed study of the individual villages, especially in social terms, it is hoped that sufficient information to support the argument is derived from the analysis of the market town and from the more limited examination of the fifteen villages.

(ii) Markets and marketing: Melton Mowbray in the early
sixteenth century

Melton Mowbray was a settlement of some importance by early Anglo-Saxon times. Its name, a Scandinavianised form of the Old English middel tūn probably recognizes the town's central position in the Wreake Valley, or perhaps in the soke of Melton. The site of an Anglo-Saxon minster church, Melton acted as a nucleus around which other parishes were arranged.¹ Five villages were ecclesiastically subservient to the town - Burton Lazars, Eyekettleby, Freeby, Sysonby and Welby. None of these chapelries became independent of the mother church before modern times.

Administratively and territorially Melton was also a focal point. The moot of Framland Wapentake met at Great Framlands within the township boundary.² In Domesday Book nine villages or parts

1. W.G. Hoskins, 'The Anglian and Scandinavian Settlement of Leicestershire', T.L.A.S., XVIII (1934-5), pp. 110-47.

2. Barrie Cox, 'Leicestershire Moot-Sites: The Place-Name evidence', ibid., XLVII (1971-2), pp. 14-21.

thereof belonged to the manor and soke of Melton held by Geoffrey de Wirce.¹ In later years Melton was a meeting place for Quarter Sessions and archdeaconry visitations, site of one of the county's powder and match storehouses, and in 1650 was described (with Leicester) as one of "the two most eminent market towns" in Leicestershire.² The town's strategic position was recognized during the Civil War when it was a centre of local operations by both sides in the conflict.³

The town was already an important trading centre by the late eleventh century when its market is first noted in documents.⁴ Melton's function as a marketing centre is owed to its siting. Ideally placed as a distribution point in the Wreake Valley the town grew where a prehistoric ridgeway descended and crossed the river. The ridgeway entered Leicestershire in the south of the county and ran northwards, probably branching to the Iron Age hillfort of Burrough, and descended to the valley floor.⁵ From here it proceeded northwards and entered Nottinghamshire in the Vale of Belvoir.⁶

Melton enjoyed excellent land communications throughout the medieval period.⁷ The Gough Map of the mid-fourteenth century marks

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1. The villages were Burton Lazars, Eastwell, Eyekettleby, Freeby, Goadby Marwood, Kirby Bellars, Sysonby, Welby and Wyfordby, V.C.H. Leicestershire, I, pp. 283, 295, 299-300, 329-30.
 2. Calendar of the Proceedings of the Committee for Compounding 1643-1660, edited by M.A.E. Green (1889), Part I, p. 338, letter from Arthur Staveley, sheriff of Leicestershire, 1650.
 3. V.C.H. Leicestershire, II, p.114; Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports, The Letter Books of Sir Samuel Luke 1644-5, pp. 204, 217, 464, 552, 574.
 4. Philip E. Hunt, Notes on Medieval Melton Mowbray 1077-1507 (1965), pp. 8-9.
 5. W.G. Hoskins, 'Galby and Frisby' in his Essays in Leicestershire History (1950), pp. 24-55.
 6. Cox, loc.cit.
 7. See Map I.

the major Coventry to Lincoln road which passes through Leicester and Grantham and an unnamed settlement half way between them which can only be Melton, then at the height of its medieval prosperity.¹ This road is largely a ridgeway along some stretches, and Ivan Margery suggested that it was a Romanized fork off the Fosse Way linking it to Ermine Street.² In 1395 the highway was known as 'Le Strete' when two merchants travelling along it were robbed of money, jewels, silk, satin and other cloth.³

The route linking Melton with Nottingham can be documented to the early thirteenth century as the one taken by royal progresses from Rockingham via Oakham.⁴ This road was demarked by Ogilby in the seventeenth century as a 'Direct Dependent' and the Leicestershire section was a stretch of the main route from London to the North. The road passed through Burton Lazars, site of the famous leper hospital of St. Lazarus. The Ogilby map also marked a road leading westwards out of Melton to Loughborough which would have joined the Fosse Way at Six Hills.

Apart from these roads, ancient or medieval, which actually passed through Melton there were others of equal or greater antiquity and importance which passed close by. Possibly the oldest of these is the Jurassic Way which runs from north to south about nine miles east of Melton.⁵ A saltway which runs east-west passes about four miles north of the town: a ridgeway, this track was Romanized as it

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1. Gough Map, facsimile, Ordnance Survey (1935), reprint (1973).
 2. Ivan D. Margery, Roman Roads in Britain (1967), p. 219.
 3. Hunt, Notes on Medieval Melton Mowbray, p. 78.
 4. Thomas Duffin Hardy, 'Itinerarium Johannis Angliae', Archaeologia, XXII (1829), pp. 124-60; V.C.H. Leicestershire, II, p. 84.
 5. O.G.S. Crawford, Archaeology in the Field (1954 imp.), pp. 81-4.

provided a useful link between the Fosse Way at Six Hills and Ermine Street.¹ The Fosse Way itself runs from Leicester up to Newark and passes about seven miles west of Melton where it is joined by the aforementioned Melton-Loughborough road and the saltway at Six Hills. The encirclement of the town by ancient roads is completed by the route which is discernible leading west out of Burrough hillfort descending down Salters Hill and following high ground until it reaches the Wreake near Rearsby. Unlike the other routes we have been discussing this trackway (which may have continued to Breedon hillfort in Charnwood) has survived for a good deal of its length as a footpath only.

It is easy to see why Melton developed as an important trading centre in the pre-Conquest period, and why in contrast to some later market foundations it has been able to maintain its most fundamental role. Whatever the trials and tribulations of the late medieval and early modern periods Melton's geographical siting ensured the endurance of its marketing function. Despite the Wreake Valley's lack of raw materials and industry the town's survival as a genuine urban community rested on a solid bedrock which no plague, fire or economic depression could shake so long as the lush valley pastures continued to feed "great numbers of sheepe".² Melton was well positioned vis a vis other market towns: Oakham is nine miles distant, Billesdon ten, Mountsorrel eleven, Bingham thirteen, Loughborough fourteen, Leicester fourteen, Grantham fourteen and Nottingham seventeen miles distant. Only Waltham on the Wolds was near enough

1. Margery, op.cit., pp. 222-3.

2. William Camden, Brittania (1610), p. 527.

to be a serious alternative market for the Wreake Valley population.¹ In 1670 Waltham's market was described as "very inconsiderable and in a manner disused", but even in the fourteenth century its population may have been only about one eighth of that of Melton.² It is extremely doubtful whether Waltham's market was of any consequence during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, though its fair may have been more lively.

Melton's market place, originally rectangular, developed around the intersection of the main north-south and east-west routes through the town. The sheep, corn, cattle and herb markets spread along the northern and eastern entries so that on market day the area occupied by stalls and pens considerably exceeded that of the market place proper. The sites of the sheep, corn and herb markets were marked by crosses in Spittal End and Thorpe End.³ The butter cross was sited in the market place, where too the hog market was held. It is not possible to date the erection of any of these crosses, although no mention of them can be traced before the second half of the sixteenth century when one would expect marketing activity to have been on the increase. There were six market officers in the seventeenth century: two aletasters responsible for bread and ale standards, two searchers and sealers of leather, and two fleshtasters.⁴

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1. Other nearby medieval markets such as the one at Stapleford were never realistic ventures and only Waltham survived the medieval period.
 2. Alan Everitt, 'The Marketing of Agricultural Produce', A.H.E.W., p. 472; V.C.H. Leicestershire, III, p. 163. In 1603 Melton was said to have 910 communicants compared with Waltham's 167, ibid., p. 168.
 3. See Map XIII.
 4. There were also two aletasters responsible to Lewes manor but these would have been concerned only with everyday infractions of the law and not with the extra volume of trade conducted in the market areas which all lay within the manor of Melton.

Market day was Tuesday, the tolls being due to the lord of Melton manor. Foodstuffs produced by both town farmers and villagers was the staple commodity, and there would be livestock for sale throughout the year as the market crosses and names imply. Dairy produce, poultry, honey, fruit, meat, bread, grain, malt and ale would be sold in large quantities whether on a market stall or in one of the victualling establishments as townsfolk and villagers stocked up with their weekly requirements. In addition manufactured wares such as candles and leather goods were laid out on stalls by town artisans, often as a supplement to the less vigorous daily sales which some of them made from their workshops. Even pure retailers put out stalls on market day in order to catch the eye of rural shoppers.¹ Villagers hired stalls to sell wool and yarn as well as foodstuffs and townsmen from elsewhere joined the throng of traders, farmers and artisans to give the weekly event a distinctly heterogeneous character.

Shops were an integral part of the town's supply function, whether they were owned by pure retailers, like mercers and drapers who imported many of the goods they sold, or by artisan retailers like chandlers and glovers, who manufactured at least some of their wares themselves. It is impossible to estimate with any precision the number or relative importance of shops in Melton during the period. No measure of the volume of trade which passed through the markets, shops and fairs is available. Certainly, though, there were shops in the town during the Elizabethan period and while some of these were

1. E.g. L.R.O., PR/1/39/251, inventory of Thomas Dickens, Feb., 1638; ibid., PR/1/71/52, inventory of George Pawley, Nov., 1670.

workshops there is no doubt that wares were being displayed permanently and sold during the week. Thomas Richardson was a shoemaker who died in 1563 with a shop stock of over 100 pairs of shoes.¹ Clearly he was not working solely to order as did many poorer craftsmen. There were several mercers and drapers selling goods in the town by the 1570s.²

As the seventeenth century progressed shopkeepers increasingly came to head Melton's socio-economic hierarchy. In general terms they became more and more independent of farming until by 1700 there were substantial numbers of retailers who had no connection with agriculture. Melton was the shopping centre of a valley whose population continued to grow despite severe demographic setbacks, so these developments were inevitable. Real specialization was rare, and the few surviving lists of shop goods show that most retailers tended to diversify as much as possible. More specialist retailers such as milliners and barbers did become more common later in the century but the indications are that they too sold a variety of goods.

If the number of retail shops increased during the seventeenth century did this mean that the market was becoming less important? Not while foodstuffs remained the main commodity bought and sold on market day. Shopkeepers were catering for an absolute increase in demand for goods generated both by a growing population and by increasing standards of living among the middle and upper levels of society in the valley. Had industry ever come to the valley this trend would have been more marked still. As it was, retailing in

1. Infra, Ch. III, p. 127.

2. Infra, Ch. III, pp. 169-72.

Melton developed slowly, and while it produced some great economic successes it could not outgrow the local agrarian economy.

Existing alongside the town's daily and weekly exchange activity were Melton's three fairs. In the thirteenth century two fairs were held annually, one in Whitsuntide week lasting for three days, the other in August lasting eleven days.¹ By 1600 a third fair was being held on Plough Tuesday in January - the most northerly of only nine January fairs held in the entire country.² The fairs' speciality was livestock. The Whit fair was principally for the sale of lambs and calves, the August fair for the laying in of store beasts, sheep and swine for winter, and to some extent for the disposal of the summer wool clip. It was probably at the long August or St. Lawrence fair that livestock, including horses, were moved into and out of the valley as part of the general drift southwards. The January fair was a purely local matter for only local folk would be expected to travel at the height of winter. Probably a sixteenth century innovation it would have been the occasion for the redistribution of livestock from those who possessed winter feeding resources to those without. With the spread of enclosures the necessity for such a fair would have become evident.

While market day and the January and Whit fairs were occasions for the local distribution of goods, livestock and foodstuffs, the St. Lawrence fair was the time when the Wreake Valley exported its main products - excepting, perhaps, wool - and imported its smallwares, cloth, spices, wine, hops and new livestock. Far from being an extra-

1. British Library, Add. Ms 33588, f. 38.

2. Margaret T. Hodgen, 'Fairs of Elizabethan England', Economic Geography, XVIII (1942), pp. 389-400.

urban phenomenon the St. Lawrence fair was the opportunity for the town's tradesmen to build up their stocks and was an essential supplement to the carrier's role in the supply network. During the fair Melton's inns, taverns and alehouses, bakers and butchers would do their best business, and as a social event for town and valley it would be the highlight of the year, especially after the demise of the pre-Reformation revels.

We cannot begin to gauge the volume of business conducted within or outside the confines of market, shop and fair. While it is possible, up to a point, to envisage the weekly and annual trade jamborees and the daily business conducted largely for the benefit of urban consumers, there is no way of isolating the private deal. Market, shop and fair probably all flourished during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a period of overall population expansion. Proceeding along parallel lines was private trading conducted in the field, the woolhouse, the inn and the alehouse, but if the growth of the open market has to be inferred, developments in private trading are almost totally unfathomable.

Professor Everitt has showed that private trading in the east of England and the Midlands was widespread during the Tudor and early Stuart periods, and that nationally the three principal commodities concerned were sheep, wool and corn.¹ He reveals that 62 per cent of private wool sales were made in the Midlands, and that 38 per cent of private wool deals were between people living in different regions.² The implication is that many sales of wool made in the Midlands were

1. Everitt, 'The Marketing of Agricultural Produce', loc.cit., pp. 544-5.

2. Ibid., p. 544, Table 15.

to buyers from other parts of the country. This is very much in accord both with the national pattern of wool growing and textiles areas, and with the evidence for wool exports from the Wreake Valley. While we cannot measure the proportion of wool going direct from the Leicestershire woolhouse to Northern, Western or East Anglian clothier or fair we can certainly affirm that it was high. In the Tudor period local Merchant Staplers were largely responsible for the export of wool from the Wreake Valley. By the early seventeenth century Northern clothiers and dealers were travelling southwards to make purchases. The Civil War period saw the re-emergence of the Melton-based wool dealer, but by the 1670s the direct Northern connection had been renewed by grazing farmers in the valley. Whether or not much wool was ever sold in the open market or at the St. Lawrence fair, it is beyond dispute that very large quantities changed hands in the private market.

It is now proposed to introduce briefly the overall economic fortunes of Melton during the period by considering the experience of the town during the early sixteenth century - a time when the close relationship between the town and the surrounding area may, perhaps, be discerned at its most simple.

The history of Melton in the early sixteenth century is largely obscure, but there are reasons for thinking that the period was one of mild prosperity for the town. If we accept the evidence of fifteenth century tax remissions then Melton was in the throes of chronic economic depression at that time. The town's assessment was cut by over 20 per cent in 1433 and by another 38 per cent in 1446 - far more than any

other surviving town in the county.¹ As Melton's medieval fortunes depended upon its simple function as a market centre and collection point for the Wreake Valley's wool the town was particularly vulnerable to demographic decline, to depression in the native textiles industry and to any fall in the level of wool and cloth exports from the country. The aftermath of the Black Death would have been a severe contraction of Melton's marketing role which would not have been alleviated until the course of population change turned upwards again.² The fifteenth century witnessed a "prolonged slump" in cloth exports after 1420 which was probably not compensated for by any expansion of native demand for cloth.³ On balance, the tax cuts of the 1430s and 1440s probably recognized the deteriorating fortunes of Melton during the first half of the fifteenth century.

It is likely that by about 1500 population growth had revived sufficiently for the agrarian sector to be showing signs of renewed life. Under these conditions a market centre like Melton, secure in its siting, communications and fertile catchment area was bound to benefit. Had either Melton or the villages around supported textiles manufacture of any note then the town might have done even better.⁴ It is noteworthy, if inconclusive, that the early sixteenth century saw a period of renewed building of the parish church.⁵

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1. W.G. Hoskins, 'The Origin and Rise of Market Harborough' in his Provincial England (1963), pp. 53-67.
 2. Many small market centres, of course, never recovered from the fourteenth century population recession, Everitt, 'The Marketing of Agricultural Produce', loc.cit., pp. 467-72.
 3. M.M. Postan, The Medieval Economy and Society (1975), pp. 220ff.
 4. Towns like Manchester and Walsall had the additional benefit of local industry, Charles Phythian-Adams, 'Urban Crisis or Urban Change' in The Traditional Community Under Stress, Open University (1977), p. 17.
 5. W.G. Hoskins, The Heritage of Leicestershire (1972), p. 45.

There are other reasons why Melton probably avoided the demographic contraction and economic decay suffered by so many towns during the first half of the sixteenth century.¹ There is no question of a switch in investment from urban to rural industry for neither was present in the valley. In any case it must be highly questionable whether this kind of distinction ought to be made between a market town and the surrounding rural population.² Taking any market area as a whole, it would make little difference whether any textile workers or merchants lived in the market town or the villages, for the town would always benefit so long as it endured as the local shopping centre, and so long as tax assessments were remissible or fossilised, thus compensating for the physical absence of these people. A parallel may be seen in livestock rearing and wool production: based almost entirely in enclosures in the Wreake Valley villages, pastoral husbandry was the staff upon which Melton leant most heavily. Indeed by the late seventeenth century Melton-based farmers were exploiting pasture resources in the valley on a grand scale.³ As a primary unit of production the valley must be viewed as an entity, the exact place of residence in which was largely irrelevant in broad economic terms.

Where this distinction may be made is between the larger, county town and the primary unit represented by a market town and the villages which looked to it as their main supply centre.⁴ Leicester, for example, was feeling the effects of outsiders conducting a retail

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1. Charles Phythian-Adams, 'Urban Decay in Late Medieval England', in Towns in Societies, edited by Philip Abrams and E.A. Wrigley (1978), pp. 159-85.
 2. A crude example of the balancing of 'urban wealth' against 'rural wealth' is to be found in A.R. Bridbury, Economic Growth: England in the Later Middle Ages (1975 ed.), Appendix II.
 3. Infra, Ch. II, pp. 70-2.
 4. The meaning of the term 'county town' as used here is explained in Peter Clark and Paul Slack, English Towns in Transition 1500-1700

trade in the town in 1540.¹ In simple terms retailers were taking their profits from Leicester and spending them elsewhere. This was happening in other towns of comparable size and status and was recognized in a statute of 1554-5.² It has been argued that the expense of urban residence was high in the towns which paid fee-farms and which had formal civic and guild structures, so much so that these costs became a positive disincentive to the wealthier sections of society.³ Some members of urban elites, therefore, quit their towns and settled where exactions on their wealth were less rapacious. This meant that the fiscal demands made upon their peers who remained were even heavier, of course; moreover these emigrants often continued to sell by retail in the town of their origin, hence the complaints at Leicester. So, where were these emigrants going? Some at least may have settled in or around smaller market towns where there were no trade restrictions and no necessity to purchase freedom; thus profits made in such towns as Leicester would be spent and invested elsewhere.⁴ There was no problem of heavy expenses for Melton's socio-economic elite because there was no formal civic, craft or ceremonial structure other than that represented by the two religious guilds. The function of these guilds was

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1. Records of the Borough of Leicester 1509-1603, edited by Mary Bateson (1905), p. 43.
 2. Phythian-Adams, 'Urban Decay', loc.cit., pp. 179-80.
 3. Ibid., pp. 173-80.
 4. Although the statute of 1554-5 lumps together "Cities Boroughs Towns Corporate and Market Towns" as suffering from retailers "dwelling in the Contreys" when discussing urban ailments the tenor of the Act suggests that small unincorporated towns were not included, The Statutes of the Realm, IV, p. 244; it would be difficult to explain the healthy condition of the upper levels of market towns were this not so, Phythian-Adams, 'Urban Decay', loc.cit., p. 173. An Act concerning this problem in Worcestershire lists 5 towns which were suffering but makes no mention of 6 other small market centres within the county, The Statutes of the Realm, III, pp. 459-60; Everitt, 'The Marketing of Agricultural Produce', loc.cit., p. 472.

the maintenance of the school and probably the bridges and pavements, money for which came from the guilds' lands and other properties, and from bequests. The Whit and Easter Lord of Misrule jamborees and the (annual?) Robin Hood plays were, far from being occasions of conspicuous expenditure for the elite, additional sources of revenue for the school and town works.¹

Taking this a stage further, if city dwellers were fleeing their cities it is unlikely that people of similar status from smaller towns or villages were eager to take their place; thus aspirant traders would be discouraged from migrating into the larger towns in a way which would be a natural state of affairs in more prosperous times.² These conditions - flight from the cities to the market towns with no reciprocal movement - may have contributed to the relative prosperity of towns like Stratford and Banbury.³ That Melton offered opportunity for wealthy immigrants is revealed by the movement into the town during the 1550s of men like James Levett, Eustace Gulson, Christopher Shyers and William Bryan.⁴

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1. Not until the 1570s is there any evidence that the Melton economic elite was expected to take upon itself the duty of paying the lesser government taxes.
 2. Peter Clark, 'The Migrant in Kentish Towns 1580-1640', in Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700, edited by Peter Clark and Paul Slack (1972), pp. 117-63.
 3. Phythian-Adams, 'Urban Crisis or Urban Change', loc.cit., p. 17 and 'Urban Decay', loc.cit., p. 179 where he makes the suggestion that "senior market towns" were exerting such pressures. There are only 3 known instances of Melton residents taking up the freedom of Leicester (with the intention of retailing there) during the sixteenth century, all prior to 1560. One of these was a butcher, another probably a woollendraper. This does not exclude the possibility that there were more Melton traders who were freemen of Leicester as the place of residence is rarely given in the freemen's list, Register of the Freemen of Leicester 1196-1770, edited by Henry Hartopp (1927), pp. 60, 65, 73.
 4. Infra, Ch. III, p. 171. Other wealthy families who appeared in the 1543 subsidy but not in the 1524 subsidy include the Fishespoles, the Traffords and the Trigges.

Similarly, the basic indivisibility of the urban and rural economy at this level meant that the normal diversification of urban wealth and its investment in land during this period had no adverse effects upon Melton's prosperity. The only problem would have been if profits were being diverted from urban industry, but in Melton there was no industry to suffer, and no real prospects of there ever being any. The departure of the Waryngs, Merchant Staplers and the second wealthiest family in the 1520s, was not detrimental to the local economy because they remained within the valley and continued to deal in wool until the end of the sixteenth century; furthermore there was usually a representative who was resident in Melton supervising the family's commercial activities. In the 1560s it was a Waryng who loaned £100 to the town so the Spinneys might be purchased. When wealthy families did leave the area altogether during this period - Christopher Whitehead, Stapler, was the most notable loss - there does not seem to have been a shortage of replacements with the capital necessary to establish themselves among the economic elite.

Lastly, it is of fundamental importance that during the early sixteenth century English cloth exports were usually buoyant.¹ Although wool exports declined over the same period the movement of wool out of the Wreake Valley to industrial areas such as the South West would have ensured that Melton profited as the local source of imported goods, providing of course that demand for these goods did not fall through population loss in the valley. There may be some doubt as to the precise chronology of population change in the early Tudor period,

1. Ralph Davis, English Overseas Trade 1500-1700 (1973), p. 11 and Table 1, p. 52; Peter J. Bowden, The Wool Trade in Tudor and Stuart England (1971), p. 72.

but it is probable that by the third decade of the sixteenth century at the latest expansion was taking place nationally, if erratically.¹ In 1524 109 people were taxed in Melton, which suggests, perhaps, a total number of households in the town of about 150, although one suspects that as a guide to the size of population the subsidy is virtually worthless without corroborative evidence.² In 1543 110 Melton people were taxed, but even less is known about the reliability of this source.³ The parish registers come to the rescue in the 1540s, from which time there is fairly clear evidence of growth in Melton's population during the century.⁴ Neither Melton nor the valley as a whole experienced the severe demographic setback which hit other parts of the country in the 1550s, and local listings confirm the trend of rising population revealed by the registers.⁵

Most certainly, therefore, the Wreake Valley enjoyed the same population expansion as the rest of the country in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The impetus which this gave to inland

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1. Ian Blanchard, 'Population Change, Enclosure, and the Early Tudor Economy', Economic History Review, Second Series, XXIII (1970), pp. 427-45. Many larger towns continued to lose population, Phythian-Adams, 'Urban Decay', loc.cit.; Clark and Slack, English Towns, p. 84.
 2. P.R.O., E.179.133/108; Phythian-Adams, 'Urban Decay', loc.cit., p. 172.
 3. P.R.O., E.179.133/135.
 4. See Figure I.
 5. It is worth pointing out here that the 1563 diocesan count of families in Melton is way off the mark in its estimate that there were only 80, a figure which has often since been quoted. There were at least twice as many families as this, probably in the region of 180 according to local assessments, L.R.O., DG.36/205; ibid., DG.36/159/7. The gross undercounting of families in 1563 in such relatively small towns as Melton and Ashby de la Zouche ought to serve as a vivid warning light to those who employ the return for calculating population anywhere, cf. C.J.M. Moxon, Ashby-de-la-Zouche: a social and economic survey of a market town 1570-1720, unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford (1971), pp. 26-7.

trade is undeniable in this, a golden age of the English market town.¹ The intensification of mixed husbandry and the spread of rich pastures meant more corn, more meat and wool, and bigger horses were produced in the valley. As the collection and distribution point for much of this produce, and the place where most agricultural incomes were spent, Melton was bound to prosper: the rise of the town's retailers and maltmakers is to be seen in this perspective.

It is doubtful whether the growing contrasts in the types of farming in the valley was a great additional stimulus to Melton's marketing role in the sense of engendering an increase in the trading of meat for corn between the enclosed, stock-rearing townships and the common field mixed husbandry settlements.² Population in the enclosed villages dropped during the seventeenth century, and while for a time the demand for corn from the bigger settlements like Kirby Bellars and Little Dalby might have increased as their fields were transformed to grassland, this would have been merely transitory: before long their populations would have ceased to be major factors in the local consumption of corn.³ In the case of most enclosed villages the demand for corn was never more than minimal because their populations were so tiny, and in any case most of the big graziers grew some crops. The population of the common field villages certainly grew during the seventeenth century, and so, consequently, did the numbers of landless persons living there.⁴ Thus, Melton's importance as the local provisioning centre would have increased, even though much of the corn, malt,

1. Everitt, 'The Marketing of Agricultural Produce', loc.cit., pp. 502ff.

2. Infra, Ch. II. Perhaps the January fair represented the main occasion for inter-rural marketing i.e. the sale of livestock from enclosed to common field villages.

3. Infra, Ch. II, pp. 75-7 and Figure II.

4. Ibid.

bread and meat that landless villagers purchased there may well have been produced within their own townships. The animals and wool reared and grown in the enclosed ground townships were largely destined for export, not local consumption.

It is to the agrarian and demographic fortunes of the settlements in the Wreake Valley which we now turn. Melton is considered separately from the villages because in several ways its farming community was very different from those of the rural settlements, and because from the townsmen came the real drive to exploit the spreading enclosed pasture grounds. Nevertheless, this is done merely to facilitate the presentation of the discussion: it is not possible to regard the respective roles of townsman and villager in the local agrarian economy as separate and distinct - they were inextricably bound together.

II

THE AGRARIAN AND DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND(i) The Tudor landscape

Leicestershire lay at the heart of classic common field country, and the Wreake Valley is one of the most fertile areas in the county. Nevertheless, inroads had been made into the common fields, and substantial areas of enclosed ground were to be found in several townships by the beginning of the sixteenth century. Monastic houses were thick on the ground in the Midlands, and Leicestershire bore their stamp in the shape of deserted villages like Ingarsby, prey to Leicester Abbey's sheep flocks.¹

At least four religious establishments, possibly more, held discrete land units among the fifteen sample villages.² The major landowner was Garendon Abbey which had granges at Sysonby, Welby and Scalford - the latter an ancient manor called Ringlethorpe, later Goldsmith's Grange.³ Kirby Bellars supported a priory which owned at least 369 acres of demesne in the village at the time of the Dissolution, although most of this was probably scattered among the common fields.⁴ Before

1. W.G. Hoskins, 'The Deserted Villages of Leicestershire' in his Essays in Leicestershire History, pp. 75-6.
2. Apart from the four religious houses mentioned here, Langley Nunnery had rents in Little Dalby; Launde Priory had rents in Abkettleby; Owston Abbey had rents in Scalford and Burton Lazars; Leicester Abbey had rents in Thorpe Arnold; and Croxton Abbey had rents in Brentingby, Kirby Bellars and Melton. In addition Kirby Bellars Priory had rents in Thorpe Arnold and Melton, and Burton Lazars Hospital had rents in Kirby Bellars and Melton; Sir William Dugdale, Monasticon Anglicanum, edited by John Coley and others (1825).
3. Ibid., V, p. 336; Nichols, II, Part I, p. 317.
4. Farnham, III, p. 127; Sybil Jack, 'Monastic Lands in Leicestershire and their Administration on the Eve of the Dissolution', T.L.A.S., XLI (1965-6), pp. 9-40.

the Dissolution Kirby priory was exchanging pasture in Buckminster with the ultimate aim of consolidation.¹ In Burton Lazars there were several hundred acres of enclosed land - the grange belonging to Vaudey Abbey and the demesne of the Hospital of St. Lazarus of Jerusalem.² Granges, though usually enclosed, could be arable or pasture, although it does not appear to have been unusual for the pasture to be severally enclosed even if the arable was scattered among the open fields.³ Monastic enclosures and conversion to pasture became commonplace as the fifteenth century wore on, and pastoral farming on some scale could be found all over the country by the early sixteenth century.⁴ The Leicestershire houses were particularly voracious and numbered Garendon and Kirby Bellars among the "notorious enclosers".⁵

Whatever the use made by the religious houses of these enclosures, the central point is that henceforth they constituted a pool of land free from the confines of the common field round.⁶ Not only were they available for several exploitation but they could be used by their owners as bases for the takeover of the common fields, if they were so inclined. The Hartopps at Burton Lazars, the Digbys at Welby, the Pates

1. Ibid., p. 20.

2. L.A. Parker, Enclosure in Leicestershire 1485-1607, unpublished PhD thesis, University of London (1948), p. 79; infra, 53-4.

3. Joyce Youings, 'Landlords in England: [Section C] The Church', A.H.E.W., pp. 309-10.

4. Ibid., pp. 313-6.

5. Ibid., p. 316.

6. Virtually all Garendon's lands were turned over to sheep. On the eve of the Dissolution the abbey was purchasing corn for consumption; Jack, loc.cit., p. 21. Burton Hospital is said by Jack to have "maintained a considerable number of sheep on some of its demesnes", ibid., p. 23. In Kirby Bellars there is evidence that the priory kept about 500 sheep before flocks were run down before the Dissolution, ibid., pp. 20-1.

at Sysonby and Erasmus de la Fontaine at Kirby Bellars proved that such inclinations could be powerful and irresistible.¹

The villages themselves varied a good deal both in the acreage of their townships and in population. Among the more extensive townships were those of Burton Lazars, Great Dalby, Kirby Bellars and Scalford, each of which measured over 2,000 acres. Far smaller than these were Brentingby, Eyekettleby and Wyfordby which measured under 1,000 acres. In terms of population Map III shows that some of the villages - Brentingby, Sysonby, Wyfordby - were tiny, with only a handful of taxpayers in 1524.² Eyekettleby was smaller still, having been depopulated sometime in the fifteenth century - the only example of early depopulation among the sample villages. One name appears in the Eyekettleby entry in the 1524 subsidy, that of Sir John Digby. There is no suggestion in any of the Tudor documents catalogued by G.F. Farnham other than that Eyekettleby's fields were entirely given over to pasture and meadow.³ In the probate inventory of Brydgytt Pate, head of the family which purchased the manor in 1556, the livestock was valued at almost £600, the crop at £90.⁴

Wyfordby, with a taxpaying population of forty-four in 1377, was hardly any bigger than Eyekettleby at that date, and a similar fate almost befell the village during the fifteenth century.⁵ Only four taxpayers were named in 1524, making it the smallest surviving common field village in the sample. Brentingby, the neighbouring village which

1. Infra, pp. 48-56.

2. P.R.O., E.179.133/108; see Map III.

3. Farnham, VI, pp. 317-8.

4. Ibid., p. 318; L.R.O., PR/1/20/90; inventory of Brydgytt Pate, Eyekettleby, Oct., 1603.

5. V.C.H. Leicestershire, III, p. 163.

intercommoned with Wyfordby, similarly had only seven taxpayers in 1524, compared with fifty-three in 1377.¹ Like the townships which certainly included monastic enclosures, Wyfordby and Brentingby, which may have done so, were to prove very vulnerable in the scramble to enclose at the turn of the sixteenth century, not least because their populations were so tiny as to present little effective obstacle.

(ii) Farming in the Wreake Valley in the sixteenth century

An housbande can not well thryue by his corne,
without he haue other cattell, nor by his cattell,
without corne. For els he shall be a byer, a
borower, or a beggar. And . . . shepe in myne
opynyon is the mooste profytablest cattell that
any man can haue . . . ²

Fitzherbert's exhortations concern the two major pillars of mixed husbandry. The ordinary common field farmer was obliged to grow peas in order to provide winter fodder for his sheep, while in return the sheep provided manure, wool, meat, and sometimes milk.³ Folding the sheep enriched the soil and maintained yields from the barley crop. As Joan Thirsk observes, the population increase during the sixteenth century meant more persons with the right to put their livestock on the commons, and that the bigger farmers were keeping

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1. The Poll Tax of 1377 and the Lay Subsidy of 1524 are certainly not directly comparable with each other because different groups of people were involved in each tax. Nevertheless, it is likely that differences of this magnitude in the number of persons recorded in the taxes indicate a fairly serious actual population loss in the intervening period; Parker, op.cit., p. 116.
 2. Master Fitzherbert, The Book of Husbandry (1534 ed.), edited by Walter W. Skeat (1882), p. 42.
 3. Tusser believed that both folding and milking a ewe was uneconomic, but if there was pasture to spare then a good profit could be made, Thomas Tusser, Five Hundred Pointes of Good Husbandrie (1580), edited by W. Payne and S.J. Herrtage (1878), p. 111.

more animals in order to increase their crop yields as a response to rising agricultural prices.¹ In addition the increased demand for wool to supply the cloth industry and wool trade was a further incentive to keep more sheep. "Hence", as Thirsk puts it "the universal pressure on grazing".² The decline in the cloth trade after 1551 meant a shift in emphasis from wool to mutton, and did not act as a disincentive to sheep farming.³

The methods employed by farmers to increase their yields during the sixteenth century have been studied in detail in the area around Lutterworth.⁴ There it was possible for the mixed farmer to use the large areas of enclosed pasture grounds to fatten sheep for mutton, a practice which became more common as the century wore on.⁵ What of the response in the Wreake Valley to the rises in population and prices? In order to examine any changes in the agrarian economy a study has been made of 117 probate inventories from the fifteen sample villages during three periods - 1529-49, 1551-9 and 1580-99.⁶ Of these, sixty-nine concern the goods of mixed farmers, the major producers for market

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1. Joan Thirsk, 'Enclosing and Engrossing', A.H.E.W., pp. 204-5.
 2. Ibid., p. 205.
 3. Ibid., p. 211.
 4. John Goodacre, Lutterworth in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: A Market Town and its Area, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leicester (1977), pp. 115-9.
 5. Ibid., pp. 129-35.
 6. The 62 inventories which date from the latter period compares with a total of 583 burials recorded in the parish registers of 10 of the villages over the same period. Burials in 2 of the largest villages - Great Dalby and Kirby Bellars - were not recorded during all of these years, so the number of inventories studied represents well under 10 per cent of the number of people (adults and children) buried.

at this time.¹ Some of the findings regarding the median farm during each of the three periods are tabulated below (mean averages in brackets):

TABLE I: The median farm in the Wreake Valley in the sixteenth century

Period	No. of Inventories	Values (£)		Farming Total (£)	Inventory Total (£)
		Livestock	Crops		
I, 1529-49	14	10/11(12)	5/6(6)	16/19(19.5)	25(26)
II, 1551-9	23	13.5(20.5)	8(10)	24(33.5)	27.5(41)
III(i), 1580-9	21	25.5(30.5)	20(21.5)	51.5(58)	67(73.5)
III(ii), 1595-9	11	41(48.5)	25.5(32.5)	67(93)	94.5(115.5)

The acreage of the median farm during the 1550s - the only period for which a reliable calculation can be made - measured thirty-nine acres, assuming both that each of the farms involved in the calculation was operating within a three-field system, and that the land in question did not extend over more than one township.² This accords closely with Hoskins' findings for the husbandman's farm across Leicestershire, although the farms here ranged in size from about sixteen acres up to over 100 acres.³

Table I reveals an acceleration in the rising values of animals and crops on the mixed farm after a steady rise from 1529-59. Agricultural prices rose rapidly towards the end of the century, especially in the 1590s - this was a nationwide phenomenon.⁴ Crop prices touched

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1. The classification used here of persons involved in agriculture is that employed by Goodacre (op.cit., p. 107 n.) which is based on contemporary classifications: a mixed farmer owned a team of draught animals of his own; a smallholder depended upon communal husbandry and usually held about half a yardland.
 2. 7 of the 23 mixed farm inventories gave crop acreages.
 3. W.G. Hoskins, 'The Leicestershire Farmer in the Sixteenth Century' in his Essays in Leicestershire History, p. 146.
 4. Peter J. Bowden, 'Statistical Appendix', A.H.E.W., p. 849.

unprecedented levels in that decade, which explains why in Period III crop values appear to have gained on livestock values in the inventories. None of this is in any way remarkable, and these findings by themselves imply nothing other than a gentle progress in farming in the valley. In fact, change was continuous.

Of the fourteen farmers who left inventories in Period I eleven owned sheep at their deaths, and one other owned some wool and a dozen sheepskins.¹ Both inventories which listed no sheep were taken before the sowing of the winter crop, so perhaps they too had sold off their sheep after shearing. Three of the flocks contained ten sheep or fewer: in each case the inventory was taken in winter, and the one inventory which listed wool and fells valued them at £1 3s 4d yet his sheep numbered only seven.² Evidently the sale of mutton after shearing was a common practice in the valley, and provided a valuable source of income even before the take-off of sheep prices from the mid 1540s.³

The (mean) average size of a sheep flock in these inventories was forty-eight, and although this figure is inflated by three flocks of ninety-eight, 104 and 120, the undercounting because of post-shearing sales probably helps balance this. It may be best to imagine the average farmer as owning around thirty or forty sheep during summer, and perhaps selling all or some of his flock at the Melton St. Lawrence Fair in August in those years when meat prices were high.⁴

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1. The inventory of John Cooke alias Smythe was taken in November, 1543: L.R.O., Wills and Inventories, 1543/27A, inventory of John Cooke alias Smith, Kirby Bellars, Nov., 1543. It was common practice - if not so common as was once thought - for farmers to sell off their flocks at the late summer fairs to avoid the expense of winter feeding.
 2. Ibid., Wills and Inventories, 1543/46A, inventory of John Hollwell, Holwell, 1544.
 3. Bowden, 'Statistical Appendix', loc.cit., pp. 824-5.
 4. Supra, Ch. I, pp. 16-7.

A flock of 100 sheep need not necessarily be regarded as evidence of pasturing outside the confines of the common fields because many common field holdings could no doubt support such a number. Even so, it could be more than coincidence that the three big flocks mentioned above were to be found in Welby, Scalford and Sysonby respectively - three townships already noted as containing granges of Garendon Abbey.¹ William Batte's crop in May, 1541 covered only thirty-six acres, and unless at least some of his sheep were pastured in enclosed grounds this would make nonsense of Hoskins' suggestion that the county's open fields carried about one sheep per arable acre.² A retreat in monastic agrarian enterprise as noted elsewhere in the country during the 1520s and 1530s, and the concomitant frequency with which leases were granted could be sufficient explanation for big pre-Dissolution flocks, and of course the Dissolution itself can account for any large flocks thereafter.³

During Period II (1551-9) there is a larger sample of mixed farm inventories which make the findings based upon their study that much more reliable.⁴ Twenty-one of the twenty-three farmers owned sheep and the average flock numbered forty head: nine flocks numbered between thirty and fifty sheep. Once again, as in Period I, both of the inventories with no sheep and most of the ones with only a handful were taken during late summer or in winter. There is, perhaps, slight evidence that

1. Supra, p. 27 ; L.R.O., Wills and Inventories, 1537/10A, inventory of Robert Colson, Welby, 1538; ibid., 1548, inventory of Robert Musson, Scalford, 1548; ibid., 154/7A, inventory of William Batte, Sysonby, May, 1541.

2. Hoskins, 'The Leicestershire Farmer in the Sixteenth Century', loc.cit. p. 173.

3. Youings, loc.cit., pp. 315, 324-32; Jack, loc.cit., pp. 9-40.

4. Although 18 of the 23 inventories date from the years 1557-9 and consequently do not give a particularly balanced view of the effects of movements in prices.

the selling of stock to avoid winter feeding was not as common by the 1550s, for several flocks of forty sheep or more were inventoried during the winter months. On the other hand some of the bigger flocks were probably kept in order to take advantage of the early spring demand for fresh stock from the farmers who had sold their sheep in August or September.¹ It is noteworthy that the two largest flocks during this period were inventoried during winter, and were to be found in Scalford and Wyfordby - two villages whose pasture resources were (or were likely to be) extensive.² Moreover, these were valuable animals worth 3s 4d and 4s 0d apiece respectively at a time when the average value of a sheep was 2s 6d.

By the end of the Tudor period the average value of a sheep had risen to 5s 4d, a three-fold increase over the corresponding figure in Period I. Most of this rise in value took place during the 1590s when the increase was from 3s 6d. Sheep were becoming an extremely remunerative part of the mixed farm as wool prices reached a peak in 1593-4, and as sheep prices began to rise from around 1589.³ Sheep farming had quite definitely increased in scale by the 1580s, and during Period III the average flock size was fifty-six head.⁴ Half the flocks contained over fifty sheep (fourteen out of twenty-eight) while only six contained fewer than twenty. Three inventories included no sheep although one (taken in March) listed fold flakes.

1. Infra, p.58 n., and supra, Ch. I, pp. 16-7.
2. L.R.O., Wills and Inventories, 1557(K-7), inventory of William Wild, Scalford, Jan., 1558 (Wild had 111 sheep); ibid., 1557(A-J), inventory of Thomas Hadcocke, Wyfordby, 1557 (Hadcocke had 140 sheep); supra, pp. 27-30.
3. Bowden, op.cit., p. 220, and 'Statistical Appendix', loc.cit., pp. 826-7.
4. The median flock in the inventories rose from 24 in the 1520s and 1530s, to 30 in the 1550s, to 45/50 in Period III; cf. Hoskins, 'The Leicestershire Farmer in the Sixteenth Century', loc.cit., p. 175.

The tendency for the largest flocks to be found in those townships which were to enclose their fields in the seventeenth century was by now unmistakable. Of the seven flocks of eighty sheep or more, two were in Wyfordby and there was one each in Burton Lazars, Holwell, Sysonby, Thorpe Arnold and Abkettleby. Only the last of these was to retain its open fields into the eighteenth century. The possible reasons for the occurrence of such sheep flocks in Wyfordby, Burton Lazars and Sysonby are discussed above.¹ At Thorpe Arnold the fields were being "considerably reorganized" by the Waryng family in the late sixteenth century.² At Holwell the Hursts had purchased a farm of 160 acres from the Master of the Rolls, so the stint alone there (assuming it to have been in the order of one sheep per acre) would probably be sufficient to explain the flock of 100 sheep owned by Alice Hurste in 1580.³ It is interesting and hardly unexpected that the average flock among the five townships which remained common field (including Kirby Bellars, which retained classic open field characteristics until its sudden enclosure in the 1630s) numbered thirty-six head - about commensurate with a yardland holding.⁴

As yet no mixed farmer could approach the success achieved by the Pates, farming their entirely enclosed township of Eyekettleby. There in 1603 they had a flock of 845 sheep worth £422 12s 0d, making the average value of a sheep 10s 0d.⁵ The sheep had been shorn and the clip was worth £100.⁶ This was the kind of sheep farming to which

1. Supra, pp. 27-30.

2. Parker, op.cit., p. 133.

3. Farnham, V, p. 224; L.R.O., Wills and Inventories, 1580/103, inventory of Alice Hurste, Dec., 1580.

4. Based upon 15 flocks - over half the total.

5. L.R.O., PR/1/20/90, inventory of Brydgytt Pate, Eyekettleby, Oct., 1603.

6. Infra, Ch. III, p. 109.

men aspired in other villages, but there was no substitute for total enclosure in producing such valuable animals.

On the evidence of the inventories it was the rearing of beef which was the major occupation in cattle farming, although the shortage of rich pasture on most farms prevented the fattening of older animals and it is probable that the trading at market and fair would have been mostly in young beasts - a pattern which would change as enclosures multiplied in the valley. Throughout the sixteenth century there was little change in the size of herds kept on mixed farms, and around ten head was usual. Oxen, steers and bullocks were very rare, and most of what there were belonged to two farmers who probably had access to enclosed pastures. Thomas Hadcocke and William Wild owned the two largest herds listed in the inventories - numbering forty and fifty-two head respectively - and between them they owned eight oxen and eight steers.¹ Both men also owned bulls and a good number of calves and young beasts so clearly breeding beef was a major activity on their farms.

Of these two farmers only Wild was definitely engaged in dairying, and neither had any stocks of dairy produce at his death. Evidence of commercial dairying is scanty during most of the century, although there are signs that it was picking up by the 1590s.² The strongest evidence of commercial dairying was, once more, in those villages which had enclosed grounds. Roger Rylve of Wyfordby had 69 cheese and a herd of twenty-nine cattle in 1586, and Michael Finn of Scalford had £2 worth

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1. L.R.O., Wills and Inventories, 1557(K-7), inventory of William Wild, Scalford, Jan., 1558; ibid., 1557(A-J), inventory of Thomas Hadcocke, Wyfordby, 1557.
 2. Out of 69 mixed farm inventories 20 listed dairying equipment or produce, including 7 out of 10 inventories, 1596-9.

of butter and cheese in 1598; Finn's cattle were the only ones described as "milk kine" in all the inventories.¹ The opportunity to practice large scale dairying was, like the building of large, valuable sheep flocks and the production of big wool clips, largely limited to farmers with access to extra pasture resources: anyone rearing calves and engaging in commercial dairying would almost certainly have required plenty of pasture in several places so as to wean the young animals early and successfully.

For the same reasons the horse was the animal generally used for draught because it did not require the rich pasture needed to keep an ox strong. Fitzherbert, in comparing the relative value of horse and ox for draught purposes favoured the ox because it was stronger and less expensive to feed in winter, and edible when old or infirm.² By comparison a horse could go faster on even, light ground, but required both hay and peas in winter, straw for its litter, shoeing, costly gear, and when old was "but caryen".³

The average number of horses kept on mixed farms was about six, although five was the commonest number.⁴ Leicestershire became famous for its horses in the seventeenth century, and already horse-breeding was widespread.⁵ Where inventories went into details about the types of

1. L.R.O. PR/1/8/50, inventory of Roger Rylve, Wyfordby, Jan., 1586; ibid., PR/1/14/107, inventory of Michael Finn, Scalford, Oct., 1598; in 1583 Rylve held four yardlands in Melton, the only recorded instance of land being held in the town by an outsider, ibid., DG.36/317.
2. Fitzherbert, op.cit., p. 15.
3. Ibid. Oats, a viable alternative to peas and hay, occurred in only 5 out of 69 mixed farm inventories.
4. Occurring in 21 inventories.
5. E.g. Daniel Defoe, A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain, 1724-6 (1971 ed.), p. 408.

horse kept on the farm foals, fillies and colts as well as mares occurred frequently.¹ The value of a horse rose four-fold between Periods I and III, and so was rising even faster than the value of a sheep. The most valuable horses of all were those of Roger Rylve of Wyfordby, who had ten horses and mares and a foal worth £29 altogether.² Rylve grew no oats but he had plenty of hay - worth £13 6s 8d - even in January.

The livestock part of the mixed farm was completed by pigs, poultry and bees. The production of pork, bacon, poultry, eggs and honey was, like dairying, becoming commercialised by the late sixteenth century judging by the increasing numbers of swine, birds and bees being kept on some farms. In some cases, such as that of Thomas Cowper of Thorpe Arnold, the hives of bees were worth more than the crop on the ground, and the production of perishable foods which would probably be sold in small quantities at Melton market was no mean business.³

Example by Leicester shire
what soile can be better than that?⁴

Though Tusser was making the point that more profit was to be had from enclosed land, it was Leicestershire which he chose to

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1. Of 22 inventories (1580-99) which specified types of horse 13 included foals, fillies or colts and 20 include mares.
 2. L.R.O., PR/1/8/50, inventory of Roger Rylve, Wyfordby, Jan., 1586; supra, p. 38 n.
 3. Ibid., Wills and Inventories, 1581/26, inventory of Thomas Cowper, Thorpe Arnold, Dec., 1581. The average number of beehives in 13 inventories during the century was 8.
 4. Tusser, op.cit., p. 141.

illustrate the best arable land which lay open. Leland recorded this impression of the land north of Melton: "Betwixt Trent ripe and Melton many benes and peson . . . From Clauson to Melton a iii. good miles by good corne ground."¹ Gabriel Plattes wrote in the 1630s that the Vale of Belvoir was the best corn land in Europe, confirmation of the fertility of the county, and of the north-east part especially.² The Hundred of Framland has long been acknowledged as the richest area in Leicestershire, and the geology of the Vale and of the Wreake Valley are responsible for this.³

Table I shows that by and large the rise in agricultural prices in the valley corresponded with those over the entire country, more so for crops than livestock.⁴ Nor does the pattern of cropping in the valley differ from that found elsewhere in the county.⁵ Barley and peas covered almost all of the arable land, although wheat plus rye were frequently sown in smaller proportions. Oats hardly ever made an appearance, and where they did it is likely that they were meant for pig-feed, not horses.⁶

Farmers in the early period were still tending to work within a framework of yardland holdings or thereabouts. Consequently the arable

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1. The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the year 1535-1543, IV, edited by Lucy Toulmin Smith (1964), p. 19.
 2. Quoted by G.E. Fussell, 'Four Centuries of Leicestershire Farming' in Studies in Leicestershire Agrarian History, edited by W.G. Hoskins (1949), p. 159.
 3. E.g. V.C.H. Leicestershire, II, pp. 150, 198.
 4. Bowden, 'Statistical Appendix', loc.cit., pp. 857-860.
 5. Cf. Hoskins, 'The Leicestershire Farmer in the Sixteenth Century', loc.cit., pp. 160-73; Goodacre, op.cit., p. 109.
 6. 2 of the biggest pig farmers, Robert Lee of Asfordby and Michael Finn of Scalford were among only 5 whose inventories mentioned the crop, L.R.O. PR/1/9/124; inventory of Robert Lee, Asfordby, Sept., 1588; ibid., PR/1/14/107, inventory of Michael Finn, Scalford, Oct., 1598. Each had swine worth over £5.

side of their farms all look very similar: crops worth about £4 10s 0d to £6 10s 0d, acreages of about thirty to forty. There was one exception, Robert Musson of Scalford, who had £16 6s 8d worth of crops and malt, though the crop in the field was valued at £10.¹ Musson had seventy-eight old sheep and twenty-six lambs, so it could be that his holding was around two yardlands and he need not necessarily have been using any part of Ringlethorp Grange for grazing.²

During the 1550s one man stood out from the rest in arable terms: William Wild of Scalford had £44 worth of grain, peas, beans, and wheat and rye in the field.³ Wild was almost certainly using enclosed pasture ground to raise his huge herd of cattle - numbering fifty-one head and including four oxen and six steers - and to produce hay worth £9 10s 0d in January. There is no real cause to suspect that Wild was raising crops on enclosed grounds, especially as grain prices in 1557 were lower than for several years.⁴

Not until the 1590s do more large arable farmers appear among the inventories, and then the spectacular price inflation somewhat clouds the picture. Michael Finn of Scalford had £80 worth of crops although this included his hay, and probably represented no more than the fruits of about two yardlands.⁵ Only two other inventories listed crops worth over £50, and neither suggests arable farming on any special scale.

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1. Ibid., Wills and Inventories, 1548, inventory of Robert Musson, Scalford, Jan., 1558.
 2. Supra, p. 27.
 3. L.R.O., Wills and Inventories, 1557(K-7), inventory of William Wild, Scalford, Jan., 1558.
 4. Bowden, 'Statistical Appendix', loc.cit., p. 818.
 5. L.R.O., PR/1/14/107, inventory of Michael Finn, Scalford, Oct., 1598.

It was the symbiotic relationship between sheep and crops which gave rise to the successes of common field farming. By 1600 there were more sheep as a consequence of there being more peas; there were more peas, barley, wheat and rye both because of the cultivation of all available land, and because yields were higher as a result of increased manuring by sheep. The numbers of cattle and horses remained constant, while dairying, pig farming and poultry farming entered the market sphere. The greatest successes, though, were found among those farmers fortunate enough to have a local supply of enclosed pasture ground which, we might presume, enabled them to built up large flocks of sheep and herds of cattle. The lushness of these pastures would mean an increase in the size of these meat-bearing animals, and would also have led to the production of longer wool than was found on common field sheep.

(iii) Farming in Melton in the sixteenth century

In several ways farming in Melton township was rather different from that practised elsewhere in the valley, because of the size of some of the farms, and because there was available within the township bounds an extensive area of enclosed pasture ground.¹ Between 1537 and 1599 there are forty-one surviving Melton inventories which concern agriculture, of which fifteen are of mixed farmers. This is a small sample, but it is quite sufficient to reveal the importance of Melton farmers throughout the century.

Only four mixed farm inventories survive from before 1560 but three of these listed over 100 sheep each. The largest flock belonging

1. The area of the township was probably in the region of 3,500 acres.

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to a mixed farmer in either town or village during the whole century was the one numbering 240 owned by Richard Scharpe.¹ Scharpe also kept eleven cows and six oxen. Under crop was only twenty-five acres, so it is almost certain that Scharpe had most of his flock and perhaps some of his cattle pastured in enclosed grounds. In fact an even bigger flock belonged to John Stret, who owned neither horses, oxen, nor husbandry implements and therefore strictly speaking he is classifiable as a smallholder rather than a mixed farmer.² Stret died just after harvest in the summer of 1537, so unfortunately there is little indication of the size of his farm in his inventory. Nevertheless his 106 quarters of grain and peas were valued at £16 18s 4d, the highest valuation of crops of any farmer during the 1530s and 1540s. Stret had a herd of twelve cattle of which ten were steers, so beef rather than dairying was his major concern. He held a farm at Thorpe Arnold as well as the one in Melton, so it is possible that his flock was divided between the common fields of the two townships.³ Stret owned sixty stones of wool worth £12 13s 4d, an enormous sum for so early a date, and his importance as a wool supplier was great.

Scharpe and Stret may well best be viewed as phenomena belonging to the wool trade rather than as agriculturalists interested in providing commodities for the valley, but the outstanding scale of their sheep farming does not alienate them from the mainstream of Melton farming. Rather they were in the great tradition of sheep farmers based in the town, a tradition which was to endure at least up to the end of the seventeenth century.

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1. Ibid., PR/1/1, inventory of Richard Scharpe, 1541.
 2. Ibid., Wills and Inventories, 1537/44A, inventory of John Stret, 1537; supra, p. 32 n.
 3. Ibid., 1537/44, will of John Stret, 1537.

Of the three mixed farm inventories from the 1550s two of them listed 100 and 102 sheep respectively.¹ The cattle herds belonging to these men were of an equally impressive size and numbered nineteen and twenty-one. Both men were stock farmers to rival any in the area save only the very biggest. One of them, John Fyshepoole, a baker, had some hay at 'Frameland', a somewhat obscure area in the north west of the township which was mentioned in the Melton Enclosure Award as an 'ancient enclosure'.²

Among the five mixed farm inventories from the 1570s is the earliest hard evidence of a Melton farmer using enclosed pastures outside the township to raise livestock. In 1540 the Brokesby family of Melton, with others, acquired rights in Ringlethorpe Grange in Scalford parish.³ In 1575 Mathew Brokesby owned 100 ewes plus lambs, fifty-nine wethers and hogges, and some rams in Ringlethorpe, along with a bull and three heifers.⁴ A shepherd was employed to tend the flock.

At this point it is worth considering the stint for sheep in Melton, the only township in the area for which this can be estimated. In the summer of 1589 the Melton constables made a levy for Mr. Foxe, the queen's saltpetre-maker, who was working at Leicester.⁵ Every yardland in the fields was rated at 3d, and the sum thus raised was £1 0s 3d, meaning that eighty-one yardlands were assessed.⁶ In 1583

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1. Ibid, 1557(A-J), inventory of John Fyshepoole, Dec., 1557; ibid., 1558(A-F), inventory of Thomas Frearch, Jan., 1559.
 2. Ibid., transcript of Melton Mowbray Enclosure Award.
 3. Letters and Papers of Henry VIII, 15, Jan.-Aug., 1540, p. 298.
 4. L.R.O., PR/1/5, inventory of Mathew Brokesby, Feb., 1575.
 5. Ibid., DG.25/1/1, f.8.
 6. This number is approximately confirmed by a stint for the Spinneys made in 1565 which lists 28 husbandmen holding between them 79 yardlands, and by a Provision assessment of 1583, which lists 78 yardlands; ibid., ff. 13-5; ibid., DG.36/317.

there were 2,600 sheep in the town's fields: if we assume that the 130 or so cottagers were entitled to keep about three to five sheep on the commons - any more would have been rather unusual - this means that the holder of a yardland was allowed somewhere in the region of twenty-four to twenty-eight sheep.¹ In Melton the yardland, admittedly as much a legal as a territorial entity, measured thirty acres according to a rental of 1682.²

The fact that three of the six mixed farmers who left inventories during the 1580s and 1590s had over 100 sheep might initially give rise to the suspicion that enclosed pastures were being employed. However, Melton's fields contained some very extensive farms, a few capable of supporting almost 200 sheep on the common pasture. Such a farm was James Levett's, which in 1599 carried 171 sheep on six yardlands.³ Throughout the century Melton's sheep farmers ranked with the most important in the valley save, perhaps, the biggest gentry graziers.

In cattle rearing too Melton's farmers were among the major figures. Clement Gyles owned the biggest herd, of eight oxen, thirteen cows and eleven young.⁴ Normally this would be outside the pasturing limits of even his four yardland holding, but in addition to the common fields Melton had its own neat pasture of over 200 acres.⁵ On this pasture, the Spinneys, Gyles had the right to put twelve kye

1. Ibid., DG.25/1/1, f.8; infra, Ch. IV, pp. 209, 213.

2. Ibid., Clayton Mss., DG.35/29/126.

3. Ibid., PR/1/17/34, inventory of James Levett, Oct., 1599; ibid., DG.36/317.

4. Ibid., PR/1/5; inventory of Clement Chauncey alias Gyles, Sept., 1578.

5. Infra, Ch. IV, pp. 209-10. That the Spinneys were intended for cattle only is evident in the many references to it as "the neat pasture". All the stints concern cattle only. Sheep and horses were allowed to pasture there only after the cattle had finished and were put onto the common fields; L.R.O., DG.25/9/2.

according to the stint of 1565.¹ It is the presence of the Spinneys and the Orgar Leys (purchased by the town in 1596) which explains the high proportion of Melton farmers who owned large cattle herds: seven of the fifteen mixed farm inventories from the sixteenth century included sixteen or more beasts.² After Gyles' the two biggest herds, of thirty-one and twenty-one head, respectively, were owned by James Levett in 1599 and Thomas Frearch in 1559.³ Between them Gyles, Levett, Frearch and Richard Scharpe owned nineteen oxen and twelve steers - a remarkable number considering that sixty-nine village mixed farm inventories contained eight oxen and seventeen steers.⁴ It is probable that the town's enclosed pastures were where these large beasts were fed. Certainly this use of the enclosures was contributing to their general overstocking in 1575.⁵

William Withers, who held a yardland, owned twenty-five cattle in 1590, although seven kye and a pair of foals were in a close at Halstead (eight miles south of Melton) and he was also leasing the Hall Close in Sysonby.⁶ This serves as a salutary reminder that it is necessary to view Melton stock farming both as large scale and as not always restricted by common fields or township boundaries, even in the sixteenth century. By the seventeenth century the strengthening of this integration of the town and the surrounding area in agricultural terms was to emphasise the basic economic unity of

1. Ibid., DG.25/1/1, ff. 13-5.

2. Ibid., DG.36/284/19.

3. Ibid., PR/1/17/34, inventory of James Levett, Oct., 1599; ibid., Wills and Inventories, 1558(A-F), inventory of Thomas Frearch, Jan. 1559.

4. Ibid., PR/1/1, inventory of Richard Scharpe, 1541.

5. Infra, Ch. IV, pp. 210-11, 214

6. L.R.O., PR/1/11/138, inventory of William Withers, Dec., 1590.

Melton and its market area.¹

As arable producers Melton's farmers were similarly in the vanguard of commercialisation. Major grain producers included John Stret (died 1537), Richard Scharpe (1541), John Fyshepoole (1557), William Trigge (1558), Mathew Brokesby (1575), Clement Gyles (1578), Robert Hebb alias More (1582), John Spenser (1588), Richard Taylor (1597), Roger Measure (1599) and James Levett (1599).² These men - a high proportion of those represented among the inventories - compared favourably with their most important village contemporaries in terms of scale of production, a fact that is not surprising in view of the sizes of farms such as those of Gyles and Levett, which were far from being atypical.³ Brokesby, for his part, was raising some of his crop at Freeby where he had £21 worth of barley and peas. Stret, as mentioned above, had a farm at Thorpe Arnold as well as his Melton holding.⁴

We have seen that rising population, rising agricultural prices and, prior to the 1550s, the growing demand for wool led to an intensification of arable farming and an increase in the number of sheep kept on mixed farms in the Wreake Valley. The presence of enclosures in some townships provided the opportunity for farmers

1. Infra , pp. 69-72.

2. L.R.O., Wills and Inventories, 1537/44A, inventory of John Stret, 1537; ibid, PR/1/1, inventory of Richard Scharpe, 1541; ibid., Wills and Inventories, 1557(A-J), inventory of John Fyshepoole, Dec., 1557; ibid., Administrations, 1556-65, inventory of William Trigge, 1558; ibid., PR/1/5, inventory of Mathew Brokesby, Feb., 1575; ibid., inventory of Thomas Chauncey alias Gyles, Sept., 1578; ibid., Wills and Inventories, 1582, inventory of Robert Hebb alias More, Sept., 1582; ibid., PR/1/9/121, inventory of John Spenser, 1588; ibid., PR/1/16/46, inventory of Richard Taylor, June, 1597; ibid., PR/1/17/40, inventory of Roger Measure, Sept., 1599; ibid., PR/1/17/34, inventory of James Levett, Oct., 1599.

3. In 1572 there were 16 farmers in the town who held 3 yardlands - equivalent to about 100 acres - or more, ibid., DG.36/159/7.

4. Supra, p. 43.

to build bigger, meatier and woollier sheep flocks, and to engage in large scale cattle farming and commercial dairying. The Pates at Eyekettleby are the most impressive example of the successes which could be achieved on enclosed grounds, but others with access to enclosures were able to emulate them on a smaller scale. Melton's mixed farms were extensive, so arable cultivation in the township was on an outstanding scale, and farmers were able to build large sheep flocks without having recourse to outside pastures. The town's farmers enjoyed the additional advantage of having their own neat pasture which in turn enabled them to raise big herds of cattle. Despite these advantages there is evidence that Melton's farmers were expanding their enterprises beyond the township boundaries into neighbouring enclosures, though as yet this practice was not widespread. It was during the seventeenth century that graziers became the major agrarian figures in the valley as enclosure picked up momentum, and then that Melton-based farmers began exploiting these enclosures in significant numbers. Meanwhile arable farming in Melton came even more to the fore as some villages enclosed their fields entirely, and as the remaining common field villages suffered a lack of progress in mixed husbandry after the late sixteenth century.

We can now trace these developments, and in so doing re-emphasise the crucial role played by Melton inhabitants in the agrarian history of the valley.

(iv) All rich meadow and pasture grounds: enclosure and depopulation

Because of the presence of enclosures in some villages in the Wreake Valley, differences in the nature of farming between these and the five villages which were to retain their common fields into the

eighteenth century were already appearing by the late Tudor period. Some of the partially enclosed villages - Brentingby, Sysonby, Welby and Wyfordby - supported only tiny populations as a result of medieval and Tudor processes.¹ Now some of the more populous settlements - notably Little Dalby, Kirby Bellars and Thorpe Arnold - were to suffer population loss because of seventeenth century developments. Conversely, the remaining common field villages were to experience a greater or lesser population increase, and concomitant overcrowding and poverty. In a similar fashion country crafts and trades were to migrate out of the enclosing villages and into the common field townships and into Melton itself.²

The seventeenth century witnessed enclosure with a vengeance in the Wreake Valley. The stimulus was the drive towards greater rationalization of land use by farmers in order to build up flocks and herds after the fashion of the Pates of Eyekettleby, and to be better able to insure themselves against the vagaries of price fluctuations. A farm which functioned as a discrete unit was infinitely more manageable than a purely common field holding, and only an enclosed ground farmer could take full advantage of price changes to ensure maximum profit.

The revival of enclosure in the Wreake Valley began - if, indeed, it had ever really ended - during the last two decades of the seventeenth century.³ The immediate trigger was the rise during these years of the price of wool, which attained unprecedented levels.⁴

1. See Maps III, IV.

2. Infra, pp. 79-87.

3. The disturbances in Leicestershire over enclosure in 1549 and the continuing enclosure at Burton Lazars in the sixteenth century (infra, p.53-4) must raise the possibility that the movement during this period was not entirely dormant; cf. Parker, Enclosure in Leicestershire.

4. Reider, The Wool Trade, pp. 219-20.

Sheep prices rose rapidly after 1589, and by 1600 flocks were larger than at any time during the preceding century.¹ Only in enclosed grounds could sheep be managed and fed sufficiently well to ensure a good quality fleece and pelt and plenty of meat: the Pate flock is striking testimony to this.²

By 1587 the Smith family were enclosing and converting land in Brentingby and Wyfordby, of both of which they were lord of the manor.³ In neighbouring Thorpe Arnold the Waryngs, late Merchant Staplers in Melton, were initiating a similar reorganization, and in 1600 sixteen yardlands of the manorial demesne were enclosed and converted to pasture.⁴ To the south Burton Lazars, a populous village which had undergone extensive enclosure by the mid-sixteenth century, was experiencing more of the same at the hands of those great enclosers, the Hartopps. By 1607 a further 176 acres of arable land had been enclosed and converted.⁵ This was but the first in a series of enclosures by the Hartopps which was to extinguish common field farming in Burton by 1662.⁶ At Freeby and Kirby Bellars Thomas Hartopp was enclosing piecemeal and converting pasture in the last decade of the sixteenth century.⁷

For Welby the death knell of common field farming was sounded by Sir Thomas Digby in the early years of the seventeenth century. The

1. Supra, p. 35.

2. Supra, pp. 36-7.

3. Parker, op.cit., p. 116.

4. Ibid., p. 133; infra, Ch. III, p. 96.

5. Parker, op.cit., p. 134.

6. Infra, pp. 54-6.

7. Parker, op.cit., p. 122.

sale of the manor in 1617 involved the transfer of a completely enclosed township.¹ Edward Pate died in 1597 seized of Sysonby Grange - around 500 acres or more - and a further fifty acres of land and 300 acres of meadow and pasture.² Taking into account Sysonby's tiny population, that the last semblance of mixed farming there is to be found in 1613, and the widespread use of Sysonby enclosures by farmers from Melton and other villages during the seventeenth century, it is more than likely that the township was fully enclosed not long after 1600. An undated document of about 1660 describes an estate of 450 acres in Sysonby and continues: "These lands are all in hand, no arable land in the whole estate. But all rich meadow and pasture grounds."³

The depression of the 1620s is well documented. The excellent harvests of 1618-20 would have reassured the big sheep farmers that they were in the right business: 1618 once more saw previously unattained wool prices, while corn prices fell alarmingly from the middle of the second decade of the century. Famine followed, corn prices rocketed, demand for wool plummeted, and plague heightened the general misery.⁴

This led to landowners letting out their sheep pastures and, it has been shown, to the cropping of pasture ground on a wide scale in south Leicestershire.⁵ Evidence for the same occurring in the Wreake Valley is limited to a single reference in the inventory of William

1. Ibid., p. 146.

2. Nichols, II, Part I, p. 283.

3. L.R.O., Clayton Mss., DG.35/29/473.

4. Bowden, 'Agricultural Prices, Farm Profits, and Rents', A.H.E.W., pp. 631-2, 640-2.

5. Ibid., pp. 641-2; Goodacre, op.cit., pp. 140-58.

Waldrom of Scalford to his growing of five acres of barley and peas in his pastures in 1627.¹ This amounted to no more than a 20 per cent increase in the area under crop on Waldrom's land, and in any case one might expect not to see peas being grown if corn for human consumption was the priority. Despite any cropping of pastures which may have taken place enclosure was actually stimulated during the crisis years, and afterwards, in the Wreake Valley as elsewhere in the county.²

The first village to enclose in the new wave was Little Dalby in 1629 - confirmed in Chancery that year.³ At about the same time Kirby Bellars suffered the winding up of common husbandry. The manor was purchased in 1622 by Erasmus de la Fountaine, a London merchant who already owned that part of the parish which had belonged to the priory.⁴ Until then and since the fourteenth century Kirby had been the most populous village in the area.⁵ A particular of de la Fountaine's estate reveals that the lands of his tenants were "layd in parts or furlongs by themselves in the three several fields, soe as every tenant hath his owne land lying together."⁶

The particular goes on to say that the intention was to sever and enclose the lands. In all, de la Fountaine's estate of several pastures and meadow comprised 1,500 acres, including 600 acres of demesne. In 1636 de la Fountaine was fined £500 by the commissioners for depopulation

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1. L.R.O., PR/1/32B/140, inventory of William Waldrom, Scalford, April, 1627.
 2. Cf. Goodacre, op.cit., pp. 141-2.
 3. L.R.O., Hartopp Mss., 8.D39/9322.
 4. Nichols, II, Part I, pp. 227-8.
 5. In 1603 there were 200 communicants, V.C.H. Leicestershire, III, p. 168. See Maps II-IV.
 6. Nichols, II, Part I, p. 231.

but it was too late to save the village.¹ In a 1648 survey of the manor of Burton Lazars, lands in Kirby Bellars said to have formerly been in the possession of three tenants who paid 5s 0d, 1s 1d and 3s 4d per annum respectively are described simply as "Now Sir Erasmus De La Fountaines".² No mixed farmer appears in Kirby inventories after the arrival of de la Fontaine as lord of the manor, and the once extensive area covered by tenements and cottages was to contract inexorably, although throughout the century the township was to retain vestiges of its decapitated open field system.³

Holwell's enclosure was enrolled in Chancery in 1654, and Thorpe Arnold probably enclosed at about the same time.⁴ In a fine of 1656 the moiety of Thorpe Arnold manor is described as having over three times as much pasture and meadow as arable.⁵ For all the conventionalism implicit in fines this is undeniable evidence that whatever system of land use was employed in the village, normal common field farming it was not.

The best documented enclosure is that of Burton Lazars, which fell prey to the ambitions of the Hartopps in a series of manoeuvres ending in 1662. The Hartopps' success is very revealing about the determination and methods of enclosers, and of the ultimate futility of opposition.

In the early sixteenth century Burton was the second most populous village in the area after Kirby Bellars.⁶ Already, common field

1. Ibid.

2. L.R.O., Clayton Mss., 35/29/2180.

3. E.g. infra, pp. 81-2; see Tables X-XIV.

4. V.C.H. Leicestershire, II, pp. 218, 256.

5. Farnham, IV, p. 241.

6. See Map II.

farming had been replaced over at least two areas of the township - the grange belonging to Vaudey Abbey and the lands of the Hospital of St. Lazarus of Jerusalem. Prior to the Dissolution these two religious institutions were exchanging lands so that by 1540 Vaudey had no interest there. After the Dissolution the Hospital's Leicestershire possessions came into the hands of John Dudley, Earl of Northumberland. He leased all his Burton property in 1552, including the manor itself, to Henry Alicock.¹ All this property was enclosed and amounted to 400 acres. This was not the full extent of enclosure in Burton by the mid-sixteenth century, for 795 acres were described in 1593 as "ancient original enclosure".² This area included about 200 acres leased by Alicock. In all, then, about 1,000 acres of land in Burton were fenced off from the common fields, in a township of some 2,500 acres. Of this, 300 acres had been enclosed between 1539 and 1552 by the Duke and by Sir Thomas Lee, a lessee of Hospital lands just before the Dissolution.³

The Hartopp family enclosed and converted to pasture around 176 acres at the beginning of the seventeenth century. They were leasing the manor from the Crown although the See of Ely held the manorial rights.⁴ This duumvirate was to lead inevitably to a clash later in the century, but as yet the bishop played no part in local affairs. Information about further Hartopp enclosures can be derived from the material engendered by the court case between the See and Peter Clayton

1. Parker, op.cit., p. 79.

2. L.R.O., Clayton Mss, DG.36/29/123.

3. Parker, op.cit., pp. 79-80. Acreages are in L.R.O., Hartopp Mss, 8.D39/2180.

4. Parker, op.cit., p. 134; Nichols, II, Part I, p. 267.

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in about 1682.¹ Clayton purchased a large part of the Hartopp estate in Burton and in so doing inherited complaints from the bishop that Sir Thomas Hartopp had: "inclosed about 50 years since considerable numbers of acres of the leasehold lands with his freehold lands without the Bishops privity or consent".²

Sir Thomas died in 1661, and on his death bed he somewhat inconsiderately confessed that he had wronged the bishop by enclosing part of the leasehold lands. He charged his son Sir William not to enclose any more land, and Sir William dutifully promised his dying father to do as he asked. Within two years Sir William had enclosed the remainder of the leasehold lands which lay in the common fields, needless to say without bothering to seek permission from the bishop.³

A deposition by John Freeman of Burton, aged about forty-seven, stated that 260 acres of land under dispute were the lands and inheritance of Sir Thomas Hartopp (deceased), and since of his son and heir Sir William, and had been "enclosed beyond memory and reputed to be ancient enclosure".⁴ A further 100 acres or so had been enclosed before his own memory, and he had heard they were enclosed by Sir Thomas' ancestors. Freeman went on to say that another 200 acres had been enclosed in about 1662, by Sir William.

The chronology of enclosure at Burton in the seventeenth century was this: during the early years Sir William Hartopp I (died 1622)

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1. For details of this litigation and other information concerning landownership and enclosure in Burton Lazars in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries see especially L.R.O., Clayton Mss, DG.35/29/87A ff., and ibid., Hartopp Mss, 8.D39/1834 ff.
 2. Ibid., Clayton Mss, DG.35/29/123.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Ibid.

enclosed at least 360 acres; in the middle years of the century his son Sir Thomas enclosed more lands, acreage unspecified; in about 1662 Sir William II enclosed another 200 acres. Furthermore, a map and survey made for Clayton in 1682 clearly show that a further 400 acres of his purchase were enclosed by that date, which may indicate the extent of Sir Thomas' work. In all almost 1,000 acres of enclosures were added to the 1,000 acres already enclosed by the mid-sixteenth century. In addition, there is the area covered by the dwellings and home closes, and a number of other small enclosures. There is no doubt that Sir William's enclosures of 1662 finally wiped out what, if anything, remained of the common fields of Burton Lazars.

This transformation had come about because the Bishop of Ely's lands amounted to 1,334 acres in all - half the township - and was held entirely by the Hartopps. On top of this was the Hartopp freehold. Early ecclesiastical enclosures, in the classic fashion, provided the springboard for ambitious enclosers to defy government regulation and successive bishops and manipulate the village fields to their own ends. If villages the size of Burton and Kirby Bellars could be enclosed with such ease we should not be surprised that far smaller villages succumbed so early in the century.

By about 1620, then, it is probable that five of the fifteen sample townships (Brentingby, Eyekettleby, Sysonby, Welby and Wyfordby) had been entirely enclosed, or very nearly so. During the ensuing two decades two more townships (Little Dalby and Kirby Bellars) were enclosed, and by 1662 three more (Holwell, Thorpe Arnold and Burton Lazars) had seen the winding up of common field husbandry. This left five townships (Abkettleby, Asfordby, Great Dalby, Freeby and Scalford) plus Melton itself which retained their common fields. The transformation

of such a large proportion of land in the valley from common fields to enclosed grounds meant that the nature of local farming changed radically.

(v) The rise of the grazier: farming in the Wreake Valley in the seventeenth century

Once again probate inventories comprise the chief source of information about farming. In all about 340 have been studied including all the extant seventeenth century inventories from Brentingby, Sysonby, Welby and Wyfordby, and over 75 per cent of those from Abkettleby, Burton Lazars, Little Dalby, Freeby and Holwell. Particular attention has been paid to two periods, 1620-36 and 1680-99 in order to illustrate the condition of the farming economy and to present a more coherent view of the differing fortunes of the various types of farmer. These periods were chosen so that the growing divergence between enclosed ground and common field farming can best be revealed.

(a) 1620-36

Of the 101 inventories examined from these years nineteen were those of mixed farmers, the men upon whom fell the greatest burden in feeding the growing non-agricultural sector of the population. Already the mixed farm was a rarity in the enclosing villages: only five of the nineteen inventories concerned farms in these townships - two each in Burton Lazars and Holwell, and one in Welby. None of the other seven enclosing or enclosed villages produced any mixed farm inventories during this period.

To regard the Welby farmer as "mixed" is, however, to be entirely

unrealistic. This man, George Bennet Esq., was lord of the manor and the most important sheep farmer found throughout the century. His grain and malt were worth £20, his livestock £1,570 4s 0d.¹ Bennet was a grazier in the Pate mould whose arable enterprise was to satisfy no more than household needs for bread and ale. In this he was the precursor of the late-century graziers, virtually all of whom ran mixed farms but with the emphasis overwhelmingly on livestock. Like the Pates, Bennet was a shining example of enclosed ground success: his flock of over 1,500 sheep was worth more than £1,000 and it included animals worth up to 18s 9d apiece at a time when the average price in the valley was around 6s 0d per sheep. He owned a woolhouse complete with winding tackle, weights and other implements, and his annual wool production would have been enormous. The thirty-two rams in the flock ensured that large numbers of lambs were produced in spring. Many of these would have been destined to restock those farmers, especially in the surviving common field villages, whose shortage of winter pasture probably caused them to sell their flocks in late summer and autumn.² Bennet's herd of 101 cattle was geared towards dual production and was a mixture of dairy cows and beef. This was farming on an exceptional scale, to be expected of a man who had an entire township at his disposal, but as the years passed other men would emerge in enclosing villages who would emulate Bennet, some on a not very inferior scale.

There was already at least one other man who was a major grazier, albeit not of Bennet's stature. William Waldrom was farming enclosed

1. Ibid., PR/1/35/6, inventory of George Bennet, Welby, 1632.

2. A new fair in January was inaugurated sometime in the late sixteenth century, probably to cater for this need. As divergences increased between enclosed and common field villages this kind of redistribution would have become more frequent. Infra, Ch. I, pp. 16-7.

grounds at Scalford (a common field village), possibly in Ringlethorpe Grange. He had only twenty-nine acres under crops, including five acres of cropped pasture ground, and his livestock was worth £221.¹ His sheep were valuable at about 8s 0d each although he was fattening no wethers, and among his herd of twenty-four beasts were four oxen and three steers.

Bennet and Waldrom had broken away from mixed husbandry altogether, but as yet these were early days and among the seventeen true mixed farmers (thirteen common field village and four enclosing) there was a fair degree of homogeneity. Most of the inventories included a flock of sheep, and the two which did not, and those which had only a handful, included fold flakes, sheep cribs and the like. Most of this group were taken in October after sheep sales would have taken place. The average flock size was fifty-eight head, and as yet there was no difference in this figure between common field and enclosing villages, although of the four flocks of 100 sheep or more two were in enclosing villages.

The largest herd of cattle belonged to Thomas Franke of Burton Lazars and numbered thirty-five head.² He was not rearing big beef cattle - his herd consisted of kine, heifers and yearlings - but he had an enormous number of cheeses and other dairy produce and implements valued at £20. In fact, apart from Bennet and Waldrom only one farmer owned any big beef cattle, John Moore of Holwell who had two steers.³

What is most striking about the mixed farm inventories from the 1620s and 1630s is the similarity between them and those of the late Tudor period: neither flocks nor herds were any larger on average.

1. L.R.O., PR/1/32B/140, inventory of William Waldrom, Scalford, April, 1627.
2. Ibid., PR/32B/130, inventory of Thomas Franke, Burton Lazars, Oct., 1627.
3. Ibid., PR/1/36/187, inventory of John Moore, Holwell, April, 1633.

161000 PR/1/36/187
161000 PR/1/36/187
161000 PR/1/36/187

Having come up against the limits of the common pasturing system by the end of the sixteenth century the common field mixed husbandman could expand his livestock farming no further without access to enclosed pastures, at least while ever smallholders and cottagers continued to claim their pasture rights.¹ Price rises were a function of inflation, not of bigger animals, and even then the average price of a sheep had only risen from 5s 4d to 6s 0d, while that of a beast remained below £2.

The average number of horses kept was still six, and the importance of pigs, poultry and bees on farms was minimal. Only one mixed farmer specialised in any of these items - Thomas Franke of Burton Lazars who owned £8 10s 0d worth of swine in 1627, twice the value of anyone else's.² Even so the swine represented only 5 per cent of Franke's livestock. The increase in production for market of dairy produce noted during the 1590s held up into the 1620s and 1630s as the prices of such commodities reached new heights in 1629 and 1636.³

If livestock farming had reached an impasse in the early seventeenth century could any progress possibly be made in arable farming? Owing to the inalienable relationship between animals and crops any such advance would be extremely unlikely. No arable farmer in the villages during this period could compare with their counterparts in Melton although owing, one assumes, to inflation the average value of crops in the inventories had risen from £32 to £42 in the 1590s.⁴ Certainly there would have been no increase in the acreage under crops on the

1. Infra, p. 61.

2. L.R.O., PR/1/32B/180, inventory of Thomas Franke, Burton Lazars, Oct., 1627.

3. Bowden, 'Statistical Appendix', A.H.E.W., p. 845.

4. This is exactly the same proportionate rise in prices as estimated for the whole country, ibid., pp. 820-1.

common field farm because any slack had been taken up during the population boom of the later sixteenth century.

Competition for the resources of a village's fields came from the small farmer or smallholder and the cottager. Smallholders held some arable land, while cottagers usually had pasture rights for a cow or two and a handful of sheep. In the Tudor period these small agriculturalists would have joined with the mixed farmers in squeezing the maximum from the fields, and the pressure exerted on the resources of the more densely populated villages would have grown with the population.

By the 1620s the smallholder and cottager were becoming rarities in the enclosing villages, and only a handful of their inventories survive. The smallholders were disappearing because there was simply no place for the small mixed farmer after the common fields had gone. Either he maintained some status as a small grazier or he descended to cottager level. Even if he did so the opportunities to diversify his livelihood were also dwindling, for the demand for both wage labour and rural crafts fell as a village enclosed and, inevitably, shrank. The only recourse for many of these small agriculturalists was to depart and try their luck elsewhere. 'Elsewhere', of course, tended to mean Melton or the neighbouring common field villages. Thus the pressure on the land in these latter places became even heavier, and the level of agricultural activity among smallholders and cottagers in the common field villages was extremely low.¹ The horns of the dilemma facing the small agriculturalist were sharp indeed.

1. Very few smallholders held more than 3 or 4 acres, and many of the cottagers kept no more than a single cow.

(b) 1680-99

Although by 1680 Burton Lazars, Holwell, Kirby Bellars and Thorpe Arnold had joined the ranks of the enclosed townships, mixed farming survived on a wide scale, and not only in the five remaining common field villages. During this period twenty-six inventories out of 104 were of men who had the capacity to undertake independent arable farming, in the shape of at least one team of horses. Thirteen of these inventories come from villages which had enclosed their common fields.

As in the earlier period the raising of crops must not be allowed to disguise the real nature of farming in several of these cases. Six of the enclosed village farmers and one from a common field village were undeniably graziers, first and foremost. It is to these men and to the pure graziers who raised no crops at all that we shall turn first, because this was now the outstanding class of farmer in the valley.

In all there are twenty-six graziers' inventories (including those of the seven men who continued to raise some crops).¹ Of these three come from common field villages, twenty-three from enclosed villages. The division of enterprise had been firmly imprinted on the face of the local agrarian economy. Sixteen of these graziers - fourteen enclosed village and two common field - were farming on a small scale and averaged thirty sheep and six cattle apiece. Flocks ranged in size from five to seventy-one head, herds from three to nine beasts. These men were the heirs of the smaller mixed farmers who had

1. Not to be confused with the group of 26 farmers who had the capacity to undertake independent arable farming and who are mentioned above, although 7 men are included in both groups.

succeeded in surviving enclosure but who lacked the resources either to diversify or to build up their farms.

The other ten men were major stock breeders who averaged 334 sheep and thirty-five cattle each. None of them had stock worth less than £138. The biggest of all was John Humberston who held a mixed farm in the common field village of Asfordby. There he had £117 3s 6d worth of grain and malt, £80 of which had been sold by his widow before the inventory was taken.¹ Sixty of his sheep and thirteen of his cattle were being fed in Asfordby's fallow field, but the remainder of his livestock - 640 sheep and sixty-four cattle - were pastured in closes in Sysonby. Humberston's animals were well above the common field average in value, his sheep ranging up to 16s 0d each; his most valuable cattle were bullocks worth £7 each and twenty-two steers worth £82.² Humberston was, however, an exception: he is the only example found during the period of a common field village mixed farmer who was using enclosed grounds outside his own township to raise large numbers of livestock. Only among Melton farmers was this common practice.³

The rest of the big graziers lived in enclosed townships. As mentioned above six of these raised some crops but the value of such crops never exceeded 15 per cent of the value of the livestock, and the average was 6 per cent. Typical was John Jarvis of Burton Lazars who had £23 10s 0d worth of barley, wheat, malt and hay, and £379 11s 0d worth of sheep (213 11s 0d), cattle (£62) and horses (£104).⁴ Jarvis,

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1. L.R.O., PR/1/96/33, inventory of John Humberston, Asfordby, Feb., 1692.
 2. Common field sheep were rarely worth more than 6s 0d each during this period.
 3. Infra, pp. 69-72.
 4. L.R.O., PR/1/84/162, inventory of John Jarvis, Burton Lazars, Jan., 1682.

like Thomas Lee, also of Burton, did not even own a plough, so it must be open to question whether the corn they possessed had been grown by them or purchased.¹ The animals belonging to this group were extremely valuable, and ~~three~~ men - John Brewen of Brentingby, John Bradberrie of Thorpe Arnold and James Humberston of Welby - each had sheep worth £1 each or more.²

In the 1720s Defoe noted the main characteristics of Leicestershire's agrarian economy. In addition to sheep and cattle breeding he commented upon the size of the horses, the largest in England.³ During the course of the century the average number of horses kept by mixed farmers in the valley rose from six to just under eight, but this was not simply the result of any increase in the amount of pasture available in the enclosed townships because in fact it was in the common field villages that more horses were generally kept. Therefore we may assume that the horses were being fed on oats and pulses rather than on an exclusive diet of grass and hay: true, the less valuable horses were found in common field townships, but in the early seventeenth century the most valuable were usually there too.⁴ William Kellam and Thomas Gamble, both of Asfordby, each had a team of five worth £30 and £25 respectively in 1635.⁵ Both men were among the four biggest arable farmers in the valley outside Melton so both would have had plenty of fodder to raise

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1. Ibid., PR/1/87/39, inventory of Thomas Lee, Burton Lazars, April, 1685.
 2. Ibid., PR/1/83/60, inventory of John Brewen, Brentingby, April, 1681; ibid., PR/1/84/173, inventory of John Bradberrie, Thorpe Arnold, Sept., 1682; ibid., PR/1/91/16, inventory of James Humberston, Welby, Feb., 1688.
 3. Daniel Defoe, A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain, pp. 408-9.
 4. Robert Loder fed his horses on hay, beans, peas, oats, malt, wheat and barley chaff, Robert Loder's Farm Accounts 1610-1620, edited by G.E. Fussell, Camden Third Series, LIII (1936), p. 20.
 5. L.R.O., PR/1/38/111, inventory of William Kellam, Asfordby, Aug., 1635; ibid., PR/1/37/174, inventory of Thomas Gamble, Asfordby, 1635.

large draught animals. Similarly, it was the important arable farmers in Melton who owned the most valuable horses early in the century. By the late seventeenth century all the horses in the area worth over £5 were either in enclosed grounds or, in the two Melton cases, owned by men who had access to Sysonby pastures, so by this time it was pasture rather than arable land which was producing the largest animals.¹

The big grazier, once a rarity, had now come of age. The demand for meat, dairy produce, leather and wool was sufficient to discourage him from concerning himself with arable cultivation, and the only grazier who did raise crops on a commercial basis was the only one based on a common field holding.

Not that arable farming was extinct in the enclosed townships, and the seven mixed farmers based in these villages bore comparison with those in the common field villages. The average flock size was sixty-five head, and the average herd numbered thirteen head, so no increase in the average livestock concern had occurred during the century. The major difference between the common field and the enclosed township mixed farmer was in the respective value of their livestock. The average value of a sheep on the common fields was 6s 0d - no change since the 1620s and 1630s - while the enclosed ground sheep was usually worth over 10s 0d, and could rise to £1 or more.

Why did these enclosed ground farmers practice mixed husbandry and not concentrate entirely upon livestock as their obviously successful neighbours did? There is no suggestion that any common field practices lingered on in these villages. Dorothy Healey of Little Dalby had seventy-four acres under crop: fifty-one acres of peas, sixteen acres

1. Even so horses were no more valuable - therefore, presumably no bigger - than in the early seventeenth century. Both in the early and the late century it is possible to find horses worth anything from £2 up to £6 or more.

of barley, six acres of oats and another acre of peas.¹ Richard Dickins of Burton Lazars had seventeen acres under crop: nine acres of barley, five acres of oats, and a further three acres of barley. These proportions in no way indicate a truncated survival of the common fields, and there is little doubt that these farmers were choosing to devote some of their enclosed grounds to crops instead of pasture. This probably reflects the rich crop which could be had from the intensively manured pasture land of enclosed fields. Even so, the mixed farmers were in a minority in the enclosed townships - these seven inventories compare with those of twenty-three graziers from the same period.

The lack of any real progress in mixed husbandry between the late sixteenth century and the 1630s was noted above. Population pressure in the common field villages ensured that the same stagnation was a feature of the whole seventeenth century. Though population expansion had slowed after the 1630s these villages had in many ways reached their optimum sizes.² Smallholders and cottagers, many of them pursuing a craft, continued to claim their rights of pasture, the smallholders maintaining their arable production. By contrast their enclosed township counterparts had all but disappeared, though not entirely. Essentially the small farmer was a phenomenon belonging to the common field system, and with the demise of that system in a township the extinction of the small farmer would not long be delayed.

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1. L.R.O., PR/1/99/79, inventory of Dorothy Healey, Little Dalby, July, 1694.
 2. It is doubtful whether any of them, with the possible exception of Great Dalby, increased in size between 1670 and 1801. In 1670 together they contained (a minimum of) 273 households, compared with a combined population in 1801 of 1,345 persons, of whom 345 lived in Dalby (60 households in 1670). P.R.O., E.179.240/279; ibid., E.179 Bundle 332; V.C.H. Leicestershire, III, pp. 180-97.

(vi) Untwisting the chains: the Melton farmer in the seventeenth century

Melton was and remained until 1760 a common field township. No person or persons ever held sufficient land to encroach very much on the three great fields.¹ Farming here shared many of the characteristics exhibited by common field villages in the Wreake Valley, but there were unique pressures exerted on the fields through the excessive numbers of those who enjoyed pasture rights. In addition to the thirty or so husbandmen living in the town at any time there were, at least between 1565 and 1685, about 132 'cottagers' who were entitled to keep animals on Melton's pastures.² Because of this we might expect to find the ambitious farmer to be more cramped than his village counterpart.

However, as we have seen Melton's Tudor farmers ranked among the most important in the valley for three reasons: the size of the farms, the availability of the town's own enclosed pasture grounds, and - although not yet to a great degree - the extension of enterprise beyond the township boundaries. Was this primacy retained at a time when common field farming in the villages had reached saturation point? The town's farmers secured the home pastures from overburdening by immigrants (unlike, it seems, the other common field townships which had no effective mechanism to do the same), but these pastures could not provide the acreages needed to satisfy the ambitious farmers, and more and more the enclosed pastures in other townships were looked to as the natural outlet for such ambitions.

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1. Called in the sixteenth century North, South and West fields, later Whalley, Burton and Long Fields respectively.
 2. Infra, Ch. IV, pp. 202, 204, 209, 213.

Not many inventories survive for Melton from the years between 1600 and 1624, so all aspects of economic life during the early decades of the century are thinly represented. Out of 117 inventories from the period 1600-50, seventy were of persons involved in agriculture in some way - mostly smallholders and cottagers - and twelve of these were of mixed farmers. Five date from 1601-12, seven from 1627-42.

Of immediate interest is that the arable side of these farms exceeded in value the livestock side in eight cases. Excluding James Shawcrosse (who is discussed below) the average ratio of crop value to stock value was 54:46, compared with the corresponding ratio on village mixed farms, 1620-36, of 39:61.¹ Even allowing for seasonal changes in these ratios as animals were sold and purchased and as grain was sold and eaten the difference between the Melton and the village farms is notable. The reason for this is likely to have been the reduction in the stint in Melton in 1610, which may have cut the number of cattle allowed on the pastures by one third.² Such a restriction in the farmers' livestock concerns would have been bound to cause an imbalance weighted towards arable, and emphasises the restrictive environment in which the town farmers operated: there was a limit to the size of beasts which could be reared on the home pastures without a reduction in their numbers, and if Melton's farmers wished to rear fat sheep and big cattle then they had to look further afield for the necessary grass-land.³

1. In the sixteenth century the ratio on mixed farms in both Melton and the villages was the same at 37:63.

2. Infra, Ch. IV, pp. 213-4 . It does not appear that the stint for sheep was also reduced.

3. The stint was lowered again in 1707. As the number of animals kept on the commons seems to have been strictly regulated this was possibly because of the increasing size of beasts pastured there, although we cannot be certain. The fall in the stint would have circumscribed stock farming in the township even further, L.R.O., DG.25.9/3.

Because of this, Melton livestock farming was, by and large, unremarkable during the early seventeenth century. Sheep flocks were about the same size as in the villages at around sixty head on average - smaller than one would normally expect on such large holdings, but in line with the suggestions made concerning the restrictive stint. None of these sheep exceeded 6s 0d in value, the same as in the common field villages. Cattle herds were somewhat larger than in the villages owing to the availability of the town's neat pastures, but again the herds were not as large as they would have been on village farms of equal size.¹ Dairying was almost universal, and clearly a thriving commercial enterprise to judge by the amounts of cheese and butter in some of the inventories. By contrast none of these farmers had any big beef cattle at the time their inventories were taken although two - Hugh Ellwood and Walter Wormwell - did own a bull each. Inconclusive this may be, but it looks very much as though the large scale breeding of beef cattle on Melton's home pastures was a thing of the past.²

One man did own both oxen and steers. James Shawcrosse died in 1642, and with the exception of George Bennet of Welby he is the biggest grazier represented in the inventories. Naturally Melton was not where Shawcrosse reared his animals: it was the enclosure of Little Dalby in 1629 which provided the extensive tracts of pasture necessary to feed his flock of 743 sheep and his ninety-seven cattle.³ In addition,

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1. 7 out of 10 enumerated herds contained between 14 and 18 beasts, compared with an average of about 10 head on village mixed farms. This is much the same pattern as in the Tudor period, since when the size of herds on mixed farms had remained static in the villages, although they were somewhat smaller in Melton, supra, pp. 37, 45-6, 59-60.
 2. The maximum age at which steers and bullocks were allowed on the Spinneys and common fields was set in 1565 and reduced successively in 1589 and 1610, infra, Ch. IV, pp. 210-1, 214.
 3. L.R.O., PR/1/49/43, inventory of James Shawcrosse, Sept., 1642.

Shawcrosse had fifteen heifers at Thorpe Arnold and fifty four "follow sheep" in Melton.

Shawcrosse's flock illustrates in stark terms why the Melton farmers who had no access to pastures were obliged to concentrate on arable cultivation. Although his pasture-fed sheep were valued at between 10s 4d and 18s 6d each, his follow sheep in Melton were worth only 7s 5d. Free from the confines of common field farming Shawcrosse was able to rear twenty-eight oxen and eight steers. At £46 13s 4d his hay, cut in Melton and Little Dalby, was worth more than the grain and pulse crop of most village husbandmen. In all Shawcrosse's livestock was worth over £1,000, compared with his crop from his common field holding in Melton which was valued at £58.¹

In exploiting enclosed grounds outside the township Shawcrosse was not the first Melton farmer - Mathew Brokesby had done so in the sixteenth century, and others like Abraham Sheldon, Walter Wormwell and Peter Bingley had leased or rented closes elsewhere in the early seventeenth century - but the scale on which he did so, unlike Sheldon, Wormwell and Bingley, enabled him to keep vast numbers of animals there.² Thus Shawcrosse was the first traceable seventeenth century grazier who was based in Melton, and he exemplified the successes which could be achieved by townsmen if they could break free from the noose which was so tight on common field livestock rearing.

In the second half of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries we find more farmers employing outside enclosures. Sysonby seems to have

1. In fact Shawcrosse was probably a member of the family of that name which had been butchering in Melton at least since 1555, and which had been resident there since the early sixteenth century; infra, Ch. III, pp. 165-6.

2. Supra, p. 44. L.R.O., PR/1/23/44, inventory of Abraham Sheldon, Aug., 1608; ibid., PR/1/24/103, inventory of Walter Wormwell, July, 1612; ibid., PR/1/39/203, inventory of Peter Bingley, Feb., 1627

become the traditional source of grassland for Melton farmers and five of the twenty-two mixed farming inventories reveal that closes were being used there. The biggest grazier of all was Edward Stokes, a member of the ubiquitous family which rose to such prominence in the town during the seventeenth century. His farming interests embraced five townships - Burton Lazars, Eyekettleby, Sysonby, Thorpe Arnold and Melton.¹ Stokes' role in domestic Melton farming was meagre - sixteen acres under barley, peas and beans, and seventy sheep in the fallow field. In Eyekettleby he had 200 sherehogs at £1 2s 0d each, four milk cows, sixteen oxen and a bull. In Sysonby was a flock of over 335 sheep, including 143 at £1 6s 5d each, over four times the value of an ordinary common field animal; in the same township Stokes had fifty-two cattle including fifteen oxen worth over £5 each, and two horses.² Thorpe Arnold had 553 of Stokes' sheep, and seven horses. In Burton Lazars were just four sheep worth £1 each. In all Stokes owned 1,162 sheep and seventy-three cattle - of which all but seventy sheep were in enclosures in townships other than Melton - worth a total of almost £1,500.

Other important Melton-based graziers included Thomas Raven, Roger Waite, and John Smith. Raven had £315 worth of livestock in 1694, of which 148 sheep and eleven cattle (worth £85 1s 8d) were pastured in Thorpe Arnold, and 174 sheep and seventeen cattle (worth £190 3s 4d) in Sysonby.³ Raven kept only forty-three sheep and four

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1. L.R.O., PR/1/69/14, inventory of Edward Stokes, May, 1668.
 2. A common field sheep could be worth as little as 4s 0d, e.g. ibid., PR/1/111/122, inventory of James Peate alias Picke, Aug., 1704.
 3. Ibid., PR/1/99/70A, inventory of Thomas Raven, July, 1694.

beasts in Melton's fields. Waite had 142 valuable sheep, plus some hay and wool, in pastures at Aunsby in Lincolnshire where he owned and rented out property in 1693.¹ In the same year John Smith had £205 worth of sheep and cattle pastured in the High Fields and the Nest Closes in Burton Lazars.²

If the common field village grazier was an unfamiliar figure, the Melton grazier was not. John Humberston of Asfordby was exceptional in being a common field villager who was exploiting enclosed pasture grounds, but apart from those already mentioned six more men are shown by their inventories to have been living in Melton and growing hay and fattening livestock in enclosed grounds outside the town between 1672 and 1703.

Melton's farmers remained at the head of arable enterprise in the valley throughout the century. In the earlier part of the century inventories dated 1612, 1627, 1631 and 1636 included crops worth more than in any inventory from any village studied between 1620 and 1636.³ The average crop value in these four inventories was over £140, compared with the two biggest arable farmers in the villages whose crops were worth £93 6s 8d and £80.⁴ Apart from this, three other Melton inventories had crops valued at between £80 and £100, and two more at

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1. Ibid., PR/1/98/23, inventory of Roger Waite, Aug., 1693.
 2. Ibid., PR/1/97/48, inventory of John Smith, Sept., 1693; ibid., Clayton Mss, DG.35/29/108.
 3. Ibid., PR/1/24/103; inventory of Walter Wormwell, July, 1612; ibid., PR/1/32B/69, inventory of John Wallace, April, 1627 (Wallace held 4 yardlands, ibid., Farnham Mss, 5.D33, inquisition post mortem, Series II, 431-16, 1627); Lincolnshire Archives Office, Reeve 1/12/1/20, inventory of Lawrence Raynes; L.R.O., PR/1/38/49, inventory of John Lorington, April, 1636.
 4. Ibid., PR/1/37/174, inventory of Thomas Gamble, Asfordby, 1635; ibid., PR/1/32B/130, inventory of Thomas Franke, Burton Lazars, Oct., 1627.

between £60 and £80.¹ As Melton men were the dominant figures in arable farming in the valley it is no mere coincidence that it was a town farmer - ironically a member of Melton's major grazing family, the Shawcrosses - and not a villager who incurred the wrath of the Privy Council early in 1623 "concerning the moderating of the excessive prices of corn in this time of scarcity".²

The biggest arable farmers were all growing barley, wheat, peas and rye in the early seventeenth century, and all had substantial amounts of malt - up to thirty-two quarters in one case.³ All too were heavily equipped with husbandry implements, and averaged three carts each. Eight farmers had two ploughs or more, and altogether the average value of implements, hovels and the like was over £18, more than twice the equivalent value in village mixed farming inventories, 1620-36.

In the later century men like Henry Trigge the elder were in the Melton tradition of important arable farmers, and he had 126 acres under barley, peas, beans and wheat in 1672.⁴ The whole crop plus twenty quarters of malt was worth £190, the most valuable crop of the period in any inventory. At a time of year when his livestock would be at its optimum level Trigge had 127 sheep and ten cows - indicative of the restrictive nature of the town's common field system. Trigge's was the largest flock of any of the farmers not rearing in enclosed grounds.

Unlike the bigger farmers smallholders and cottagers were rarely able to keep sheep through winter because of the expense of feeding them.

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1. This is out of a total of only 12 surviving mixed farm inventories from the period 1601-42.
 2. Acts of the Privy Council (1621-3), p. 454, letter to the High Sheriff of Leicestershire.
 3. Infra, Ch. III, pp. 163-4 and n.
 4. L.R.O., PR/1/74/56, inventory of Henry Trigge the elder, Aug., 1672.

Throughout the century, therefore, very few inventories of these people listed sheep in winter, although the annual profit to be made from the sale of wool, lamb and mutton was sufficient incentive for many of Melton's traders and craftsmen to indulge in the less than onerous pursuit of running sheep with the common flock during the summer months. Dairying based on a few cows was widespread early in the century but it died out eventually at this level of farming, probably because competition from, especially, enclosed ground dairy farmers drove the small producer from the market place. Individually very minor figures, collectively these small agriculturalists had a great influence over the nature of farming practices in the Wreake Valley. By exerting this pressure on Melton's pastures they forced the town's farmers to look elsewhere for the grassland necessary for full participation in the remunerative livestock business.

We have seen, then, that only in villages which enclosed their common fields was significant progress made in farming after the intensification of mixed husbandry in the later sixteenth century. This was at the expense of the small producer in the enclosing villages, who by and large was pushed out to try his fortune either in a common field village, the local market town, or further afield. Melton's role in these developments was two-fold: firstly the town acted as a sink for many of these displaced persons; secondly, farmers living in the town were among the foremost exploiters of the enclosed pastures, the creation of which had led directly to the ejection of the migrants. The stresses which immigration caused in Melton's society will be dealt with in Chapter IV; how the social and economic structures of the common field villages were transformed because of demographic change, in turn engendered by the enclosure

movement, is examined in the next section. Thereby we can preface our remarks in the next chapter about the overall pattern of marketing and manufacturing in the valley, and the degree to which Melton acted as the focus of these economic activities.

(vii) Rural population and crafts

As impressive a result of the enclosure movement as the spread of grassland and the shrinking of arable was the population redistribution which took place in parallel. In the simplest of terms common field husbandry could support a village community; grazing farming could not. It was a harsh, inevitable fact of life that when enclosure arrived in the Tudor and Stuart period, population departed. The earliest example in the Wreake Valley was Eyekettleby, depopulated during the fifteenth century. Between 1600 and the 1660s nine more villages were to suffer net population loss - varying from a 50 per cent reduction to total desertion.

For six villages there is clear evidence of population change during the critical period. A comparison of the diocesan counts of communicants in 1603 and 1676 shows growth in three villages - Asfordby, Great Dalby and Scalford - ranging from 9 per cent to 41 per cent; these were common field villages into the eighteenth century.¹ Population loss was suffered by three other villages - Little Dalby, Kirby Bellars and Thorpe Arnold - ranging from 43 per cent to 48 per cent; these were villages whose fields were enclosed between the taking of the diocesan counts.² These figures alone are sufficient to illustrate

1. V.C.H. Leicestershire, III, pp. 168, 173. The other common field townships were Abkettleby and Freeby.

2. Ibid. The other enclosed or enclosing villages were Brentingby, Burton Lazars, Eyekettleby, Holwell, Sysonby, Welby and Wyfordby.

the dramatic divergence of demographic fortune between the two types of settlement.

Equally reliable evidence is not to be had for the other villages in our sample, and resort has to be made to parish register entries, a notoriously unreliable source. Nevertheless a pattern does emerge from study of the registers. In Sysonby and Wyfordby the excess of baptisms over burials was very marginal throughout the seventeenth century, and clearly no increase in population took place in these villages, which were tiny when the century opened. Brentingby and Welby can probably be regarded in the same light, although for neither village are the smattering of parish register entries of any use. Both were small during the sixteenth century, and both enclosed early in the seventeenth.

Burton Lazars, fully enclosed by 1662, never experienced a surplus of baptisms over burials on a decennial scale between the 1640s and the 1680s, by which time the annual number of baptisms was only 2.5 having been at 7.2 during the 1620s.

The demographic events for Abkettleby (a common field township) and Holwell (enclosed in 1654) are entered in the same register, and distinctions between persons of the two villages are rarely made. It is, therefore, impossible to document population trends in the two townships, and we can but assume that Abkettleby grew while Holwell, at least after 1654, contracted.

Freeby's parish register is defective after 1649, and does not begin until 1601, so there is not much scope for analysis. The fifth common field village, it was never very populous and consequently the lack of demographic information is not crucial to our understanding of the pattern over the area.

An overall comparison of the parish register events for four common field townships and five enclosed townships reveals the consistent excess of baptisms over burials in the former, and a decline in the number of entries of any kind through the seventeenth century in the latter.¹ This need not detain us because it is clear that the common field villages were absorbing refugees from the enclosing settlements, and perhaps also from outside the area.²

One result of this has been discussed above. Mixed farming in the common field villages was hemmed in by small farmers and cottagers claiming common rights, and the influx of settlers could only exacerbate the situation. Two other major problems were caused by this trend - poverty, and a degree of overcrowding which invited plague to take a high toll. The three big villages of Asfordby, Great Dalby and Scalford had between 31.8 per cent and 38.8 per cent exemptions in the 1670 Hearth Tax returns.³ Scalford is the best documented of these and it is in the Scalford parish register, 1636-41, that out of thirty-three entries which carry occupational information eighteen concern "cottagers", indicating a low economic status. Testimony to the extent of poverty in the village comes from the Peck Ms:

In the civil war, a soldier came to levy contributions for the Roundheads at Scalford; and seeing a man in green stockings in the church-yard, he called to him, and bad him tell his neighbours they must raise him a sum immediately. The other replied, 'he wondered he should come to so poor a town as Scalford on such an errand.'⁴

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1. See Figure II.
 2. Cf. Goodacre, Lutterworth, pp. 72-3.
 3. P.R.O., E.179.240/279; ibid., E.179, Bundle 332. Cf. infra, Ch. IV, p. 198.
 4. Quoted in Nichols, II, Part I, p. 315. In fact a fight ensued in which the soldier was struck in the heart with a fork and killed.

Scalford's parish register also illustrates the frequency with which wanderers passed into the villages which possessed no effective manorial veto, especially during critical periods like the 1630s.¹ In 1631 a child was born there to Marie Johnson (who was born in Derbyshire) and her husband Mark (born in Stafford) who had lived in the Leicestershire village of Sharnford for the past three years. The register notes of Mark that "by trade he was a hatdresser and passing through the country for work."² The following year a child was baptised whose mother, from Gadburton in Lincolnshire, "was a vagrant seeking after her husband."³ In April 1639 "was buried a traveller whose name was not known amongst us: he was an ancient man (as the people said) from Wickham brought speechless and senseless on a horseback with the help of two men."⁴ These are just some of the more elaborate register entries among many which record the passage of the unemployed, the homeless and the destitute.

In 1610 Scalford was visited by the plague, which decimated the population. Fifty-one burials took place in the village that year - mostly in April, May and June - compared with an annual average of just over four. Normally, villages escaped the full fury of the plague because housing conditions were less crowded than in towns, but the common field villages were badly hit by the epidemics of 1635-6, which wiped out a quarter of the population of Melton Mowbray. By contrast the death rate in the enclosed villages actually fell during the 1630s.

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1. Paul A. Slack, 'Vagrants and Vagrancy in England, 1598-1664', Economic History Review, Second Series, XXVII (1974), pp. 360-79.
 2. Scalford parish register in Scalford parish church.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Ibid.

The greatest movement of displaced population was, however, into Melton, where most employment opportunities were offered. There the immigrants created great social and economic strains as the town's community struggled to adapt itself to the flood.

Hand in hand with the redistribution of population went the redistribution of skill. All the settlements of any size had their quota of craftsmen who served local needs. The miller, the blacksmith, the carpenter, the shoemaker, the weaver, the tailor and the manorial baker were familiar figures in the countryside.¹ Some of these men might be mixed farmers, others were cottagers, but for all a craft was an adjunct to an agrarian livelihood, whether based upon land or labour. More often than not a craftsman's primary occupation would be given in documents as an agrarian one, depending upon the degree of involvement in the craft, which renders the tracing of country crafts difficult, especially during the sixteenth century. The degree of independence of agriculture is an important variable, a function of the sophistication of a village economy, in turn dependent upon the size of the village. As the seventeenth century drew towards a close, the size of villages was more dependent upon the nature of farming than any other factor. Consequently the measure of the craft structure in a village was a measure of the state of its fields and of its demographic fortunes.

Already in the sixteenth century the tendency was for crafts to be found in those villages which were to retain their common fields. Out of thirteen craftsmen's inventories (dated between 1553 and 1599,

1. Cf. John Patten, 'Village and Town: an Occupational Study', Agrarian History Review, XX, Part I (1972), pp. 1-16. Every village would have its baker, the presence of whom most certainly does not indicate "a near-urban society" as Patten suggests.

but mostly between 1578 and 1599) eight come from common field villages and four more come from the as yet populous villages of Burton Lazars and Kirby Bellars. In the small villages there was no sign of any non-agricultural occupations in the probate records. The most substantial rural craftsman was Thomas Dubleday, a glover of Asfordby who died in 1595. A cottager, his agricultural interests consisted of two kine, two swine and a few miscellaneous implements, in all worth under £5.¹ Dubleday owned some wool and hemp, and had £1 6s 8d for "cloth sold". A dealer in wool and cloth and, presumably, involved to some extent in leather working, Dubleday was obviously making a living outside the agrarian round, although he may also have laboured during parts of the year. No other craftsman approached Dubleday's stature, although several had trade implements valued at £1 or so.

Apart from Dubleday the leather crafts were represented among the inventories by a solitary corvisor of Burton Lazars who owned no trade implements.² The remainder of the inventories were of weavers (five), smiths (two), a tailor, a woolwinder, a miller and a butcher.³ The weavers were the least prosperous as a group, which might indicate that more of them fell outside the probate class.⁴

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1. L.R.O., PR/1/15/56, inventory of Thomas Dubleday, Asfordby, June, 1595.
 2. Ibid., PR/1/15/84, inventory of William Bland, Burton Lazars, Jan., 1595; ibid., Wills, 1595, 72, will of William Bland, 1595.
 3. The butcher, Anthony Pearsonn of Asfordby, owned an axe, a cleaver, and a hatchet. He seems to have been no more than a specialist in butchery, and not involved in the leather trade; ibid., PR/1/16/155, inventory of Anthony Pearsonn, Asfordby, 1597.
 4. But see infra, Ch. III, pp. 103 and n., 105, 115-6.

There are seventy-two village craft inventories from the period 1602-1711, of which thirty-four date from 1602-46.¹ Eighteen of these thirty-four come from common field villages and ten more are from Burton Lazars and Kirby Bellars. There was not yet a clear separation of interests between crafts and agriculture, and in most cases farming at some level provided the major livelihood, especially among the wealthier craftsmen. The only men who had no stake in agriculture were a shearman from Scalford, a tailor from Asfordby and a petty chapman from Burton Lazars.² The shearman and the tailor were worth only £6 1s 4d and £2 18s 4d respectively, and they may have supplemented their livings by labouring. The petty chapman was probably itinerant. He sold a wide variety of smallwears as well as cloth, and, while resident in Burton, would have made many of his sales in Melton and elsewhere. Several other men were largely dependent upon their craft, none more so than Robert Allat, a glover in Asfordby.³ The major item in his inventory was wool valued at almost £9 and some pelts in his lime pits. Like his predecessor Thomas Dubleday, Allat's business exhibits the transition among glovers from leather working to wool dealing.⁴

Of the thirty-four craftsmen appearing in the inventories 74 per cent were involved in textiles or building. The crafts which appeared most frequently were those of tailor (seven), weaver (six)

1. See Tables XI-XIV.

2. L.R.O., PR/1/40/2, inventory of William Robbinson, Scalford, March, 1638; *ibid.*, PR/1/37/177, inventory of Ralph Bowman, Asfordby, Oct., 1635; *ibid.*, PR/1/29/162, inventory of Richard Rye, Burton Lazars, Nov., 1620.

3. *Ibid.*, PR/1/21/24, inventory of Robert Allat, Asfordby, April, 1606.

4. *Infra*, Ch. III, pp. 108-9.

and carpenter (six). Both tailors and carpenters appeared among the more important craftsmen, but the weavers were mostly smaller scale. There is hardly any trace of leather working in the villages - Robert Allat was the sole representative apart from an Asfordby butcher.¹

Even though many of these inventories are of small craftsmen, as a source they are still socially selective. Do the parish register occupation entries for the 1630s and 1640s suggest a different pattern?

Between 1636 and 1649, excluding servants there were eighty-three men with non-agricultural occupations recorded in the parish registers of the villages; these are tabulated in Table X. This confirms that textiles were easily the predominant rural non-agricultural trade, and tailors and weavers are similarly confirmed as the most familiar village craftsmen. Wood and metal workers emerge as the next largest group, suggesting that their scale of work caused most of them to be excluded from probate matters. Certainly the local demand for wood and metal workers would enable men in most villages to earn a small living from this type of work.

Although Asfordby had the most craftsmen - nineteen - Burton Lazars and Kirby Bellars continued to show that the social and economic structures of large, enclosing settlements need not be transformed at a stroke as long as the provision for the small farmer and cottager at enclosure was reasonably generous. The real change was to come later, when it became clear that the long term prospects of such farmers and cottagers were very limited. Between them these two villages had twenty-two craftsmen named in their registers, while Little Dalby and

1. L.R.O., PR/1/40/101, inventory of Adam Underwood, Asfordby, June, 1638. In his shop Underwood had a table and a cleaver worth 5s 4d out of a total inventory value of £10 13s 4d.

villages, and eight more - four each - come from Burton Lazars and Kirby Bellars. The only craftsmen in enclosed villages who were concerned with probate were two weavers in Holwell, another weaver in Wyfordby, and a blacksmith who lived in Welby but whose workshop was in Abkettleby.

Textiles no longer appeared as the major rural trade, for building crafts now constituted 34 per cent of the total, with six carpenters, two plumbers, two masons, two slaters and one millwright. Perhaps here is an indication that the rehousing of the enclosing village refugees stimulated this particular trade, and all these craftsmen were to be found in the common field villages and in Kirby and Burton. On the other hand, building was overestimated in the inventories of the pre-1646 period, at least on the evidence of the parish registers, so it is possible that the same bias applies to the late century inventories.¹ The demise of the tailors - there were only two tailors' inventories, both from Great Dalby, and neither pointing to much of a business - is interesting because there were seven from the earlier period, among fewer inventories. The explanation is likely to be that tailoring in the valley was being monopolized by Melton where, in the last decades of the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth it was the craft which appeared most frequently in the parish register.² Weaving remained in evidence in some villages, but the ultimate task in clothing production was becoming increasingly an urban skill.

An important development is that many craftsmen were by now primarily reliant upon their craft for their living, and four of the ten

1. See Tables X, XIII.

2. See Table VII.

most valuable inventories contained farming stock which was worth less than 25 per cent of the total. This trend is most noticeable in the big common field villages of Scalford and Asfordby where most of the major craftsmen were based. John Fann, a plumber living in Scalford, had £8 worth of cattle and horses, but his glass, lead and solder was valued at £13 6s 0d, and his "plumbery lead" and tools were worth £14 13s 0d.¹ Fann was owed £80 by his creditors and his personal wealth altogether totalled over £90. More impressive still was Nathaniel Parte, a whittawer of Asfordby, who died in 1669. A cottager, Parte owned three cows, two heifers and a swine hog; in his shop and warehouse he had eighty horse hides, seven and a half bull hides, twenty pair of pipes, fifteen forehorse haltars, thirty-seven collars and twenty-four harnesses, in all valued at over £50.² This was enterprise on an urban scale.

A further indication of the increased importance of crafts in the bigger villages is the frequency with which large amounts of credit appeared in their inventories. Apart from Fann, Parte was owed £50 in bonds, William Awood, a Scalford blacksmith, was owed £31 10s 0d, and Roger Parker, a carpenter in Great Dalby, was owed £23.³ Tools, timber and other trade wares were valued in almost every inventory, and often they were quite valuable, even among the smaller craftsmen. Edward Barnard, an Asfordby blacksmith, owned cattle, a pig, hay and a hive of bees worth £5, and bellows, vices, hammers and other implements worth £5 6s 8d; the inventory totalled £19 19s 6d.⁴

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1. L.R.O., PR/1/69/170, inventory of John Fann, Scalford, Dec., 1669.
 2. Ibid., PR/1/67/147, inventory of Nathaniel Parte, Asfordby, March, 1669.
 3. Ibid.; ibid., PR/1/71/152, inventory of William Awood sen., Scalford, Oct., 1671; ibid., PR/1/99/22, inventory of Roger Parker, Great Dalby, April, 1694.
 4. Ibid., PR/1/53/147, inventory of Edward Barnard, Asfordby, March, 1661.

There was, too, an increasing variety of occupations as men like William Bryan of Scalford, "Doctor of Phissick", James Bullar, also of Scalford, basketmaker, and Thomas Corner of Asfordby, sleamaker, began to appear in the probate records.¹ The scope of one or two enterprises provides an ironic twist in that enclosed village operators had premises in common field townships: Thomas Haggett, a locksmith, was resident in Kirby Bellars but he owned a shop in Melton which contained £7 12s 8d worth of goods, in addition to his shop in Kirby complete with its bellows, hammers, tongs, files, chisels, locks and other tools.² John Holliday of Welby was a blacksmith whose shop was in Abkettleby, the nearby common field village.³

Around the turn of the seventeenth century the parish registers provide a very unsatisfactory check on the occupational information found in the probate records for certain villages. Asfordby is best served by register entries from 1695 to 1707, when there appeared five weavers, two shoemakers, a tailor, a glover, a fellmonger, a carpenter, a tiler, a blacksmith and a miller. What these few registers do show is that there were more textile workers around than the probate records suggest. In particular, there were eight weavers and five tailors out of a total of thirty-nine occupations from five villages.⁴ This would

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1. Ibid., PR/1/91/152, inventory of William Bryan, Scalford, Feb., 1689; ibid., PR/1/99/126, inventory of James Bullar, Scalford, Jan., 1695; ibid., PR/1/89/32, inventory of Thomas Corner, Asfordby, May, 1686.
 2. Ibid., PR/1/69/220, inventory of Thomas Haggett, Kirby Bellars, 1670.
 3. Ibid., PR/1/62/49, inventory of John Holliday, Welby, Feb., 1664.
 4. Abkettleby/Holwell (1699-1722), Asfordby (1695-1707), Burton Lazars (1680), Sysonby (1686).

tend to indicate that the villagers retained some role in local textiles manufacture, but that the participants were fairly insignificant in scale.¹

The redistribution or, at worst, the elimination of skills is evident. In the sixteenth century, and even during the early seventeenth century rural crafts were spread about fairly evenly, although the smaller villages naturally had very few. By 1700 the enclosures which caused the squeezing out of people from one village into another had the same effect on crafts. When population dwindled there was little opportunity for non-agricultural occupations to survive. Where population increased people with or without special skills were drawn in: this was true of villages as well as towns. Nevertheless towns offered more opportunity and more hope for men and their families, and from the middle of the sixteenth century migration into Melton, from the local enclosing villages as well as from elsewhere, was continuous. Asfordby and Scalford grew quickly up to the late seventeenth century, but Melton's experience was in a class by itself. Moreover, while the big common field villages certainly boasted concentrations of craftsmen these were undoubtedly secondary in importance to the crafts and services which Melton could offer.

In the next chapter the roles of both townsmen and villagers in the valley's marketing and manufacturing, and in the provision of services, are assessed together, but before moving on it is worth recalling the part played by the townsmen in the agricultural output of the valley. Throughout the period Melton's farmers were at the head of arable enterprise. In the production of bread and ale for

1. Infra, Ch. III, p. 122.

consumption in the valley the Melton farming community was of great, perhaps crucial importance, and this importance increased as the conversion of arable to pasture proceeded. The Melton farmers were also major graziers, and their close involvement in the local agrarian economy is emphasised by their exploitation of the pasture resources of other townships in the area. There can be no mistaking the complete blurring of the 'urban' and the 'rural' in this, the most fundamental sector of the valley's economy.

III

PROSPERITY AND POVERTY IN AN ELEMENTAL ECONOMIC SYSTEM¹

In this chapter it is proposed to examine the main pillars of local marketing and trading, and of such manufacturing processes as the Wreake Valley supported. The export of wool emerges as the economic activity upon which the basic prosperity of the valley depended, although the relative importance of meat exports, while probably great, remains obscure.

There was no significant manufacture to be found anywhere in the valley, although Melton did act as something of a manufacturing centre in that there were concentrated the local leather trades. Melton's major functions, though, were as a distribution point for the valley's wool (a role which fluctuated) and as the local retailing and provisioning centre which suffered no real competition from rural-based traders. Although the most rapid growth had ended by the 1650s, population expansion in the valley was almost continuous. Under these conditions the local market town thrived throughout the period, thus giving rise to some great successes in retailing and provisioning.

Melton's overall prosperity during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was secure under the conditions of the prevalent marketing system and demographic developments, but this prosperity was very

1. See Maps VI and VII. These credit links between Melton and other settlements and between the 15 sample villages and settlements other than Melton have been found in probate inventories of Melton and of the 15 villages. It is intended that these Maps be considered alongside Maps VIII-XII in hinting at the approximate extent of the economic and social system which, perhaps, centred on the town, infra, Ch. V.

limited in its social coverage, and with it, hand in hand, strode chronic poverty. As a centre of employment opportunities Melton was singularly unrewarding, yet population growth, the necessary precondition of agrarian and retail prosperity, meant that immigrants poured into the town from the mid-sixteenth century - a process which probably did not abate substantially until the middle of the seventeenth century when population pressure eased. Added to this was the displacement of peasant farmers and their families from their holdings in enclosing villages: again, agrarian progress and prosperity was socially crippling. Thus, while Melton offered advancement for some, for many it was a deadly trap. Such textiles, leather, building, wood and metal crafts as the purely local demand could support were saturated and provided very limited relief to the underemployed who continued to rest their hopes on the town. Spinning, victualling and labouring supplemented the pool of employment, but it was still pitifully small.

The discussion in this chapter concentrates heavily upon Melton itself, simply because the town was at the heart of the valley's economy, and because it is there that the various elements in the economy can be seen to coalesce. This approach is designed to strengthen rather than detract from the concept of the economic unity of Melton's market area.

Various aspects of the local economy are dealt with in some detail. This has been done in order to derive the greatest premium from the recording of so many occupations in the town and village parish registers, and from the several hundred probate inventories and wills which have been examined. Anything less than such a detailed survey runs the risk of superficiality, and of repeating the familiar mistake of systematically relating a town to its area in economic terms.

(i) The wool trade and textiles manufacture

By the early fourteenth century Melton was already one of the Midlands' major wool collecting centres. Although little is known of developments during the fifteenth century it is clear that the town played an important role in the export of wool from the Wreake Valley during the Tudor period, and that Merchant Staplers living in Melton were pre-eminent in the trade. Their grip on wool exports loosened as the overseas market shrank and the home market blossomed, enabling other dealers to move in. Eventually the Staplers faded away, and while wool dealers continued to conduct business some big growers began to treat direct with clothiers and their agents. Perhaps owing to the uncertainty of markets caused by the Civil War and aggravated by disease Melton dealers once more assumed some control over wool exports, but with the re-establishment of stability and the rise of the worsted industry in the North the big Melton dealers disappeared for good.

It would be extremely difficult to present a case for the importance of textiles manufacture of any kind in the valley at any time during the period. Only the spinning of yarn, mostly linen, ever seems to have achieved anything other than purely local significance, and only during the early seventeenth century. There are signs that hosiery was beginning to become of some importance right at the end of the seventeenth century but even then it had nowhere near reached the status of an industry. Evidence of the existence of any capitalist clothiers is singularly lacking, and the major figures in the clothing process were those involved in its initial stages - wool growers and, at times, dealers.

(a) The medieval wool trade

Because of the vitality of Melton's wool trade in the early fourteenth century the town enjoyed great prosperity.¹ A reflection of this may still be seen in the parish church of St. Mary: while the lower stages of the building probably date from the second half of the thirteenth century, the main body was rebuilt between about 1290 and 1350. From the first three decades of the fourteenth century date the Galilee porch and the elaborate aisled transepts. By mid-century the central tower had probably been completed, except for the final stage.²

In 1338 three townsmen were summoned to attend the Westminster Trade Council of that year, an indication of the significant role which Melton's merchants were playing in the export of wool.³ In the same year the town was named as one of those from which Brabant merchants were to be supplied with wool following a treaty between the Duke of Brabant and "the king's enemies". The merchants were given a short time to collect 2,200 sacks of wool at Ipswich then depart the realm.⁴

The greatest of the medieval Melton wool merchants was Walter Prest, who paid 22s 0d out of the town's tax assessment of £8 1s 0d in 1327. With others Prest lent large sums of money to Edward III to finance the latter's continental wars, and in return Prest was

1. There was a Woolhouse in Melton by 1348-9. The arms of the Merchants of the Staple were found in the hall window of a building formerly standing at the east end of the town. Possibly this marked the site of the Woolhouse. Nichols, II, Part I, pp. 243, 248.
2. W.G. Hoskins, The Heritage of Leicestershire, p. 41. Hoskins describes Melton church as "one of the most beautiful and stately parish churches in England", ibid., p. 27.
3. Nichols, II, Part I, p. 242.
4. Hunt, Notes on Medieval Melton Mowbray 1077-1507, p. 43.

allowed trading privileges: in 1343-4 he was one of thirteen merchants who were granted all the customs in the realm for three years upon payment of £50,000 yearly.¹ Prest's scale of operations was immense and he exported a consignment of wool worth £3,536 in 1339, and 20,000 woolfells in 1541.²

Other important mercantile dynasties of the fourteenth century were the Orgar, Burgeys and Ruskyn families. Three Orgars appear in the list of taxpayers of 1327.³ In 1351 John Orgar was exporting through Boston, and in the 1381 Poll Tax John Orgar, franklin, and his wife paid 4s 0d, one of the highest assessments.⁴ In 1327 Ralph Burgeys paid the third highest amount in the lay subsidy.⁵ In 1338 the collectors of customs in Hull were instructed to make allowance of £376 14s 6d to Ralph Burgeys, and two years later the king acknowledged his indebtedness to Burgeys for £100.⁶ In 1347 Richard Burgeys was ordered to provide a wool store to receive the king's wool for the County of Rutland, and in the 1381 Poll Tax William Burgeys, Esq., and his wife were assessed at 5s 0d.⁷ Richard Ruskyn appears in Melton by 1371 when he was involved in a plea concerning wool belonging to him which had been detained by two other men.⁸ In

1. Ibid., p. 53.
2. Ibid., pp. 45-7. Ports used by Prest were London, Hull and Boston, ibid., pp. 45-50.
3. Ibid., p. 38.
4. Ibid., pp. 60, 69. John's son Robert was a merchant of London in 1389, ibid., p. 75. The Orgars gave their name to the Orgar Leys, a parcel of pasture purchased by the Town Estate in 1596.
5. Ibid., p. 38.
6. Ibid., p. 38.
7. Ibid., pp. 58, 69.
8. Ibid., p. 66.

the Poll Tax of 1381 he is described as a merchant and he paid the highest assessment of 10s 0d; in the same return Thomas Ruskyn, merchant, paid 5s 0d.¹

From the fifteenth century, a period of recession for Melton in marketing terms, we have fleeting glimpses of the continuance of the wool trade. Robert Ashby was variously described as woolman, chapman and merchant between 1418 and 1421.² The Ruskyns survived, despite the attentions of the Waltham family, into the sixteenth century, and their heirs were the prominent Lacy family. The Orgars and Burgeyses lasted into the 1550s.³ In 1470 John a Woode was described as Merchant of the Staple of Calais; he died in the early sixteenth century, and his will is dated 1509.⁴

(b) The sixteenth century

The prominence of wool traders in Melton survived into (or revived during) the sixteenth century, and two of the three most highly assessed men in the 1524 subsidy, William Waryng and Bartholomew Brokesby, were Merchant Staplers.⁵ The top assessment was paid by

1. Ibid., pp. 71-2. A footnote to the emergence of the Ruskyns as the major wool merchants in Melton is what appears to have been a feud between them and the Waltham family, one of whom, Roger, was appointed to supervise royal revenues from the wool trade in Leicestershire in November 1395. Just after Easter of that year Roger's son Robert killed Thomas Ruskyn in Melton on market day, and was pardoned. In August 1400 Roger and Robert were said to have murdered Richard Ruskyn the younger by striking him with a variety of weapons. Roger was later appointed one of the collectors of tenths and fifteenth in Leicestershire, ibid., pp. 79, 81.
2. Ibid., pp. 83-4.
3. Ibid., p. 88, Nichols, II, Part I, p. 243.
4. Hunt, Notes on Medieval Melton Mowbray, p. 92; Nichols, II, Part I, p. 254; P.R.O., PROB 11/16, f.29, will of John Woode, April, 1509.
5. P.R.O., E.179.133/108; Ibid., PROB 11/29, f.4, will of William Waryng, 1542; Philip E. Hunt, The Story of Melton Mowbray (1979 ed.), Appendix II.

Robert Porver, a name unfamiliar among Melton records; indeed this is the only appearance noted. Porver, who was assessed on £80 in goods, was possibly a member of the wealthy county family of wool dealers who were operating from Lutterworth at the time.¹ If so it seems likely that Porver was resident in Melton for at least part of the year or he would not have been taxed there. By the time of the 1543 subsidy Porver had disappeared and the Waryngs and Brokesbys headed the assessment.²

Apart from the Waryngs and Brokesbys and their descendants there were at least four more Merchant Staplers who lived in Melton during the century. This concentration of wool merchants in the town confirms Melton's continuing importance as a wool centre.

These men were at the peak of the town's socio-economic hierarchy. In the 1571 subsidy Christopher Whitehead easily headed the list.³ The son-in-law of William Waryng, he was very prominent in town administration and was a Warden of the pre-Reformation religious guilds according to deponents in a court case in 1577.⁴ In 1559 Whitehead was in charge of the Lord of Misrule receipts, and from 1565 to 1569 he was responsible for the raising of money for the purchase of the Spinneys by the town.⁵ He was one of the men entrusted with conducting town business in London, and from 1547 - when the main series of parish documents begins - until the 1570s he was active as one of the inner circle of

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1. Goodacre, Lutterworth in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, p. 211. Leicester freemen's records reveal several versions of the name, e.g. Paver, Pavyer, Payver, Poryr. Register of the Freemen of Leicester 1196-1770, edited by Henry Hartopp.
 2. P.R.O., E.179.133/135.
 3. L.R.O., DG.36/206.
 4. P.R.O., PROB 11/38, f.22, will of Elizabeth Waryng, Sept., 1556; L.R.O., DG.36/326/10, depositions of Henry Tallis, Robert Hawley and Bartholomew Wormwell.
 5. Ibid., DG.36/286, DG.36/284/7.

signatories to town decisions and accounts as well as being a feoffee of the Town Estate itself.¹ By 1577, at the age of sixty-nine, Whitehead was living in Denton in Lincolnshire, probably in retirement.² In this he followed in the footsteps of the Waryngs who, however, continued their business in Melton. In 1565 the head of the family William II, nephew of the aforementioned William, was living at the Waryngs' farm in neighbouring Thorpe Arnold which had been in the family since the elder William was alive.³ In 1579, though, William Waryng III was a Melton resident. He was probably conducting the trading side of the family business after the country retirement of his father.⁴

Michael Bentley first appeared in the town records in 1565, although he said that he had been living in the town since about 1550.⁵ Nobody of this surname was mentioned in the 1524 or 1543 subsidy lists, so it is likely that he was an example of a wealthy young merchant migrating into Melton at a time when many bigger towns were complaining that such figures were deserting them or refusing to take up permanent residence.⁶ In 1566 Bentley went to London as Melton's representative concerning the impending court case over the concealment of lands at the dissolution of religious houses.⁷ He was

1. E.g., *ibid.*, DG.36/284/11, DG.36/299.
2. Ibid., DG.36/326/10, deposition of Christopher Whitehead.
3. L.R.O., DG.36/299; P.R.O., PROB 11/29, f. 4, will of William Waryng, 1542. It was this William the younger who lent £100 to the town with which to purchase the Spinneys, *ibid.*, DG.36/299.
4. Ibid., Administrations, 1573-85, inventory of Thomas Cowper, Thorpe Arnold, Dec. 1579.
5. Ibid., DG.36/159/2, DG.36/326/8, deposition of Michael Bentley.
6. Charles Phythian-Adams, 'Urban Decay in Late Medieval England', in Towns in Societies, edited by Philip Abrams and E.A. Wrigley, pp. 173-80.
7. L.R.O., DG.36/284/8.

a feoffee of the Town Estate and at various times held the offices of Townwarden, Churchwarden and Constable. Always among the major contributors to the poor he appeared in the list of twenty-six men who were responsible for the payment of the 1571 subsidy, and he continued to rank among the half dozen wealthiest townsmen until his death sometime around the beginning of the seventeenth century.¹

In 1577, Bentley claimed to have known the Grammar School in Melton for twenty-eight years, that is, since he was eighteen years old. He stated that he could only vouch for the use of the town lands for the upkeep of the school for ten or twelve years past "and for longer he knoweth not because he saieth he hath travelled much abroad and beyond the seas for merchandise."²

Of Leonard Lacy we know little. He was the second son of Richard Lacy of Halifax who had married Margaret, the co-heir of Jasper Ruskyn, last in the line of great Melton wool merchants.³ Leonard was bequeathed money and "his freedom of the Staple" by William Waryng, Merchant Stapler, in 1542.⁴ He was a signatory to a town document in 1557, but no more is known about him thereafter, except that his younger brother John was a draper in 1572.⁵

William Alkyne, the last identifiable stapler found in Melton, first appeared in the subsidy list of 1592. He was one of the town's wealthiest inhabitants, and he served as Townwarden in 1598.⁶ Alkyne was still alive in 1610 when the Town Estate purchased from him some meadow ground and leys of grass.⁷

1. Ibid., DG.36/206.

2. Ibid., DG.36/326/8, deposition of Michael Bentley.

3. Nichols, II, Part I, p. 264.

4. P.R.O., PROB 11/29, f.4, will of William Waryng, 1542.

5. L.R.O., DG.36/159/7.

6. Ibid., DG.36/159/1.

7. Ibid., DG.25/10/5.

If Melton could support Staplers in some numbers to the end of the sixteenth century then clearly the town remained an important collection point for the valley's wool, the production of which was increasing owing to the spread of enclosure and the general intensification of sheep farming noted in Chapter II.

Nor did the locally based Stapler have a monopoly on the redistribution of wool, for from earlier in the century comes evidence of the wool dealer operating from Melton. Bartholomew Hose, a substantial glover living in the town during the second quarter of the century, was the agent for John Johnson, a Merchant Stapler who was resident at Glapthorn in Northamptonshire. Their correspondence of 1545-6 shows that Hose relied upon a system of chapmen to collect wool and fells, and then Johnson would have the merchandise sent by carrier to Boston where it would be loaded and shipped out.¹

Evidence of the mechanism of the transference of wool from sheep farmer to traders is difficult to come by. Hose himself did not come into contact with growers, and his letters to Johnson suggest that the chapmen were paid for the wool after Hose received the cash from Johnson and not before.² Thus the exporter was paying for wool at third hand, and the dealer - the local contact - employed mobile traders to conduct business with the growers.

In 1541 a Brentingby farmer owed "Master Waryng" of Melton £1 0s 4d at his death.³ In 1557 a farmer of Burton Lazars owed 6s 8d to "Master

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1. Letters and Papers of Henry VIII, Addenda, I, Part II, 1538-47, pp. 582, 586; ibid., XX, Jan.-July 1545, pp. 389, 393; ibid., XXI, Jan.-Aug. 1546, pp. 304, 653; ibid., Sept. 1546-Jan. 1547, p. 161. Johnson operated a network of wool dealers during the 1540s; Peter J. Bowden, The Wool Trade in Tudor and Stuart England, p. 78; Barbara Winchester, Tudor Family Portrait (1955).
 2. Hose's wife went in person to collect money from Johnson on at least one occasion. In a letter from Sabine Johnson to her husband John she said: "This day hath Bartholomew Hosse wife been here, who came afoot, as like a slut as ever she was. She would have money but I had it not for her", ibid., p. 165.

3. L. R. O. Wills and Inventories, 1540/60A, inventory of Nicholas

Whytehead".¹ Although neither villager was an important sheep farmer these debts perhaps represented advances by the Staplers for wool as yet undelivered. Perhaps the men were agents in the villages for the merchants. Later in the century the only two cases of indebtedness between a Stapler and a villager involved the villager rather than the stapler extending credit. In one case William Waryng junior owed £1, and in the other Michael Bentley also owed £1.² These sums are small, and they may not have represented the extension of credit in wool dealing, but taken together they do suggest that credit was at the basis of even small transactions. Only one case has been found of debt involving a Stapler and another Melton resident: at James Levett's death in 1599 this important farmer and mercer was owed £19 by "Mr Alkynes" and "Mr Mitton". Levett owned 171 sheep, and his wool clip had been disposed of by the 1st October when the inventory was taken.³ The evidence is extremely flimsy but there is a hint here that the Staplers were buying wool on credit by the late sixteenth century. If so, was this a symptom of harder times looming? It is certainly true that by this time the days of the Staplers were numbered, so it would not be surprising if this were so.

What other evidence is there of the movement of the valley's wool? In most cases it is obvious that wool stocks represented the

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1. Ibid., 1557(K-7), inventory of Henry Sheperd, Burton Lazars, Sept., 1557.
 2. Ibid., Administrations, 1573-85, inventory of Thomas Cowper, Thorpe Arnold, Dec. 1579; ibid, Wills and Inventories, 1581/26, inventory of Thomas Cowper, Thorpe Arnold, December, 1581. (These are certainly different men.)
 3. Ibid., PR/1/17/34, inventory of James Levett, Oct., 1599.

owner's clip which had not yet been sold. Not until the 1590s did any wool stocks in the villages exceed £4 in value, and then only in two instances: a Thorpe Arnold farmer who owned over 100 sheep worth £30 had £10 worth of wool, and Thomas Dubleday of Asfordby had £9 in wool and £1 in wool and hemp.¹ The case of Dubleday is much the more interesting because he was a glover who owned no sheep at his death. Evidently he was purchasing fells and dealing in wool. Although on this scale individually he would have been no serious rival for the staplers Dubleday must be viewed in the national context of the rise of the leather-working wool dealer.²

The only other substantial stocks of wool found during the sixteenth century were owned by two Melton farmers. John Stret had 60 stone of wool worth £12 13s 4d sometime after harvest in 1537, and he owned 260 sheep.³ Robert Hebb alias More had 120 fleeces weighing 15 stone 10 lb and worth £7 10s 0d in September 1582; he owned a flock of 143 sheep.⁴ It is possible that both men were keeping their wool in order to benefit from the seasonal rise in price, although to whom and how they were intending to sell is impossible to tell.⁵

What was the destination of the wool grown by Stret and Moore, and bought by Dubleday and the local staplers? The wool gathered by

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1. Ibid., PR/1/16/186, inventory of John Scarborough, sen., Thorpe Arnold, 1597; ibid., PR/1/15/56, inventory of Thomas Dubleday, Asfordby, June, 1595.
 2. Bowden, op.cit., pp. 80-3, 113-5; infra, pp. 108-9.
 3. L.R.O., Wills and Inventories, 1537/44A, inventory of John Stret, 1537; supra, Ch. II, p. 43.
 4. Ibid., 1582, inventory of Robert Hebb alias More, Sept., 1582.
 5. An Act of 1552 which was designed to bring down the price of wool forbade growers to keep their wool for longer than one year, providing they had received a reasonable offer, Bowden, op.cit., p. 116.

Hose's chapmen was shipped abroad. Michael Bentley spent much of his time overseas up to the 1560s, and he and Christopher Whitehead were chosen by Melton's inhabitants to represent their interests in London, probably because they spent periods there upon their own business and they would be familiar with the problems and contacts to be encountered in the capital. There was, after all, no point in belonging to the Company of Staplers unless the intention was to export wool abroad. Right into the 1550s the Staplers continued to export, and something of a peak was attained in 1553 owing to a fall in prices - due in turn to a contraction in cloth exports - inflation and the rising price of Spanish wool.¹ With the fall of Calais in 1558 the export of raw wool slumped and: "It was a feeble trade which the Company now carried on."²

The growth of the woollen textile industry in England during the fifteenth century meant that increasing amounts of wool were being distributed around this country instead of being sent abroad. The annual export of 30,000 sacks of wool in the fourteenth century had dwindled to 5,000 sacks by the sixteenth, and manufactured cloth became England's staple export.³

Leicestershire was not a centre of cloth manufacture in 1500 and during the fifteenth century its production of woollen cloth was negligible.⁴ The county's wool, though, short staple and above average in quality, was in great demand to supply the home industry,

1. Bowden, op.cit., p. 155.

2. Ibid., p. 57.

3. E. Lipson, A Short History of Wool and its Manufacture (Mainly in England) (1953), p. 61. Cloth exports trebled in the first half of the sixteenth century, Bowden, op.cit., p. 43.

4. Herbert Heaton, The Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries from the Earliest times up to the Industrial Revolution (1965 ed.), pp. 85-8.

especially the major manufacturing area, the West Country.¹ The expansion of manufacture in the South West meant that supplies of raw wool were being drawn increasingly from outside the region and by 1530 Gloucestershire clothiers were importing Leicestershire wool.² At the beginning of Mary's reign John Stephens, a Gloucestershire wool brogger, and two other Cotswold woolmen were prosecuted in Star Chamber for engrossing wool in nine counties including Leicestershire.³ The sale of wool by Leicestershire farmers, dispensing with the services of intermediaries, is noted in an estimate made in 1577 of transactions in Cirencester market which credits two Leicestershire husbandmen each with selling 60 stones.⁴ By the second half of the sixteenth century most Midlands wool was destined for the West Country broadcloth industry, and by about 1570 East Anglia too was tapping the Midlands source.⁵

It may be imagined, therefore, that in line with the national trend wool from the Wreake Valley was increasingly making its way across country to supply the native textiles industry. A combination of marketing techniques would have been employed: like Stret and Moore growers may have transported wool themselves, probably waiting until market prices were at optimum level; secondly, middlemen like Dubleday would buy fells and wool in some quantity from local growers and establish their own links with English clothiers;

1. Bowden, op.cit., pp. 31-2, 45, 72.

2. Ibid., p. 57.

3. G.D. Ramsay, The Wiltshire Woollen Industry: in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (1943), p. 9.

4. Bowden, op.cit., p. 84 n. Cirencester was a distribution centre for Midlands wool, ibid., p. 73.

5. Ibid., pp. 72, 65.

thirdly and most important, Staplers based in the market town would also buy direct from growers - or possibly use agents - and redirect the wool to the manufacturers, a trade which was replacing the dying export business.¹

Was all the marketing of raw wool? What of the local textiles manufacture, if any? Out of 194 probate inventories studied from the sixteenth century for Melton and the sample villages a total of forty included spinning wheels - almost exactly 20 per cent. The proportion was roughly the same in both town and villages.² The average value of inventories which included wheels in Melton was slightly lower than the average for all the town's sixteenth century inventories, while the corresponding value of village inventories which included wheels was actually higher than the average for all the village inventories.³ This cannot inspire confidence in any suggestion that the class of household excluded from probate would have been more likely to own a spinning wheel, at least in the villages. As the problems of underemployment and poverty in the town would be greater than in the villages during this period of population growth we should not be surprised at the difference in the findings between the two types of settlement.

Of the spinning wheels over 65 per cent were linen wheels as opposed to woolen wheels, although most inventories which listed

1. Bowden dates the switch to the internal market by Staplers to the 1560s, op.cit., p. 161.

2. 19.5 per cent in the villages, 23.5 per cent in the town - totals 27 and 13 respectively.

3. The figures are:

	<u>average value</u>	<u>average value of inventories with wheels</u>	<u>Sample</u>
Melton inventories	£57	£45	55
Village inventories	£41	£51	139

two or more wheels - twenty-five altogether - included both types.¹ There is no evidence to suggest that flax or hemp were grown in the valley but supplies could be had from the nearby Fens or from Rockingham Forest in Northamptonshire.² Certainly the spinning of linen yarn was more important locally than the spinning of woollen yarn, which reinforces the view that most wool was exported raw out of the region, a trade which we have seen was largely in the hands of Melton dealers.

Who was importing the flax? James Levett, mercer, for one. In his shop in 1599 he had 4 cwt 25 lb of rough flax and 1 cwt of hemp, worth altogether £9 13s 5d.³ With soap and silk these items were among Levett's most valuable wares. In addition he had 6s 0d worth of Flanders flax, presumably of a higher quality. How and where spinners bought their rough flax, or whether the work was put out to them by linen clothiers is impossible to tell. If Levett and other retailers were selling flax in their shops this suggests the existence of independent spinners in town and village who sold spun yarn in the market place. The single example of a man who owned spinning wheels, yarn and who put out yarn to a weaver was Roger Rylie, a major sheep farmer of Wyfordby.⁴

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1. A distinction was drawn in 19 of the 40 inventories which gave totals of 27 linen wheels and 18 woollen wheels.
 2. Joan Thirsk, Economic Policy and Projects: The Development of a Consumer Society in Early Modern England (1978), pp. 73, 144, and 'Stamford in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in The Making of Stamford, edited by Alan Rogers (1965), pp. 58-76.
 3. L.R.O., PR/1/17/34, inventory of James Levett, Oct., 1599.
 4. Ibid., PR/1/8/50, inventory of Roger Rylie, Wyfordby, Jan., 1586. Rylie owned wool, hemp, flax, 2 woollen wheels, 2 spinning wheels, some woollen yarn, and he had 20 yards of cloth worth £1 "at the weaver".

A similar lack of information besets any consideration of wool spinning. Judging by the infrequency with which woollen wheels were to be found in inventories this was not a widespread occupation, and probably production of woollen yarn represented no more than the partial supply of local demand.¹ Even if we suggest that spinning was more widespread among the lower levels of society than among the class concerned with probate, such a generous allowance still would not lead to the conclusion that it was a major cottage industry, especially in the villages.

In light of this it is not surprising that textile finishing in the Wreake Valley makes no outstanding impression. In the Melton probate records of the sixteenth century there were three weavers and one shearman represented, although two other men, a shepherd and a chandler, each owned looms.² In the villages only five weavers' inventories survive out of a total of 139. As none of these weavers was particularly wealthy once again the possibility is raised of more weavers operating who fell outside the probate class. This is an insoluble problem, although the foregoing discussion of spinning, and the reputation of the county as a non-textile producing area renders it unlikely that weavers were present in any numbers in the valley.³

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1. Only 15 out of 194 inventories specifically detailed woollen wheels; in 3 of these cases 2 wheels were listed.
 2. In Worcester, a town dominated by the cloth industry, 38 per cent of wills made before 1621 were made by weavers or 'clothiers', and the proportion was rising, Alan D. Dyer, The City of Worcester in the sixteenth century (1973), p. 82.
 3. In no writings on the county has textiles production ever emerged as a significant manufacture, e.g. Derek Charman, 'Wealth and Trade in Leicester in the Early Sixteenth Century', T.L.A.S., XXV (1949), pp. 69-97; W.G. Hoskins, 'An Elizabethan Provincial Town: Leicester', in his Provincial England, pp. 86-114; V.C.H. Leicestershire, III, pp. 1-56. It was hosiery for which Leicestershire became famous, and this not until the eighteenth century.

More information about textiles manufacture in Melton is contained in a list of householders drawn up by the Overseers of the Poor in 1572.¹ Compiled in response to a government enquiry into the town's provision for its resident poor the document gives the primary occupations of 110 persons. By supplementing this information with evidence obtained elsewhere it is possible to find the occupations of 113 of the 191 persons listed. Of the remaining seventy-eight persons, fifteen were recipients of poor relief, and eight of these lived solely by alms. Therefore a list can be compiled of the primary occupations of some 62 per cent of the town's active householders but this is a far from satisfactory indication of the work pattern. This is because almost all the people for whom no occupation can be found were described as "not able to give" to the poor. So, they comprised the poorer 30 per cent or thereabouts of Melton's workforce. The list therefore exhibits much the same degree of social selection as do the inventories, and the fact that there were only five weavers among the 113 occupations similarly does not exclude the possibility that there were more. Indeed the presence of two fullers does suggest that local cloth manufacture was not wholly insubstantial. Nevertheless two fullers hardly amounts to a major industry, and if we assume that fulling in the valley was confined largely to Melton then two men, who probably worked manually, may have found plenty of work servicing the small local production of cloth.²

1. L.R.O., DG.36/159/7. See Table VI.

2. There was a "walker" working in the village of Hoby (about 5 miles downriver from Melton) in the 1580s, to whom an Asfordby farmer owed 1s 0d in 1586. It is interesting that the walker was thus described because the implication is that he was fulling without the aid of a mill, *ibid.*, PR/1/8/95, inventory of Richard Heine, Asfordby, 1586. There is no trace of a fulling mill in Melton - the lack of sufficient water power may be the main reason why Leicestershire did not foster a textiles industry, of course.

It is thus extremely probable that textiles manufacture in the Wreake Valley was of little note. There were no great clothiers because there was no industry to control. It was the export of wool and the importation of cloth which were the limits of the valley's part in the country's premier non-agricultural industry.

(c) The early seventeenth century

Why did the Staplers cease functioning in Melton? Competition from other middlemen was a powerful factor. Despite legislation by successive Tudor governments which was designed to prevent middlemen from dealing in wool the value of these men to textiles manufacture was high. They could buy and sell in small amounts, sort and classify wool, and pay close attention to supplying specialist demand. In fact there was no essential difference between the internal trade conducted by Staplers and other dealers, hence the constant opposition of the former to the activities of their unofficially sanctioned brethren. Acts of 1465, 1489, 1531, 1546 and 1552 were measures aimed at controlling the activities of middlemen, and pressure on the government by the Staplers around the middle of the sixteenth century was especially strong because of the background of soaring wool prices.¹ From the 1570s the issue of licenses by the government allowing dealers to conduct their business legally accelerated.² This policy was probably little more than a method of capitalizing upon the increase in trading which resulted from the growth in production of the new draperies. As such it was a recognition of the proliferation of wool dealers. An increase in the price of wool during the 1570s presented the excuse

1. Bowden, op.cit., pp. 114-8.

2. Ibid., pp. 126 ff.

for more agitation against middlemen by large clothiers, mainly promoted by a desire to see the small manufacturer cut off from his raw material.¹ The Staplers - ignoring the fact that they themselves were merely middlemen who by then were concentrating on the internal market - blamed glovers and whittawers as the principal culprits in the price rise.²

The Staplers had no effective protection against the rise of other wool dealers. With the protracted demise of wool exports (they were actually forbidden by the government in 1614) the Staplers disappeared from Melton. Some of the trade formerly conducted by prominent figures like Christopher Whitehead was adopted by wool broggers such as Thomas Dubleday.³ Robert Allat was another Asfordby glover who was dealing in wool at the turn of the century. Although he owned no sheep at his death in April 1606 he had £18 15s 6d worth of wool plus beams and weights, besides pelts in his lime pits.⁴ The wool comprised over one third of Allat's total inventory value. It is most unfortunate that probate records for Melton between 1600 and the 1620s are so scarce because this was a crucial period in the area's wool trade. Not until the 1620s do we find the town's next glover's inventory; inevitably, Francis Willcox owned some wool as well as leather and skins, although at £2 in value and weighing $\frac{1}{2}$ cwt, not very much.⁵ Another glover, George Cotterill, owned 15 lb of wool in 1638.⁶ Again

1. Ibid., pp. 135-7.

2. Ibid., pp. 138-9.

3. Supra, pp. 96, 99-100.

4. L.R.O., PR/1/21/24, inventory of Robert Allat, Asfordby, April, 1606. At Loughborough two fellmongers were dealing in wool at the turn of the sixteenth century: ibid., PR/1/16/42, inventory of John Burton, Loughborough, April, 1597; ibid., PR/1/19/145, inventory of Bartholomew Tisteye, Loughborough, Jan., 1602.

5. Ibid., PR/1/32B/145, inventory of Francis Willcox, Oct., 1627.

6. Ibid., PR/1/40/70, inventory of George Cotterill, May, 1638.

this is not much, but Cotterill's entire wealth amounted to less than £6. In the 1634 levy for the repair of Melton's parish church the glovers made a very poor showing as a group and they numbered among the town's least prosperoud craftsmen: Cotterill and four other glovers who were named in the parish register between 1636 and 1638 were too poor even to be assessed.¹

In fact during the period 1600-1642 there was not a great deal of wool to be found in many inventories, either village or town. There is no doubt that the glovers were dealing but their scale of operation was small where they can be traced. It seems that substantial amounts of wool were leaving the valley by other means. At Brydgytt Pate's death in 1603 she had £100 worth of wool which means anything between about 16 and 25 cwt at local prices.² This was the clip from a sheep flock numbering over 800 and valued at over £400. George Bennet of Welby owned well over 1,500 sheep worth more than £1,000, and a woolhouse, winding tackle, weights and other implements.³ Bennett had disposed of his wool, and his cash, clothes, saddle and "horse furniture" amounted to £477. How were these huge amounts of wool leaving the valley if not via ordinary wool dealers?

At this juncture it is pertinent to consider the changing character of Leicestershire wool. In medieval times the county's wool was short staple, eminently suitable for the production of good quality woollen broadcloth. Hence the dependence of the West Country textiles industry on Midlands wool in the sixteenth century.⁴ The progress of

1. Ibid., 1.D41/4/XVII/77; infra, Appendix II, pp. 273-4.

2. Ibid., PR/1/20/90, inventory of Brydgytt Pate, Eyekettleby, Oct., 1603; supra, Ch. II, pp. 36-7.

3. Ibid., PR/1/35/6, inventory of George Bennet, Welby, 1632; supra, Ch. II, pp. 57-8.

4. Supra, pp. 101-2.

enclosure changed all this. Better fed sheep produced longer and coarser wool which was more suited to the production of worsted cloth.¹ Consequently the rise of the worsted industry was inevitable, as was the decline of woollen cloth manufacture, and the markets for Leicestershire wool changed.

The broadcloth industry in the West slowly contracted while the arrival of the new draperies during the later sixteenth century gave a new lease of life to the flagging East Anglian textiles manufacture.² By the early seventeenth century much Midlands wool was destined for East Anglia.³

Meanwhile, in the North of England it was the manufacture of coarse woollens like kersies which was the major concern until the later seventeenth century when worsted became established there.⁴ The increasingly coarse Leicestershire wool was ideal for Northern manufacture and by 1615 it was being carried in quantity to the West Riding and Lancashire.⁵ By the 1630s the county's wool was in such great demand from the East Anglian and Northern textiles industries that it was in short supply, and Yorkshire clothiers were being forced to draw upon inferior wools from Scotland, Ireland and the North.⁶ Nevertheless, regular consignments of Leicestershire wool were still being sent to the Doncaster market in the second quarter of the century, although by the 1640s this situation may have been altering.⁷

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1. As Heaton stated: "the long wool of Lincolnshire and Leicestershire, the very heart's desire of the worsted maker", op.cit., p. 271.
 2. Bowden, op.cit., pp. 46-9, 52-3.
 3. Ibid., pp. 64, 72.
 4. Ibid., p. 54.
 5. Heaton, op.cit., p. 118.
 6. Ibid., p. 205; Bowden, op.cit., p. 55.
 7. Ibid., p. 70; infra, pp. 120-1.

As for the mechanism of purchase and delivery, Heaton says that Yorkshire clothiers "often journeyed into the wool area of Lincolnshire and Leicestershire".¹ Some 1638 lawsuit depositions show that "many" Yorkshire clothiers journeyed into these two counties to buy wool.² Only the wealthier clothiers could afford the time and expense of these expeditions and naturally only big purchases would be economically viable. In all probability here lies the answer to the question as to how important sheep farmers like the Pates and the Bennets made their sales. As enclosure invariably meant fewer farmers and bigger flocks the large scale deal would have become more and more common up to about the middle of the seventeenth century when the movement slackened off.

Despite the personal attention to buying which some clothiers were able to give, the smaller clothier was catered for by middlemen who bought wool at its source then took it and resold it, sorted and classified, to Northern clothiers.³ It is evident that the Wreake Valley middlemen so far identified did not operate on sufficient scale to be able to spend time in the carriage of wool to Yorkshire. Moreover, all were working glovers. It is most likely that the middlemen were professional Northern dealers who could make maximum capital out of their local knowledge of the clothiers and their particular requirements. In East Anglia, too, dealers transported wool from the Midlands and resold in local markets.⁴

We have seen that in the sixteenth century textiles manufacture

1. Heaton, op.cit., p. 118.
2. Bowden, op.cit., p. 70.
3. Heaton, op.cit., p. 119.
4. Bowden, op.cit., p. 65.

in the valley was of a subsistence nature, consisting of a minor production of mostly linens and kerseys. Interestingly, the frequency with which spinning wheels occurred in probate inventories rose during the first half of the seventeenth century, especially in the Melton inventories.¹ This change deserves more consideration.

The first point to notice is that there were over twice as many linen wheels as woollen wheels, so the sixteenth century pattern was repeated. Flax and hemp were still being imported and sold by the town's mercers, one of whom, George Merrill, was also a carrier.² The second point is that no fewer than thirty-five of the forty-eight Melton inventories which listed wheels contained no sheep. Even taking into account seasonal variation in farm stock this means that either work was being put out to the spinners or they were buying small amounts of wool as well as flax in the market or in shops. Furthermore, half of the town's inventories listing wheels totalled £20 or under, compared with an average of £70 for all Melton's early seventeenth century inventories. In this sense the increase in spinning can be seen as having taken place largely among the poorer section of the community. The wealthy tended to have more wheels, and totals of five or more were not uncommon, whereas the poor often had only one.

It is noticeable that by the 1620s many more persons who would have been excluded from the probate class in the sixteenth century were now making inventories, and this is in part, though not by itself

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1. The proportion of inventories which include spinning wheels are:
 Melton: Sixteenth Century = 23.5 per cent; 1600-1647 = 41.5 per cent.
 Villages: Sixteenth Century = 19.5 per cent; 1600-1646 = 33 per cent.
 The sample sizes were: Melton 55 and 115 respectively; villages 139 and 140 respectively.
 2. E.g. L.R.O., PR/1/32B/15; inventory of George Merrill, March, 1627; ibid., PR/1/40/289, inventory of Dorothy Briggs, Dec., 1637.

responsible for the increased evidence of spinning as revealed by these documents. The fact is that the third and fourth decades of the seventeenth century were a period of chronic economic and social depression all over the country. In broad economic terms Melton did not suffer a great deal from the slump in the textile industry engendered by failing overseas markets and worsened by the Cockayne project because it could not bite deeply in a non-industrialised area. Nevertheless all sectors of the economy felt the blows of depression, dearth and disease during these years. Moreover, Melton was stricken by a very high level of immigration caused by a combination of rapid population expansion and enclosure in the Wreake Valley.¹ In the face of serious underemployment it is highly probable that more of the town's inhabitants turned to spinning as a means of eking out a living.²

Neither the problem of poverty nor the concomitant resort to yarn spinning was in as much evidence in the villages. Some were showing signs of strain imposed by demographic pressures: Scalford, for example, exhibited an even higher proportion of spinning wheels in its inventories than Melton. The erratic progress of enclosure and the small size of the sample renders it unwise, however, to distinguish between common field and enclosing villages. The overall picture is the more significant one, and this shows - if the evidence

1. Supra, Ch. II; infra, Ch. IV, pp. 198-202.

2. Corporations around the country reacted to poverty by initiating schemes to provide work for the poor, and more often than not spinning yarn was the staple occupation, e.g. Paul Slack 'Poverty and politics in Salisbury 1597-1666' in Crisis and Order in English Towns, edited by Peter Clark and Paul Slack, p. 182; Wallace T. MacCaffrey, Exeter, 1540-1640: The Growth of an English County Town (1975 ed.), pp. 114-5; cf. Joan Thirsk, 'Industries in the Countryside' in Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England, edited by F.J. Fisher (1961), pp. 70-80.

of spinning shows anything at all - that it was Melton which was suffering the most.

There may well have been an increase in the exportation of yarn from the valley as a result of growing popularity of spinning, assuming, that is, that it was not being woven locally. It was during the 1630s that the middleman trade in yarn became a national issue, although the yarn broker had first come to real prominence early in the seventeenth century.¹ It is probably no coincidence that agitation by clothiers against yarn middlemen increased during this period if the surmise is correct that poverty was responsible for more spinning being undertaken. In the West of England most yarn passed through the hands of yarn badgers who became major figures in the spinning industry: Cornish yarn was sent to the Devon textiles industry, Dorset yarn was sent into Wiltshire, Somerset and Berkshire.² At the other side of the country the Norfolk industry was being supplied with yarn by neighbouring counties.³ The transference of yarn from the area where it was spun to where it was woven and finished was, therefore, a well established trade. No particularly large amounts of yarn were to be found in any Wreake Valley inventories so it looks as if it was disposed of soon after it was spun, perhaps in the market place.

Some yarn did find its way into the hands of wealthy townsmen like Andrew Lacy, vintner, and William Trigge, mercer, who owned no wheels of their own. These men may have employed spinners, or simply

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1. Bowden, op.cit., p. 174; G.D. Ramsay, The Wiltshire Woollen Industry, pp. 89-90. As early as 1429 the middleman trade in yarn had been forbidden by Act, Bowden, op.cit., p. 165. In 1615 a proclamation commanded the Act's observance, ibid.
 2. Ibid., pp. 50, 59-60.
 3. Ibid., p. 67.

purchased yarn in the market, but they represented local demand rather than capitalist enterprise. Spinning in the valley in the first half of the seventeenth century is best regarded as a method of supplementing precarious livings and not as an initiative by local clothiers. This was the stage in textile processing which required raw material, no capital investment and little skill, and as such it was ideal for what turned out to be a temporary expedient by townsmen and, to a lesser extent, villagers, when faced by severe economic pressures.

In the village parish registers of the 1630s and 1640s fourteen weavers appeared with two clothworkers, one shearmen and one silkweaver, while between 1602 and 1646 six weavers, one clothworker and one shearmen left inventories.¹ All the textile workers who left inventories lived in the big villages of Asfordby, Burton Lazars, Great Dalby, Kirby Bellars and Scalford. In the Melton registers 1636-8 ten weavers appeared with a dyer, a hatter and a bonelacemaker; among the probate records, 1600-49, were one weaver, one hatter and one man whose only identifiable source of income apart from victualling was the spinning of yarn and its sale from a stall in the market.²

The combined population of the sample villages in about 1640 was in the order of 2,000, which was somewhat more than that of Melton itself: eighteen textile workers in the parish registers does nothing to dispel the belief that local cloth manufacture was nowhere near sufficient to supply even local requirements.³ The rural weavers who left inventories averaged two looms each so there was no large scale

1. See Tables X, XI, XIII.

2. L.R.O., PR/1/36/36, inventory of Thomas Barnes, April, 1634. See Table VII.

3. In the period 1630-9 12 villages - excluding Eyekettleby, Welby and Kirby Bellars - averaged a total of just under 60 baptisms a year. From 1640-9 the average was just over 60 a year.

production in substantial workshops.¹ The wealthiest textile worker was John Robinson, clothworker of Scalford, whose inventory totalled over £120, but 80 per cent of this was farming stock, the most important item among which was his cattle.² Robinson owned sixty-three sheep, some wool, three linen wheels, one woollen wheel, yarn and three pairs of shears, so he and his family were active at every stage of cloth production. Nevertheless it is obvious that his main livelihood was farming, and his shears and "other trade things" were valued at only £1. Edward Wilforth of Kirby Bellars was the most prosperous weaver with goods valued at over £40.³ In his shop he had two looms, and he owned $\frac{1}{2}$ stone of wool, three wheels and 18 lb of hemp yarn.

Similarly, the Melton textiles manufacture was low key. The appearance of only one weaver in the probate records, whose wealth totalled £13 13s 2d, indicates the low economic status of the trade.⁴ The latter Richard Levitt was worth only £2 4s 0d at his death in 1638.⁵ Neither the dyer nor the bonelacemaker who appeared in the parish register was of sufficient wealth to be concerned with probate. The relative importance of the weavers in Melton's economy may be gauged by the fact that they were outnumbered in the registers by carpenters, among others.⁶

1. Cf. V.C.H. Leicestershire, IV, p. 87.

2. L.R.O., PR/1/4/79, inventory of John Robinson, Scalford, August, 1639.

3. Ibid., PR/1/32B/137, inventory of Edward Wilforth, Kirby Bellars, Sept., 1627.

4. Ibid., PR/1/30/167, inventory of Richard Allum, Sept., 1623.

5. Ibid., PR/1/40/67, inventory of Richard Levitt, May, 1638.

6. The coincidence of the arrival of plague, 1636-7, with the start of the recording of the occupations of adult males in 1636 enables us to chart the primary occupations of over 300 men during the period 1636-8. This is roughly equivalent to the number of households in Melton. See Table VII.

Counting occupations in any class of record - and parish registers are probably the best source apart from censuses - is a very unsatisfactory method of constructing a so-called "occupational structure", but it is not wholly without virtue if inventories and rural records can be used to supplement the urban picture. It may be worth noting here that in only one inventory, village or town, did any mention of cloth occur, and this was £2 worth of traditional woollen cloth which belonged to Lawrence Raynes, a Melton farmer, in 1631.¹ There was as yet no sign of hosiery manufacture - no jersey, jersey combs, jersey wheels or jersey stockings, even in mercers' or drapers' shops. Indeed, the only mention of hose in any of the 255 inventories studied for the early seventeenth century was one pair of worsted stockings in a haberdasher's shop.²

(d) The later seventeenth century

The most dramatic development in the local wool trade as revealed by inventories was the renaissance of the Melton middleman. Since the last of the Merchant Staplers it cannot be demonstrated that dealers in the Wreake Valley played a highly significant role in the export of wool to other areas. All the examples found have been of small scale operators and it looks very much as if the bigger wool growers were making their own arrangements for sale. Before the 1670s were out the big wool dealing fellmonger had appeared in the town with stocks of wool

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1. Lincolnshire Archives Office, Reeve 1/12/1/20, inventory of Lawrence Raynes, Dec., 1631.
 2. L.R.O., PR/1/41/108, inventory of Anne Siston, May, 1640. In Leicester at this time hosiery manufacture was already under way, V.C.H. Leicestershire, IV, p. 90.

worth over £100.¹

The first two fellmongers' inventories of 1655 and 1661 are of men whose families had probably been glovers in Melton at least since the early 1640s.² Neither man was particularly rich but over half of Thomas Turner's wealth was in the form of pelt wool, wool, skins and pelts worth £18. Turner owned only thirteen sheep worth £2. In 1671 John Smith, fellmonger, owned 300 pelts and pelt wool valued at £16.³ The farmer of about a yardland, Smith kept a flock of twenty-six follow sheep - no more than his common field holding would support.

John Daves and Henry Wallshorne (or Watcherne) both died in December 1679. Watcherne was a farmer whose stock was worth £57, but most of his wealth was tied up in skins, pelts, leather and wool. He had nine packs of fleece wool, five packs of bay wool, some "middle wool", wool skins and calf skins, 100 sheep leathers, 500 pelts and working tools valued altogether at £104 10s 0d.⁴ Debts due to him amounted to over £60. John Daves' scale of operation was even greater: his wool alone was worth £128, his book debts totalled £40, and his cash and the value of his clothes amounted to £50.⁵ Daves was totally dependent upon his trade for his livelihood.⁶ Watcherne was probably descended from a family

1. The first man described as "fellmonger" appeared in a shoemaker's inventory of 1563, but no other can be traced until 1646 when a man hitherto described as a glover was thus named, L.R.O. Administrations, 1556-65, inventory of Thomas Richardson, May, 1563. This change of occupation description doubtless recognized the trend towards more dealing in the valley. The first fellmonger's inventory from Loughborough is dated 1597, and from Hinckley, 1627; ibid., PR/1/16/42, inventory of John Burton, Loughborough, April, 1597; ibid., PR/1/32A/180, inventory of Thomas Mason, Hinckley, Jan., 1627. Both men were dealing in raw wool, though not on a large scale.
2. Ibid., PR/1/52/156, inventory of Thomas Turner, Nov., 1655; ibid PR/1/56/89, inventory of William Smyth, Oct., 1661.
3. Ibid., PR/1/71/112, inventory of John Smith, June, 1671.
4. Ibid., PR/1/81/173, inventory of Henry Wallshorne, Dec., 1679. Of this the wool was worth £79 10s 0d and the wool skins £11.
5. Ibid., PR/1/81/151, inventory of John Daves, Dec., 1679.
6. He owned no animals except a gelding; he had £4 worth of corn, hay
~~and was the sum of his farming involvement.~~
~~and was the sum of his farming involvement.~~
~~and was the sum of his farming involvement.~~

which specialised in the animal trade but Daves was a newcomer to the town and he did not appear in any of the Hearth Tax records, 1664-70.¹ It is tempting, though perhaps fanciful to suppose that Daves, with his traditionally Marcher surname, had been attracted across country by the profits to be made in the valley from a trade with which, perhaps, he was already familiar.

After this no other men who left inventories owned amounts of wool which were not commensurate with their sheep flocks, although fellmongers continued to appear in the parish register.² Oddly enough it was not until after the deaths of Watcherne and Daves that big wool stocks began to reappear in sheep farmers' inventories. John Bradberrie of Thorpe Arnold owned the first of these: he had £100 worth of wool from his 538 sheep in 1582.³ Others included Thomas Raven's stockpile of £54 worth of wool clipped from his flock of 365 sheep in 1694.⁴ Large stocks were fairly common, especially during the 1690s and the early eighteenth century, but all were owned by big sheep farmers and by no means all were to be found in the two or three months following shearing. This suggests that by the end of the seventeenth century (at the latest) the export of local wool had once again passed out of the hands of Melton dealers, and that much of it was being withheld from sale until the winter months or even later, pending the arrival of the clothier or his agent from a manufacturing region.

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1. In the 1630s two Watchernes were described as "horseriders" in the parish register, and in the 1650s two Watchernes were described as shepherds.
 2. See Table VII. One fellmonger and one glover were named in the Asfordby parish register at the turn of the century. The village had a tradition of leather processing. Supra, Ch. II, p. 83.
 3. L.R.O. PR/1/84/173, inventory of John Bradberrie, Thorpe Arnold, Sept., 1682.
 4. Ibid., PR/1/99/70A, inventory of Thomas Raven, July, 1694.

Why was there this temporary period of prosperity for the Melton wool dealers - if, indeed, there really was one? Or to rephrase the question, why does it appear that local wool growers, for a time, sold their wool to Melton middlemen when previously and later most of the larger wool stocks seem to have been purchased directly from the growers by dealers from textile areas? It may be stretching credulity to blame the Civil War, but disruption in trade there certainly was during the mid-century. Even before the outbreak of hostilities stocks of cloth in Yorkshire were lying "dead in the hands of the clothiers", and "many thousands of poore people, who onely subsist by spinning and cardinge of . . . woolles, are like to be brought to suddaine want, for want of worke."¹

During the 1640s Leeds and Bradford were at the centre of hostilities in the North and the cloth trade was severely hampered.² Plague added to the difficulties of the Northern clothiers and not until 1654 could the Leeds corporation declare that "tradeing at present is beginning a little to revive".³ It is clear that into the 1660s the Northern textiles industry was still recovering from the major interruptions of the previous three decades.⁴ It was during these years that fellmongers came to prominence in Melton, and the possibility is that, faced with a slackening of demand for wool, growers boosted the trade through Melton by selling to town dealers like the Smiths.⁵

1. Petition by clothiers, 1640, quoted in Heaton, op.cit., p. 207.

2. Ibid., pp. 208-11.

3. Ibid., p. 214.

4. Ibid., p. 215.

5. A similar mid-century hiatus may have occurred in other parts of the country. Large wool stocks appear for the first and last time in fellmongers' inventories in Hinckley in 1638 and in Loughborough in 1649. L.R.O., PR/1/39/209, inventory of Edward Hurst, Hinckley, Jan., 1638; ibid., PR/1/51/8, inventory of Nicholas Fowler, Loughborough, March, 1649.

Presumably, growers would have been satisfied with making a sale at all if their usual outlet had collapsed, while the dealers, upgrading themselves from working glovers, would reap the benefit of a fall in prices.¹ As trade with the Northern clothiers was disrupted it is even possible that the Melton dealers were redirecting some of the valley's wool to other manufacturing areas which were less affected by the war, and thus in effect consolidating existing outlets. By the end of the 1670s, and probably before, transactions between growers and Northern clothiers and dealers may once more have begun to take precedence over the system of local middlemen as trading links recovered their vitality. It was not until the late seventeenth century that the worsted industry really began its rise in the North, and one can but conclude that thereafter more and more Leicestershire wool found its way into Yorkshire.²

The condition and scale of wool exports from the valley was naturally still dependent upon the importance of local textiles manufacture. Although the production of yarn held up into the 1680s in both Melton and the villages, traces of spinning became rare during the succeeding decades. In the villages the proportion of inventories which contained spinning wheels fell to 15 per cent by the last two decades of the century.³ In the town the decline was much more obvious: out of fifty-eight inventories from the years 1690-1709 only two listed wheels, and these belonged to weavers. Nor was this development merely a function of any decline in the detail in which inventory contents were listed.⁴ Spinning in the valley was traditionally geared towards local consumption. The crisis

1. Wool prices dipped in 1638, and again in 1639. A slump engendered by the importation of Irish wool in the last decades of the century should not be allowed to obscure the downward trend already apparent; Bowden, op.cit., pp. 209-17 and Appendix, p. 220.

2. Heaton, op.cit., pp. 263 ff.

3. Wheels occur in 16 out of 104 inventories.

4. The number of inventories which, e.g., simply gave values for a room's contents is not very high.

period of c. 1620-1640 witnessed an increase in yarn production as a hedge against underemployment, particularly in Melton, and an increase in trading in yarn as opposed to raw wool probably took place. Once the demographic explosion was over and the valley's economy had readjusted to the increase in the numbers living there it looks as though spinning reassumed a minor role. As linen production in other parts of the country was progressing and prospering it may simply have been uneconomic to import flax into the area.¹ Melton's retailers probably became the source of most linen for the valley's inhabitants by about 1700.

In the villages the proportion of weavers in the probate records had hardly altered by the late seventeenth century, and there was still no evidence of any significant textiles manufacture. None of the half dozen weavers found was wealthy and the average number of looms among the four who owned them was two. Although some parish registers sporadically recorded occupations during the 1690s and the early eighteenth century the coverage was too patchy to tell us very much, except that the big common field village of Asfordby did have several weavers living there at the turn of the century.

In Melton five weavers appeared in the probate records between 1660 and 1720, while in the parish registers the craft again failed to make any consistently notable impression, although during the late 1660s the proportion of weavers did rise to almost 6 per cent.² Of the weavers concerned with probate all were poor except William Hubbard, whose main livelihood was the keeping of a small inn or tavern.³

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1. England was exporting linens in the 1660s, Joan Thirsk, Economic Policy and Projects, p. 187. There was no sign of flax in any inventories, urban or rural, after 1663. Hemp occurred occasionally, mostly in ropers' inventories.
 2. See Table VII.
 3. L.R.O., PR/1/112/4, inventory of William Hubbard, Feb., 1706. Apart from Hubbard, whose goods were valued at £71 3s 11½d, none of the weaver's inventories exceeded £16.

No shearmen or clothworkers appeared in the parish registers after 1663, the single feltmaker appeared in 1647, and the last hatter in 1670. This was despite the proliferation of specialist trades in the latter half of the century. Of the two "clothiers" recorded in the register between 1681 and 1687 one was William Trigge, in fact a wealthy woollendraper who died in 1681.¹ The other, Edward Mason, has left no trace apart from the register entry, but it would be very surprising if he were a clothier in the strict sense of the word. Dyeing did attain some importance in Melton, but no more than tailoring need it be regarded as an integral part of local textiles manufacture. During the 1690s there were at least three dyers working in the town, one of whom, John Farin, was probably the son of the John Farin, dyer, who died in 1687. Farin senior was described as "gent" at his death and he had been running a major business since the 1650s. Entirely dependent upon his craft, he left trade tools and materials worth £153 6s 0d in his workhouse and dyehouse, and he was owed £30 by creditors.² In view of the minor nature of local textiles production Farin and the other dyers were probably dyeing finished white cloth and linen imported into the area by mercers and drapers.

Hosiery manufacture trickled into Melton sometime around the 1650s, about twenty years later than the first knitwear hosiers are found in Leicester.³ A jerseyweaver and a jerseycomber were named in the parish registers but production was never more than very small scale in the seventeenth century. The first stockingweaver or stockiner did not

1. Infra, p. 177.

2. L.R.O., PR/1/90/147, inventory of John Farin, June, 1687.

3. V.C.H. Leicestershire, IV, p. 90.

turn up in the registers until 1686. His inventory survives, and the majority of his wealth, which totalled £21 0s 2d, was held in cash; his working gear consisted of one wheel and a reel.¹ Between 1715 and 1718 there were three stockiners named in the registers: under 5 per cent of the identifiable workforce they by no means represented manufacture on any scale as yet. Although the knitting frame arrived in the county town in 1670 or thereabouts the earliest record of a framework knitter in Melton was in 1707.² Ironically the next trace of a framework knitter was of John Canner who left Melton in 1715 and settled in Ashby de la Zouch.³ Canner came from a family of stockiners living in Melton, so evidently some tradition was being built up. In the villages occupation data is harder to come by, so the fact that the only stockiners to be found did not appear until 1706 and 1711 in Abkettleby parish does not necessarily mean that hosiery manufacture in the valley was quite so retarded. Even so this was only two stockiners out of thirty-four persons with identifiable occupations in the villages between 1695 and 1722. Because women played an important role in the hosiery industry it is not possible to draw any really satisfactory conclusions, but the valley does not stand out as a centre of such manufacture in the late seventeenth century.

The changes described in the pattern of the wool trade had no fundamental significance for either the economy or the community of the town. As long as wool continued to leave the valley then demand

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1. L.R.O., PR/1/97/5, inventory of Thomas Wilson, Sept., 1692. Cf. the much more impressive Leicester hosiers, V.C.H. Leicestershire, IV, pp. 91-2.
 2. V.C.H. Leicestershire, IV, p. 168; L.R.O., DG. 25/9/4.
 3. C.J.M. Noxon, Ashby-de-la-Zouche, p. 114.

was continually generated for the goods and services which Melton provided. The methods employed in the export of wool were not relevant to the actual prosperity of the town, although they did, of course, affect the pattern of employment and the structure of the socio-economic elite. In broad terms it was the almost continuous vitality of wool exports from the valley which were of such importance, and in this the unity of the 'rural' and the 'urban' economies is demonstrated just as clearly as in the local agrarian experience outlined in Chapter II.

The absence of any worthwhile textiles manufacture, meanwhile, may well have been a county-wide phenomenon but this was no consolation to the immigrants who flooded into Melton looking for work in the late sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. Even towns which supported manufacturing during this period could provide little hope for immigrants, forced onto the roads by population pressure and enclosure.¹ A market town like Melton suffered great economic and social strains.

(ii) Leather processing

"A vital industry in the economy", the processing of leather has long been recognized as a major employer of labour in pre-industrial England.² A recent compilation of occupational data shows how urban leather workers in some Midlands towns outnumbered those involved in textiles and clothing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.³

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1. E.g. Peter Clark, 'The Ramoth-Gilead of the Good': Urban Change and Political Radicalism at Gloucester 1540-1640' in The English Commonwealth 1547-1640, edited by Peter Clark, Alan G.R. Smith and Nicholas Tyacke (1979), pp. 167-87.
 2. L.A. Clarkson, 'The Leather Crafts in England', Agricultural History Review, XIV (1966), pp. 25-39.
 3. L.A. Clarkson, The Pre-Industrial Economy in England 1500-1750, pp. 88-9, Table 2. In this table shoemakers are included under leather rather than clothing. The towns involved are Ashby de la Zouche, Leicester and Northampton.

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In Lutterworth during the 1630s the same was true although the proportion of leather crafts was somewhat lower than in these other Midlands towns.¹ It has been shown by individual studies that the three Leicestershire towns of Ashby de la Zouche, Leicester and Lutterworth were not industrial centres during this period, but that the importance of leather processing was perhaps less localised than such textiles manufacture as have been found in these towns.²

We have seen that textiles manufacture in Melton Mowbray and the Wreake Valley was of purely local significance, and that most cloth sold in the town was imported from textile producing areas by retailers. Similarly, leather production and processing, though the raw material was in abundant supply, was on a very small scale both in Melton and the villages. Melton supported most of what manufacture there was, but this cannot be regarded as anything other than a subsistence production.

With the emphasis in farming shifting very definitely to livestock in the early modern period there was plenty of leather available in the valley. The increase in the acreage under pasture meant both more and bigger animals, and although many of these would join the movement of meat southwards in the direction of London, butchery in the valley to feed the growing local population would ensure an increasing supply of skins available for leather workers.

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1. Goodacre, Lutterworth, pp. 352-3, Appendix F. The proportion involved in the leather crafts in Lutterworth was 15.6 per cent; cf. Ashby de la Zouche (1637-43) 22 per cent, (1658-61) 25 per cent (Moxon, op.cit., p. 69); Leicester (1559-1603) 22 per cent, Northampton (1524) 23 per cent. (Clarkson op.cit., pp. 88-9.)
 2. Moxon, op.cit., Ch. III; Derek Charman, 'Wealth and Trade in Leicester in the Early Sixteenth Century', loc.cit., pp. 69-97; W.G. Hoskins, 'An Elizabethan Provincial Town: Leicester', loc.cit., pp. 272-4, 352-3 Appendix F.

The role of a Melton glover, Bartholomew Hose, in the export of wool out of the county in the 1540s has been noted, but because of the paucity of occupational data during the early sixteenth century neither Hose's nor any other leather worker's importance can be properly assessed.¹

No light can be shed on the leather crafts until after the middle of the century. Three shoemakers were the only representatives of these crafts in the town's Tudor probate records. The earliest of these was the greatest and he ranked among Melton's wealthiest inhabitants.² This was Thomas Richardson who, even at this early date, was virtually independent of agriculture for his livelihood. He held no land except some pasture ground for his four cows and twenty sheep, and his total farming stock amounted to £11 2s 8d.³ In his shop, by contrast, he had 115 pairs of shoes, twelve pairs of boots, skins, hides, 16 stone of tallow, boot legs, lasts, five gallons of oil and a variety of other implements worth in all £74 13s 0d.

Richardson was clearly doing his own currying to judge from the oil and tallow in the shop, but immediately the question arises as to the whereabouts of the tanners from whom he and the other Melton shoemakers obtained their hides. A skilled and lengthy process, there is no sign of tanning in Melton or in the sample villages before 1640 when

1. Supra, p. 98.
2. In the 1555 assessment he paid 4s 0d, which placed him among the top 10 per cent in terms of wealth, L.R.O., DG. 36/205.
3. Ibid., Administrations, 1556-65, inventory of Thomas Richardson, May, 1563. His farming stock comprised 10 per cent of the value.

John Vinston, tanner, married a girl in Melton.¹ Neither before nor thereafter did Vinston nor anyone bearing the girl's surname, Marsen, appear in any local records. Five tanners were presented in Melton manor court between 1677 and 1681 for selling unsealed or insufficiently tanned leather.² None of these men ever seems to have lived in the town and their surnames too are unfamiliar in local records. These were tanners or dealers from elsewhere selling hides in Melton market. One of them, John Croket, was described in an archdeaconry court record as a currier who was owed money by a Melton whittawer, William Shippey.³

The insignificance of tanning at Melton was in marked contrast to the situation at Leicester, Loughborough, Ashby de la Zouche and Nottingham. At Leicester, tanners were numerically and socially ascendent during the late sixteenth century, and ranked among the town's major figures.⁴ Tanning was a "considerable industry" at Nottingham in the seventeenth century, and there were 47 tanneries along the River Leen there in 1667.⁵ In the Ashby de la Zouche parish register, 1637-40, there were eight tanners comprising 3.6 per cent of

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1. In 1590 John Lacy, a wealthy draper and maltster, desired his son William to "set up and follow the occupation of a tanner" and asked that his youngest son Henry should be William's apprentice. Lacy was not confident that William would follow his advice and he made the alternative suggestion that if William did not set up as a tanner then Henry was to be put to "some good trade or occupation" by his two elder brothers Matthew and William, ibid., Wills and Inventories, 1590/3/III, will of John Lacy, 1590.
 2. L.R.O., 1.D41/4/XLIII/54.
 3. Huntington Library, San Marino, California, Leicestershire Manorial Paper Box 18[1119], Melton Mowbray Draft Court Rolls, May 1677, Oct. 1679, Oct. 1681.
 4. Hoskins, 'An Elizabethan Provincial Town: Leicester', loc.cit., pp. 94-6, 108; and 'An Elizabethan Butcher of Leicester' in his Essays in Leicestershire History, pp. 108-22. Tanning made many fortunes during the sixteenth century. The craft required a good deal of capital investment and a large turnover in order to make sufficient profits.
 5. Clarkson, 'The Leather Crafts of England', loc.cit., p. 35.

the total number of occupations, as in the period 1658-61.¹ Loughborough produced fourteen tanners' inventories between 1545 and 1710, the average value of which was £96. The presence there in the 1580s of John Sansone, whose stock of leather, hides, kips, skins and bark was valued at £212 5s 0d, merely serves to emphasise the absence of such men in Melton.²

As both hides and water were present locally in sufficient quantities to support tanning we can only assume that the missing factor was oak bark. In the 1381 Poll Tax four Melton tanners were named, two of whom were quite highly assessed.³ The conclusion must be that during the fifteenth century the last of the wooded countryside in the Wreake Valley was cleared. As it cannot have been because of population pressure it could well have been to create more enclosures for sheep. Rather like flax spinning in the late seventeenth century, tanning in Melton during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries gave way in the face of competition - that is, lower production costs - in other areas. It would certainly have been no less feasible to transport hides by carrier to Leicester, Loughborough or Nottingham for tanning (or for tanners to send or bring hides to Melton market) than it would have been to transport bark to Melton from a suitable wooded region such as Sherwood, Leicester, Charnwood or Rockingham Forests. All these towns were nearer Melton than any woodland worth exploiting.⁴

1. Moxon, op.cit., pp. 69-71, Table 3.1.

2. L.R.O., PR/1/8/104, inventory of John Sansone, Loughborough, July, 1586. The Melton family of this name were never more than poor shoe-makers.

3. Hunt, Notes on Medieval Melton Mowbray 1077-1507, pp. 69-73.

4. In 1549 boards were brought from Woodhouse (probably Woodhouse Eaves in Charnwood) for work on the church roof, L.R.O., DG.36/140/3. In 1631 boards used for making shelves and cupboards in the church were transported from Boston at a cost of £1 10s 0d. In 1680 a Melton cooper, James West, owned three trees as well as his stock of cut wood and hoops. Two of the trees were in Ashby wood, the third was at Harby. Ashby (presumably Ashby Folville) is about 5 miles from Melton and Harby is 8 miles distant, ibid., PR/1/84/239, inventory of James West, Sept., 1680. Cf. Clarkson, op.cit., p. 93.

A professional relationship between William Mabbes, a Melton shoemaker, and John James, a tanner of Nottingham seems highly probable judging by a deed dated July 1621 concerning a shop on the Round Table in the centre of Melton. The Mabbes family assigned the property to James in 1620 and had it reassigned to them by James in 1621. Whatever the machinations behind these dealings the relationship between the shoemaker's family and the Nottingham tanner is certain.¹ Inventories show that tanners invariably worked on a credit basis, possibly because of the length of time which the process took. They probably collected payment when tanned leather was returned to its owner, and if more inventories of Leicester and Nottingham tanners were to be studied they may reveal more connections with, especially, shoemakers in Melton.²

To return to Thomas Richardson, his debt to a tanner in Nottingham can be explained as above. Richardson's business was a substantial one, and it was not to be equalled in scale by any other shoemaker during the period. The market was already growing rapidly by the time of Richardson's death in 1563, and he was obviously in a position to benefit in a substantial way. His list of credits totalled only 10s 5d, all desperate debts, so it looks as though he operated on a fairly strict cash sales basis. His debtors included villagers from Asfordby and Welby, for whom Melton was the nearest source of new shoes.

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1. Lincolnshire Archives Office, Reeve 1/12/1/7.
 2. None of the 14 Loughborough tanners' inventories revealed contacts with Melton men, but only 2 of them actually specified the identity and whereabouts of debtors. From these it can be seen that Loughborough tanners were linked with men in Glenfield, Mountsorrel, Shepshed, Sileby and Wymeswold as well as Leicester and the more distant Braunston in Rutland; L.R.O., Wills and Inventories, 1564, inventory of Thomas Rygmayden, Loughborough, 1564; *ibid.*, PR/1/8/104, inventory of John Sansone, Loughborough, July, 1586.

Neither of the other two sixteenth century Melton shoemakers' inventories totalled very much. One of these men, whose inventory was taken in 1597, seems to have derived at least some of his living from victualling: no leather, shoes or other trade wares or tools were listed.¹ The other shoemaker was William Blythe who died early in 1582 aged about 66.² His inventory totalled under £24 and included no trade wares or tools: evidently Blythe had retired in favour of his son Thomas, for during his working life he usually appeared among the wealthiest 20 per cent in subsidy assessments.³ Occasionally he was called upon to witness town and parish accounts although he never held executive office other than assessor for levies.

Blythe's son Thomas attained a greater eminence than his father as Townwarden, Churchwarden and Constable. In the 1587 assessment only twelve men paid more than he did.⁴ Unfortunately his inventory is not extant so we cannot accurately assess his economic status.⁵ Nor does the inventory of William Mabbes, shoemaker, survive. Active in town administration as Townwarden, Churchwarden and Constable from 1591,

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1. L.R.O., PR/1/16/82, inventory of John Harris, April, 1597. Harris owned a variety of ale looms, brewing vessels, a beer barrel, and he had a buttery. He also owned a pair of playing tables and 6s 0d worth of hay and peas straw, despite the fact that he kept no animals of his own except some pigs. He may have been in retirement from shoemaking.
 2. Blythe was aged 60 when he made a deposition in a 1676 case over the Town Lands, ibid., DG.36/326/7, deposition of William Blythe.
 3. E.g. Blythe was assessed at 1s 8d in 1576. Out of 152 people taxed 94 paid 8d or less. At least 50 householders were not taxed at all, ibid., DG.36/207.
 4. Ibid., DG.36/210.
 5. In his will Blythe bequeathed 10 dozen shoes and shop furniture to his eldest son Michael. He mentioned the tenement and appurtenances that he "lately bought", which implies, perhaps, that his livelihood was primarily shoemaking and that the land was a recent investment, ibid., Wills, 1617, Series II/55.

by the early seventeenth century he actually numbered among the dozen or so men who paid the lesser subsidies on behalf of the town.¹

Because the evidence is thin we cannot affirm that during the mid- to late sixteenth century Melton shoemakers were major figures who were largely independent of agriculture. However the example of Thomas Richardson shows that this was possible, and the socio-economic status of the Blythes and Mabbes supports the suggestion that local demand was sufficient to spawn and maintain several shoemakers who ranked among the town's economic elite. Well entrenched though Melton was in the valley's agrarian economy its own successes during the sixteenth century were not limited to farming.

Leather processing in the villages has made very little impression in the records. Only three inventories, all from late in the century, indicated its presence outside Melton. A glover and a butcher were living in Asfordby in the 1590s. The glover, Thomas Dubleday has, like Bartholomew Hose in Melton, been identified as a wool dealer.² At his death Dubleday owned no leather or skins, only wool and hemp, so his involvement in leather processing is impossible to weigh.³ The butcher, Anthony Pearsonn, was a poor cottager who butchered other men's animals: he owned an axe, a cleaver and a hatchet, but only one "old black cow" and three swine.⁴ Asfordby's position on the main east-west Melton to Loughborough route, and its economic and social status as a big common field village throughout the period, rendered it a special case among the settlements in the valley.⁵ The lone village shoemaker

1. Mabbes was assessed at £3 in goods, not lands, which put him in a minority in the 1602 subsidy assessment, ibid., DG.25/39/4/1.

2. Supra, pp. 90-100.

3. L.R.O., PR/1/15/56, inventory of Thomas Dubleday, Asfordby, June, 1595.

4. Ibid., PR/1/16/155, inventory of Anthony Pearsonn, Asfordby, 1597.

5. Supra, Ch. II, p. 83.

in the sixteenth century probate records was a cottager who lived in Burton Lazars. He owned no shoes, no leather and no working tools.¹

These then were the great days of shoemaking in the valley and Melton held the monopoly. Thereafter, while the town remained the main centre of the craft, and while the demand for shoes continued to grow, no shoemaker approached the importance of Richardson, the Blythes and Mabbes. After 1597 the next shoemaker's inventory was dated 1631 and amounted to £21 17s 4d - above average for this craft in the seventeenth century. Of the twenty-one shoemakers and four cobblers named in the parish register, 1636-8, under half were of sufficient wealth to be levied for the repair of the church in 1634.² Only labourers, shepherds and weavers emerge as poorer occupations by this measure.

It remained possible for a shoemaker to rise above the level of his colleagues, although the heights attained were not very great. James Archer was assessed at 2s 6d in the 1634 levy, which was a little below the average assessment, but Archer and the two other shoemakers who paid the same amount could be described as comfortably off.³ In 1636 Archer's goods and chattels were worth £72 7s 8d in what was by quite a margin the most valuable shoemaker's inventory of the century.⁴ Archer kept a retail shop which contained seventy-four pairs of shoes, boots, leather, lasts, wooden heels, wax and various other items worth altogether

1. L.R.O., PR/1/15/84, inventory of William Bland, Burton Lazars, Jan., 1595. Bland was described in his will as a corvisor but this generally meant little other than shoemaker, ibid., Wills, 1595/72, will of William Bland, 1595.
2. Ibid., 1.D41/4/XVII/77; infra, Appendix II, pp. 273-4.
3. Altogether 186 people contributed to the levy. Of these 64 paid less than 1s 0d. About 60 persons were assessed at a higher level than Archer, ibid.
4. Ibid., PR/1/38/173, inventory of James Archer, Oct., 1636.

£24 11s 4d; his credits amounted to £2. He farmed a smallholding and his farming stock totalled almost £20. In other words his craft and his farm were of about equal importance.

Archer was, however, an exception. The thirteen other shoemakers who left inventories during the seventeenth century were not substantial figures individually, and the average value of their inventories was under £16. Only four of them left shop goods or working tools and in three cases this amounted to less than £1. Six were cottagers and one was a small grazier who owned 16 sheep; the rest were non-farmers in every sense of the word. The craft had detached itself from agriculture and become almost purely urban, but most of these men were toiling in the twilight zone at and around the poverty level.

Why was there this fall from grace? It is possible that the big Tudor shoemakers like Thomas Richardson had been producing for a wider market than the valley, but there is no evidence for this, and no particular reason either. In none of the general retailers' inventories of shop wares did shoes appear for sale so there is no evidence of their importation from, say, Northampton. The answer probably lies in the prevailing economic situation in the Wreake Valley which meant that there was a large and growing pool of surplus labour. In the fight for survival in a town with no staple industry, shoemaking would have provided some measure of opportunity which required almost no capital. If too many shoemakers were flooding the local market this would certainly have depressed the individual craftsman to subsistence level.¹ Thus one of Melton's few crafts which was, perhaps, capable of absorbing

1. Between 1685 and 1720 no shoemakers' inventories appeared among the 81 which have survived for Melton. The last 3 inventories date from the early 1680s and their average value was under £7.

surplus labour would soon be saturated during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century rush into the town. In turn this would be bound to lead to a rapid turnover of personnel as aspirations proved groundless and prospects minimal. So, of twenty-seven families which had at least one member involved in shoemaking between 1636 and 1644 according to the parish registers, only four were still involved in the craft during the years 1663-71, and only one, the Sansomes, was still definitely involved by the period 1698-1718.¹

Shoemaking may be seen in the big common field villages for the first time at the turn of the seventeenth century. This development could conceivably have occurred at any time since the 1640s and is not noticed before the 1690s because not until then did any rural parish registers begin again to record some occupations. The absence of shoemakers from village probate records does not imply that there were none working in the villages during the third and fourth quarters of the century. As in Melton these craftsmen were probably supplying no more than local needs, and one at least is described in the register in 1703 as "pauper". The same pressures of overpopulation and under-employment which were being exerted in Melton would be found too, although not as intense, in the common field villages, whose capacity for the absorption of immigrants was no greater. Thus the appearance in the big villages of what had hitherto been a purely urban craft can be explained as a resort in the face of these pressures. This development would, of course, hardly have had beneficial effects upon Melton's shoemaking, already staggering under the weight of numbers.

The other main branch of the heavy leather industry was saddlery, which supplied agricultural and transport requirements. The first

1. See Table IX.

recorded saddler in Melton was Thomas Oundell, who began to appear in assessments from 1587 and who rose into the ranks of the wealthiest 10 per cent within a few years. Oundell served successively as Overseer of the Poor (1590), Constable (1592, 1612), Churchwarden (1595, 1609, 1610, 1619), Townwarden (1597, 1598, 1611, 1613, 1615, 1616) and in 1606 he was named as Feoffee of the Town Estate: an impressive run through the executive offices by one of the town's longest serving and most eminent governors. His inventory is lost but his will, dated 1620, gives some idea of the extent of his wealth. A host of bequests included £6 13s 4d to one female servant and £10 plus a heifer to another; the bequests covered eleven towns and villages including London and Nottingham.¹ The Nottingham link is interesting in that it hints at a professional relationship between Oundell and one John Perrie - was Perrie a tanner?²

Davie Oundell, saddler, whose relationship (if any) with Thomas Oundell is unknown, died in 1607 and left goods worth £90 2s 6d.³ Most of this - over £50 - was farm stock while shop wares were valued at £17 8s 8d. Both Oundells were among the town's wealthiest craftsmen but the dissipation of Thomas's wealth - he left no male heir - meant that saddlery was no longer represented among Melton's economic elite. Only one saddler contributed to the 1634 church levy, but two were not assessed.⁴

The craft was not a major one either in terms of numbers or wealth until late in the century when a revival took place. Between 1671 and

1. L.R.O., Wills, 1620/2, will of Thomas Oundell, Aug., 1620.
2. At least two of Oundell's bequests were to members of Melton families which were engaged in the leather trade - the Dickensses (saddlers) and the Powleys (glovers), ibid.
3. Ibid., PR/1/22/28, inventory of Davie Oundell, July. 1607.
4. Ibid., 1.D41/4/XVII/77; infra, Appendix II, pp. 273-4.

1699 five saddlers' inventories survive, the average value of which was £49.¹ Four of these listed goods for sale in shops and all the craftsmen concerned were entirely independent of agriculture for their livelihood. One, Thomas Pym, by some means or other seems to have taken over the entire contents of a mercer's shop, that of John Merrill, and is a reminder of the flexibility and diversity to be found among retailers in the town.² Richard Tealby, a saddler in the early eighteenth century, became the first member of his craft since Thomas Oundell to hold office in the town administration: as Overseer of the Poor, Churchwarden (twice) and Townwarden (four times).

While ever horses were the main form of transport and arable farming survived there would be a demand for saddlers' products. That the craft suffered a decline during the second and third quarters of the seventeenth century perhaps owes something to the years of depression and poverty nationwide which were succeeded by the disruptions of the Civil War. The local disturbance by enclosures of the sixteenth century system of common field husbandry would have affected demand for saddlery wares, many of which were produced primarily for the arable farm; the relative stagnation of mixed husbandry in the valley was noted above.³ The revival of saddlery could well have owed most to the town's role as a wayfaring and victualling centre - the same factor which helped sponsor the prosperity of Melton's various provisioning trades.⁴

1. No saddlers' inventories date from between 1607 and 1671.

2. L.R.O., PR/1/101/111, inventory of Thomas Pym, July, 1696; ibid., PR/1/99/53, inventory of John Merrill, June, 1694.

3. Supra, Ch. II, pp. 59-61, 66.

4. In 1686 Melton had more stabling than any market town in the county except Hinckley, P.R.O., W.O.30/48; infra, pp. 143-69.

The link in the chain between the tanner and the shoemaker or saddler was the currier, who replaced the oils in the leather lost through the tanning process.¹ It is unlikely that carriers would have been much in evidence where leather production was not only of a subsistence nature but where it also lacked tanners; consequently carriers occurred only occasionally in Melton.² It was stated above that the biggest Tudor shoemaker was doing his own currying, and to judge by the curry combs which appeared in saddlers' inventories it does seem that the larger scale leather workers at least forewent the services of the currier.

The light leather industry included glovers and whittawers. The leather used by these craftsmen was not tanned but dressed by smoking, soaking in oil and pasting with alum. These operations were much simpler than tanning and often the light leather crafts were integrated - this explains the shortage of whittawers in Melton, for as with currying the industry was small enough not to require a great degree of specialization, and glovers would probably be doing the dressing.³ The skins used by these men were of sheep, lambs, calves, pigs, deer, rabbits and even dogs.

Three glovers were named in the 1572 levy, and though one of them farmed a yardland and was reasonably prosperous, the other two belonged among the lower economic strata in the town.⁴ In 1595 a glover died in

1. L.A. Clarkson, 'The Organization of the English Leather Industry in the Late Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', Economic History Review, Second Series, XIII (1960-1), pp. 245-53.
2. There was a currier in Melton in 1572, but only two carriers' inventories survive, both from the seventeenth century, and neither was of a wealthy craftsman; see Table VI.
3. Clarkson, 'The Organization of the English Leather Industry', loc. cit.
4. L.R.O., DG.36/159/7; see Table VI.

Asfordby, but he seems to have been as much a wool dealer as a leather worker.¹ From 1606 dates another Asfordby glover's inventory, and although most of his wealth consisted of wool and animals he did have £1 worth of pelts in his lime pits, so he clearly was a working craftsman.² These are the only instances of glovers in the rural probate records and as they were primarily wool dealers it leads to the conclusion that the light leather industry, like the heavy, was concentrated almost entirely in Melton at this time.

Only four Melton glovers' inventories have survived, all date from the period 1627 to 1638, and all totalled under £40. At least two of these men were dealing in wool in a small way, and they were all virtually independent of agriculture. The highest assessed glover in the 1634 church levy was Thomas Jackson, whose inventory totalled just £20 0s 2d including three and a half dozen gloves and three dozen leather skins.³ While six glovers were included in this levy, at least five more were not, and one of these, George Cotterill, was worth only £5 19s 5d at his death in 1638.⁴ Glovers were the fourth most numerous non-agricultural trade grouping in the parish register, 1636-8, yet, like shoemakers and weavers their individual scale of operation was very small and they can have been supplying no more than the local market. That the numbers of glovers held up reasonably well in the registers into the eighteenth century, taken

1. Supra, pp. 99-100.
2. L.R.O., PR/1/21/24, inventory of Robert Allat, Asfordby, 1606. Supra, p. 108.
3. Ibid., 1.D41/4/XVII/77; ibid., PR/1/40/54, inventory of Thomas Jackson, Nov., 1637.
4. Ibid., PR/1/40/70, inventory of George Cotterill, May, 1638; infra, Appendix II, pp. 273-4.

together with their disappearance from the probate records suggests that, like shoemaking, the craft proved unable to support any independently wealthy men. Again, like shoemakers, and possibly for the same reasons, glovers sank lower and lower down the economic scale.¹

The single whittawer who left an inventory was William Shippey. Although his scale of operation was not great, Shippey provides us with a good example of the flow of hides into Melton from the surrounding area. Evidently, after his death, there was a legal wrangle over his unpaid debts and somehow the case landed before the Archdeaconry Court.² The records of the case reveal that Shippey owed money to dozens of men from at least fourteen villages as well as the county town, usually a few shillings for a single hide. Shippey probably dressed the hides himself, and any tanned hides he needed to work up he would buy from the likes of John Crocket, described as a currier, to whom he owed 5s 0d. Crocket sold tanned - and presumably curried - hides in Melton market, where he was fined in 1679, although he does not seem to have been resident in the town.³

Asfordby was the one village where both butchery and leather working could be found from the late sixteenth century through to the early eighteenth century. Sited on the Melton to Loughborough road this big common field village evidently saw sufficient wayfaring to be able to support such workers.⁴ Indeed the only whittawer involved with probate throughout the period was a resident of Asfordby and

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1. Three of the four glovers in the 1670 Hearth Tax were exempt from paying on the grounds of poverty, P.R.O., E.179.240/279; ibid., E.179 Bundle 332.
 2. Ibid., 1.D41/4/XLIII/54.
 3. Huntington Library, San Marino, California, Leicestershire Manorial Paper Box 18[L119], Melton Mowbray Draft Court Roll, Oct., 1679.
 4. Supra, Ch. II, p. 83.

compared with the Melton leather workers he was immensely rich.¹

It has already been shown that the Melton fellmongers were wool dealers not leather workers, although we may allow that some of the lesser fellmongers might have been processing skins after the wool trade passed out of the townsmen's hands during the later decades of the seventeenth century. It is now possible to assess the importance and fortunes of the leather industry in Melton and the Wreake Valley.

The first and most significant conclusion is that, as with textiles, there was no true industry. But unlike textiles there was no importation of the finished product. While drapers and mercers prospered through the sale of cloth, the local shoemakers, saddlers and glovers appear to have satisfied local needs. Workers in shoemaking and, to a lesser extent, gloving, proliferated (by Melton standards) during the seventeenth century, and these, with weaving, may have been the chief crafts entered upon by immigrants facing stark underemployment. The influx of new names into the shoemaking craft seems to have been at its greatest during the Civil War period.² Whether or not these men brought skills with them into Melton there is no doubt that the craft attracted substantial numbers of immigrants as well as some who were already resident in the town. There was, of course, no craft mechanism to prevent this immigration, and shoemaking, gloving and weaving were all depressed by simple overmanning: supply exceeded demand.

The major stage in leather processing, and one which in other towns was to create fortunes, was absent from Melton. Tanning of Melton skins was undertaken in other places, including Nottingham. This would have had certain adverse effects on the local economy: if the raw materials - hides - were purchased by a leather processor he would then have to send

1. L.R.O., PR/1/67/147, inventory of Nathaniel Parte, Asfordby, March, 1669; supra, Ch. II, p. 85.

2. See Table IV

them by carrier to be tanned and thus his costs would be that much greater than those of the processor not so encumbered. Alternatively the processor would be buying tanned - and perhaps curried - hides in the market place. Either way this represented a serious loss to the local economy because, obviously, the tanner's profits were being made and spent elsewhere rather than in Melton, and another source of employment was closed off. The cash cost of sending hides to be tanned, or of buying ready-tanned hides which had been transported into Melton (and thus adding to their price) would either be passed on to the consumer or borne by the processor - the shoemaker in most cases. If market resistance was high - for example if other retailers could import cheaper finished goods - or if local competition was severe then the processor himself may well have had to stand the transport costs. In Melton competition was severe and there were always some wealthy retailers who could purchase goods in bulk. So in addition to great competition, and partially because of it, the poor shoemaker was in the unenviable position of having to bear these transport costs. The margin for survival of these men was precarious through overmanning; the absence of tanning from Melton must have broken many backs.

Thus, while the leather trade was of great local importance in general terms, both as an employer and as a supplier of finished goods, it was no place for the ambitious. A modest living achieved by one or two saddlers towards the end of the seventeenth century could not compensate for the miserable conditions and hopelessness endured by so many leather craftsmen. In this, as in the country's other major non-agricultural employer, textiles, Melton could offer no salvation for the subsistence migrant for whom the town, like all towns, was a strong magnet.

(iii) Provisioning

Having seen that Melton Mowbray had no real industrial character it remains to discuss the town's role in the distribution of locally produced foodstuffs and livestock, and in the retailing of imported goods. It is in these areas that the greatest economic successes were registered by townsmen, and where we may see the essential economic function of Melton in its valley.

Corn dealing in the Wreake Valley consisted of the transference of barley and wheat from farmers to bakers, maltmakers and brewers. Little if any corn actually left the valley, because although the soil was equally suitable for crops and grass the area was remote from water transport, and it was livestock husbandry which came to predominate and which was geared towards export. An increasing amount of land was being laid down to pasture and up to half the arable land was producing winter feed for animals: the emphasis in investment in the villages lay with animals, not crops. A relatively densely populated area like the Wreake Valley would require all its grain for local consumption. Corn would be sold in the market or privately, and bought by bakers, victuallers and maltmakers.¹ Bakers and victuallers would put the grain out to be milled while maltmakers would steep and dry the grain before employing the services of a miller. Victuallers would then have their flour baked and would themselves brew ale purchased from a maltmaker. It goes without saying that one person might undertake two or more of these processes: a farmer could be milling, baking, making malt, brewing and victualling. These trades and butchery will be examined both to throw into relief the developing role of Melton as a

1. The term 'victualler' is used here to describe any person who was engaged in selling food and drink.

food market for the valley, and to explain some further aspects of the changing structure of the town's socio-economic hierarchy.

By itself milling never produced an independently wealthy figure in Melton. Because of the nature of the process and the difficulty - not to mention illegality - of setting up a rival, the manorial mills maintained their monopoly through the period. There were five mills within the township by the middle of the seventeenth century. Two of these were under a single roof at Beck or Overshot Mill on the Scalford Brook; two were under one roof at Eye Mill at the confluence of Scalford Brook and the River Eye; the fifth was a windmill in the South or Burton Field.¹ In 1574 these mills were leased from the crown by William Whyte alias Carver as parcel of the manor of Burton Lazars.² It is a mystery as to how the mills came to be parcel of Burton manor and not of any of the three Melton manors, but throughout the rest of the seventeenth century rents from the mills were due to the Bishops of Ely as lords of Burton manor.

Carver was a man of some eminence in the town. He held no offices of the Town Estate or the parish but he was one of the last Wardens of the pre-Reformation religious guilds according to deponents in the 1576-7 case over the concealment of religious properties.³ He followed a variety of occupations: farmer of a smallholding, surgeon

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1. L.R.O., Clayton Mss, 35/29/99. There was a mill in the Spinneys which was mentioned in 1567 although there is no further trace of it. This may have been the mill belonging to Lewes Manor as the Spinneys were probably the ancient demesne of that manor. Ibid., DG.36/284/9.
 2. Ibid., Administrations and Inventories, 1573-85, inventory of William Whyte alias Carver senior, Jan., 1574. There was only one mill at Beck Mill at this time.
 3. L.R.O., DG.36/326/10, depositions of Robert Hawley, Henry Tallis and Bartholomew Wormwell. Carver's colleague as Warden of the Guilds of St. Mary and St. John was Christopher Whitehead, Merchant of the Staple.

and miller. He also kept bees, brewed ale, carded and span wool and kept the largest number of poultry found in the sixteenth century.¹ Carver was never accorded an occupation description but he did keep a valuable collection of surgical instruments, unguents and drugs, and we may suppose that he was best known in his palliatory capacity. He undoubtedly had men working for him in the mills, because even if he was actively involved he could not run three establishments. It is most likely that Carver sublet all the mills and concentrated upon his more urbane activities.

Carver's interest in the mills seems to have passed on to the wealthy Lacy family. One of Carver's administrators in 1573 was John Lacy, the man who was described in 1608 as the former leaseholder of the properties.² Lacy's will, made in 1590, named Matthew and Christopher Carver as his sons-in-law and left them legacies to be taken up at the end of their respective apprenticeships.³ In 1608 Andrew Lacy, a vintner and kinsman of John Lacy, was the leaseholder.⁴ Moreover Andrew was tenant of the windmill in Burton Lazars according to an undated seventeenth century rental.⁵ In effect Andrew Lacy had a grip on milling in the area although it is impossible to go any further with this investigation, and the relationship between Lacy and his millers cannot be defined.

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1. Ibid., Administrations and Inventories, 1573-85, inventory of William Whyte alias Carver senior, Jan., 1574.
 2. Ibid., administration of William Whyte alias Carver, 1573; ibid., Hartopp Mss, 8.D39/1834.
 3. Ibid., Wills and Inventories, 1590/3/III, will of John Lacy, March, 1590.
 4. Ibid., Hartopp Mss, 8.D39/1834.
 5. Ibid., Clayton Mss, 35/29/101.

By the time of Lacy's death in 1635 the lease of the mills had probably already passed into the hands of the Hartopp family, resident in Burton Lazars. All of the subsequent references to the mills state that they were in the occupation of the Hartopps, so throughout the century Melton's millers were no more, in effect, than employees of this ubiquitous family.¹ The single miller's inventory is dated 1638 and totalled just £2 11s 4d.² Over twenty millers were named in the parish registers between 1636 and 1718 but none was involved with probate, and the two who appeared in the 1670 Hearth Tax were both exempted from paying.³ Some of them were described variously as loadsman or labourer. The presence of the Henfreys, a milling dynasty working between 1656 and 1717, points to continuity of tenure at one of the mills; the Henfreys too were sometimes described as labourers.

Rents from Melton's mills seem to have been the sole interest of the successive leaseholders. None of the millers was able to build up any wealth and they were insignificant figures in corn dealing. Their task was the traditional one of milling other men's grain - that of individual householders, bakers and victuallers.

Malting was the other function of millers. After steeping and drying, the grain had to be ground. While this could be done on a small scale in malt quernes, large amounts would be milled. Only one maltmill was ever recorded in the town: this was Christopher Row, usually described as plain 'miller'.⁴ It is apparent that malt was

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1. The rents of the Eye Mills were granted to Sir Thomas Hartopp by the Bishop of Ely in 1638, *ibid.*, Clayton Mss, 35/29/165. This may have been a renewal. There was no mention of mills or a lease in Lacy's will and inventory, *ibid.*, Wills, 1635/34, will of Andrew Lacy, March, 1635; *ibid.*, PR/1/37/33, inventory of Andrew Lacy, April, 1635.
 2. *Ibid.*, PR/1/39/244, inventory of John Spick, Jan., 1638.
 3. P.R.O., E.179.240/279; *ibid.*, E.179 Bundle 332.
 4. I.e. in the parish registers.

milled on the same premises as corn, and under similar circumstances - the malt belonged to brewers. Perhaps the occasional description of Row as a maltmillers suggests some specialisation among the mills, and certainly the volume of malt to be milled in the town would have been great enough to keep at least one mill fully occupied.

The right to bake commercially in Melton, like milling, would historically be reserved to the manor, and the wealthiest baking family in the probate records in fact held the lease of the manorial bakehouse. That they were the first identifiable bakers as well as the richest implies that during the sixteenth century the manorial monopoly was effective. However there were three manors in the town and we must assume that there was room for competition, even during the sixteenth century when manorial power in Melton was likely to have been at its greatest. Unlike milling, where there was no trace of a multiplication of enterprises outside the hold of the mill owners, baking does appear to have drifted outside the control of the biggest manor, that of Melton itself. In this way it would have been possible for bakers to establish themselves as men of independent wealth.

The Fyshepoole family were the first recorded manorial bakers. They were represented in the 1543 Lay Subsidy by John Fyshepoole who paid the respectable sum of 2s 0d.¹ In the 1555 assessment he was headed by only twelve men.² John died late in 1557 as one of Melton's major famrers.³ The lease of the bakehouse, held of Lady Anne Berkeley, remained in the family for some years until it was inherited by Robert

1. P.R.O., E.179.13/135. 21 men and women paid more out of a total of 110 who were taxed.

2. L.R.O., DG.36/205.176 people were taxed.

3. Ibid., Wills and Inventories, 1557(A-J), inventory of John Fyshepoole, Dec., 1557. Three months after harvest Fyshepoole had £27 worth of grain and sown ground, over 100 sheep and 19 cattle. His farm stock was worth £86 8s 11d out of a total inventory value of £114 18s 11d.

Hebb alias More via his wife, a Fyshepoole.¹ He too was an important farmer of about three yardlands, although he was described as a baker and victualler in 1572.²

The dominance by the Fyshepoole clan of the town's baking trade probably ended with the death of Robert More in 1582. More had no son and most of his wealth passed to his wife and female kin. Thereafter the descent of the manorial bakehouse becomes obscure for a while. A 1592 Archdeaconry Court case suggests that one William Gardner, baker, was the holder of the lease, but it is possible that Gardner was working for the real leaseholder.³

In 1608 Abraham Sheldon was the holder of the lease of the bakehouse.⁴ A smallholder, Sheldon's crop, malt and animals amounted to over 80 per cent of his personal wealth, which totalled £67 12s 7d. Included in this was 16½ qtrs of malt worth £20. Sheldon would have been buying corn in the market or privately - he had only four acres of wheat, rye and barley of his own, plus a hovel of peas in Kirby Bellars. Some of this he would have put out to be milled, the rest to a maltmaker. It is possible that he processed the malt himself but such a large amount had more likely been dried in a malt kiln, which Sheldon did not own. Although he was not entirely independent of farming Sheldon's main livelihood derived from his role in the provisioning

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1. L.R.O., Wills and Inventories, 1564, will of Thomas Fyshepoole, June, 1564; ibid., 1582/6, will of Robert Hebb alias More, 1582.
 2. Ibid., inventory of Robert Hebb alias More, Sept., 1582. More owned a flock of 143 sheep which was managed by a live-in shepherd, 12 cattle including a bull, and almost £70 worth of grain and hay. Ibid., DG.36/159/7. More was the only baker named in this listing.
 3. Ibid., 1.D41/4/565.
 4. Ibid., PR/1/23/44, inventory of Abraham Sheldon, Aug., 1608.

trade. Whether or not he was running a drinking establishment is difficult to tell, but if not then he was an important supplier of malt for people who were.¹

The significant development here is that Sheldon, unlike his predecessors at the bakehouse, was not a big farmer. The full time professional baker, while he did not appear during the seventeenth century, was presaged as farming and servicing diverged. Moreover, Sheldon was one of the first townsmen who was not an important farmer to take an active part in local administration. In 1586 he was chosen as "townhusband for observing the business of the town till Monday come a year".² A paid post, this was a novelty which was not seen again. It involved overseeing repair work to the two bridges - an onerous task.³ Sheldon was Churchwarden from 1590 to 1594 and Constable in 1594, but he never attained the heights of Townwarden. His appointment and payment as townhusband shows that his status was outside and below that of the inner governing body: high office in Melton as elsewhere was unpaid and was an executive manifestation of socio-economic status. While the cost of office in a major city was not paralleled in Melton - there was never any question of officers ending up out of pocket - payment of top-ranking executive officers was unknown at this time.

By the 1620s the manorial baker was a very minor figure so it looks as if, perhaps, any vestiges of monopoly over the trade had dissolved.⁴ It is unfortunate that there is no way of telling whether the five men who were presented in the Court Baron of Lewes Manor

1. A Thomas Sheldon was named as 'victualler' in 1572, ibid., DG.36/159/7.

2. Ibid., DG.25/1/1, f.8.

3. Ibid., DG.36/284/14.

4. Ibid., PR/1/31/150, inventory of Robert Ward, Dec., 1625.

in July 1627 for breaking the assize of bread and ale were selling bread or ale.¹ No bakers appeared in the 1634 church levy, although we can assume that the two who were named in the parish registers, 1636-8, were working at the former date.² They were, therefore, probably excluded from the rate on the grounds of poverty.

Between 1636 and 1671 no fewer than nine different bakers were named in the parish register. One of these was probably the father of the William Clemens who died in 1672.³ Clemens's inventory totalled £62 18s 8d of which his crop was worth £13.⁴ He kept no cattle or sheep although a survey of lands in Burton Lazars made in the 1660s shows that he occupied three enclosures, parcel of the Hartopp freehold.⁵ The list of Clemens's goods was fairly sparse and included no mention of his trade goods, so quite possibly he had already disposed of some of his possessions to his nephew Anthony Westbrooke.⁶ Westbrooke died in 1679 leaving a huge house and personal wealth totalling £88 14s 6d, including a flock of twenty sheep and a herd of seven cattle.⁷ John Treen was the third important baker to be concerned with probate during the late seventeenth century. He was far more involved in farming than Clemens and Westbrooke and he held three yardlands in the town

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1. Lincolnshire Archives Office, Reeve 4/4/2, Court Baron, Manor of Lewis, July, 1627.
 2. L.R.O., 1.D41/4/XVII/72; infra, Appendix II, pp. 273-4.
 3. A Richard Clemens died in 1650. Some of these bakers may, of course, have been assistants to master bakers.
 4. L.R.O., PR/1/73/96, inventory of William Clemens, July, 1672.
 5. Ibid., Clayton Mss, 35/29/103.
 6. Ibid., Wills, 1672, will of William Clemens, March, 1672.
 7. Ibid., PR/1/81/28, inventory of Anthony Westbrooke, April, 1679.

fields.¹ Treen serves as a reminder that while the general trend in the town was for retailing and servicing to become more detached from agriculture there was in many cases still a long way to go before the break was complete.

The pattern of the baking and selling of bread was somewhat more complex than the picture presented so far indicates. Firstly, baking in Melton was not limited to the men actually described as 'baker'. Even if the manorial monopoly still meant anything in the 1620s it had most certainly collapsed by about the 1670s. In the 1670 Hearth Tax the manorial bakehouse was taxed quite separately from William Clemens.² While it is possible that the tax on the bakehouse fell upon Sir Henry Hudson as Lord of the Manor, rather than the incumbent baker, there is no mention in the wills or inventories of Clemens and Westbrooke of any lease.³ There were, moreover, other bakehouses in the town which belonged to wealthy figures not described as bakers. Robert Gilbert, gent., and Edward Fleming, mercer, had bakehouses according to the 1664 Hearth Tax, and Richard Willcocks, attorney and victualler, had one listed in his inventory in 1689.⁴ These men all served as Townwarden and Gilbert in particular, the owner of malthouses and farmer of four yardlands, was a very eminent figure. The attraction of men such as this to the trade emphasises not only the importance of baking in Melton

1. L.R.O., Wills, 1682/108, will of John Treen, 1682; ibid., PR/1/84/131, inventory of John Treen, Aug., 1682.
2. P.R.O., E.179.240/279.
3. Ibid., Wills, 1679/23, will of Anthony Westbrooke, April, 1679.
4. P.R.O., E.179.251/3; L.R.O., PR/1/95/67, inventory of Richard Willcocks, Feb., 1689.

but the overall significance of the town's role in provisioning the area. In addition to these men the court rolls reveal that other Meltonians were selling bread: in the 1681 court roll two victuallers, a tailor and a carpenter were presented for breaking the Assize of Bread.¹ All four were also selling drink so they were all victuallers rather than actual bakers - their bread would have been bought from or baked by professional bakers.

Secondly, there were the bakers who did not live in Melton. Evidence of baking in the sample villages is scarce, and though moulding boards, kneading troughs, sieves and suchlike occurred occasionally there was only one bakehouse recorded in the inventories.² This belonged to Robert Orgar, an Asfordby farmer who died in 1559.³ It is possible that Orgar was running the manorial bakehouse in the village. In the 1630s a baker by the name of John Wartnaby was working in the recently enclosed village of Little Dalby. Doubtless much of his custom came from the big Hartopp establishment in Dalby. In Abkettleby Nathaniell Bodman was the baker until his death in 1666. A smallholder, Bodman owned a pack saddle, panniers and weights and he and the likes of Wartnaby must have been familiar figures in Melton if the court rolls are any guide. In 1677 six bakers from Abkettleby, Gaddesby, Leicester, Saxelby, Waltham and Whissendine (in Rutland) were presented along with three Melton bakers for breaking the Assize.⁴ In 1679 thirteen persons

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1. Huntington Library, San Marino, California, Leicestershire Manorial Paper Box 18[L1L9], Melton Mowbray Draft Court Roll, Oct., 1681.
 2. Possession of these implements does not mean, of course, that the owner was actually baking dough any more than it means he milled the grain in the first place.
 3. L.R.O., PR/1/1/20, inventory of Robert Orgar, Asfordby, 1559.
 4. Huntington Library, San Marino, California, Leicestershire Manorial Paper Box 18[L1L9], Melton Mowbray, Draft Court Roll, May, 1677.

were presented for the same offence, including only three Meltonians.¹ In 1681 seven more non-residents were presented.² Most of these outside bakers would have descended upon Melton on market day when demand was at its greatest, while on other days the week men like Bodman and John Smith of Abkettleby probably came into the town to supply the victuallers.³

Thirdly there was the reciprocal process of Melton bakers selling bread outside the town. This is difficult to trace without a full scale search of manorial records, but we can be sure that it happened. Edward Bass of Melton, baker, owned two horses with panniers at his death in 1705, while John Bass was presented in the manor court of Burton Lazars in 1707 for breaking the Assize of Bread there.⁴

There is occasional evidence of baking on a small scale but there is no doubt that most of the daily commercial production of bread was in the hands of the bigger bakers.⁵ These would have supplied private households, victuallers and inns in the town, demand reaching a peak on market day when bakers from other settlements would provide more competition. It took capital to set up a baking business, but there were certainly profits to be made for those who did.

Brewing was another growth area which provided opportunity for those with enough capital to get started on a large scale. Ale was

1. Ibid., Oct., 1679.

2. Ibid., Oct., 1681. See Map VIII.

3. Smith was one of the men presented in 1677, ibid., May, 1677.

4. L.R.O., PR/1/112/84, inventory of Edward Bass, Sept., 1705; ibid., Clayton Mss, 35/29/2074. The manorial bakehouse in Burton was described as "down" in a list of the Bishop of Ely's property made in about 1680, ibid., 35/29/101.

5. It is, of course, perfectly feasible to bake bread in an open hearth.

the staple drink, and its brewing was a major household and commercial activity, perhaps the most widespread household economic activity of all. Rare was the sixteenth century inventory in town or village which did not evince brewing on some scale. Most farming households would have been fully equipped to make and grind their own malt from their own barley. Some village farmers had their own kilns or malt houses which may mean they were making malt for sale, but these were very few and far between.¹ Similarly, very few substantial amounts of malt - over 10 qtrs - were to be found in village inventories and most of these not until the late seventeenth century.² As four of the six big village stocks of malt were found in Welby and Sysonby it is almost certain that the malt was destined for sale in Melton, as neither village could provide any kind of demand from within. Only in one case did the owner of a large amount of malt also own a kiln.³

By contrast Melton's production and sale of malt and brewing were large scale and geared towards the satisfaction of local, mercantile and wayfaring demand. Kilns, malt chambers, malting rooms and malt-ing floors occurred frequently in the houses of the wealthy by the seventeenth century. Large amounts of malt were also common - sixteen inventories listed 15 qtrs or more during the century. The system probably worked like this: most malt makers would have used their own

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1. Kilns and malthouses (not necessarily the same thing) occurred in village inventories in 1541 (Kirby Bellars), 1588 (Asfordby), 1596 (Burton Lazars), 1613 (Sysonby), 1673 (Holwell) and 1694 (Little Dalby, a "quern house").
 2. Large stocks found in 1548 (Scalford, 15 qtrs), 1613 (Sysonby, about 15 qtrs), 1684 (Welby, 30 qtrs), 1688 (Welby, 20 qtrs), 1692 (Asfordby, 28 qtrs), and 1707 (Sysonby, about 20 qtrs).
 3. L.R.O., PR/1/24/170, inventory of Thomas Nuttall, Sysonby, Jan., 1613.

barley, perhaps supplemented by purchases from other farmers in the valley, depending upon their own scale of production. The malt would have been processed and dried in their own kilns (if they owned them), put out to be milled, and then either brewed on their own premises or sold to brewers and victuallers in the town. If any men in the valley can be identified as corn dealers then these large-scale malt makers were they, although most were very important arable farmers in their own right and their own farms would have supplied much of their barley.

"Maltster" as an occupational term did not occur locally until 1660 when Thomas Wilson, previously described as a thatcher, was thus identified in the parish register. In 1686 another maltster appeared, and by 1701-3 there were four maltsters named in the register. Only one of these men was concerned with probate and he seems to have been a maltster in the usual sense of a middleman. John Archer owned no land and no animals and the bulk of his rather inconsiderable wealth was £14 worth of malt weighing 15 qtrs.¹ The only rooms named in his dwelling place were a long malting chamber and a little malting chamber. Archer must have been buying barley, malting it and reselling. As he was the single maltster who was wealthy enough to be concerned with probate, we may assume that his colleagues were of even meaner stature. Perhaps these small scale dealers were serving the purchaser who bought only small amounts for home consumption; in a town there would have been many such consumers.

During the sixteenth century over 75 per cent of Melton inventories indicated that some brewing was going on in the household. In the seventeenth century this proportion dropped, largely because less

1. Ibid., PR/1/110/29, inventory of John Archer, Sept., 1703. The inventory total was only £15 7s 0d.

wealthy people were involved with probate and these were the ones who were not brewing.¹ Of twenty-six labourers' inventories from the period 1615 to 1667, for example, only those of the two richest men in the group (both smallholders) contained any malt or brewing vessels.² The average value of a labourer's goods during this period was £9; Christopher Franke's and Thomas Chisseldine's goods were worth £29 0s 10d and £25 8s 4d respectively. Daily custom for the brewers and victuallers in Melton was most certainly not limited to visiting farmers, traders and travellers but included a good many of the town's own poor. The landless found it less expensive and more expedient to buy ale rather than buy barley and go through the successive stages of brewing.³

We may now consider the purveyors of ale - the innkeepers, taverners, victuallers and alehousekeepers. Who were they and what was their economic role? This type of occupation is difficult to track down. The term "victualler" appeared rarely, "taverner" and "alehousekeeper" never. Only so-called "innkeepers" are relatively easy to identify. Two were named in the 1572 listing of inhabitants - Henry Tallis and Bartholomew Green.⁴ Neither was especially wealthy and Tallis's inventory of 1584 listed only eight rooms including the hall, kitchen, shop and two butteries - not an opulent establishment.⁵ There were in

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1. As indeed in the sixteenth century. The average value of all sixteenth century inventories was £58. The corresponding value for non-brewers was £10.
 2. L.R.O., PR/1/26/105, inventory of Christopher Franke, March, 1615; ibid., PR/1/52/307, inventory of Thomas Chisseldine, March, 1655.
 3. Cf. Peter Clark, 'The Alehouse and the Alternative Society' in Puritans and Revolutionaries, edited by Donald Pennington and Keith Thomas (1978), pp. 52-3.
 4. L.R.O., DG.36/159/7; see Table VI.
 5. Ibid., PR/1/6(b)/65, inventory of Henry Tallis, Jan., 1584.

fact six beds in one chamber on the first floor so privacy was not the house speciality either. Half of Tallis's wealth, which totalled £76 15s 6d, was farm stock and his alternative description was "husband-man". Of similar stature was Thomas Frearch who ran a hostelry of modest size.¹ It was Frearch's wife who supplied drink at the meeting of the Spinney Wardens and witnesses in 1558.² The drinking room on his premises was called the tavern - the only mention of such a room in the inventories - and "tavern" might be a good description for his, Tallis's and Green's establishments, for there was none of the grandeur normally associated with inns, and accommodation was distinctly on the crowded side. Although none of these three men was active in town administration in this they shared the experience of the bigger innkeepers of later years. Perhaps their occupation required their full time presence in a way not often found in other walks of life.

Nine persons were described as "victualler" in 1572.³ One of these was also a baker and another the widow of a baker. Where inventories survive they reveal establishments not essentially very different from those of Tallis and Frearch, although the amount of accommodation provided was a little less. Farming on a small scale seems to have been the norm, although it must be noted that these nine victuallers were all able to contribute to the poor: other victuallers who were not able must have been living in Melton. One or two of the male victuallers served as minor executive officers in the administration, but no more. Obviously distinctions in the Tudor period between victuallers and innkeepers were blurred.

1. Ibid., Wills and Inventories, 1558(A-F), inventory of Thomas Frearch, Jan., 1559. He too was a mixed farmer of some standing.

2. Ibid., DG.36/29/3.

3. Ibid., DG.36/159/7; see Table VI.

The town's premier inn throughout the period was the Swan, upon which information is lacking. From the sixteenth century there are glimpses of its functions as inn, meeting house for visiting notables and officers, social centre and gaol, but no inventory of any of its innkeepers survives to give us any further information.¹ From the 1630s, though, dates an inventory of the town's second major inn, possibly called the Crown. Described as gent., John Leig ran an establishment of twenty-five rooms, three yards and two stables until his death in 1636.² In all there were about sixteen guest rooms, most of which contained luxurious fittings and furniture. Leig was not farming at all although his wealth amounted to over £300 including £17 worth of hay. He served beer and wine as well as ale: this is the earliest mention of beer in the town, though hops were to be found in a mercer's shop in 1599.³

Two descriptions of the Mermaid, also known as Blyth's Inn, illustrate what was becoming the general pattern among victuallers of any status - that the larger establishments, while being insatiable consumers of foodstuffs, were not based on farm holdings.⁴ In line with the overall tendency in the town the victualling trade became disengaged from direct participation in agriculture. The Mermaid had about eight or nine guest rooms in 1679. It was fully equipped with stables, garden, wine and beer cellars, valuable sign and cockpit. The only concession to self-sufficiency made by the Blyths were a few swine and three cows in 1666: by 1679 even the cows had gone. The inn was, in fact, the

1. E.g. L.R.O., DG.36/284/3, 8, 21.

2. Ibid., PR/1/39/4, inventory of John Leig, Dec., 1636.

3. Ibid., PR/1/17/34, inventory of James Levett, Oct., 1599.

4. Ibid., PR/1/65/104, inventory of Mary Blyth, Oct., 1666 (total value = £170 17s 8d + £121 13s 0d credit); ibid., PR/1/81/75, inventory of Mary Blyth, July, 1679 (total value = £154 7s 7d).

meeting place of the Melton Manor Court Leet and Court Baron.¹ That the Mermaid was, while not large, a high class establishment is supported by the fact that William Dugdale the royal herald at the Visitation in 1682-3 stayed here at least once.²

Other hostelries offering more than half a dozen guest rooms can be traced occasionally, but one which offered very limited accommodation was among the most impressive victualling houses. It was run by Andrew Lacy, a vintner and feoffee of the Town Estate who left goods worth £212 6s 7d in 1635.³ Here drinking and eating were more important than sleeping. Although Lacy's premises contained fourteen rooms or so only three were (primarily anyway) for sleeping in, and at least one of these must have been for his own use.⁴ He had six children as well as a wife so the probability is that his trade consisted entirely of selling wine, ale, beer and food. Over half of his wealth comprised plate, malt, and £66 worth of wine. Lacy also provided his clientele with a bowling green complete with little house containing benches and tables. Lacy was succeeded by his son George, who unlike his father kept a handful of sheep; Andrew had provided for his children before his will was made, and any record of his farming

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1. Huntington Library, San Marino, California, Leicestershire Manorial Paper Box 18[L1L9], Melton Mowbray Draft Court Rolls, May, 1677 and Oct., 1679.
 2. Philip Styles, 'The heralds' visitation of Warwickshire, 1682-3' in his Studies in Seventeenth Century West Midlands History (1978), p. 117. A fourth substantial inn was that being run at the turn of the seventeenth century by Thomas Cropley. This had in the region of 10 or 12 guest rooms, L.R.O., PR/1/111/63, inventory of Thomas Cropley, Dec., 1704.
 3. L.R.O., PR/1/37/33, inventory of Andrew Lacy, April, 1635. His credits totalled £73.
 4. The rooms were, in order of listing in the inventory, hall, parlour, two butteries, little lodging parlour, servants' parlour, two Chambers, study, drinking room, kitchen, brewhouse, garner chamber, and cellar. Lacy owned his own malt kiln, so unlike most victuallers he made his own malt. Brewing, of course, virtually all victuallers undertook themselves.

involvement is lost.¹

Lower down the social scale were the lodging houses which provided up to half a dozen guest rooms which were less luxuriously furnished than in the larger inns. The inventories of such hostellers were usually worth between about £20 and £40. The services and facilities other than food, drink and a bed provided by these victuallers were fairly sparse and amounted to no more than the occasional shovelboard room (one of which at least doubled up as a guest room) or billiard table.² One of these men, William Barnett, died owing money to a variety of butchers, bakers and mercers, and more to at least two farmers and a Chandler for supplying him with malt.³ Below this group were the establishments which offered one or at most two lodging rooms. Often widows, the hosts had little personal wealth and their income seems to have derived almost entirely from the sale of ale; their inventory values tended to be between £10 and £20. These two groups of hostelries produced over twenty inventories between 1627 and 1710 - the largest number of any single occupational grouping apart from those of farmers and labourers.⁴

At the very bottom of the social and economic range of food and drink retailers were the alehousekeepers. Perhaps we have already encountered some of this group in the very lowest levels of the

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1. L.R.O., PR/1/40/153, inventory of George Lacy, Aug., 1638. Ibid., Wills, 1635/34, will of Andrew Lacy, March, 1635.
 2. E.g. ibid., PR/1/100/91, inventory of Zachary Harris, June, 1695 (inventory total = £31 3s 4d); ibid., PR/1/96/90, inventory of Richard Rollinson, July, 1592 (inventory total = £25 2s 4d).
 3. Ibid., PR/1/76/2, inventory of William Barnett, July, 1672 (inventory total = £30 12s 2d).
 4. These victuallers are recognizable as a grouping even though some of them pursued other occupations as well. This is, of course, not peculiar to victualling.

lodging houses which contained only a single guestroom. The alehouse-keepers who did not brew their own ale are virtually impossible to trace most of the time because their inventories - where they were prosperous enough to make them - would not contain any of the accoutrements of brewing such as gylefatts, mashfatts or coppers. Ale sellers do turn up in manorial presentments but only a few of these survive for Melton.

Before the late seventeenth century information on these people is very thin. In 1599 the parish Constables were instructed by a local Justice of the Peace to ensure that nine persons who had failed to do so "enter into bond" for victualling and brewing to sell.¹ One of these was a farmer, one was a carrier, one was an innkeeper/farmer (the son of Henry Tallis) and two bore the same surnames as two of the victuallers named in 1572.² One bore the same surname as a baker of the 1590s and two more were women. In 1617 four persons were presented in Lewes Manor Court for being common brewers and selling illicit measure without seal: one was John Kightley (the innkeeper of the Swan), one was a woman, and the other two are unidentifiable although one may have been a shoemaker by trade.³

By the late seventeenth century we have a much better guide to the practice and identity of people doubling up as alehousekeeper because in 1681 forty-five persons were presented in Melton Manor Court for breaking the Assize of Ale.⁴ Of these it is possible to identify thirty-eight, of whom fourteen were women. We can probably accept this number

1. L.R.O., DG.36/216.

2. Ibid., DG.36/159/7.

3. Lincolnshire Archives Office, Reeve 4/4/1, Court Baron, Manor of Lewes, Oct., 1617.

4. Huntington Library, San Marino, California, Leicestershire Manorial Paper Box 18[L1L9], Melton Mowbray Draft Court Roll, Oct., 1681.

as a bare minimum for the number of alehouses although the spectrum of establishments encompassed may have been somewhat wider than that usually associated with the term 'alehouse'. Nineteen of the forty-five were concerned with probate, and twenty-one were named in the 1670 Hearth Tax. We are in some position, therefore, to analyse the scale and mechanism of victualling.

Firstly, there were twelve different non-victualling occupations represented among the assize breakers, apart that is from one vintner, one 'innkeeper' and nine victuallers (identified either through the parish register or through inventory contents).¹ Secondly, only three of the nineteen whose inventories survive could be described as rich: the husbandman and two female victuallers, one of whom - Jane Vittel - was the widow of an 'innholder'.² The average value of the other sixteen inventories was just £22: none exceeded £36 and five totalled £15 or less. We can but assume that most of the people not concerned with probate were poorer still. Similarly, of the twenty-one who appeared in the 1670 Hearth Tax five were exempted on grounds of poverty.³ Thirdly, only three of the nineteen who left inventories were landholders: the husbandman, one of the rich female victuallers and a tailor. We probably have here many of the alehousekeepers who were living in Melton during

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1. The twelve occupations were tailor (5 persons), carpenter (2), attorney, barber, carrier, cooper, gardener, glazier, husbandman, labourer, locksmith and shoemaker.
 2. L.R.O., PR/1/100/23, inventory of Henry Blankley, April, 1695 (inventory total £350 1s 0d including £301 farm stock); *ibid.*, PR/1/85/172, inventory of Jane Vittel, Dec., 1683 (inventory total = £231 5s 0d, no farm stock); *ibid.*, 1.D41/4/XXXV/138; *ibid.*, PR/1/93/17, inventory of Anne Greene, March, 1690 (inventory total = £86 9s 8d including £33 1s 0d farm stock).
 3. P.R.O., E.179.240/279; *ibid.*, E.179, Bundle 332. Counting hearths as an indicator of wealth will not work. There are many examples of persons with 3 or 4 hearths whose personal wealth amounted to less than £30. Similarly, wealthy people often lived in houses with 1 or 2 hearths. The proportion and identity of those exempted is the important evidence contained in the Hearth Taxes.

the 1670s and 1680s. The overall picture is of poor craftsmen and widows who may have held cottage rights but who were not farming. Any accommodation they may have provided must have been extremely rudimentary and would have satisfied nobody much above the social status of the vagrant. At least four of the people presented for selling ale were also selling bread, and probably many others were too.¹ Their custom would have comprised large numbers of Melton's resident poor - the ones who were not brewing themselves. Wayfarers who were engaged on business (as opposed to vagrants) probably patronised the hostelries described above, while richer merchants, gentry and travellers would provide the custom for the large establishments.

Fortunes in the brewing industry were not made by vendors, but by the big arable farmers who made and supplied the malt. These men acted as capitalist supervisors of the initial stages of production. They were often involved in brewing too, for a quarter of alehousekeepers were not themselves brewing. This is not to disallow that there were parallel systems of processing barley into ale such as that practised by maltsters, or the household production of most of the town's wealthier inhabitants. Nevertheless the production of ale for commercial sale was certainly largely in the hands of Melton capitalists

1. Huntington Library, San Marino, California, Leicestershire Manorial Paper Box 18[L1L9], Melton Mowbray Draft Court Roll, Oct., 1681.

by the seventeenth century.¹ To these men malting was an adjunct (albeit a very remunerative one) to their other occupations, and nobody has been traced before the eighteenth century whose livelihood was entirely dependent upon the making and selling of malt. A great deal of capital was required to purchase (or grow) sufficient barley, build a kiln and employ a miller, so commercial production of malt was within the capabilities only of the wealthy, and they held the monopoly. The competition from village malt makers was scarce until the 1680s when large stocks of malt did appear.² In general though, village farmers seem to have been content with malting only enough grain to satisfy their own needs and to sell the surplus unprocessed to men like Davie Oundell, Andrew Lacy and Thomas Cloudesley. In any case the village farmers concentrated upon fattening up animals rather than producing grain for market. Melton was where kilns, custom and capital were concentrated.³

1. Examples of these men from the early seventeenth century are: Walter Wormwell, gent., (farm stock = £241, malt worth £30, owner of a kiln); John Wallace, schoolmaster (farm stock = £263, malt worth £24, malt chamber); Thomas Cloudesley, mercer, (farm stock = £114, malt worth £15, kiln). From the later seventeenth century: Charles Hill, attorney, (farm stock = £159, malt worth £40); Roger Waite, mercer, (farm stock = £358, malt worth £101, malting floors and chamber). Examples of dealers who initially purchased barley because they were small farmers or non-farmers include Davie Oundell, saddler, (farm stock = £20, malt worth £30); Andrew Lacy, vintner (no farm stock, 20 qtrs malt, kiln); Thomas Cloudesley II, mercer (farm stock = £38, malt worth £40, malting room). L.R.O., PR/1/24/103, inventory of Walter Wormwell, July, 1612; *ibid.*, PR/1/32B/69, inventory of John Wallace, April, 1627; *ibid.*, PR/1/38/171, inventory of Thomas Cloudesley, Sept., 1636; *ibid.*, PR/1/100/182, inventory of Charles Hill, July, 1688; *ibid.*, PR/1/98/23, inventory of Roger Waite, Aug., 1693; *ibid.*, PR/1/22/28, inventory of Davie Oundell, July, 1607; *ibid.*, PR/1/37/33, inventory of Andrew Lacy, April, 1635; *ibid.*, PR/1/84/226, inventory of Thomas Cloudesley, 1682.

2. Supra, p. 154.

3. Victualling in the villages is even more difficult to trace than in Melton, although a few millers, butchers and bakers were involved with probate. There were certainly people in the larger villages who would have relied upon victuallers and farmers to supply them with grain, malt or ale, though even so Melton may have been their chief source.

In an economy increasingly dominated by livestock husbandry it is to be expected that butchers would have ranked among the leading trades in the valley. The beast and sheep markets in Melton would have been the major economic event of the week as villagers and townsmen brought in their animals for inspection and sale and as prospective purchasers gathered to restock their herds and flocks or to drive the animals southwards towards the hungry capital. Butchery for the local market would have been bound to thrive under these circumstances, but who derived the main benefits - townsman or villager?

The earliest sixteenth century evidence of a Melton butcher is of Simon Shawcrosse who became a freeman of Leicester in 1555.¹ Though he was selling meat in Leicester as well as Melton Shawcrosse appeared in the 1555 assessment as of only middling wealth.² In the 1565 stint for the Spinneys both Simon and William Shawcrosse were rated as cottagers so the number of animals owned by these men would have been very small, strongly suggesting that they made their livings by butchering other men's animals.³ In 1572 William Shawcrosse, Thomas Johnson and Robert Hollingworth were the three butchers named as being able to contribute to the poor, but only the latter paid very much.⁴ A Simon Shawcrosse - we are probably dealing with a different person from the Leicester freeman - was too poor to contribute. Hollingworth farmed a yardland in 1565 but Johnson, like the Shawcrosses, was a cottager only. None of these men could be described as wealthy to judge by Elizabethan assessments, and none were in any way involved in the administration of the town.

1. Register of the Freemen of Leicester 1196-1770, edited by Henry Hartopp.

2. L.R.O., DG.36/205.

3. Ibid., DG.36/317.

4. Ibid., DG.36/159/7. Shawcrosse paid 4d a year, Johnson 8d, Holl-

More Shawcrosses were butchering around the turn of the century, but none of them made much of an impression in taxation lists or administration. John Shawcrosse died in 1607: a half-yardlander, he owned a cow, a calf, a horse, and four swine, and his shop implements were worth 5s 0d.¹ Between 1607 and 1657 no butchers made inventories, and the three which date from 1657, 1660 and 1688 averaged under £30. This is despite the fact that there were at least eight butchers resident in Melton during the 1630s; none of them paid very much in the 1634 church rate - the highest sum paid was 1s 6d by Thomas Howett - and two were too poor to pay anything.² The town's butchers, then, were hardly economic giants.

There is no evidence that butchery was undertaken on any scale in the sample villages. Only one butcher appeared in the rural probate records, and he was a poor cottager living in Asfordby near the end of the sixteenth century.³ During the entire seventeenth century only two butchers can be identified in the villages, both in Asfordby.⁴ By the early eighteenth century there were butchers in Scalford and Holwell. The very reason why markets originally emerged from the agrarian economy was that they gave advantages to purchasers and vendors which could not be gained by any other means: the purchaser had a wide choice, the vendor an almost guaranteed sale provided he was competitive. In butchery the whole carcass had to be disposed of quickly or the vendor would lose money: fresh meat would fetch a higher price than if it were salted, and this was especially important in summer. The paradox

1. Ibid., PR/1/22/25, inventory of John Shawcrosse, Aug., 1607.

2. Ibid., 1.D41/4/XVII/77; infra, Appendix II, pp. 273-4.

3. Ibid., PR/1/16/155, inventory of Anthony Pearsonn, Asfordby, 1597.

4. Supra, Ch. II, p. 83 , Ch. III, pp. 140-1.

inherent here is that a village grazing farmer would have to buy from a Melton butcher if he wanted fresh meat, unless he were butchering himself and selling in the market.

In fact the presentment of villagers in Melton Manor Court for hocking and for killing and selling veal under five weeks old in the market reveals that probably most of the butchery and the sales of meat in the town were undertaken by non-residents.¹ Because these are the only surviving Melton Court Rolls it cannot be claimed with certainty that this was the case during the entire period but owing to the poor showing made by resident butchers this must be extremely likely. As with bakers the court rolls completely undermine the counting of heads visible in other local records, and serve to emphasise the impossibility of attempting to divorce the economic history of a market town from the area which it serviced.

It is clear that these non-resident butchers were village farmers who sold meat in different markets on different days. In the Court Rolls of 1677, 1679 and 1681 a total of forty-three butchers from at least sixteen villages were presented.² Several of these villages were nearer to other markets - those of Leicester, Oakham and Grantham - than to Melton, so we can assume that the farmers frequented these places at least as often as Melton. The town acted as a natural distribution centre for meat from a wide area, and although some of the takings from these sales were destined to be spent in markets other than Melton, the same pattern of sales in other market towns would ensure redress. This is an entirely different situation from that of a large town like Leicester being consciously exploited in the sixteenth

1. Huntington Library, San Marino, California, Leicestershire Manorial Paper Box 18[L1L9], Melton Mowbray Draft Court Rolls, May, 1677, Oct., 1679, Oct., 1681.

2. See Map VIII
 of the
 Leicestershire
 Manorial
 Survey

century by outsiders anxious to avoid pouring money into fund-swallowing fee-farms and civic junketings: the pattern of butchery described above was a quite natural instance of open market free trade.¹

The lowly status of Melton's butchers, who were not farmers, is explained by the importance of visiting butchers. In fact there was one major Melton resident who was running a butcher's shop as an adjunct to his grazing interests, but not until very late in the seventeenth century. This was Thomas Raven, who owned over 300 sheep and thirty-two cattle, most of which were pastured in enclosures in the neighbouring townships of Sysonby and Thorpe Arnold.² Raven was the only big grazier who ran a permanent shop: the rest contented themselves with selling meat once a week in the market, or with selling to full time town butchers who had kept shops long before Raven appeared on the scene.

From this study of Melton's function in provisioning it emerges (as one might expect) that the biggest successes were registered by farmers. Not yet had the primary producer given up his role in the direct supply of foodstuffs to the consumer in favour of an increasingly sophisticated retailing system: big arable farmers figured prominently in brewing, big graziers were the important figures in butchery. Retailers of foodstuffs did not exhibit the same degree of success in general although it was possible for a few innkeepers and, to a lesser extent, bakers to build up remunerative businesses without being based on a sizeable farm holding. The vitality of Melton as a food market is emphasised by the presence of large numbers of bakers and butchers from other towns and villages in the market. Population growth was

1. Cf. supra, Ch. I, pp. 20-1.

2. L.R.O., PR/1/99/70A, inventory of Thomas Raven, July, 1694.

at the root of this vitality, although there is no doubt that Melton was also a busy wayfaring centre, which obviously contributed to the success of the provisioning trades. Under these conditions it is no surprise that in a non-industrial town the farmer should not only be the anchor-man in the supply of food, but should also play such a significant part in the traditionally urban pursuits of food-processing and retailing.

Provisioning was one of Melton's two prime functions as a market town, and to the other, retailing, we shall turn next. It should be emphasised, though, that Melton's role in provisioning was something more than that of a point of exchange: the town's inhabitants were major figures in the processing and supply of food to townsman and villager alike, and their importance grew as long as the valley's population continued to expand.

(iv) Retailing, services and service crafts

Retailing in Melton was not confined to foodstuffs. Apart from locally manufactured wares such as shoes, light leather goods and candles there were the items which were imported into the valley in exchange for wool and livestock. The most important of the traders who sold imported goods were the mercers and drapers, and the mercers in particular included some of the outstanding figures in the valley's economy.

The most valuable inventory of the sixteenth century was that of James Levett, a mercer who died in 1599 with goods worth over £420, plus credits of over £200.¹ Almost half of this total, £196 17s 8d, was

1. L.R.O., PR/1/17/34, inventory of James Levett, Oct., 1599.

farm stock, mostly cattle and sheep. In fact Levett farmed six yardlands, a huge farm, but his shop goods were valued at almost £150 so his was a truly dual occupation. Included among these goods was over £40 worth of cloth, silk and lace, at least some of which came from the continent. Levett sold a host of haberdashery, spices, luxury goods and necessities such as books, spectacles, pens, brushes, paper, nails, bowstrings, glue, turpentine, gunpowder, sweets, candy, licquorice, sugar, honey, prunes, hops, sandlewood, currants, cinnamon, pepper, nutmegs, ginger, cloves, aniseed, turmeric, almonds and rice. The single most valuable item in the shop apart from cloth was sweet soap worth over £20.

In 1571 Levett was the third richest man in Melton after a Merchant Stapler and a draper.¹ This was a position he more or less maintained until his death: by 1587 he was far ahead of the rest of the town in the assessment of that year, and it was the same in the 1592 fifteenth when he paid £1 - 5s 0d more than anyone else.² Born in Whissendine in Rutland, Levett was a purely Elizabethan phenomenon and he founded no great urban dynasty.³ His farming interests he bequeathed to his eldest son Richard and his second son Matthew. His "mansion house" where he lived was left to Levett's youngest son Edward.⁴ A James Levett served in a variety of executive town offices in the second decade of the seventeenth century, but others bearing the name have left little impression in the records.⁵ This may have

1. Ibid., DG.36/206.

2. Ibid., DG.36/210, DG.36/159/1.

3. Ibid., Wills, 1600/59, will of James Levett, 1597.

4. Ibid.

5. E.g. the inventory of Richard Levett, hatter, totalled only £2 4s 0d in 1638, ibid., PR/1/40/67, inventory of Richard Levett, May, 1638.

been because the main branch of the family retired to the country. A Richard Levett, later knighted, was a feoffee of the Town Estate from 1556 but he was not resident in the town.

Three other mercers were named in the 1572 listing - Brian and Christopher Shyers and Eustace Gulson.¹ A fourth mercer, William Bryan, was also active during the latter half of the sixteenth century. Significantly, no Gulson or Shyers appears in the subsidy lists before 1555; Levett first emerged in the town records in 1558, Bryan in 1560. That these men all moved into Melton at about the same time says a good deal about the prospects in retailing in such a town during a period of population expansion and agrarian prosperity. The increase in population which was possibly already in progress when the Melton parish registers begin in the 1540s, as well as stimulating agricultural output would have been opening up new horizons for importers into the valley. The essential relationship between population growth, agrarian success and retail opportunity is possibly as well illustrated during the mid-Tudor period as at any other time in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The draper was the other major retailer in Melton. Four drapers (two of them father and son) were named in the 1572 listing.² One of these, Robert Odam, sen., was actually rated higher than James Levett in 1571, making him the richest tradesman in the town.³ The other three men appeared in the same list of twenty-six who were Melton's economic elite at the time, and there is no doubt that these drapers were all extremely wealthy. The stint of 1565 shows that two

1. Ibid., DG.36/159/7; see Table VI.

2. Ibid., DG.36/159/7. They were Robert Odam sen. and jun., Dennis Shepperd and John Lacy; see Table VI.

3. Ibid., DG.36/206.

of them, Robert Odam sen. and Dennis Shepperd farmed three and a half and four and a half yardlands respectively, so like Levett they were heavily involved in farming as well as retailing.

The chandler was the third main type of retailer operating in Melton in the late sixteenth century, but he was not a figure to rival the mercer and the draper. Three chandlers were named in the 1572 listing, two of them members of the fecund Wormwell family which was represented in the town both in 1524 and 1700.¹ All three were only cottagers in 1565 and only one showed up as being wealthy in the Elizabethan tax lists.² In the 1576 assessment Thomas Wormwell paid the very respectable sum of 3s 0d, but Bartholomew Wormwell paid only 4d.³ By 1579 Thomas made his first appearance in the elite group which paid some of the national taxes, although he never approached the sums paid by the likes of James Levett and Robert Odam.⁴ Bartholomew's inventory survives: a weaver as well as a chandler his "chandling things" were worth 6s 8d out of a total of £14 5s 2d.⁵

Like the chandler the tailor was an artisan retailer who could, in theory, prosper during a period of increasing demand for his product. However, tailoring, like weaving and shoemaking, tended to attract large numbers of poor without any capital, thus depressing the craft on an individual scale. Competition was very severe and the wealthy tailor was a rarity. Four tailors were named in the 1572 listing, but none

1. Ibid., DG.36/159/7; see Table VI.

2. Ibid., DG.36/317; cf. the individual insignificance of butchers during the same period, supra, pp. 165-6.

3. Ibid., DG.36/207.

4. Ibid., DG.36/284/13.

5. Ibid., Wills and Inventories, 1579, inventory of Bartholomew Wormwell, Sept., 1579.

of them showed up well in the subsidy lists of 1555 and 1576.¹ Two Tudor tailors' inventories survive: the earliest is dated 1539 and totalled £16 6s 6d, and the second is dated 1575 and totalled £13 11s 4d.²

The prominence of the mercers among tradesmen continued into the seventeenth century, so much so that they seriously challenged the farmers for economic prevalence in Melton. In the second decade of the century the Cloudeleys first appeared in the town. Round about the same time, John Lorington also settled there. Although Lorington did not found a mercery dynasty the Cloudeleys did, one which endured into the 1680s. Another important dynasty which arrived in the town in the same period and which entered the mercery trade was the Stokes family. Anthony Stokes, founder of the dynasty, was a blacksmith, but Edward Stokes was certainly running a mercer's shop by the 1630s. Yet another newcomer to the mercery fraternity was Edward Fleming who arrived in the 1630s. Clearly early seventeenth century immigration into the town was not of a purely subsistence nature.³

Not only were new men arriving in the town to try their luck at retailing but indigenous families hitherto unconcerned with mercery were turning their hands to the trade. William Trigge, a member of one of Melton's oldest and most eminent families, died in 1638 after twenty years service to the town's administration. Hitherto the Triggess had been big farmers, and William the mercer must have represented a younger branch of the family because into the 1670s at

1. Ibid., DG.36/205, 207, DG.36/159/7; See Table VI.

2. Ibid., Wills and Inventories, 1540/59A, inventory of William Shaw, 1539; ibid., PR/1/5, inventory of John Symson, March, 1575.

3. Infra, Ch. IV, pp. 199-202.

least Triggess remained at the head of Melton's mixed farming community.¹ What is significant, though, is the complete switch by this branch to shopkeeping. In 1638 William held no land and kept no livestock; his shop goods were worth £130 out of an inventory total of £178 15s 4d.² Another family which turned to mercery were the Pawleys. Since the second half of the sixteenth century they had been glovers, but Moses Pawley was a rich mercer by 1634 when he paid 7s 0d towards the repair of the church.³

This levy of 1634 is a useful guide to the relative economic standing of Melton's inhabitants in the early seventeenth century, based as it was upon detailed local knowledge.⁴ We may set out the occupations of the most highly assessed men as follows:

TABLE II: The top twenty-eight assessments in the 1634 Melton church levy

Occupation	Assessment				
	Over £1	16s 0d - £1	11s 0d - 15s 11d	8s 0d - 10s 11d	6s 0d - 7s 11d
Husbandmen	1	3	2	1	2
Mercers	-	2	1	-	3
Gentry	-	1	3	1	2
Lawyers	-	-	-	1	-
Chandlers	-	-	-	-	2
Drapers	-	-	-	-	1
Haberdashers	-	-	-	-	1
Schoolmasters	-	-	-	-	1
TOTAL	1	6	6	3	12

Table II shows that nine husbandmen, seven gentry (most of whom were certainly farmers), six mercers, two chandlers, one draper, one haberdasher,

1. Infra, Ch. IV, pp. 236-9.

2. L.R.O., PR/1/40/14, inventory of William Trigge, Jan., 1638.

3. Ibid., 1.D41/4/XVII/77; infra, Appendix II, pp. 273-4.

4. This is evident from the Archdeaconry Court case fought over the assessment by one of the town's inhabitants, Thomas Sargeant, L.R.O. 1.D41/4/XVII/65-78.

one (farming) lawyer, and one (farming) schoolmaster paid over 6s 0d in the levy.¹ The town's economic elite can thus be clearly defined as consisting of farmers and retailers. How independent of farming were these shopkeepers?

John Lorington's was the earliest seventeenth century mercer's inventory.² He was one of the most important mixed farmers in the valley and his farm stock was worth over £350. Even so Lorington's mercery wares were valued at £465 3s 0d, and his credits in his book, in bonds and bills totalled £845 8s 0d. Thomas Cloudesley died in the same year as Lorington, 1636. Described as a mercer, his inventory does not include his shop goods, although he was very wealthy even leaving aside his mercery wares.³ Cloudesley was a big farmer and a maltmaker and he owned a herd of twenty-three cattle. In all his farm stock was worth £129 3s 0d out of an inventory total of over £450. His credits, presumably largely owing to his mercery business, totalled almost £400.

If the very biggest retailers were not yet divorced from farming, the retailing side of these businesses was no mere by-employment. Rather this is an example of a prevailing mentality in early modern England: the diversification of resources was an almost universal practice and as always land was seen as the prime investment. Given the conditions during the early seventeenth century retailing was coming to be seen as an almost equally good option. Consequently money made through farming was being invested in retailing, and vice versa. That there were big retailers who were farming extensive holdings

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1. One other person paid 7s 9d, but his occupation is unknown, ibid.
 2. Ibid., PR/1/38/49, inventory of John Lorington, April, 1636.
 3. Ibid. ., PR/1/38/171, inventory of Thomas Cloudesley, Sept., 1636.

does not imply that one pursuit was subordinate to the other, but that both were growth areas.

As there were pure farmers, of course, there were pure retailers, and as the seventeenth century progressed the trend was for retailing to become more and more independent of farming. As farms grew bigger and population pressure on the land continued to increase the opportunities for diversification between land and the shop decreased. This was an inexorable process in which Melton's modern role - servicing and provisioning with farming in the hands of a tiny rural minority - was portended. By the early eighteenth century the biggest mercery shop found in Melton's inventories was owned by a man whose farming interests consisted of keeping £70 worth of sheep, cattle and horses in Welby.¹

Examples of early seventeenth century retailers already growing independent of farming are difficult to trace because of the shortage of inventories before the 1630s. However one important draper, James Hickson, did leave an inventory in 1613. His shop goods, consisting of felt, feathers and bands were worth £94 12s 0d out of an inventory total of £121 7s 2d.² Hickson was (so far as we can tell) a non-farmer, and he is the earliest example of a pure retailer since Thomas Richardson who was of real status.³ Richardson did, of course, have the additional advantage of producing the goods which he was selling, which would more enable him to stand apart from farming than otherwise.

As the seventeenth century progresses we find evidence of a decreasing dependency upon farming by mercers and drapers. Thomas Cloudesley was undoubtedly a descendent of the Cloudesley who died in 1636, so

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1. Ibid., PR/1/110/54, inventory of Jonathan Hubbard, Nov., 1703.
 2. Ibid., PR/1/24/180, inventory of James Hickson, Jan., 1613.
 3. Supra, pp. 127. 130.

something of a direct comparison may be made between the way in which the two men conducted their businesses.¹ Cloudesley I was a substantial mixed farmer who kept a large herd of cattle worth over £70.² Cloudesley II was a smallholder whose livestock consisted of four cows, three swine and a horse, and the majority of whose arable produce was £40 of malt.³ By contrast, his shop goods were valued at over £630, and his plate alone was worth more than his animals. Daniel Simpson's mercery, grocery and haberdashery wares were worth £170 in 1694; he was not farming in any way.⁴ William Trigge, woollen-draper, had cloth valued at £240 in 1681, and his credits totalled over £650; he too was a non-farmer.⁵ Jonathan Hubbard owned £70 worth of cattle, sheep and horses, all pastured in Welby in 1703, but his grazing interests were dwarfed by his huge mercery business: his goods, "several parcels of cloth, thread, silk, buttons" were worth over £1,000 and his credits totalled £900.⁶

Edward Stokes and Roger Waite were the two major exceptions to this pattern. Stokes was a towering figure in grazing farming and he owned immense numbers of sheep and cattle in enclosed pastures in the valley.⁷ In all his livestock was worth £1,469 19s 0d in 1668. Described consistently as a mercer, Stokes's shop goods were not listed or valued, but whatever the extent of his involvement in retailing there is no denying his importance as a farmer. Similarly Waite's mercery wares were not listed in his inventory, although his business was of

1. Supra, p. 175.

2. L.R.O., PR/1/38/171, inventory of Thomas Cloudesley, Sept., 1636.

3. Ibid., PR/1/84/226, inventory of Thomas Cloudesley, 1682.

4. Ibid., PR/1/97/111, inventory of Daniel Simpson, Jan., 1694.

5. Ibid., PR/1/83/49, inventory of William Trigge, March, 1681.

6. Ibid., PR/1/110/54, inventory of Jonathan Hubbard, Nov., 1703.

7. Ibid., PR/1/69/14, inventory of Edward Stokes, May, 1668; supra, Ch. II, p. 71.

sufficient scale for him to issue his own trading tokens.¹ Waite was a major mixed farmer whose interests stretched into Lincolnshire; his farm stock was worth over £450 in 1693, and his credits totalled £1,388 1s 2d.² Stokes and Waite were reaping rewards both from the increasing local bias towards livestock farming and from the continuing prosperity of retailing, but this reminder of the diversity of Melton's economy cannot obscure the general trend in retailing.

Moreover, smaller retailers who were wholly dependent upon commerce and not involved in farming began to appear during the seventeenth century, thus providing a broader base of competition for the larger shopkeepers. Isabel Jesson, haberdasher, and Dorothy Briggs, mercer, were early examples.³ Isabel Jesson may have inherited the retail side of a dual business from her husband, but Dorothy Briggs was a spinster who was operating a shop on her own, and the cases of men such as James Hickson and William Trigge (died 1638) shows that this development was not peculiar to women.⁴ By the time that inventories begin to appear in bulk after the Restoration it becomes clear that these small independent retailers were flourishing. Elizabeth Briggs, mercer (died 1668), George Pawley, mercer (d. 1670), Edward Brooks, haberdasher (d. 1693), John Merrill, mercer (d. 1694), Michael Smith, tallowchandler (d. 1701), Thomas Sawbridge, mercer (d. 1703), William Browne, chandler (d. 1707), and John Marriott, mercer (d. 1712) were

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1. Ibid., Pamphlet Collection Box 50B, J.L. and N.L. Wetton, The Seventeenth Century Traders' Tokens of Leicestershire (1967 typescript). Edward Stokes also issued tokens, ibid.
 2. Ibid., PR/1/98/23, inventory of Roger Waite, Aug., 1693.
 3. Ibid., PR/1/25/115, inventory of Isabel Jesson, Aug., 1614; ibid., PR/1/40/289, inventory of Dorothy Briggs, Dec., 1637.
 4. Supra, pp. 173-4, 176.

all non-farming retailers, the average inventory value of whom was just £41.¹

Tailors continued to be present in large numbers in Melton throughout the seventeenth century, and they were invariably very minor figures individually. The turnover of personnel was rapid as these men, like shoemakers and weavers, fell by the economic wayside, only to be replaced by other aspirants.² Six tailors' inventories survive from the century, the average value of which was £17 - a figure inflated by the fact that two of the tailors were running small drinking and lodging houses.³

Other (ostensibly) specialist retailers appeared with increasing frequency during the century - barbers, apothecaries and milliners, for example. The inventories which survive reveal that these businesses were usually conducted on a fairly small scale, and that as with the more traditional retail trades agricultural interests were minimal.

Lists of shop goods rarely survive, but where they do they tend to show that while concentration upon retailing to the exclusion of farming was the norm, specialisation in the type of goods sold was not usually a feature of the shops. Martin Wormwell, a Chandler who died in 1650 and who kept a shop in the market place, sold flax, hemp, oil, vinegar, pitch, nails and "Norse" fish as well as tallow and candles: the latter he prepared himself in his workshop, the

1. This compares with an average inventory value of the 151 post-1660 Melton inventories of £106; L.R.O., PR/1/67/102, inventory of Elizabeth Briggs, Sept., 1668; ibid., PR/1/71/52, inventory of George Pawley, Nov., 1670; ibid., PR/1/96/141, inventory of Edward Brookes, Jan., 1693; ibid., PR/1/99/53, inventory of John Merrill, June, 1694; ibid., PR/1/107/33, inventory of Michael Smith, June, 1701; ibid., PR/1/110/44, inventory of Thomas Sawbridge, Nov., 1703; ibid., PR/1/114/21A, inventory of William Browne, May, 1707; ibid., Administrations, 1712, inventory of John Marriott, Feb., 1712.

2. See Table IX.

3. L.R.O., PR/1/84/241, inventory of Thomas Barkes, Jan., 1683; ibid., rd Rollinson, July, 1692.

rest of the goods were imported.¹ Another chandler was selling tobacco and soap by the early eighteenth century.² The development of artisan retailers into more general storekeepers was a natural one, of course, at a time when the demand for general goods was increasing.³

Administration in Melton was increasingly dominated by retailers during the seventeenth century. One in five Townwardens was a mercer in the period 1600-1720, and altogether 38 per cent of people holding the Townwarden's office were retail distributors.⁴ By comparison the proportion of pure farmers holding the office was exactly half this at 19 per cent. We can subdivide this period into two. During the years 1600-50 the respective proportions were: retailers 33 per cent, farmers 28 per cent; during the years 1651-1720 the proportions were: retailers 41 per cent, farmers 15 per cent. While some of these retailers were farming as well the proportion was falling as time passed, so the direction of change would not be altered, and it can be seen that more retailers and fewer farmers were becoming involved in local administration. The background to this was the overall increase in the number of shopkeepers compared with, at best, a static number of farmers.⁵ As would be expected, the growth of the professions in the later seventeenth century caused a rise in the proportion of attorneys and non-farming town gentry who played a part in Melton's

1. Ibid., PR/1/54/78, inventory of Martin Wormwell, June, 1650.

2. Ibid., PR/1/114/21A, inventory of William Browne, May, 1707.

3. Cf. T.S. Willan, The Inland Trade: Studies in English internal trade in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (1976), p. 79.

4. This included 21 mercers, 8 chandlers, 5 drapers, 3 apothecaries and 2 haberdashers out of 104 men who served as Townwarden; infra, Ch. IV, pp. 225-31.

5. This was not the only explanation - infra, Ch. IV, pp. 225-31, 241-2.

administration. In the period 1600-50 no (identifiable) lawyers served as Townwarden, but from 1651 to 1720 no fewer than nine did so.

As a retail distribution centre Melton never faced any serious competition from village based traders so far as this can be measured. A petty chapman and two pedlars living in Burton Lazars, a mercer in Abkettleby/Holwell and a chandler in Kirby Bellars were the only traceable retailers in the early seventeenth century. Obviously the chapman and the pedlars are to be viewed in a wider context than that of a single village or town and their function is probably best seen in terms of a wider economic and geographical area with, perhaps, Melton at its centre. Pedlars may well have supplied villagers with smallwears and utensils, but it is likely that most of these goods were purchased wholesale from permanent Melton traders or at the town's fairs. Pedlars resident in Melton occurred throughout the seventeenth century and they too are likely to have found most of their custom in the villages. One of these men, William Lamb, was a sievemaker who died in 1699; his wealth was mostly tied up in a single pack of milliner's wares valued at £8.¹ A Scottish chapman was evidently a frequent visitor to Melton in the 1640s. In 1641 he was involved in a report made by prominent townsman of a suspicious character making notes from the Sunday sermon in the church. Although the Scot had left town by the time the local Justice of the Peace was notified, he was expected to return within the week.² It is worth noting that this chapman was staying at the best inn in town, the Swan, which implies that he was a man of not insubstantial means.³

1. L.R.O., PR/1/104/8, inventory of William Lamb, April, 1699.

2. P.R.O., S.P.16/487, f.84.

3. Ibid.

Tailors were certainly found in large numbers in the villages, as in Melton, and virtually every village had at least one in the early seventeenth century. Where inventories survive they show firstly that the tailors relied to a great extent on agriculture, and secondly that they were rarely wealthy: the two smallest inventories of rural craftsmen both belonged to tailors.¹ Evidently the market for clothing was sufficient to support many tailors in the valley but the familiar trap of oversubscription to the craft ensured individual poverty. Most of the cloth made up by rural tailors would, of course, have been purchased from Melton drapers and mercers, although the itinerant pedlar would have supplemented this source.

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century rural craft and trade inventories the distributive trades were represented by a solitary Chandler from Asfordby who died in 1705 with goods worth £33 11s 6d.² His business would have been reliant upon the presence of victualling and butchery in this big thoroughfare village. In the parish register of Abkettleby/Holwell at the turn of the seventeenth century John Moore, husbandman/chandler/mercier appeared as the sole retailer found in the few village registers which listed occupations at that time. No trade tokens from any villages anywhere near Melton have ever come to light, and the past attribution of some to the decayed market town of Waltham on the Wolds, some five miles along the Grantham road from Melton, has since been proved doubtful.³

On this evidence there can as yet be no case made for serious rural competition for the town's retail distributors. If the village

1. See Table XI.

2. L.R.O., PR/1/112/74, inventory of William Kenelm, Asfordby, Oct., 1705.

3. J.L. and N.L. Wetton, op.cit.

shop had already made its appearance then it has left singularly little mark in the surviving Wreake Valley records.

Closely associated with retailing were the carriers who brought into Melton much of the cloth and mercery wares sold there. We cannot say when the professional carrier took over the bulk of local transport from the mixed farmer. Perhaps he never did, although it is reasonable to assume that most long distance haulage was undertaken by the professional long before the sixteenth century.

John Johnson, the Northamptonshire Merchant Stapler, used carriers to transport wool from collection points to ports in the middle of the sixteenth century, and one of these men was Ralph Capit of Melton.¹ In 1572 a carrier was named in the listing; he was a cottager of very low economic status, but it would surely be at this time that the demand for imports into the valley was increasing rapidly and we may speculate that carrying, whether by mule, packhorse, or cart, was a growth area.²

The founding of a carrying dynasty which was to last for about one hundred years may be seen in this perspective, therefore. At least seven men represented this dynasty, the first of whom was Nicholas Merrill. Nicholas can be traced carrying money, letters and books between Melton and London in the 1590s, but he had been living in the town since the 1570s, and a Merrill was resident there in the 1560s.³

Edward Merrill was the next member of the family to run the business, and he had £10 of James Hickson's money at the time of the latter's

1. Barbara Winchester, Tudor Family Portrait, p. 236.

2. L.R.O., DG.36/159/7, DG.36/317; see Table VI.

3. Ibid., DG.36/140/24.

death in 1613.¹ Presumably this was an advance from Hickson for a consignment of cloth which he never received. This relationship between a draper and a carrier is a perfect example of the way in which the one thrived upon business provided by the other's success.

George Merrill's inventory is dated 1627, and is the first carrier's inventory to survive. George was a cottager whose only interest in agriculture was two sheep.² He owned eight horses and a wagon with some spare wheels worth in all £22. A significant development in Melton at this time was the investment in retail businesses by rich immigrants and by resident townsmen: for Merrill this would be a logical extension of his carrying, and at his death we find that he had indeed opened up a shop selling cloth and flax, the goods which would have bulked so large in his profession.

Thomas Merrill had added a second wagon to the family business by 1637, although there was no sign of the shop in his inventory.³ In 1634 there were at least three other carriers operating from Melton, and there may have been up to about three more.⁴ The Merrills were the richest of these, and Thomas's inventory totalled £83 1s 10d, of which his seven horses, two wagons and cart gears comprised almost half; for small consignments Thomas had a collection of panniers and pack saddles. In addition his credits amounted to £55.

George Merrill II succeeded Thomas, and he too was faced with competition from at least half a dozen carriers during the 1640s. By the 1660s

1. Ibid., PR/1/24/180, inventory of James Hickson, Jan., 1613.
2. Ibid., PR/1/32B/15, inventory of George Merrill, March, 1627.
3. Ibid., PR/1/39/217, inventory of Thomas Merrill, Oct., 1637.
4. Ibid., 1.D41/4/XVII/77; infra, Appendix II, pp. 273-4.

the Merrill flag was being flown by John, who died in 1667. In contrast to his forbears John was a grazing farmer who kept a flock of over 60 sheep and a herd of seven cattle - the lure of land was too great for some to resist.¹ John was a man of substantial wealth: he owned ten horses, two coaches and a wagon worth £50, and his credits totalled almost £500, mostly in bonds and bills. He bequeathed £100 to each of his four children, and his horses, coaches and wagon to his wife if "she find herself able to follow my calling" until his son Thomas were of age to take over; otherwise she was to sell the lot and give the money to Thomas.² Whether or not Mistress Merrill took over the reins of the family business - which by now embraced passenger carriage - the dissipation of his wealth would undoubtedly have put an end to the rise of the Merrills up the economic scale during the seventeenth century. John Merrill II died in 1694, and his concern was entirely with his two mercery shops in Melton and "the country", the goods wherein were worth only £22 10s 0d.³ No Merrills were ever described as carrier after the death of John I in 1667, and the dynasty may have ended in the male line in 1694.

The rise and fall of the Merrill clan illustrates several aspects of Melton's economic development during the period. Firstly, there was the prosperity to be gained from the transport business, an opportunity provided by the success of retailing, in turn the result of population growth and agrarian progress. Secondly, there was the tendency for retailing to attract new personnel, whether from within or without the town, who possessed the necessary capital: as a form

1. Ibid., PR/1/66/31, inventory of John Merrill, March, 1667.

2. Ibid., Wills, 1667/29, will of John Merrill, Feb., 1667.

3. Ibid., PR/1/99/53, inventory of John Merrill, June, 1694.

of investment it looked extremely promising, and it was most certainly an easier life than farming both in terms of effort and security of returns. Thirdly, there was the continuing if decreasingly common practice of investing in land.

It is as well to remember that not all the carrying of goods into and out of Melton was in the hands of local men. At least some wool dealers and clothiers from other parts of the country would have bought wool at its source in the valley, and large amounts of cloth and other imported goods would have been brought to Melton's fairs by dealers and traders and bought there by the town's retailers. The death at Widow Read's house in 1705 of the carrier Israel's daughter, meanwhile, points to the largely itinerant nature of many of the carrying fraternity.¹

In addition to the provision of food, drink, cloth, shoes, hardwares and luxury goods to its own and the rest of the valley's population, Melton supplied a variety of other goods and services. Here were to be found a grammar school and a petty school, surgeons, and by the seventeenth century, attorneys, physicians, a surveyor, a clockmaker, musicians. Of more fundamental importance to the majority of the population, both for the goods they produced and the employment they generated, were the building, wood and metal crafts. The numbers of craftsmen such as blacksmiths, carpenters, coopers, glaziers, joiners, masons, plumbers, turners and wheelwrights were simply related to the population of the town and the area it served. Melton offered no particular speciality among these crafts and they are to be found scattered fairly randomly among the villages especially the larger ones, of course.²

1. Entry in Melton's parish register.

2. See Tables VII, X-XIV.

Most villages probably had at least one blacksmith, and most would have had a carpenter or a woodworker who could fulfill the same function. In Melton these men were essentially of similar status to such as shoemakers, and the majority worked in an atmosphere of under-employment and low standards of living. The only ones who could keep themselves above the general morass of poverty were those who were engaged in farming or retailing (as opposed to working entirely to order). The occasional success registered by these craftsmen are all to be regarded in these terms. Roger Lambard, a wheelwright, was the wealthiest woodworker who lived in Melton during the period, but he was primarily a grazing farmer, and 80 per cent of his inventory total of £114 1s 8d was livestock, implements and hay; he had no stocks of wood or wheels at his death.¹ Frances Pawley, glover, and Charles Hackett, smith, were both wealthy but both ran retail shops: they were not simple artisans.² One pinmaker ran a small shop which sold tobacco and pipes as well as a variety of metalwares.³

More typical of these craftsmen were Thomas Bolyvant, carpenter (inventory total £11 4s 0d in 1637), and Richard Garland, smith (inventory total £15 2s 6d in 1695).⁴ Although carpenters were among the most numerous craftsmen in Melton during the seventeenth century only three were ever involved with probate, and the average value of the inventories was under £17. Victualling provided extra income for

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1. L.R.O., PR/1/31/87, inventory of Roger Lambard, Jan., 1626.
 2. Ibid., PR/1/46/3, inventory of Frances Pawley, April, 1644 (inventory total = £85 1s 0d); ibid., PR/1/85/129, inventory of Charles Hackett, Oct., 1683 (inventory total = £74 3s 4d).
 3. Ibid., PR/1/60/75, inventory of James Goldringe, Feb., 1664 (inventory total = £49 18s 8d).
 4. Ibid., PR/1/40/55, inventory of Thomas Bolyvant, Nov., 1637; ibid., PR/1/85/129, inventory of Charles Hackett, Oct., 1683.

some, but there is no disguising the fact that the building, wood and metal trades were to be found alongside leather workers, weavers and tailors near the bottom of the town's socio-economic scale.¹

The range of the low status craft in Melton increased during the seventeenth century. The whitesmith, the sievemaking, the cabinet-maker, the chairturner, the beehivemaking, the brushmaker and the matmaker all made their appearance in the parish registers in the second half of the century. To some extent this represents increasing specialisms within the local economy, paralleled by the arrival of the coachman, the furrier, the clockmaker and the wigmaker, but here also is part of the explanation as to what was happening to the urban labourer.

Labourers were at the very bottom of the social scale: they were society's anchormen, and with widows they comprised an extremely broad base.² In 1572 26.5 per cent of 113 traceable occupations in the listing of that year were labourers, although it is certain that many more would be found among the ranks of the seventy-eight persons whose occupations are unknown.³ Between 1636 and 1653 the proportion of 'labourers' named in the parish registers ranged from 30 to 35 per cent, and averaged 33 per cent. Between 1636 and 1638 over 100 labourers were named, and in 1637 alone thirty-eight died. No economic grouping

1. So-called 'labourers' were also working at these crafts, *infra*, p.191-2. Of the 94 men exempted from paying the Hearth Tax in 1670 we know the occupations of 72: among these were 5 tailors, 3 weavers, 3 glovers, 3 shoemakers, 2 carpenters, a painter and a signmaker. Apart from labourers the others were: 2 millers, 2 pedlars, 2 tinkers, a baker, a chandler, a gardener, a miller, a musician and a shepherd; P.R.O., E.179.240/279; *ibid.*, E.179 Bundle 332.
2. Over half of the persons who were probably excluded on the grounds of poverty from the 1634 church levy were labourers, *infra*, Appendix II, pp. 273-4. Of the 139 persons exempted from paying the Hearth Tax in 1670, 42 were labourers and 44 were women, P.R.O., E.179.240/279; *ibid.*, E.179 Bundle 332.
3. L.R.O., DG.36/159/7; see Table VI.

left more inventories; between 1615 and 1667 twenty-six labourers' inventories were made, the average value of which was under £9. Most of these were made during the brief period 1636-8 when the plague wiped out so many townsfolk, and from when a high proportion of all inventories date. The part played by this group in the economy of the town may have been small on an individual scale, but in terms of numbers it was of major importance.

Who were these labourers and what did they do to make a living? Just over half of the labourers who left inventories were cottagers, three were smallholders, one was a small grazier and eight were landless and did not keep any animals either. As this group represented the better-off labourers we can assume that a high proportion of the whole relied entirely upon labour provided by other people for their livelihood. There was work in the fields throughout the year with a peak at harvest time, but this alone was insufficient to support a third of Melton's adult male householders. Apart from the limited amount of work available there was also competition from women and children as well as temporary day workers from outside of the town.

The same circumstances which prevented Melton from becoming a manufacturing centre meant that the scope for labourers to diversify their means of subsistence were very limited. No local woodland, no coalfield, no quarry, no water transport, no textiles industry. Flax spinning, and to a lesser extent wool spinning provided some extra income for labourers and their families, but it was suggested above that textiles manufacture of any kind was never healthy in the Wreake Valley, and was largely, if not wholly, geared to local demand.¹ There

1. Supra, pp. 105-7, 115-7, 121-4.

certainly seems to have been an increase in the amount of spinning in Melton during the early seventeenth century, probably in response to the cumulative effects of population growth and even more pressure on the land to provide wage labour. The opportunity to engage in victualling was one which offered itself in a market town although here too the labourer faced competition from widows and craftsmen struggling against the same problem of underemployment. In fact only one labourer can be shown to have broken the Assize of Ale in 1681.¹

Labourers have been found who were also described in various records as shepherd, servant, loadsman, miller, sievemaker, pipemaker, lacemaker and pedlar to mention a few, and there is no doubt that as many who could draw upon some skill or find work of any kind would do so. The sixteenth century Townwardens Accounts give us further examples of the kind of casual work to be found in Melton.² Labourers were frequently hired by the town to work on the repair and maintenance of the bridges and causeways: tasks included gathering stones and pebbles in the fields of neighbouring townships and scouring Melton itself - sources of stones, sand and gravel were the churchyard, the streams and the street; carrying these materials to the bridges, diverting the course of the river to allow repairs to be made to the bridge arches, and helping the masons and pavers all provided work for men, women and children. Rates of pay in 1586 varied from 2d a day for gathering pebbles in the brook and street, and 6d a day for digging and carrying sand and gravel, to 8d a day for helping the

1. Supra, p. 162 and n.

2. The following information derives mostly from the Townwardens Accounts of 1582 to 1586, L.R.O., DG.36/284/14.

masons. Margaret March received 5d a day for gathering pebbles in Pickwell, a village six miles south of Melton, while Abraham Sheldon was paid 3d a load for gathering forty loads of pebbles in Stapleford fields. The daily rate for going further afield to Clipsham in Rutland for dressed stone from the quarries there was 1s 0d. Such maintenance was not required every year, but few years passed without at least several days work being spent on the bridges and pavements, and at these times large numbers of labourers were provided with occasional employment. Between 1588 and 1595 the townsmen reckoned they spent over £90 on maintaining the two main bridges and the streets.¹

Other casual employment provided by the town included cleaning the streets and causeways, keeping the river banks secure, hedging and ditching the town lands, helping craftsmen to repair the Town Estate buildings, the pinfold, the schoolhouse and the church, harvesting the gorse in the Spinneys, guarding and escorting prisoners and watching the entrances to the town in times of plague. In 1631 at least twenty-four labourers were employed for up to seventeen days each ditching in the Spinnies and the normal daily payment was 6d although "Stukely's boy" was paid 4d.² In 1634 at least thirteen labourers were paid for scouring the "cow dams" and trenching in the Spinnies.³

By the turn of the seventeenth century the proportion of labourers named in the parish register had dropped to an average of about 18 per cent - not much over half the 1630s figure. This probably reflects an increase in specialization enforced by population pressure. The

1. Ibid., DG.36/267.

2. Ibid., DG.36/284/32.

3. Ibid., DG.36/284,33.

decrease in the proportion of labourers was inversely reflected in the slow rise in the proportion of people said to be involved in the wood, metal and building trades as well as the appearance or increased frequency of occupational descriptions like pipemaker or hempdresser. As Melton grew there was less scope for the ordinary labourer to rely upon the agrarian economy, which was an employer of strictly finite proportions. In order to survive he had to concentrate more on, for example, carpentry or masonry: where he had once been described as 'labourer' the parish register began to reveal the diversification of livelihood which was not a new phenomenon but in which, perhaps, the emphasis was changing. While it is not possible to trace this development on an individual scale it can be shown that surnames associated with labouring in the 1630s and 1640s were being associated with other occupations later in the century (and not, any more, with labouring).¹ Continuous immigration ensured that the status of such people remained low - the rough mason (or weaver, tailor, shoemaker) was unlikely to be any better off in 1700 than he had been 100 years earlier.

It is to be expected that the turnover of labouring families would be high as immigrants arrived and departed having found little solace in Melton. The number of surnames of which at least one bearer appeared as a labourer in the parish register between 1636 and 1644 was 127: only thirty of these surnames appeared among the men who were described as labourers in the 1660s, and by the early eighteenth century only seventeen of the original 127 surnames still appeared among the men described as labourers.² This is a very rough and ready device for measuring

1. For example the Johnsons, Sharpes and Wilfords turned to weaving; the Eminses, Stringers and Websters to tailoring; the Clarkes, the Holdings and the Wrights to shoemaking. See Table IX.

2. See Table IX.

occupational turnover for several reasons. One is the number of people who regraded themselves occupationally and so left the ranks of designated labourers yet remained resident in the town (and labouring). Another distorting factor is the omission of unmarried labourers (possibly a good sized section of the class) from the parish registers until their death, which may or may not have occurred in Melton. Thirdly, the high mortality caused by the plague, as in 1637-8, may have wiped out entire families, thus obscuring the actual rate of inferred emigration; obviously disappearance owing to disease is an entirely different matter to disappearance owing to economic distress, although the two may be related. In addition high mortality years would over-emphasise the presence of the unmarried male labourer by comparison with other periods which did not experience severe epidemics. Fourthly there is the problem of the natural extinction of male lines, which was probably quite high among people living on and below the poverty line.

The difficulties presented by the guillotine effect of plague on poor families can perhaps be circumvented by omitting from the list of 127 'labouring surnames' the ones which only occurred in 1636-8 and not thereafter. This leaves us with eighty-seven different surnames of which fifty-seven had disappeared from the labouring ranks by the 1660s, which still indicates a rapid turnover of personnel. Similarly this reduces the proportion of unmarried labourers to a level more comparable with subsequent periods. Years of high mortality in the 1650s would, nevertheless, have had a similar distorting effect.

Even so, a high rate of immigration is indicated by these findings. In the period 1660-71 forty-seven 'labouring surnames' appeared for the first time, and in 1698-1718 a further forty-six new names appeared.

In both periods the totals represented over 55 per cent of the total number of 'labouring surnames' occurring in the register. The surmise is that these new arrivals were replacing people who had either been victims of the town's natural wastage or who had left in search of better prospects, having given up the struggle for survival in Melton.¹

In Chapter I the idea of the economic unity of Melton and the Wreake Valley was introduced. In the broadest of terms it was suggested that agrarian or rural prosperity was bound to benefit the local market town, and that considerations about the weighing of 'urban' against 'rural' prosperity are irrelevant. In Chapter II the process of agrarian change was discussed, and the social effects thereof were briefly considered in terms of the redistribution of population. The critical role of the Melton farmers in the feeding of both the town's and, to some extent, the villages' populations, and in the production of wool and meat for export, was noted. In Chapter III we have discussed Melton's function as a distribution centre for the valley's wool and the ways in which this function waxed and waned. Secondly, we have suggested that the town's role as a manufacturing centre offered some measure of hope for the increasing numbers of underemployed in the valley. Thirdly, the processing of foodstuffs and the provisioning of the valley's population by Melton's bakers, maltmakers and victuallers have, like the part played by rural-based butchers in the sale of meat in the market town, been shown to have increased in significance against a background of rising population. Finally, the retailing and servicing role fulfilled by townsmen has been seen to have led to the creation of some great fortunes, and to have owed its blossoming

1. Infra, Ch. IV, p. 206.

not only to local population growth, but also to the successes being registered in the valley's agrarian economy. In all these aspects it is impossible to separate urban from rural fortunes: the production of food and wool, their redistribution and export, the reciprocal importation of other goods and their redistribution - in this the economy of town and country was completely integral.

It remains now to consider the social developments which accompanied these economic processes. Economic change in pre-industrial England invariably meant benefits for some, grim hardship for others. The stark contrasts engendered by agrarian change and population expansion were nowhere more clear than in Melton, where poverty and despair staggered along beside prosperity and abundance. Yet, while Melton exhibited these classically urban characteristics it is insufficient to regard the people living in the town as a society apart. In Chapter IV we will study the cultural and social relationships between Melton and the villages within its economic ambit which indicate a measure of unity in terms other than the purely economic.

IV

URBAN SOCIETY AND EXTRA-URBAN SOCIAL RELATIONS

In many ways the Melton of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was a classic English market town.¹ An administrative, religious and trading centre, Melton was sited on important north-south and east-west routes, and here was concentrated what manufacture the Wreake Valley supported. Melton undeniably had 'urban' characteristics, and at any moment in time its inhabitants can clearly be recognized as comprising an 'urban society'. Nevertheless there are reasons for regarding the town not so much as a discrete social entity but more as a focus in a system of social relationships enjoyed by the population of the valley. In this chapter it is proposed to examine the structure of and the changes in the urban society and then to suggest that this society in fact operated within, and perhaps at the centre of a wider field of activity which we might call a social area. While a variety of economic relationships between Melton and the villages in the valley provided the framework for this social area, it was the continuous migration into and out of the town which, acting as a kind of lubricating agent, ensured the generation and regeneration of social contacts.

It is with the town's social structure and the effects wrought upon it by migration that we begin our analysis, in the hope of characterising and demonstrating the essential fluidity of this particular urban society. The second section deals with the mechanism and personnel

1. Peter Clark and Paul Slack, English Towns in Transition 1500-1700, pp. 17-25; Alan Everitt, 'The Banburys of England', Urban History Yearbook (1974), pp. 28-38.

of local administration in so far as this influx of migrants and the shortage of common pasture caused serious problems for the town's socio-economic elite, especially during the period c. 1550 to the 1630s. Ultimately this led to Melton's farmers expanding their enterprises into the multiplying pasture grounds in the valley, a development which helped to cement the fundamental economic unity of the town and the valley. The third section considers the degree to which we might regard the town society as integrated with that of the surrounding area.

(i) The common and daily receiving in of strangers: the problem of immigration

As in other towns and as in the country as a whole Melton's social structure can be visually represented by a pyramid with a narrow band of wealthy at the top and a broad base of poor. Although the 1524 subsidy is no more than an approximate guide to wealth structure in that we know little of the omission rate, it does tell us that almost half the taxable population of Melton were assessed at the lowest rate of £1 on goods or wages.¹ There will have been others who were poorer than this, perhaps about 35 per cent of the total number of households in the town.² In 1543 exactly half the taxed households were assessed at £2 or below; again the omission rate may have been around 35 per cent or a little higher.³ Compared with other English towns during the early sixteenth century there is nothing remarkable in these proportions.⁴

1. P.R.O., E.179.133/108; 47 per cent were assessed on £1, and 2.7 per cent were assessed on more than £40.

2. Supra, Ch. I, p. 23 ; Charles Phythian-Adams, 'Urban Decay in Late Medieval England' in Towns in Societies, edited by Philip Abrams and E.A. Wrigley, pp. 170-2; Clark and Slack, English Towns, p. 112.

3. P.R.O., E.179.133/135.

4. Supra, pp. 112-3.

In 1670 the very poor were exempted from paying the Heart Tax, and in Melton this meant 139 households out of a total of 339 - 41 per cent in all.¹ Thus, while these sources are not directly comparable there appears on the surface to have been in Melton, as in other English towns, "no major restructuring of the social hierarchy . . . between the 1520s and the 1660s."² As far as Melton is concerned, however, the comparison between conditions in the early sixteenth and later seventeenth centuries conceals changes in society which were so dramatic as to amount, if not to a restructuring, then to a gross distortion. These changes resulted in a division in the town's society which in some ways was as rigid as if Melton had been granted a charter of incorporation.

The second half of the sixteenth century witnessed population expansion all over England. In itself this was sufficient to cause widespread poverty, for employment opportunities in pre-industrial societies do not multiply as quickly as population. Large numbers of people who found themselves surplus to labour demands in their locality took to the roads and many ended up in towns, which were seen as providers of employment and relief.³ Melton was well sited on major routes and as early as 1558 beggars were being driven out of the town.⁴ By the opening years of the seventeenth century the town's Constables were giving relief to between two and three vagrants a week, almost one third of them children.⁵ Where destinations were given they show

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1. P.R.O., E.179.240/279; ibid., E.179.Bundle 332. Cf. supra, Ch. II, p. 77.
 2. Clark and Slack, English Towns, p. 114.
 3. Ibid., pp. 82-96.
 4. L.R.O., DG.36/284/2.
 5. In the parish Constables' accounts for the single year 1601-2 relief was paid to at least 117 vagrants of whom 10 were married couples, 21 were soldiers and 36 were children, ibid., DG.25/39/1/1. The Churchwardens, too, made contributions to the poor, as in 1596-7, ibid., DG.36/140/26.

that the majority of these people were travelling long distances: parties were heading for Durham, Exeter, London, Cambridgeshire, Gloucestershire, Norfolk and Surrey. Others were not going quite so far from Melton - to Gainsborough, Peterborough, Staffordshire - but these too involved substantial travel over thirty miles or more, and we do not often know how far they had already travelled to reach Melton. Doubtless most were heading for where they believed work to be available. These travellers were, of course, mostly licensed beggars, and there may have been many more who were given shorter shrift by the town's parish officers.

Of greater and more lasting significance to the town was the settlement, whether temporary ^{or} ~~of~~ permanent, of immigrants. It was mentioned above that the mid-sixteenth century witnessed the movement into Melton of some wealthy retailers, a reflection, perhaps, of the prosperity which the town was already seen to be enjoying owing to the growth of the Wreake Valley's population and the local agrarian progress.¹ Two local listings - a subsidy assessment of 1555 and an assessment for contributions to the poor of 1572 - each may have included just about every householder resident in Melton.² Of the 135 different surnames recorded in 1555, eighty were also recorded in 1572; of the 143 different surnames recorded in the latter year, therefore, sixty-three were new to the town. This may imply that since 1555 44 per cent of the surnames to be found in Melton (representing 33 per cent of the total number of households)

1. Supra, Ch. III, p. 171.

2. L.R.O., DG.36/205, DG.36/59/7. Out of the 176 persons named in 1555 40 per cent were assessed at nothing to pay; out of 192 persons named in 1572 58 per cent were assessed at nothing to pay. If any householder was excluded from these lists it was simply on the grounds of poverty.

represented people or families that had migrated into the town during this period of seventeen years. If so, the rate of immigration of families was 3.7 per year.¹ Of these sixty-three 'surname-groups' in 1572, forty were assessed at nothing to pay - a proportion of 63.5 per cent. This compares with a proportion of 58.3 per cent of all the 192 persons named in 1572 who paid nothing. It can hardly be taken as evidence, then, that the immigrants during these years broadened the poor base of the social pyramid. At about the time that the country's population began to expand the social composition of Melton's immigrants was practically the same as that of the resident population.²

Thereafter there were no lists made which appear to be as comprehensive as those of 1555 and 1572. In 1592 a subsidy return named 229 persons of whom only twenty-four (10.5 per cent) were assessed at nil, and yet excluded were thirty townsfolk known to have received poor relief only a year earlier.³ Perhaps there were others whose circumstances were little better and who were also excluded from the assessment. Certainly in the light of recent urban studies one would expect a full household listing of a late Elizabethan town to include more persons who were excused payment

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1. The 63 new surnames were represented by 64 householders; most of the newcomers had not yet, presumably, produced children who were old enough to be the heads of separate households.
 2. It is most likely, though not provable, that many of these immigrants came from within the Wreake Valley, for the simple reason that Melton had no manufacture. It does not seem probable, therefore, that as yet people from far afield would be drawn to the town, except incidentally. In other words this is likely to have been short distance subsistence migration.
 3. L.R.O., DG.36/159/1.

through poverty than a mere 10.5 per cent.¹ Despite the incompleteness of the 1592 subsidy, however, there were still ninety-three new surnames out of a total of 178 - equivalent to an annual recruitment rate of 4.6 families over the previous two decades.

If the 1592 subsidy was incomplete, that of 1602 which named 242 persons is even more likely to have been so, and yet even this included sixty-five surnames which were new to Melton - equivalent to an annual recruitment rate of 6.5 families during the period 1592-1602.

These calculations are extremely crude, but they do illustrate that Melton was absorbing immigrants from the mid-sixteenth century up to the early years of the seventeenth.² Evidence that migration into the town continued during the seventeenth century is to be found in the concern felt by townsmen over the erection of new cottages.

In 1613 two townsmen were sent to Oakham assizes "about the new erected cottages and the inmates", but any success they may have achieved in preventing such new building cannot have been lasting, because the problem was just as acute in 1629.³ In that year the town was asking advice of a lawyer: could anything be done at law about "new erected cottages without the view of the market"?⁴ Was it possible to charge a higher poor rate to "those that do erect them and make so many poor"?⁵ The lawyer, John Wightwicke, was optimistic in reply, and he recognized that the erection of new cottages which did not have four acres was "the means to bring in beggars", but we

1. E.g. see Clark and Slack, English Towns, pp. 121-3; John Pound, Poverty and Vagrancy in Tudor England (1971), pp. 25-8.

2. See also infra, pp. 209-14.

3. L.R.O., DG.36/284/29.

4. Ibid., Clayton Mss, 35/29/386.

5. Ibid.

do not know what legal action the town took, if any.¹ One action that was taken was the listing and numbering of the 132 "ancient cottages" which had rights of common, both their current owners and occupiers being named.² No other cottage was to have any rights of common whatsoever. This meant that no new cottage rights had been granted for at least sixty-four years.³

Early in 1631 the townsmen, in response to a request from the Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor, let certain pieces of town land, the proceeds to be used for a stock for the poor.⁴ Eyekettleby residents were also taxed £1- towards this stock: this money was used to render the workhouse fit.⁵

By 1638 the population of the town had been decimated by the plague; nevertheless Melton still thronged with poor people, and its predicament was raised at the Leicester assizes in that year. The Justices, Sir Richard Hutton and Sir Thomas Trever, noted that Melton was suffering from:

the common and daily receiving in of strangers, taking in of inmates and making new erections, by reason whereof the poor people are exceedingly chargeable by taxes and otherwise to the Inhabitants of the said Town, and that many that do receive strangers, entertain inmates and make such new erections for their private gain are least of all charged for the relief of the poor and many times by reason of their own poverties do become capable of relief by collection themselves.⁶

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1. Ibid.
 2. Ibid., DG.25/1/1, ff. 49-50.
 3. Infra, pp. 209, 213.
 4. L.R.O., DG.25/1/1, f.52.
 5. Ibid., DG.36/284/32.
 6. Ibid., DG.25/1/1, f.77.

The Justices' decision was that the town could tax the inhabitants who received immigrants and who erected new cottages according to the annual value of the newcomers' homes. No inhabitant was to take in a stranger or settle him in a new cottage before giving security to the Churchwardens, the Overseers, and two manorially appointed stewards against the stranger's becoming a charge upon the town.

Two points should be made at this juncture: firstly, there was the demographic cataclysm of 1636-7 when 508 burials of townsfolk were recorded in Melton. These years, and the 1650s (when the annual total of burials exceeded that of baptisms on four occasions) would have relieved much of the population pressure being felt in the town.¹ These years of high mortality carried off such large numbers, many of whom were surely poverty stricken, that they disguise the changes in the town's social structure which took place over the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and which a straightforward comparison between society in the 1520s and the 1670s misses completely

The second point is that population growth in the Wreake Valley - from where many of the immigrants into Melton during the Elizabethan and early Stuart periods probably came - had slowed by the 1630s, as it had, possibly, throughout the country.² For this reason alone immigration into Melton would have decreased from this time, from the valley anyway.

Despite the slowing of population growth and, after about 1660, the petering out of enclosure in the valley, immigration into Melton continued up to and beyond 1700. In 1681 at the Court Leet of the Manor

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1. In 1665, too, plague struck fiercely, so that the Hearth Tax returns for Michaelmas that year were lost, P.R.O., E.179.251/7.
 2. E.g. see J.D. Chambers, Population, Economy, and Society in Pre-Industrial England (1972), p. 135.

of Melton it was agreed that no person was to take in any foreigner or stranger to dwell at his tenement or cottage without giving security to the town, upon pain of forfeiting £5.¹ Four years later in 1685 the 132 ancient cottages, their owners and their tenants were all listed again.² In the parish registers, 1701-9, there were 249 different surnames, 139 of which did not appear in the 1670 Hearth Tax. The Hearth Tax recorded 339 households of which 139 [sic] were exempted because of poverty; this was, therefore, almost certainly a complete household count, and it included 226 different surnames.³ A comparison of the surnames in these two records suggests that Melton continued to recruit new families at a fairly rapid rate during the last three decades of the seventeenth century, perhaps as many as four a year. This, if accurate, is not very much less than the annual recruitment rate in the late sixteenth century, a time when the town's population was growing. Now, by contrast, the population of Melton was fairly static. Two questions to be answered are: why was Melton still absorbing immigrants when the Wreake Valley was producing little (if any) surplus population, and why was the town not growing as a result?

In answer to the first of these questions, a number of settlement certificates from the period 1697-1729 give the most recent origins of sixty-seven immigrants and their families.⁴ Twenty-five of these - under 40 per cent - came from an area within seven miles of Melton; twenty more came from between ten and fifteen miles distant. This

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1. Huntington Library, San Marino, California, Leicestershire Manorial Paper Box 18 [L1L9], Melton Mowbray Draft Court Roll, Oct., 1681.
 2. L.R.O., DG.25/1/1, ff. 111-2.
 3. P.R.O., E.179.240/279.
 4. L.R.O., DG.25/35/1/1-66, DG.25/35/2/2. See Map IX.

still leaves twenty-two families - 33 per cent - who came from over fifteen miles away. These included migrants from as far afield as Durham, Denbighshire and Covent Garden. None of these, nor quite a few of the immigrants from between seven and fifteen miles distant, can be said to have moved into Melton as part of a normal pattern of local mobility or short range migration found around any urban centre.¹ A possible explanation is that the growth of the Leicestershire hosiery industry was attracting people to the county, and some of these long-distance travellers ended up in Melton even though the town was never a great hosiery centre like Hinckley or Leicester.² It is difficult to see any other reason for long-distance migration into Melton during this period, especially as the settlement certificates had been issued in the parishes of origin and were valid only for settlement in Melton - this was not simply chance settlement in a promising-looking town on the road to London.³

Before hosiery signalled the arrival of manufacture in Leicestershire the county as a whole offered little opportunity to migrants from other parts of the country. This, added to the social disruption caused by enclosures, makes it very probable that immigration into Melton during the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries consisted of local people trying their luck in their market town, as

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1. John Patten, Rural-Urban Migration in Pre-Industrial England, University of Oxford School of Geography Research Paper 6 (1973), pp. 23-5.
 2. Supra, Ch. III, pp. 123-4; of the handful of occupations attributed to these immigrants one was a woolcomber, another a framework knitter.
 3. Nor were these people being returned to Melton (such resettlements were dealt with in Quarter Sessions). The certificates specify that the Churchwardens and Overseers of the parishes of origin agreed to take back the migrants if they became charges on Melton's poor rate.

we have argued above.¹ The end of enclosure and the slowing of population growth would have reduced this flood to more normal proportions by the second half of the seventeenth century (the assumption being that rural-urban migration was 'normal' in pre-industrial England). Immigration thereafter consisted of 'normal' mobility within Melton's market area, plus a (possibly increasing) proportion of longer distance movement into the town.²

In answer to our second question, Melton was not growing after 1670 because baptisms had levelled off after reaching a peak in the 1640s; because the excess of baptisms over burials was probably not sufficient to produce much overall population growth; and because immigration was being balanced by emigration. This, at least, is the conclusion which may be drawn both by inference and from the rapid turnover in personnel in some of the town's poorer occupations, especially the labourers, shoemakers and tailors.³ To judge from surname-evidence large numbers of men, perhaps with families, were moving into Melton during the late seventeenth century to take up one of these occupations, only to disappear from the parish register within a generation. Deaths alone cannot explain this: a saturated economy is the answer. Rapid mobility into and out of the town was a major feature of the late seventeenth century.

If the social structure was deformed by mass immigration during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, what were the consequences in terms of social relations? What measures were taken

1. Supra, p. 200 n.

2. By 1725-9 8 out of 16 immigrants into Melton came from outside the county, compared with 19 out of 51 in the period 1697-1724.

3. Supra, Ch. III, pp.135, 179, 192-4 ; see Table IX.

by the townsmen to discourage immigrants, and for what reasons? To answer these questions we must consider the availability of and pressure upon Melton's common pastures; this will then involve us in a closer scrutiny of the mechanism and major figures of the town's administration.

(ii) The Town Estate and the farming community

(a) The origins of the Town Estate and the pressure on Melton's pastures

With the dissolution of Melton's two religious guilds in the Chantries Act of 1547 the town was left facing a serious problem because the lands and properties which belonged to the guilds were liable to confiscation.¹ Although there is no conclusive evidence, it is highly likely that the profits from the guild lands were administered by Guild Wardens, and that they were used to pay the wages of the guild priests, to repair the church, the bridges and the highways, and for the upkeep of the Grammar School. This is the picture which emerges from the Chancery Court case of 1577.² By that time the town had legally recovered lands and properties which had been confiscated from the guilds and which had passed into the hands of John Beaumont and Christopher Draper.³ The court case arose because it was believed that the town also owned some

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1. Calendar of Patent Rolls, Edward VI, I, pp. 299-300; ibid., Elizabeth I, 1563-66, pp. 10-11; ibid., 1569-72, p. 271.
 2. L.R.O., DG.36/326/1-10.
 3. Thomas North, 'The Ancient Schools of Melton Mowbray', T.L.A.S., III (1865-9), pp. 404-20; Dorothy Pockley, 'The Origins and Early Records of the Melton Mowbray Town Estate', ibid., XLV (1969-70), pp. 20-38, and The Origins and Early History of the Melton Mowbray Town Estate: A study in the government of an unincorporated town, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leicester (1964); Joan Simon, 'Town Estates and Schools in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries' in Education in Leicestershire 1540-1940, edited by Brian Simon (1968), pp. 3-26; L.R.O., DG.36/313/326.

properties which had been concealed from the Crown at the time of the Chantries Act. Already in 1566 an Inquiry had been held into this possibility by appointed commissioners Thomas Lucas and William Uvedale, but the ensuing Exchequer Court case decided in favour of the town.¹ During the Exchequer case it was stated that the profits of the lands in question were used towards the maintenance of Melton's school.² In the Chancery case the townsmen denied that these lands had ever belonged to the guilds, and claimed that the profits issuing out of them were used to repair the church, the bridges and the highways as well as the school. In the event the townsmen again won their case and they were free from further government scrutiny.

These lands and properties formed the original nucleus of a trust which was set up shortly after the Chantries Act and which was to become known as the Town Estate. In 1549 twenty-two men were enfeoffed of the Spittal Chapel: this is the earliest traceable evidence of the Town Estate mechanism although the 'concealed' guild lands and the Beaumont purchase may have already been enfeoffed in trust.³ The creation of a trust enabled the community of the town to own property collectively and erected a wall of feoffees which constituted a legal entity, and which prevented escheatment to the manorial lord. In some ways the trust could be regarded as a primitive species of corporate government, although it was subordinate to more authorities than a corporation, and in Melton the Town Estate did not hold the rights to the market and fair tolls until the nineteenth century. Of far greater significance than the limited degree of self-government which the owner-

1. Ibid., DG.36/313/322-3, 325.

2. Ibid., DG.36/313/325.

3. North, 'The Ancient Schools of Melton Mowbray', loc.cit., p. 406; Pockley, loc.cit., p. 22.

ship of the guild properties permitted and sponsored the assumption of control by the Town Estate over the pasture resources of the township.

As early as the 1550s the Town Estate properties included several enclosures within the township. Among these were Abbot Close, Chapel Close, Davy Hook, Ford Close, Mill Close, Open Close, St. Johns Wong, Spenser Close and Water Lane Close, all acquired at some time during the sixteenth century. A larger enclosed pasture ground was the Orgar Leys, which measured somewhat over forty acres, and for which the town paid an annual rent of £1 to Mr. Pagnam.¹ Townsmen were declared in about 1580 to have been commoners over the land "time out of mind".²

More extensive still was the Spinneys, another area of pasture which exceeded 200 acres and which was rented by the town until 1564. In that year the townsmen paid £200 plus the cost of numerous expeditions to London, legal expenses, gratuities and bribes in order to buy the Spinneys outright.³ A few months after this highly expensive purchase was made it was declared at a town meeting that 157 households had rights to common over the pasture - thirty holders of a yardland or more, and 127 cottagers.⁴ Common rights over the Spinneys were thus fossilized, and it is highly probable that this is the reason why this vital area of pasture was secured. Henceforth the Spinneys was entirely

1. L.R.O., DG.36/329/1.

2. Ibid., DG.36/330.

3. Ibid., DG.36/297/5, 6, DG.36/313/62; Thomas North, 'Melton Mowbray Town Records', T.L.A.S., IV(1878), pp. 329-84.

4. Ibid., DG.36/317. The stint was three kye for a yardland, two kye and a follower for a cottage.

under the control of the townsmen, and the real need for this can be deduced from subsequent evidence of an increasing pressure on Melton's pasture resources.

Ten years later the stint of 1565 was reaffirmed for the Spinneys, and the same stint was applied to the common fields, but steers and bullocks aged three years or more were now forbidden to pasture either on the Spinneys or on the common fields.¹ At the same time it was laid down that no man having both a farm (i.e. a yardland) and a cottage could keep animals on the pastures and commons or both; transgressors were to be fined 10s 0d to be used for the relief of the poor.² In 1579 this order had to be repeated.³

The following decade saw further measures being taken by the townsmen to protect their scarce pasture resources. From 1582 new leases of town properties included the proviso that lessees "shall not admit or take in any inmates or double tenants upon pain to forfeit."⁴ In the same year it was decided at a town meeting that the Orgar Leys should be purchased.⁵ The proposed price was thirty years' rent "or somewhat more rather than go without them or grow in trouble or sweat for the same."⁶

Four years later in 1586 a crucial decision was taken. A town meeting then declared that no newly erected cottage should enjoy any

1. Ibid., DG.36/317. The Spinneys was primarily for cattle only, supra, Ch. II, pp. 45-6.

2. L.R.O., DG.36/317.

3. Ibid., DG.25/1/7, f.8.

4. Ibid., ff.9-10.

5. Ibid., f.4.

6. Ibid. In fact the Orgar Leys was not purchased until 1596.

pasture rights in the township.¹ As a result Melton's cottage economy was now legally closed to the poor immigrant, who would henceforth have to rely entirely upon wage-labour or a trade. The town had now done all in its power to discourage any immigrant who could not afford to buy a farm or an established cottage holding.

The stint was repeated in May, 1589, although the age above which steers must not be pastured on the commons was lowered to two and a half years.² Increasing concern about immigration is evident in this order, made the same day: "That no shopdweller or barndweller neither any new erected cottage shall have any common at all. Except they were inhabited and dwelt on as cottages before the memory of man."³ Although they were debarred from any permanent claim to pasture rights "new erected cottages shall be allowed common this year paying to the Spinney Wardens 1s 4d for every beast so they have not above 2."⁴ Two days later the stint for cottagers was actually raised to three beasts, although only for a single year: from 1590 the stint for cottagers was to be the usual two beasts and a follower.⁵ Whether the orders regarding both new and established cottagers resulted from a particularly lush grass crop we cannot tell, but certainly both measures were temporary.⁶

1. Ibid., f.7. This order included the common fields, whereas the limitation of rights in 1565 seems to have applied only to the Spinnneys.

2. L.R.O., DG.25/1/1, f.11.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. 1590 was a poor harvest year. Poor weather for grain crops was usually good for grass, Bowden 'Agricultural Prices, Farm Profits and Rents', A.H.E.W., p. 623, and 'Statistical Appendix', ibid., p. 819.

The Orgar Leys were eventually purchased by the town in 1596 for £40.¹ Mr. Pagnam must have refused to sell in 1582 and the townsmen had to wait until the land passed into the hands of the local Pate family of Eyekettleby before they were able to succeed with their bid. From this time on the town had full control over the two major enclosed areas of pasture in the township.

In 1600 the town properties were conveyed by the two surviving feoffees to nine new ones, as was the usual procedure.² The settlement included the affirmation of the 1565 stint, and given to the Townwardens was "full power and authority . . . for the time being to sue and implead in any lawful court . . . any person or persons, trespassing or offending in or upon the said premises."³

The continuing resolve of the townsmen to safeguard their pasture resources was tested in 1606 by John Thurbarne, a lawyer who had recently settled in Melton. Thurbarne, castigated by townsmen as "very miserable, covetous and contentious", attempted to keep the town herd from pasturing in Dike Meadow, of part of which he was the owner and had enclosed, until Lammas, August 1st.⁴ The town claimed that Dike Meadow was, in fact, commonable over a month earlier, on midsummer day. On behalf of the town Edward Wormwell, a feoffee of the Town Estate, took the dispute to the Court of Wards.⁵ The case lasted for four terms before being dismissed and referred to common law.

1. L.R.O., DG.36/284/19, DG.36/313/71.

2. Ibid., DG.25/9/2.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., DG.36/319.

5. Wormwell was the tenant of 4 yardlands owned by George Savage, a minor. Wormwell's rights of common over Dike Meadow were those belonging to this land.

Eventually Wormwell won the verdict "in the right of the Town" but his costs amounted to 100 marks; Thurbane was ordered to pay him costs of only £13 6s 8d.¹

During the course of the Dike Meadow case it was stated that the cottagers in Melton had common for thirteen score beasts.² At a stint of two beasts per cottage this means that the number of "ancient" cottages with pasture rights was about 130 - in other words, probably the same as in 1565.³ Clearly the town was rigidly enforcing its measures to discourage immigration by restricting common rights. Despite this, Melton was described during the case as "a poor market town populous and full of poor people" and in 1610, the same year that a levy was made to build a House of Correction, the heavy pressure on the town's pastures was recognized in a reduction in the stint for the Spinneys and the Orgar Leys.⁴ These pastures were described as having been "heretofore greatly overcharged with a high rate of beasts more than that ground by a great number were able to keep and maintain by reason whereof many hath sustained great loss and hindrance."⁵

The reduction in the stint may have come about through a disregard for the town's regulations about which it was difficult to do very much. Fines will have been levied for transgressions but these

1. L.R.O., DG.25/1/1, f.29.

2. Ibid., DG.36/319.

3. Supra, p. 209. We cannot be absolutely certain that the limitation placed upon the number of cottagers entitled to put their animals on the Spinneys also applied to the common fields.

4. L.R.O., DG.36/319, D.G.25/1/1, f.33, DG.36/320/1-2.

5. Ibid.

may not have been a sufficient deterrent, and in any case it would not have been a simple task to identify illegally pastured beasts among a herd exceeding 570 cattle.¹ On the other hand it is quite possible that it was the sheer size of the farmers' beasts which was causing the overstocking. Big arable farmers could feed up their cattle during winter in a way far beyond the resources of the cottagers, and there were certainly plenty of fat cattle in Melton's inventories during the late sixteenth century.² Steers, bullocks and oxen would eat far more grass than the cottagers' spare beasts, and the successive orders which gradually reduced the maximum age at which these large animals could be pastured on the commons proves that Melton's farmers were keeping substantial numbers of them.

The drop in the stint applied both to farmers and cottagers: henceforth farmers were to keep two beasts per yardland (instead of three) and cottages were allowed the same (since 1565 they had been able to keep a calf as well).³ This meant that there would be up to 210 fewer cattle in the pastures, an indication of the seriousness of the overcrowding.⁴ In the same orders the age limit for steers allowed in the Spinneys and the Orgar Leys was further reduced to two years.⁵ Any beasts found on the pastures which were not entitled to be there were to be impounded.

1. In 1606 cottagers had common for 260 kine and 130 calves; farmers had common for 180 kine, ibid., DG.36/319, DG.25/1/1, f.11.

2. Supra, Ch. II, pp. 45-6.

3. L.R.O., DG.36/320. A calf now counted as a fully grown beast.

4. There were said to be 81 yardlands in the fields in 1589, supra, Ch. II, p. 44 and n.

5. L.R.O., DG.36/320.

We can explain the determination of the townsmen to protect the home pastures by observing the way in which Melton's farming community dominated local administration during the critical period from the mid-sixteenth century up to the early decades of the seventeenth. It was the farmers who had the major interest in the town's pasture resources, and they who had the most to lose if the stocking of the pastures with immigrants' animals went unrestrained. The pressure on Melton's fields was great enough without such an additional burden. Before demonstrating that power in Melton was wielded by the farmers, however, we must first describe the administrative mechanism through which that power was exercised.

(b) The exercise of power: the composition and motives of the ruling elite

It has been suggested of the Melton town trust "that the ultimate authority to govern lay with the community as a whole."¹ This view was taken because neither the feoffees (who were elected for life) nor the Townwardens (elected annually) had the authority to make important decisions outside the forum of the town meeting. At the meeting "ten or twelve of the best estimation" would be chosen to form a body to which, according to Dorothy Pockley, both feoffees and Townwardens were responsible.² Furthermore, this body "did not form anything in the nature of a permanent committee . . . each group being chosen for particular occasions."³ The implication is that Melton was governed by a democracy in which the executive officers were responsible to

1. Pockley, loc.cit., p. 24.

2. Ibid., p. 23.

3. Ibid., p. 24.

the entire community. This does include an element of truth but it is not the whole story, for Melton was ruled by an elite just as surely as if it had been incorporated.

It is undeniable that the majority of decisions taken concerning town affairs, such as stinting, the appointment of officers-extraordinary, the regulations concerning new cottages and inmates, and the collection of government levies, were taken "by common consent" or "by consent of all the inhabitants". We must, though, look beyond this to see the mechanism of decision-making. The "general meeting" in the strictest sense does appear to have involved substantial numbers of townsmen who were summoned, according to an entry in the Town Minute Book of 1606, by the tolling of the church bells.¹ On that particular occasion forty-five men "with many others" turned up to elect ten of their number to let town properties.² At other times during the seventeenth century the number of men present at general meetings whose names were recorded varied between about twenty and fifty. Assuming that these are minimum estimates of the number of men who attended these meetings then some form of democracy indeed seems to have been in operation.

However in the first place it cannot be confirmed that these 'elections' normally involved the actual casting of votes. In 1702 a vote was taken over the appointment of the new Townwardens after two men had been 'elected' and this had been disputed. It would appear that voting as such was a last resort in the case of dissent, and that 'election' was actually selection.³

1. L.R.O., DG.25/1/1, f.27.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., DG.25/1/1, f.124.

In the second place it is almost certain that the only people who were entitled to attend these meetings were the holders of yard-lands and the occupiers of the ancient cottages. In 1670 the general meeting consisted of "freeholders, cottiers, tenants and occupiers of land in Melton".¹ These contrasted with the folk sneered at as "shop dwellers and barndwellers" who were singled out by legislation concerning the town pastures in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and who were being blamed for causing more poverty in Melton in 1638.² In local by-laws these people were recognized only in their debarment from enjoying the same rights as the established or wealthy families. Therefore, probably a maximum of only about 160 householders were entitled to attend town meetings.³

In the third place, among these householders we may detect what we might call an active governing elite, in the seventeenth as well as in the sixteenth century. Occasionally at the general assemblies a small group of men, usually numbering about ten, were chosen not only to execute a decision, but to make it in the first place, often in partnership with the feoffees. If authority in the Town Estate can be said to have lain ultimately with about 160 householders, then it must also be said that effective power was wielded by a number far smaller than this. In 1582 two local gentry were requested to choose twelve men, who from among themselves chose five to execute the leasing of town lands.⁴ In April 1628 ten "meet men" were selected to let the lands along with the nine surviving feoffees.⁵ In April 1630 ten

1. Ibid., f.96.

2. Supra, pp. 202, 211.

3. I.e. about 30 farmers and 132 cottage holders.

4. L.R.O., DG.25/1/1, f.3.

5. Ibid., f.46.

men were elected to decide (with the feoffees) what should be the stint for the common fields and the enclosed pastures.¹ In June 1641 eleven "meet and fit men" were chosen to lease the town lands once more, again with the feoffees.²

In these cases, then, it was the feoffees and some of "the best sort of inhabitants" who really seem to have counted.³ Consultation and ratification were probably the extent of the involvement of the majority of the town's eligible householders. In the case of much other town business, such as the scrutiny and allowance of the Townwardens' annual accounts, it is difficult to tell how many people were involved. In almost every case no more than eight or ten signatures or marks were appended to such accounts. Does this mean that no-one else was present? Or that it was not feasible to ask all those present to sign or make their marks? Whatever the truth, the more active signatories almost invariably consisted of feoffees, men who were elsewhere described as "meet", and men who had not were later to serve as Townwarden.⁴

The authority vested in the town meeting did not simply depend upon the trust's ownership of certain lands and properties in Melton. By 1575 at the latest the Town Estate had absorbed the function of the manor court in the regulation of the common fields, and it was at a town meeting that the stint for the fields was laid down that year.⁵ Although some fines continued to be levied in Melton manor

1. Ibid., f.51.

2. Ibid., f.57.

3. Ibid., f.33.

4. Of the 10 chosen to let town properties on April 6th, 1659, 9 were Townwardens at some time and the tenth was a feoffee, ibid., f.75. Similarly, of the 10 chosen for the same task in June, 1665, 9 were Townwardens and the other was a feoffee, ibid., f.91.

5. Supra, p. 210.

court it is clear from this and from subsequent decisions made at town meetings that effective power over Melton's fields lay with the Town Estate.

Moreover the functions of Melton's parish officers - the Churchwardens, Constables and Overseers of the Poor - were controlled at town meetings. These officers kept their own accounts, but they were reimbursed by the executive officers of the Town Estate, the Townwardens, if they ended up out of pocket. The election of parish officers took place at town meetings, where matters concerning the officers were frequently discussed and settled. So, it was the Town Estate which taxed the town on behalf of the Constables in 1613; which supervised the apprenticeship of poor children in 1598; and which supervised the Churchwardens and Overseers in their payment of a legacy to the poor in 1611.¹ Doles to vagrants were made by the Townwardens, who were also to be found buying psalters and paying the gaolers' wages.² The functions of Townwardens, Churchwardens, Constables and Overseers were, in other words, almost indistinguishable in Elizabethan Melton, and all worked under the guiding hand of the town meeting.³ It is time to look more closely at the men who ran the meeting, and through it, the local government of the town.

Since the feoffees were the permanent visual and legal representatives of the Town Estate and the men who were invariably involved as a group in the making of major decisions throughout the period it is evident that they comprised the nucleus of local government. As elsewhere, the identification of their power with status and wealth in the sixteenth

1. L.R.O., DG.25/1/1, ff. 20, 36-7.

2. Ibid., DG.36/284/4, 14, 22.

3. There was no recognizable cursus honorum through the offices.

century is demonstrable through taxation records. Of the nineteen men who were enfeoffed of the Spinneys in 1564, thirteen were among the twenty-six persons taxed in the 1571 subsidy, including nine of the thirteen who were assessed at £4 or over.¹ The average value of the five inventories left by sixteenth century feoffees exceeded £170 - way above the average of £58 for the fifty-five Melton inventories of the same period. Among these nineteen feoffees were a Merchant Stapler, an innkeeper, two drapers, a mercer and a surgeon, but the most important occupational feature of the group is that sixteen of them were farmers who held on average three yardlands each in Melton's fields.²

The predominance of the farming community among the Tudor feoffees may have been no more than a reflection of the continuing importance of agriculture in Melton's economy, for as yet the economic primacy of the farmers was unchallenged by retailers. It would have been curious indeed had the farmers - who represented the pinnacle of Melton's socio-economic hierarchy at this time - not dominated local government. What is of importance, however, is that it was this very period of farmer-dominated government which coincided with the acceleration of immigration into the town, and with the period of the most frequent anti-immigrant measures.

It is in these circumstances that the developments already described should be seen. It was, perhaps, in response to the influx of immigrants from about the middle of the sixteenth century that the farmer-led town community secured control over the Spinneys and mobilised what was probably the existing framework of local government towards the safeguarding of Melton's pasture resources. Thereafter

1. L.R.O., DG.36/313/62,63,DG.36/206.

2. Ibid., DG.36/317, DG.36/159/7.

followed a series of enactments which froze the number of inhabitants who were entitled to common rights within the township, and which were designed to ensure that the commons did not become overstocked.¹ That the concern at this stage was with pasture rather than with the cost of supporting the swelling numbers of paupers in Melton is shown by the contrast between regulations concerning the stint and the tone of the response made by the town to central government enquiries about the poor in 1572. In their reply the townsmen declared themselves well able to support their own resident poor - fifteen persons in all - and that "we have houses enough to suffice the poor within our town to dwell in".² Clearly the immigrant poor were not yet seen as the responsibility of the town; did not therefore constitute a problem from this point of view; and were not declared to be so in 1572. The real threat from the immigrants was that their animals would devour Melton's pastures, and it was against this that the rich farmers, who led the town's government, reacted.

By the third decade or so of the seventeenth century the town's responsibility for its poor had broadened. In 1629 the Town Estate attempted to pass more of the burden of poor relief onto those who encouraged immigration, and further pleas to this effect were made at Leicester assizes in 1638.³ Later in the century the 1681 decision in the Court Leet that no-one was to take in strangers without giving security to the town was similarly made in order to prevent immigrants from becoming chargeable on the poor rate.⁴ Apart from the restatements of

1. Supra, pp. 209-13.. It is notable that the smaller enclosures owned by the town were invariably rented to farmers who were actively involved in administration during this period.

2. L.R.O., DG.36/159/7.

3. Supra, pp. 201-3.

4. Supra, pp. 203-4.

the number of cottages entitled to common rights in 1629 and 1685 there is no sign of the earlier paranoia about the danger of immigrants overburdening the commons: after the earlier decades of the seventeenth century the main preoccupation was with the poor rate rather than the pressure on pasture. Why was this?

The most obvious answer is that the fossilization of common rights in 1565, reaffirmed in 1629 and 1685, had the desired effect in keeping immigrants from the commons, and that after about 1589, therefore, there was no need for too much serious concern. This may have been so, although the reduction of the stint in 1610 proves that the pastures were still oversubscribed at that date. Perhaps a stronger reason for the decreasing concern with common rights, however, might lie in the decline in the numbers and, probably, influence, of the farmers who were actively involved in local administration.

We can begin to demonstrate this by looking at the occupations of the feoffees, although this only takes us so far because the seventeenth century evidence is not as firm as in the sixteenth. In 1565, 1572 and 1583 the number of yardlands held by farmers were listed, so that although men like Robert Odam and Christopher Whitehead were usually described as 'draper' and 'Merchant Stapler' respectively, it is evident that they were also major farmers, each holding three yardlands in 1572.¹ There were no such lists of farmers in the seventeenth century, and although inventories help to fill the gap, too few of them have survived to give us a great deal of information about the feoffees.² We have to broaden our perspective

1. L.R.O., DG.36/317, DG.36/159/7.

2. E.g. of the 14 feoffees named in 1620 only 4 left inventories which have survived.

and try to identify other men, apart from the feoffees, who could be considered as members of the active governing elite. In this way we can endeavour to characterize the economic base of the elite, and see how it changed during the seventeenth century.

Although the feoffees are the most readily identifiable members of the elite, other men can be shown to have been important figures in local administration because of the frequency with which their signatures or marks were appended to accounts and decisions. Throughout the period 1556-1720 the names of thirty-eight men appeared more than a dozen times at the foot of decisions recorded in the Town Minute Book (1572-1720) or at the foot of the Townwardens' Accounts (1556-1618).¹ These men represented about 11 per cent of the 345 persons whose signatures appeared at various times.

We should probably also regard the men who served as Townwarden as members of the active elite. Forty-two of the eighty-eight feoffees and thirty-two of the thirty-eight 'frequent signatories' were Townwarden on at least one occasion: in all, fifty-four out of the 121 known Townwardens were either feoffees, frequent signatories, or both. If any executive office stood out as the 'key' office then it was that of Townwarden. During their tenure of office these men handled larger sums of money than the parish officers, being responsible for the collection of rents, loans interest and fines.² As the major office the

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1. These two sources include virtually all decisions of significance to the town as a whole. Although they overlap chronologically they do so for only about 46 years, during which period the Minute Book carries relatively few signatures, thus minimising the danger of overemphasising the frequency with which townsmen who were active during these years attended meetings. The signatures appended to the Churchwardens' Accounts (1546-1612), Constables' Accounts (1587-1626) and Oversees' Accounts (1565-96) almost always duplicate those in the Townwardens' Accounts.
 2. In the 1560s the annual average of the Townwardens' receipts was about £34; in the early 1630s it had risen to £56, and by the 1690s it had reached over £80. The Churchwardens' ordinary receipts during the 1590s were only about one quarter of those of the Townwardens, and those of the Oversees were lower still.

Townwardenship was held by men of substance, and the average value of inventories left by thirty-five Townwardens throughout the period was £317 - almost six times the average of the other 301 surviving Melton inventories.

In all, then, we can identify 168 men as members of the active elite during the period 1549-1720. It must be strongly emphasised, however, that this is meant to be no more than an approximate guide to the active personnel in administration, and that there are serious reservations to this identification which must now be voiced. First, this group of men were not differentiated from the rest of the Melton inhabitants by any formal status other than that of their legal tenures as yardland - or cottage-holders, although many of them did hold office. Even so, there were many men who held a cottage right and who took no part in administration, so there was no ruling caste identical with the holders of grazing rights. There were, secondly, men who probably enjoyed equal social status with many of this group and who may have wielded equal influence, but who, by our criteria, were not members.¹ Furthermore, our criteria do not allow for the fact that a single signature to a crucial decision may indicate the presence of a town father of greater eminence than a frequent signatory of more mundane documents. Thirdly, all those who held office other than those of feoffee or Townwarden have been excluded, as have those whose signatures have been found fewer than thirteen times in the Townwardens' Accounts and the Town Minute

1. Such men included John Wallace, schoolmaster in the early seventeenth century, and John Dowell, vicar in the second half of the seventeenth century. Both these men were to be found in attendance at town meetings, the latter with some frequency. Another who came into this category was William Boswell, gent., whose signature appeared in the town records 7 times over a period of 18 years from 1596 to 1614, and who was Constable in 1595. Boswell was probably also the Constable of Framland Hundred, L.R.O., DG.36/190/5, DG.36/215, 217-8.

Book, even though such people may have been for a brief period, in regular attendance at town meetings.¹ It is impossible to tell, fourthly, whether there was any variation over the period concerned in the relative importance of an office, of the feoffees, or of attendance at town meetings; consequently, we cannot be certain that our criteria for inclusion among the elite are of consistent application. Finally, no provision can effectively be made for the fact that some men served many times as Townwarden, while others served only once. For our statistical purposes both were of equal importance within the elite.

The identification of this active elite is, then, rather arbitrary, but for the purposes of endeavouring to equate the exercise of power with economic interests it probably suffices, confronted as we are by the absence of any formal social stratification. It is doubtful whether very many persons of administrative significance have been excluded. Bearing in mind all these reservations, we can now look at the economic base of this administrative elite. If we subdivide the entire period into three - the later sixteenth century, 1600-60 and 1660-1720 - we find that fifty-three, fifty-two and sixty-three members of the elite respectively were active during these successive periods.

There can be few doubts concerning the dominance of farming interests in Melton's local government during the sixteenth century. Of the fifty-three members of the elite it can be proved that at least twenty-four held a yardland or more, while eight others were or were probably related to a yardland holder. Two more were described as 'yeomen', two as 'husbandmen', another as 'gent.'; one other was an innkeeper who

1. John Browne, for example, was a Churchwarden in 1685 and between 1680 and 1690 his signature appeared 10 times in the Minute Book - a better attendance record than many who we have included in our 'elite'.

farmed half a yardland. Of the remaining fifteen, eight were feoffees of the Spittal Chapel in 1549 and we have no occupational information about any of them; one was a mercer, one a fishmonger, one a surgeon (and a smallholder), one a tailor, one a glover; about the remaining two men we again have no occupational information. The prominence of the farmers in this group supports the evidence concerning the nineteen among them who were enfeoffed of the Spinneys in 1564.¹

It is all too easy to fall into the trap of accepting at face value contemporary occupational descriptions. To do this would lead us to believe that only ten of the fifty-two elite members during the period 1600-60 were farmers while the rest were involved in the food and drink trades, retailing and the professions. This would be quite erroneous. Only by scrutinizing probate records can we usually hope to glimpse the economic realities behind the facades of "occupational structures" during the early modern period.

There are twelve surviving inventories of the goods of elite members, 1600-60, and these reveal that in addition to the three men described as yeomen, four of the retailers were also big farmers. However, the overall trend was a growth in the number and wealth of retailers, professional men and the purveyors of food and drink, while the number of farmers was inevitably static.² Consequently, the primacy of the farmers in the social hierarchy of the town was being challenged and eroded by, especially, the increasingly eminent retailers. As yet the divorce of farming from retailing had not fully taken place, but in some notable cases where the two pursuits

1. Supra, p. 220.

2. Supra, Ch. III, passim.

were combined, such as that of John Lorington, mercer (a feoffee and Townwarden), there is no doubt that retailing was already the prime concern of the two.¹ It is probably meaningful, then, that five of the dozen surviving elite inventories from these years evince no signs of farming on any kind of scale.

Moreover, two of these twelve inventories were of the goods of men whose families had formerly been among the leaders of the farming community and which were two of the most important governing dynasties in the town. The Lacy family, which held a total of seven yardlands between them in 1572, were prominent administrators throughout the Tudor and early Stuart periods.² There were three of them (Hugh, Leonard and Seth) among the 1549 feoffees, and three (Hugh, John and William) among the 1564 feoffees. Four (Hugh, William, William II and Mathew) were frequent signatories by our definition during the sixteenth century, three (Hugh, John and Mathew) were Townwardens, and four (Hugh, John, Mathew and William II) were Churchwardens. Andrew Lacy, descended from Hugh, was a vintner whose inventory of 1635 revealed no traces of farming although he may have disposed of any land he held before his death.³ His son George inherited Andrew's drinking establishment but he was not farming at his death.⁴ The second inventory was that of William Trigge, who was descended from the farming Triggess, one of whom was a feoffee, Townwarden, Churchwarden, Spinney Warden, Constable, Overseer and frequent signatory in the late sixteenth

1. Supra, Ch. III, p. 175; L.R.O., PR/1/38/49, inventory of John Lorington, April, 1636.

2. Ibid., DG.36/317.

3. Supra, Ch. III, pp. 159-60; L.R.O., PR/1/37/33, inventory of Andrew Lacy, April, 1635.

4. Ibid., PR/1/40/153, inventory of George Lacy, Aug., 1638; ibid., Wills, 1635/34, will of Andrew Lacy, 1635; supra, Ch. III, pp. 159-60.

century. William was a rich, non-farming mercer at his death in 1638.¹

If the signs are that non-farmers were playing an increasingly prominent role in administration during the early seventeenth century the trend is still clearer later in the century. Nineteen inventories provide us with details about the occupations of just under a third of the elite during this period. Four of these were of farmers' goods, the average value of which was an unimpressive £150; six were left by mercers, four by attorneys, and one each by a Chandler, a draper, a vintner, a butcher and a knight (Sir Edward Hudson). Excluding Hudson, whose inventory was obviously not a complete one, this latter group of fourteen inventories reveals that two of the attorneys and a single mercer were the only men who were farming at the time of their deaths. The mercer was Roger Waite, who was an important mixed farmer.² The two attorneys were James Julyan, the farmer of a yardland or so, and Charles Hill, another big farmer who was probably running a medium sized inn.³ Of the other eleven men Thomas Cloudesley was a smallholder whose mercery wares far exceeded in value his handful of animals, and Jonathan Hubbard, mercer, owned fifty-four sheep and eight cows, but these were pastured in Welby township - he had no interest whatsoever in Melton's fields.⁴ Twenty-eight sheep, four cows and an old heifer comprised the only agricultural involvement of the other nine men, and even then the sheep and the cows were in Welby, not Melton.

1. L.R.O., PR/1/40/4, inventory of William Trigge, Jan., 1638.

2. Supra, Ch. III, pp. 177-8.

3. Ibid., PR/1/84/121, inventory of James Julyan, Aug., 1682; ibid., PR/1/100/182, inventory of Charles Hill, July, 1688.

4. Supra, Ch. III, p.176-7; L.R.O., PR/1/84/226, inventory of Thomas Cloudesley, 1682; ibid., PR/1/110/54, inventory of Jonathan Hubbard, Nov., 1703.

Evidently, then, by the late seventeenth century contemporary occupational descriptions were somewhat more reliable than in earlier periods. While by no means any more than a fair guide they did begin to give a truer flavour of the local economy. On the one hand, no longer was the wealthiest 20 per cent made up almost entirely of farmers, how ever they may have been described; on the other hand the development of the specialist retail trade in particular was being reflected in the make up of town government. Twenty-three out of the sixty-two occupations found for the sixty-three members of the elite were of retailers; only nine are known to have been primarily farmers. The figure for farmers may be increased to allow for dual occupations (for example Waite, Julyan and Hill) but the picture remains one of a swing away from the influence of the farmers in local government. This is illustrated in Table III:

TABLE III: Occupations of the active elite in Melton administration in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries

A = Late sixteenth century

B = Late seventeenth century

Notes:

	A	B
Agriculture		
Gents ¹ Yeomen, Husbandmen	24	9
Retailing		
Mercers	4 ²	12 ⁷
Drapers	3 ³	28
Chandlers	1	5 ⁹
Haberdashers	-	1
Apothecaries	-	3
Provisioning		
Fishmongers	1	-
Bakers	1 ⁴	1
Innkeepers	1	-
Butchers	-	2 ¹⁰
Vintners	-	1 ¹¹
Leather		
Glovers	1	-
Shoemakers	-	1
Saddlers	-	1
Textiles		
Shearmen	1	-
Dyers	-	1
Clothiers	-	1
Framework-knitters	-	1
Wood and Metal		
Blacksmiths	-	1
Brasiers	-	1
Miscellaneous		
Surgeons	1	-
Schoolmasters	1 ⁵	-
Merchant Staplers	2 ⁶	-
Physicians	-	2
Attorneys	-	8 ¹²
Gentlemen	-	8 ¹³
Clerks	-	1
	41	62

1. 5 of 11 gents. held an average of 4 yardlands each in 1565. Another held 3 yardlands in 1583. 4 more were members of big landowning families, L.R.O., DG.36/317.

2. 2 of these held 5 yardlands between them in 1572, ibid., DG.36/159/7.

3. These 3 held 8 yardlands between them in 1572, ibid.

4. His widow held 3 yardlands in 1565, ibid., DG.36/317.

5. Held 2 yardlands in 1583; ibid.

6. Held 7 yardlands between them in 1572, ibid., DG.36/159/7.

7. Out of 6 inventories, 1 farmer and 1 smallholder.

8. 1 inventory, a non-farmer.

9. 1 inventory, a non-farmer.

10. 1 inventory, a non-farmer.

11. 1 inventory, a non-farmer.

12. 4 inventories, 2 farmers.

13. By this time more likely to have been farming than in the sixteenth century when 'gent.' was almost synonymous with major farmer; Alan Everitt, 'Social Mobility in Early Modern England', Past and Present, 33(1966), pp. 56-73. At least 3 of these were probably the sons of attorneys, and another the son of a clerk.

Though the two periods are not directly comparable because the lists of yardlands in the sixteenth century produce a bias towards farming in revealing otherwise concealed farming activities, the survival of nineteen elite inventories from the late seventeenth century partially compensates for this. These inventories suggest that farming as a dual occupation was not as widespread among the elite as it had been in the sixteenth century.

There are two further important considerations concerning the dwindling role of the farmers in local government. The first is the entry into active government by the later seventeenth century of men from a wider occupational and social background. This can be demonstrated by assessing the respective wealth of the elite members vis a vis the rest of the town in the late sixteenth and late seventeenth centuries.

In the sixteenth century the series of Elizabethan subsidy returns shows that the governing elite was drawn almost exclusively from the highest strata of wealth. In 1555 thirty-seven persons (21 per cent of those named) paid 2s 0d or more in the assessment made in August; of the twenty-four elite members named in the assessment, eighteen paid 2s 0d or more, including ten of the eleven most highly taxed men.¹ Four more of the twenty-four elite paid 1s 0d or more, putting them among the top 33 per cent of taxpayers. Only two paid small amounts. Similarly, twenty-one of the twenty-two elite named in the 1576 assessment were among the top 24 per cent who paid 2s 0d or more.² In this assessment Hugh Ellwood (inventory value £225 4s 6d

1. L.R.O., DG.36/205.

2. Ibid., DG.36/207; there were 152 persons named in this assessment. It is likely that there were at least 40 more householders living in Melton at this time. 192 households were listed in 1572, ibid., DG.36/159/7.

in 1606) paid 3s 0d; twelve of the twenty-two elite named paid as much or more than Ellwood.¹ This pattern was repeated in other levies and assessments of 1582, 1587, 1592 and 1596.² In the sixteenth century Melton was governed by a classic plutocracy, a farming plutocracy.

There are no comparable records to illustrate the wealth structure of the town during the latter part of the seventeenth century, but the survival of the inventories of almost one third of the elite enables us to make a comparison between them and their Tudor counterparts. The average of the nineteen elite inventories was £262, compared with the average of all the 151 post-1660 Melton inventories of £106. The elite average, though, is inflated by the inclusion of three of the four biggest inventories of that period. In fact eight of the nineteen elite inventories totalled less than the overall average of £106: the average of these eight was just £54. While not conclusive this indicates that the wealth base of the elite was far broader by the late seventeenth century than it had been earlier. The plutocratic nature of local administration had been replaced by a more open form of government. Table III shows that this was paralleled by the involvement of a wider range of occupations in administration, notably the professions and retailers. In an increasingly broader based economy this is, of course, to be expected, although the entry into the elite of men from an increasingly lower economic status is less predictable.

An analysis of the elite during the seventeenth century reveals a rapid turnover in membership as measured by the surnames of individuals. During the early seventeenth century (1600-49) twenty-eight elite members (= 54 per cent) had surnames which were not among those of the elite in the late sixteenth century. As yet, continuity in membership

1. Ibid., PR/1/21/65, inventory of Hugh Ellwood, March, 1606.

2. Ibid., DG.36/191, 210, DG.36/159/1, DG.36/140/26.

was relatively high because the Gulson, Lacy, Trigge, Withers and Wormwell clans still dominated the elite in terms of numbers: eighteen of the fifty-two elite bore one or another of these surnames.¹ By the late seventeenth century (1650-1720) this continuity had been shattered, and forty-eight of the sixty-three elite members (= 76 per cent) bore surnames which were not among those of the elite in 1600-49. Only five men bore surnames which were among those of the elite in the sixteenth century.²

Were the new recruits coming from indigenous Melton families or were they newcomers to the town? During the period 1600-49 twenty-six elite members (= 50 per cent) bore surnames which did not appear in the 1572 listing; the other twenty-six were members of families which had been resident in Melton since at least that date.³ This means that half the elite during the early seventeenth century came from indigenous families, and the other half belonged to families which had but recently settled in Melton. Twenty-nine elite members (= 46 per cent) during the period 1650-1720 bore surnames which did not appear in the 1634 listing.⁴ The proportions of old and new families among the elite were thus approximately the same as in the early seventeenth century, although only nine (= 14 per cent) of the late seventeenth century elite bore surnames which appeared in the 1572 listing - an 86 per cent replacement rate since 1572.

It is not easy to tell whether the size of the elite increased with the broadening of its social and occupational base, because the large number of enfeoffments during the Tudor period inflates our 'elite' in relation to the late seventeenth century (1650 - 1720) when there were

1. Infra, pp. 34-7.

2. These were 2 Triggess, 2 Wormwells and a Levett.

3. L.R.O., DG.36/159/7.

4. Ibid., 1.D41/4/XVII/77.

only two enfeoffments, in 1656 and 1707.¹ In terms of numbers it is therefore difficult to compare the two periods. In all there were fifty-three elite members in the late sixteenth century, and sixty-three in the late seventeenth, over a longer period. Nevertheless, bearing in mind the discrepancy between the number of feoffees in the two periods (forty-one and twenty-eight respectively) and that meetings, decisions and therefore signatures were thicker on the ground in the early years of the Town Estate, it does look as though there may have been more men normally involved in administration by the later seventeenth century. Fifty-four men served as Townwarden between 1660 and 1720 (sixty years), compared with only twenty-six during the period 1556-99 (forty-four years). In part the decline in the social exclusiveness, the increase in the heterogeneity, and the possible increase in the size of the elite probably came about because of the success of the Town Estate in achieving its early aims of protecting Melton's lands, properties, school and pastures.² By 1700 the tasks of the town meeting were far more mundane and routine.³ The entry into the governing elite by men from lower down the social scale reflects both this and, perhaps, an increase in the legal professionalism desirable in the town's governors.

A second reason for any increase in the size of the elite by the late seventeenth century, and the second feature of the decline of the

1. Ibid., DG.25/1/1, ff. 61-2, DG.25/9/3, 4.

2. It should be remembered that probably the major power normally resting with an incorporated town government was control over the local economy. This power was entirely lacking in the Melton administration, except in so far as it did not control the town's pastures. The entry into the elite of men who were not of great social and economic weight was, therefore, far more likely in Melton than it would have been in an incorporated town.

3. Infra, pp. 241-2.

role and influence of the farmers in town administration was the disappearance of major farming dynasties and their replacement by other, though fewer dynasties whose fortunes were based more on non-agricultural pursuits. The most important dynasties in late sixteenth and early seventeenth century administration were the Gulsons (two feoffees, four Townwardens), the Lacys (nine feoffees, three Townwardens, six frequent signatories), the Trigges (two feoffees, five Townwardens, two frequent signatories), the Witherses (three feoffees, six Townwardens, two frequent signatories) and the Wormwells (three feoffees, four Townwardens, one frequent signatory). Three, and probably four of these five were primarily farming dynasties during the sixteenth century.

Head of the Gulsons was Henry, gent., who farmed at least a yardland in Melton and held two yardlands in Freeby.¹ Two other members of the Gulson clan were described as mercers in the early seventeenth century, but there were at least two branches of the family, and Henry himself had nine male children who were all alive at his death in 1592, so the descent of his lands is totally obscure.² William Gulson, who died in 1637, held over four yardlands in Melton at that date.³

The Lacys were the most spectacular example of a governing dynasty. There were at least four branches during the 1570s, at least three of which were farming.⁴ One branch, the youngest, was headed by John Lacy who farmed a yardland and who was described as a draper in 1572, but the two elder branches were major farmers.⁵

1. Ibid., DG.36/159/7; ibid., Wills and Inventories, 1592/162, will of Henry Gulson, 1592.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., Farnham Mss, 5.D33, inquisition post mortem, William Gulson, April, 1637.

The Triggess were all yeoman farmers in the Tudor period, a sequence not broken until the 1620s when William Trigge, a mercer, came to prominence as the founder of the retailing branch of the family. The elder branch continued as big farmers into the 1670s.

The Withers family produced five important farmers during the late sixteenth century, four of them members of the elite. One of them, John, was extremely wealthy by Melton standards, farmed six yardlands, and owned the small manor of St. John in the town.¹

The Wormwells were the exceptions among these farmers. Several of them were chandlers from as early as the 1550s, but not until the death of Walter Wormwell in 1612 do we have the earliest proof that Walter's branch of the family, at least, were major farmers.² Walter was one of the most important arable farmers in the Wreake Valley, although we cannot establish how he came into possession of his land. In 1565, 1572 and 1583 there were no Wormwells among the farmers.³

By the middle of the seventeenth century the Gulson, Lacy and Withers families had disappeared both from the elite and from the town. The last Withers (a feoffee, frequent signatory and former Townwarden, Churchwarden and Constable) died in 1638, although his career as an active administrator had ended seven years previously; thereafter there is no further sign of the family in Melton. The Lacys survived until 1647 in the person of Nathaniel, Esq., a feoffee and frequent signatory. The last of the Gulsons, a humble parish clerk, signed a Town Estate document for the last time in 1659. After 1642 no Gulson occupied a major town office. We cannot know why these three families left the

1. Ibid., DG.36/317; ibid., Farnham Mss, 5.D33, fine, Michaelmas, 5-6 Philip and Mary, 1558.
2. Ibid., PR/1/24/103, inventory of Walter Wormwell, July, 1612.
3. Ibid., DG.36/159/7, DG.36/317.

town or whether they died out in the male line, but their demise left a vacuum in local administration. Between them they had provided fourteen feoffees and thirteen Townwardens during the Tudor and early Stuart periods.

Moreover, other shorter-lived farming families, important in the late sixteenth century, disappeared from local government at about the same time: the Shepwards and the Lanes (between them three feoffees and four Townwardens) ended their associations with town government in 1618 and 1633 respectively. Some of the outstanding individual farmers in the elite in the later sixteenth century either failed to found dynasties or their descendants were not involved in local government: in this category were Martin Arden, Michael Bentley, Hugh Ellwood and Robert Odam. There is no doubt that these men, with members of the Gulson, Lacy, Lane, Sheppard, Trigge, Withers and Wormwell families comprised the nucleus of the elite in the last three decades of the sixteenth century and into the early seventeenth. Between them these four individuals and members of these seven families provided sixteen of the twenty-five Townwardens who served between 1560 and 1599; more importantly, they filled the office no fewer than forty-eight times out of a total of sixty-three traceable tenures. Six of the eight feoffees of 1586, and six of the eleven named in 1600 came from these families. As late as 1620 the Gulsons, Lacys, Lanes, Triggess, Witherses and Wormwells provided eight of the fourteen feoffees.

The absence of all except the Triggess and the Wormwells from administration by the 1660s meant that other men and other new dynasties came to fill the vacuum. Paramount among these were the Cloudesley, the Sargeant and the Stokes families who arrived as town governors within ten years of each other between 1618 and 1628. These three families together

provided ten feoffees and nine Townwardens after 1620; on eighteen occasions from 1629 a member of one of them served as Townwarden, some for a period of two years. The Wormwells and Triggess provided Townwardens on eleven occasions during the same period, all before 1675 (and on twelve occasions between 1600 and 1628).

So, from the 1630s, at about the time when some of the older farming dynasties were disappearing, the nucleus of town administration was provided by two venerable families (the Triggess and the Wormwells) and three new ones (the Cloudesleys, the Sargeants and the Stokeses). This phase lasted into the 1670s, after which only the Stokeses out of these families ever again provided a Townwarden, although the selection of feoffees in 1656 ensured that a Cloudesley, a Sargeant, a Stokes, a Trigge and three Wormwells endured as such until their deaths at various dates later in the century.

What of the economic base of these dynasties? One of the Stokeses, Edward, was a huge grazier as well as a mercer, virtually all of whose agricultural interests lay outside Melton.¹ The rest of the Stokes brood, though, comprised two blacksmiths, two mercers, a vintner/schoolmaster, a haberdasher, a butcher, a lawyer, a grocer/woollen-draper, and a gent.² Only two inventories survive from all these men, those of a blacksmith and a mercer, neither of whom was farming.

Thomas Cloudesley I was also an important farmer and mercer, but Thomas Cloudesley II was no more than a smallholder, and by this time the mercery side of the family business dwarfed the farming involvement.³ Arthur Cloudesley was a Chandler of whom we know no more.

1. Supra, Ch. II, p. 71.

2. These occupations have been recovered from the Melton parish registers.

3. Supra, Ch. III, pp. 176-7.

The Sargeants were attorneys and gents., but one of them, Thomas, held about two and a half yardlands in 1630, and his elder brother William inherited five and a half yardlands (this was the Lacy inheritance) from his mother in 1622.¹

By the 1620s one branch of the Triggs were non-farming mercers and the two branches - one farming, one retailing - shared the burden of office through into the 1670s.²

The Wormwells produced two chandlers (at least one of them a non-farmer), a non-farming attorney and a clerk during the course of the seventeenth century, in addition to two 'yeomen', one of whom was a smallholder, the other the Walter Wormwell mentioned above.³

The economic base of these dynasties, then, was a mixture of retailing and, to a lesser extent, farming, the farmers being in the minority so far as we can establish. In this the developments in the town's socio-economic hierarchy by the middle years of the seventeenth century were duplicated. There was still a relatively strong farming interest in the elite, but it would be very difficult to maintain that it was as powerful as it had been in the heyday of the farmer-administrator in the late sixteenth century, when the town's great farming dynasties stood guard like sentinels over Melton's precious pastures.

(c) Recapitulation

The reaction of the farmer-dominated elite to the influx of immigrants during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries does

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1. L.R.O., 1.D41/4/XVII/65-78; ibid., Farnham Mss, 5.D33, Feodaries Surveys, County Leicester, 1627; Lincolnshire Archives Office, Reeve I/II/I/I.
 2. Supra, Ch. III, pp. 173-4.
 3. Supra, p. 236.

not mean that the elite presented a concerted policy either in the face of the threat to the town's pastures, or concerning any other aspect of urban life. Because there was no formal social organization other than that which differentiated farmers and cottage holders from the rest - by the 1630s, the bulk - of the population it would be wrong to try to represent the elite as a rich caste intent on self-preservation. The small size of the town, the root cause of its relatively primitive political and social organization, meant that such a clearly defined pattern of social stratification could hardly develop, and there were apparently no devices such as civic uniforms to express visually any such system.¹

While we have endeavoured to isolate the 'elite' and have gone so far as to limit our definition so as to include only 168 men, this has been essentially an arbitrary and artificial definition which would most certainly not have been recognized by contemporary observers. Our purpose has been to explain the anti-immigrant measures of the Elizabethan and early Stuart period by trying to characterize the men who were responsible. By so doing, and by following through the analysis in the seventeenth century, it has been possible to try to explain why local government as embodied in the town meeting seems to have receded from playing an active role in social control other than through the traditional parish offices. If the Town Minute Book is any guide, the 'elite' in the later seventeenth century was far less concerned with the problems posed by the swelling of the ranks of the poor except in terms of the expense of poor relief. No longer does concern over the common pastures appear as the overriding preoccupation.

1. In 1579 the Townwardens paid 2s 0d to the queen's commissioners "for that the townsmen did not wear capes according to the statute", L.R.O., DG.36/284/13.

It must be emphasised, though, that while Melton's socio-political organization was not highly sophisticated and formal, it did function informally. Through the mechanism of the Town Estate and the town meeting it was possible for the farmers, as leaders of the wealth and social hierarchy, to protect their own economic interests by a restrictive practice every bit as formal as those employed by craft guilds in larger towns.

The reason for the retreat of the Town Estate's role in social control remains an insoluble problem. We know that the farmers' influence in local government declined through the seventeenth century, but we do not know for certain whether these two developments can be equated. We have suggested that the interest of the farmers in local administration receded after the common pastures were secured, but another reason - perhaps more important - may have been the availability of enclosed pastures in other townships in the Wreake Valley which Melton's farmers could exploit for stock-rearing. It is certainly true that the town's wealthiest farming residents in the seventeenth century - James Shawcrosse, Edward Stokes, Roger Waite, Thomas Raven - were all using pastures outside the township, and there were other farmers doing the same.¹ Faced with competition on Melton's pastures from up to 130 cottagers, as well as from other farmers, anyone with ambitions for raising large, valuable herds and flocks had little alternative but to look further afield. If the farmers' dependence upon Melton's fields was being reduced then their interest in controlling the home pastures would surely have declined correspondingly. Only 2 per cent of the value of Edward Stokes's livestock was in Melton's fields in May, 1668.² In these circumstances it

1. Supra, Ch. II, pp. 69-72.

2. Supra, Ch. II, pp. 70-1 ; L.R.O., PR/1/69/14, inventory of Edward Stokes, May, 1668.

is no wonder that the town's farmers played no really active role in local government in the later seventeenth century. Once it had been of paramount importance that the Town Estate mechanism was employed to safeguard the home pastures: now, we might suggest, it was of hardly any importance at all in this respect. Consequently, local government settled down to the routine administration of town properties, the school, the various parochial duties and the enforcement of manorial by-laws, and the emergent retailers and professional men largely took over at the helm.

There is one final point to consider regarding the nature of local government and of the 'elite'. While the elite constituted neither a 'class' nor an 'estate' there are discernible signs of informal social grading in the descriptions of members of the elite as "meet", "of the better sort" and as "chief inhabitants", and in their marriage pattern. There are insufficient surviving elite wills to enable a preliminary friendship or kinship network to be reconstructed at any time, although the lists of witnesses and supervisors in the ten sixteenth century (1566-99) elite wills which included them suggest a closer affinity between members of the elite than was the case by the late seventeenth century.¹ Five elite members (Roger Chauntler, Hugh Ellwood, William Lane, James Levett and William Trigge) were each named as supervisor or witness in two wills. In all, seventeen elite members were named in these ten inventories out of a total of forty persons (= 42.5 per cent), and only one of the ten did not name at least one member of the elite. In twenty-one late seventeenth and early eighteenth century wills (1650-1701) which named witnesses and (occasionally) supervisors, fifty-four

1. Only a full family reconstitution from the parish registers could give a reasonable idea of kinship networks involving the elite.

men were named altogether, of whom sixteen (= 29.5 per cent) were fellow members of the elite. Four elite men were each named in two wills, and two more were each named in three wills, but at least two of these six were attorneys and two more were 'gents.' who may also have been professional men.

By our definition of the elite we can trace fifty-six marriages involving members between 1546 and 1720.¹ Twenty-five of these took place between 1546 and 1599, and of these thirteen (= 52 per cent) involved women who bore contemporary elite surnames; the other twelve marriages involved women whose surnames were not among those of the elite.² The marriages of fourteen elite members have been found between 1600 and 1649, and six of these (= 43 per cent) involved women who bore contemporary elite surnames.³ Of the seventeen marriages involving elite members which took place between 1650 and 1720 only five (= 27 per cent) involved women who bore contemporary elite surnames.⁴ The pattern is clear: although the population of the town did not far exceed 1,000 in 1600, half of the elite found wives from within their own ranks. By the later seventeenth century endogamy was no longer a striking characteristic of the elite. In fact at least five elite members during this period found wives outside the town altogether, and two

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1. Information derived from the Melton parish registers and bishop's transcripts, L.R.O.
 2. The surnames represented among these 13 marriages were: Lacy (5x), Gyles (3x), Carver (2x), Chauntler (2x), Wormwell (2x), Bentley, Ellwood, Gulson, Pawley, Richardes, Shepward, Shyers, Trafford, Trigge, Waltham, Whitehead, Withers.
 3. The surnames represented among these 6 marriages were: Cloudesley (2x), Brigges, Browne, Gulson, Lacy, Sargeant, Stokes, Trigge, Waite, Wormwell.
 4. The surnames represented among these 5 marriages were: Julyan (2x), Brigges, Farin, Gilbert, Lambert, Lorington, Matchett, Storer, Westbrook.

of these came from outside the county. As much as anything else this changing pattern probably reflected the opening up of the governing class to men of a more varied social and occupational background. The Tudor identification of the elite with the wealthy had changed, and as the elite gradually ceased to be a farmers' club the wives of elite members naturally began to come from a wider background.

This sketch of some of the social developments in Melton during the early modern period has portrayed an urban community divided into two distinct parts: those who enjoyed common rights and those who did not. Embodied in this division was a gulf between rich and poor and, in many ways, between old and new. The control of common rights enabled the farmer-led indigenous inhabitants to close off a means of subsistence to poor immigrants who were thus condemned to struggle along as best they could without the benefit of a cow or two. The ending of the dominance of the farmers in local government coincided with a change in attitude of the townsmen towards the poor: no longer was the concern with pastures, but with the escalating cost of poor relief. Partially because of the farmer's withdrawal from administration and partially because of the changing economic structure of the town the personnel of the administrative process had a broader economic and social base by 1700 than at any time previously. Although the gulf between those with common rights and those without remained, the increasing sophistication of Melton's economy would eventually obscure it as the possession of such rights became less important.

This picture, though, is too myopic. Melton's inhabitants did not live behind walls in a self-sufficient economy; the town was most certainly not "a world apart". Melton, as a simple market town, was but a part of a wider economic system, and also, perhaps of a wider

social system, without due regard for which any analysis of the towns-men's lives is wholly incomplete. Economic linkages between Melton and the wider world were discussed in Chapters II and III. It is now time to consider other relationships enjoyed by the townsfolk with outsiders, and thus to present a rounder view of life in Melton.

(iii) A social area?

Melton's role as a religious, cultural and social centre added to its central marketing function in sponsoring a variety of interrelationships, both economic and human, between the town and the villages of the Wreake Valley whose market town Melton was. Any village in pre-industrial England enjoyed social connections with many other settlements, but the form and intimacy of the relationship between a village and its market town was unique.

It was a relationship which was founded upon the concentrated weekly - and perhaps more frequent - movement of men, goods, animals and money between the two settlements. The market town was the exchange point for primary agricultural producers: it was the link between them and the full flow of a national market economy, but for most purposes - and for many, all purposes - the market town was the limit of the villagers' concern with the country's marketing pattern. Because of this their aspirations, their fortunes and their opinions were closely tied up with the role played in their lives by their market town, and by the people they encountered there.

The evidence for the social relationships between Melton and the villages in its market area is diverse, and points towards the existence of a mutually inclusive sphere of operations within which kinship, friend-

ship, neighbourliness and common interests tied together townsman and villager in a way unlikely to be found further up the urban hierarchy. While the inhabitants of individual rural settlements will have been perfectly aware of their respective village loyalties, the social links between these villages and others within the market area, and between them and Melton itself, may thus be seen as forming a wider social area.

The extent of this area broadly depended upon the extent of Melton's religious, cultural and economic influence. These influences undoubtedly waned as the distance from Melton increased, especially when the influences exerted by another town were encountered. Moreover, for the gentry and perhaps for the wealthiest farmers Melton may have exerted little influence in any case if larger centres such as Leicester or Nottingham offered alternative or better services. Nevertheless, for the majority of the Wreake Valley population Melton was the most important marketing and service centre, and because of this the town was the centre of an area of social and economic activity within which they lived.

As a social centre Melton's biggest attraction was its alehouses, and, for the wealthy, its inns.¹ Here were to be found ale, wine, food, and by the seventeenth century at least, a cockpit, a bowling green, shovelboard and probably a host of other pursuits, respectable and otherwise. Business in these establishments would have been at its most brisk on market day when the town was inundated by thirsty and (relatively) pleasure-starved villagers catching up on gossip, scandal, religious and political developments, and discussing prices, setting up deals, borrowing money, gambling, wenching.

1. Supra, Ch. III, pp. 156-63.

The thrice annual fairs would have been still greater social occasions, with travelling sideshows adding to the general melee of salesmen, stalls, livestock, grain, and exotic foods and wares. Like market days the fairs were town and country affairs to which people would flock from varying distances depending upon the competition and the specialisms of a particular fair. Essentially, though, the catchment area of two of Melton's fairs was more or less the same as for its markets.¹ The third, St. Lawrence Fair, probably had a wider catchment area because it was the valley's major marketing event of the year and would have drawn in people from greater distances in order to buy wool and, especially, livestock.²

During the sixteenth century the fairs were not the only special occasions which demonstrated an element of urban-rural unity in the valley. In the Churchwardens' Accounts of 1547-9 there is the first mention of Melton's Lord of Misrule revels held at Whitsuntide, 1547.³ Further mentions were made in the Churchwardens' records, and in 1563 an account was made by Robert Odam, junior (the son of a major elite figure), which reveals that in some respects the Melton festivals resembled those described by Stubbs in The Anatomie of Abuses.⁴ The

1. Supra, Ch. I, p. 16.

2. Ibid.

3. L.R.O., DG.36/140/1.

4. Ibid., DG.36/287; Philip Stubbs, The Anatomie of Abuses, edited by J. Furnivall, New Shakespeare Society (1877-82). On at least two occasions the sons of prominent elite members were Lord, and on another William Carver, a feoffee, was chosen, L.R.O., DG.36/284/10, DG.36/287, 299. We may, perhaps, infer from this an interesting inversion of the usual social function of the Lord, cf. Charles Phythian-Adams, Local History and Folklore: A new framework (1975), pp. 25-7.

Lord and his Lady were chosen on the Thursday before Whitsunday, and the events lasted for a week.¹ Accompanying the Lord and Lady on their progress - the Lord at least had a horse - were four footmen and two butlers; a special Lords Hall was erected, and 400 'liveries' were handed out. Music was provided by townsmen.²

Other accounts show that in fact the Lord of Misrule celebrations were held twice a year, at Easter as well as Whitsuntide, and that both townsmen and villagers attended: Robert Odam was chosen Lord "to gather the devotion of the Town and Country" and Thomas Trafford delivered money "which he gathered of the town and country being the Lord at Whitsuntide 1562."³ The Churchwardens' Accounts of 1558 and 1559 also make it clear that money was collected from "the country" as distinct from that donated by townsmen.⁴

On Mayday more festivities took place, and perhaps it was then that the Robin Hood plays were performed.⁵ The plays were first mentioned in 1555 and the revenue from them, like that from the Lord of Misrule, was usually spent on repairing the town's causeways and pavements, the bridges, and probably the church (although in 1565 money raised by the Lord of Misrule in 1562 was put towards the purchase of

1. Money was collected on Whit Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday (the largest sum) and Thursday, L.R.O., DG.36/287.
2. It is possible that the Melton revels were connected with the games at Burrough Hill on Whit Monday. Burrough Hill is about 4 miles south of Melton and, as Leland says, "standeth in the very high way betwixt Melton and London. To these Burrow hills every year on Monday after Whit Sunday come people of the country thereabout, and shout, run, wrestle, dance and use other feats of exercise", The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the year 1535-1543 edited by Lucy Toulmin Smith, p. 20.
3. L.R.O., DG.36/285-7, DG.36/288/2, DG.36/299.
4. Ibid., DG.36/140/8.
5. Ibid.; a maypoll is mentioned in the Churchwardens' Accounts of 1559.

the Spinneys).¹

While the parish was "the most common ritualistic context" it is evident that at least one of the major social rituals in Melton embraced a wider area than the town alone.² How extensive this area was we cannot tell, because it is possible that all the villagers who were involved in the Melton Lord of Misrule celebrations did actually live within the parish. The parish church of St. Mary was mother church to five chapelries at Burton Lazars, Eyekettleby, Freeby, Sysonby and Welby, so we might expect the participation in the festivities by people from these townships. Whether villagers from elsewhere in the valley attended we do not know, but Leland's account of the Burrough Hill sports certainly suggests that inter-parochial activities of this kind were not unknown in the area.

Probably pre-Reformation in origin, these events survived the Reformation by only a few years, and there is no further trace of the Lord of Misrule or Robin Hood plays in Melton's records after 1571. Possibly a strong local puritan opposition was the cause of this, although the town leaders had proved themselves so willing to bend with the winds

1. Ibid., DG.36/285-6, DG.36/288/2, DG.36/299. According to Nichols "long tradition" has it that Melton was the town alluded to by Latimer in a sermon preached before Edward VI: "I came myself to a place, riding in a journey homeward from London; and I sent word over-night into the town that I would preach there in the morning, because it was a holiday . . . and I took my horse and my company, and went thither (I thought I should have found a great company in the church); and, when I came there, the church door was fast locked. I tarried there half an hour and more; at last the key was found, and one of the parish came to me, and said, 'Sir, this is a holyday with us; we cannot hear you; it is Robin Hood's day. The parish are gone abroad, to gather for Robin Hood; I pray you, let them not.' I was feign there to give place to Robin Hood, I thought my rochet should have been regarded, though I were not; but it would not serve; it was fain to give way to Robin Hood's men". Nichols believed that the Robin Hood plays and the Burrough Hill festivities were one and the same, Nichols, II, Part I, p. 248. Certainly Latimer did preach in Melton on at least one occasion, L.R.O., DG.36/140/6.

2. Phythian-Adams, op.cit., p. 17.

during the 1540s, 1550s and 1560s that it is probable that external disapproval, aided by an element of internal agitation, would have sufficed to bring about the end of the festivities.¹ The town's Whitsuntide fair may have accrued to itself the role formerly played by the Whit and Easter jamborees in urban-rural ritual and social connections, and it is possible, though not provable, that the May Games survived the sixteenth century.²

Melton's parish church also drew villagers into the town, whether to listen to sermons by famous preachers like Latimer, or, in the case of the residents of the town's chapelries, to marry, christen their children and bury their dead. The church seems to have been popular, too, for marriages between people who lived neither in Melton nor in the hamlets. To take a typical year, in 1712 there were four such ceremonies, while during the Interregnum there were scores.

Similarly the town's Grammar School attracted people from outside the town. Some of these had kin living in Melton: Daniel Trigge, the son of a Somerby farmer, and Mathew Trigge, the son of a Somerby grocer,

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1. The Churchwardens' Accounts record the vascillations caused by changes of religious policies in London.
 2. Of some interest here were the celebrations in Melton at the coronation of Charles II in April 1661, of which Mercurius Politicus (May 9th, 1661) said: "The great expressions of this our little town . . . take as follows; viz. the lord archbishop of Dublin, the lord Roos, knight of our county, with many other persons of quality, came hither last night . . . where was rendezvoused the trained bands of this side of the county . . . Sir Henry Hudson, baronet, entertained at his own charge all the persons of honour and quality assembled, keeping open house for the trained bands, and all the country round about which came in . . . And for perpetuating the memory of this happy day . . . he gave a fat ox, which was roasted whole in the street before his own door; every one orderly sharing it and the other cheer provided for that day. The town and country at length grew to such emulation of each other in the eternizing the memory of this joyful day, that, after the ox was eaten, they accounted him happy that could but carry away either one of the ribs of the ox, or the least shiver of the bones, to treasure up reliques. Ringing of bells, volleys of shot, bonfires, music, dancing, and all the usual ways of expressing so great a joy, continued three days." Quoted in Nichols, II, Part I, p. 246.

both attended Melton school in the 1620s.¹ Others, like Edward Smith of Rotherby and Martin Lister of Thorpe Arnold, were the sons of local clergy and gentry.² The school, while somewhat overshadowed locally by those at Grantham, Oakham, Stamford and Uppingham, nevertheless had two very able schoolmasters in Simon Humphrey and Henry Stokes, and many pupils entered university upon leaving.³ It may be that scholars from outside the town outnumbered those from within, because although the townsmen's estimates of the number of pupils there ranged from forty to 120 in 1576, it was declared in about 1600 that the schoolmaster Roger Chauntler had "not above 10 or 12 of our town to teach".⁴ It should be added that this was in part owing to Chauntler's refusal to receive new pupils from the town unless they paid £1 or 30s 0d "so they will be fit for his school".⁵ This was, needless to say, entirely contrary to the ideal of a Free School for the children of the town's inhabitants.

It is in probate records that we find some clear indications of social links enjoyed by people in Melton with villagers in the valley. The naming of executors, overseers, supervisors and beneficiaries in wills, and of administrators in administration bonds reveal that many people may have had at least as close affinity with persons living

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1. Alumni Cantabrigienses, IV, edited by J. and J.A. Venn, (1927), p. 265.
 2. Ibid., p. 96; ibid., p. 90. Smith attended the school in the 1660s, Lister in the 1650s.
 3. Simon, 'Town Estates and Schools' in Education in Leicestershire, edited by Brian Simon, pp. 18-9; Venn, op.cit., IV, p. 66.
 4. L.R.O., DG.36/326/7, 8; ibid., DG.36/267.
 5. Ibid.

outside the town as they did with those within.¹ As in many other aspects of town life, the frequency with which these extra-urban relationships occurred in wills and administrations seems to have been different during the seventeenth century to what it had been in the sixteenth.

In the case of administrators there is little information from the Tudor period. Only eleven Melton administration bonds survive, all from the years 1558-94: in these, twenty-two administrators were named of whom fifteen (= 68 per cent) lived in Melton and seven (= 32 per cent) lived elsewhere.² There are insufficient surviving Melton administration bonds from the early seventeenth century to make a comparison worthwhile, but from the period 1660-1712 forty-six survive. In these, ninety-one administrators were named of whom sixty-one (= 67 per cent) lived in Melton and thirty (= 33 per cent) lived elsewhere.³ Twenty-two of these bonds (= 48 per cent) named at least one non-Melton administrator. There is no discernible change between the two periods in the proportion of non-resident administrators but then the sample from the sixteenth century is rather small. The significant finding is that during the late seventeenth century as many as one in three administrators of Melton estates lived outside the town.

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1. Almost invariably the witnesses to wills were local men and women, some of whom would have been hurriedly summoned to a death bed, others nurses, others neighbours. There was no purpose served (in most cases) in summoning a geographically distant friend or relative merely to witness the making of a will.
 2. This excludes the wives of the deceased who were often named as administrators as a matter of course. The 7 administrators from outside Melton lived in Asfordby (2), Burton Lazars, Grantham (Lincs.), Leicester, Rotherby and Thorpe Arnold. See Map X.
 3. See Map XI.

The practice of the testator appointing overseers or supervisors of the disposal of his goods and properties declined during the seventeenth century but there are sufficient wills which named supervisors from then and from the sixteenth century for a comparison to be made between the two periods.¹ In the sixteenth century forty-four Melton wills (out of 110) nominated supervisors, and out of a total of eighty-three men so named seventy-five (= 90 per cent) lived in the town and eight (= 10 per cent) lived elsewhere; three of these eight were all named in one will, that made by the Merchant Stapler William Warying in 1542.² In each of five other wills one non-Melton resident was named.

Of the 208 seventeenth century Melton wills thirty nominated supervisors.³ Out of fifty-eight supervisors forty-two (= 72 per cent) lived in Melton and sixteen (= 28 per cent) lived elsewhere. Again the proportion of men appointed to serve in this role who did not live in Melton was, at 28 per cent, quite high. Moreover, eleven of the wills (= 37 per cent) named at least one supervisor from outside the town.

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1. Obviously we cannot even begin to gauge the emotional involvement or degree of affinity between the testator and persons appointed as supervisors, any more than we can properly assess the importance of administrators in the life of testator, but a strong element of trust and regard on the part of the testator is the very least that can be suggested. The decline of the practice of appointing supervisors during the seventeenth century does not lessen the likelihood that anyone so nominated had such a relationship with the testator.
 2. P.R.O., PROB 11/29, f.4, will of William Warying, 1542. The domiciles of these three men are not given but their names are entirely unfamiliar in Melton records and one at least, William Faunt, was probably a member of a Leicestershire gentry family. It is worth pointing out that there may have been more non-Melton supervisors: it has been assumed (normally) that where no place of residence was given it meant that a supervisor lived in Melton, which is unlikely to have been so in every case.
 3. Most of these date from the period 1600-49.

Only three of the Tudor wills gave any indication of the relationship between the testator and the non-resident supervisor. William Waryng's three supervisors were his "trusty friends", one of whom was his "cousin".¹ William Waltham's single overseer was his "wellbeloved brother Richard Boroughe, gent".² Helen Cooke's one supervisor was her "wellbeloved cousin Gilbert Lee".³ Of the seven seventeenth century wills in which the testator described the relationship between himself and his non-resident supervisor four referred to "brothers" (one of whom was a brother-in-law to judge by the difference between his and the testator's surnames), one testator named his "loving uncle-in-law" and three more referred to "friends" (one "loving", one "beloved", one "worthy").

Usually, executors were the next of kin, most often the spouse of the testator, but occasionally other persons were named. The naming of an executor was very rare in sixteenth century wills, and only on one occasion, in Elizabeth Crowe's will of 1522, was a non-resident of Melton nominated.⁴ This was Elizabeth's father, Edward Benet of Leicester who, with William Robinson of Melton, was to have custody of her bequest to her young son John. There were several instances of non-residents being chosen as executors during the seventeenth century: two of these were brothers of the testator, one a brother-in-law, one a nephew and one a "loving friend".

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1. P.R.O., PROB 11/29, f.4, will of William Waryng, 1542. Macfarlane points out that "friends" could refer to affinal relatives, Alan Macfarlane, The Family Life of Ralph Josselin: a seventeenth-century clergyman (1970) pp. 139-43.
 2. L.R.O., Wills and Inventories, 1565, will of William Waltham, 1565.
 3. Ibid., Wills, 1599/12, will of Helen Cooke, 1596.
 4. Ibid., Wills, 1515-26, f.166, will of Elizabeth Crowe, 1522.

In a period of high geographical mobility like the seventeenth century when families were quickly scattered over areas, this was bound to result in a complex of inter-familial relationships between a town - a magnet for immigrants - and, in particular, the villages which looked to it as their market. In Melton's case mobility was possibly all the greater because the town so often frustrated people looking for employment. Whether or not these inter-familial connections were particularly strong is uncertain, but the signs are that kinsmen, both cognative and affinal, were important in fulfilling the duties of supervising the execution of Melton wills, and this explains the frequency with which, in the seventeenth century, supervisors living outside Melton were appointed by testators.¹

It is not possible to quantify the number of bequests made by testators to persons living outside Melton because the place of residence was rarely given, yet many beneficiaries had names entirely unfamiliar in local records. In very many cases it is just as likely that a beneficiary who was accorded no place of residence did not live in Melton as it is that he lived in the town. Having said this, there were still seventeen Tudor Melton wills (= 15 per cent of the total) and thirty seventeenth century wills (= 14 per cent) which made bequests to persons living outside Melton.² Over the late seventeenth century (1650-99) twenty wills out of ninety-five (= 21 per cent) made such external bequests, so by that time the practice was relatively common.³ Why

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1. Cf. Macfarlane, Ralph Josselin, pp. 105-6, 148-60. Out of 23 seventeenth century Melton wills which indicate the relationship between testator and supervisor, 14 name supervisors who were kin (sons-, fathers-, brothers-, and uncles-in-law, brothers, "cousins" and "kinsmen").
 2. 3 of the Tudor wills were made by Merchant Staplers, who would have spent at least as much time away from Melton as in the town; thus they would have had ample opportunity to make contacts elsewhere which would lead to bequests being made.
 3. See map XI.

there should be so few external bequests in early seventeenth century wills - in only ten out of 113 - is a puzzle, but perhaps the high proportion of wills made by poorer inhabitants during the 1630s is a contributory cause: the smaller the bequest, presumably the less chance of absent kin (whose physical distance from the testator must have at least tended towards rendering many of them peripheral and 'non-effective') being included in the will.¹

We have seen that Melton's role as a social, cultural, religious and marketing centre contributed to the forging of social links between its inhabitants and those of the villages within its ambit, and, of course, those outside. Immigration (partially 'normal' but stimulated by the town's economic and marketing functions) and emigration (again partially 'normal' but probably stimulated by the lack of employment opportunities in Melton) ensured the constant refreshing of inter-familial, urban-rural relationships. Intermarriage between townsfolk and villagers, once more stimulated by social contacts which in turn resulted from marketing and other economic links, also ensured the constant reinforcement of urban-rural relationships within the area.

Map XII shows the distribution of marriage connections, 1654-1720, as revealed by the Melton parish registers and those of eighty or so parishes and townships in east Leicestershire, south Nottinghamshire and west Lincolnshire.² This map by no means charts all the marriages

1. Cf. Macfarlane, Ralph Josselin, pp. 156-7.

2. Some original registers of the villages near Melton have been consulted, the rest as transcribed in the Phillimore parish register series. Many of the registers never give the origins of marriage partners. The Melton registers very rarely give origins before 1654, and thereafter the coverage is patchy. Often, bishop's transcripts (where they survive) give the place of origin where the registers do not.

between Melton inhabitants and people living elsewhere, but it does give an idea of the distribution of the domiciles of these marriage partners, and thus of the town's marriage or 'courtship' area. It can be seen that there was, as one would expect, a distinct concentration of marriages within the Wreake Valley, but what proportion of the total number of marriages entered into by Melton inhabitants was this? Over three periods (1654-64, 1681-4 and 1706-20) this can be estimated, because during these years the marriage entries in the Melton registers gave more information than usual, and in particular the place of residence of both partners was often given:

TABLE IV: Marriages taking place in Melton Mowbray parish church:
1654-64, 1681-4, 1706-20

	A	B	C
1654-64	107	46	43
1681-4	35	11	31.4
1706-20	106	36	34
TOTALS	248	93	37.5

Column A = total number of marriages involving at least one Melton partner.

Column B = total number of marriages involving one non-Melton resident.

Column C = Column B as a percentage of Column A.

These figures indicate that one marriage in three which took place in Melton parish church, and which involved at least one Melton resident, was to a partner who lived outside the town.¹ Such a rate of exogamous

1. This does not include marriages involving a Melton inhabitant which took place in other churches during these years.

marriages - and there is no reason to think that these sample periods were unrepresentative - is of great importance in assessing the degree to which Melton's population was socially integrated with the rural population of the valley. Obviously, an exogamous marriage rate of these proportions suggests a good deal of social intercourse both before and (presumably) after marriage between the respective families of the partners. This marriage pattern goes a long way towards explaining the frequency with which bequests and the appointment of supervisors were made in wills which involved persons not living in Melton.

The nature of much of the evidence relating to Melton in the early modern period prevents the application of even primitive statistical techniques in most cases. This should not discourage us from considering one or two items of interest which relate to the present theme. Revealing, for example, is the way in which the local gentry rallied round in the 1560s when the town had to raise the money for the purchase of the Spinneys and for the legal costs. Gentry in Burton Lazars, Great Dalby, Shoby, Stapleford and Thorpe Arnold loaned money to the town, and the Townwardens' Accounts do not suggest that any interest was charged.¹ Other local families - the Caves, Digbys and Villierses - were involved in the commission of enquiry in 1566 and as interrogatories in 1576-7 in the court cases over the town lands.² The town, of course, won both cases. The undersheriff - another Cave - was accused by two government commissioners in 1567 of obstructing their enquiries into the allegedly concealed guild properties in Melton.³ In 1577 a letter from five local gentry assured the government that the Grammar School in Melton indeed

1. L.R.O., DG.36/284/7, DG.36/299.

2. Supra, pp. 207-8; Pockley, The Origins and Early History of the Melton Mowbray Town Estate, Ch. II, pp. 30-65.

3. L.R.O., DG.36/323.

had 120 pupils (the maximum estimate given by townsmen in the depositions made in April, 1576), that the profits of the allegedly concealed lands were used towards the maintenance of the school, and that "this we are able to write unto your honours at the especial desire of our poor neighbours in the furtherance of their humble suit in so godly a cause."¹ In the same Chancery court case William Waryng of Thorpe Arnold, of a family of Merchant Staplers recently resident in Melton, testified on behalf of the town.² In 1582 two local gentry were actually called in to select twelve townsmen in order to organize the leasing of the Town Estate properties.³ The partiality shown towards the town in these matters, and the interest which these gentry undoubtedly had in the fortunes of the Town Estate, says much for the attitude of local landed families to their market town. The impression of a protective hand being extended over Melton during these years is difficult to dispel.

At other times the town was borrowing money from a Saxelby gentleman to pay the schoolmaster's salary (1568); receiving a legacy for the poor from a Freeby gentleman (1611); and taking a bond of a Burton Lazars gentleman for the repayment of a debt owed to the town by a resident widow (1626).⁴ There is no evidence of conflict between the town governors and local gentry, and none of attempted interference by the latter in town affairs at any time.⁵

1. Ibid., DG.36/325.

2. Ibid., DG.36/326/7.

3. Supra, p. 217.

4. L.R.O., DG.36/284/9, DG.25/1/1, ff.36, 45-6.

5. This may owe something to the residence in the town by the mid-seventeenth century of 2 genuine gentry families in the Hudsons and the Myttons. Both families lived in huge houses (respectively the Limes and the Park House which had 19 hearths apiece in 1664, P.R.O. E.179. 251/3) and the Hudsons were the Lords of ~~Laws~~ Manor from 1622 (Lincolnshire Archives Office, Reeve 4/4/5) and of Melton Manor from 1658 (L.R.O., Farnham Mss, 4.D33, fine, 1658). Henry Hudson was created a baronet in 1660 (Nichols, II, Part I, p. 246) and both families produced feoffees of the Town Estate, although their eminence was probably too great for them to supply executive officers.

eat for them to
eat for them to

More vivid illustrations of the kind of social interactions which took place between Melton folk and villagers in the valley are to be found in the archdeaconry court records. It is perhaps of some note that out of only three traceable cases of adultery (or accusations thereof) in the archdeaconry records which involve Melton inhabitants, one of them was that of 1641 in which Anthony Latham of Melton said that:

if I Anthony Latham have kissed or had to do
or have committed the art of adultery or
fornication with Mary Stephenson now or late
of Asfordby once he the said Mr. William Greg-
ory had or hath kissed her . . . forty or 3
score times or the said William hath so often
had the use and carnal knowledge of her body . . . 1

A single example of 'urban-rural immorality' but one which, in light of the foregoing discussion, is unlikely to have been an isolated one. More revealing was the court case of 1568, Gamble versus Coddington, both of Burton Lazars, a question of defamation.² It was William Gibson of Scalford who, the Thursday after Whitsunday:

was sitting at the door of one Hinman of Melton
and James Coddington came by and reviled Hinman
saying thou arte a swilling tub knave for thou
holdest with that hore in knave Gamble. Hinman
answering him saying I know him for no other than
an honest man. and then Coddington swore a great
oath saying he was taken using Nedes wife of
Knipton carnally.³

Further testimony comes from John Hinman himself, who:

was sitting at his own door . . . James Coddington
came to him saying thou blowboule, thou great
bellied knave and growte nole knave, thou howldest
with that hore in knave Gamble, who answered him
saying I pray the let me alone I will not meddle
with the to my knowledge Gamble is an honest man,
nay said Coddington he is a very horemaster for he

1. L.R.O., 1.D.41/4/XXVII/49.

2. Ibid., 1.D.41/4/39.

3. Ibid., deposition of William Gibson of Scalford; original spelling and punctuation preserved.

was taken by 2 women of Knipton in a hay barn playing the harlot together.¹

In the same case a third deponent, William Dickens of Burton, said that Coddington had also told him that Gamble had been discovered by two women in a hay barn at Knipton (presumably with Mistress Nede).²

This single case reveals a variety of social contacts between the inhabitants of three villages and of Melton. The tableau in question took place in the market town, and perhaps the fact that it was on the Thursday after Whitsunday explains the presence in town of Gibson and Coddington because, as we have seen, the Lord of Misrule festivities had probably not yet ended.³ Hinman, who was a victualler of some substance, was obviously friendly with Gibson, and Coddington not only knew Hinman but was also aware of the latter's friendship with the said Gamble.⁴ Gamble, if Coddington's account is accurate, knew Mistress Nede rather well, and the fact that Coddington knew the lady's name indicates a fairly close familiarity with the events concerned.⁵

This is exactly the kind of incident which one would expect to have taken place outside a Melton victualling house, but the involvement of people from three villages, and the fact that it happened during the Lord of Misrule celebrations, eloquently exemplifies the role played by Melton in the mechanism of social relations within its area.

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1. Ibid., deposition of John Hinman of Melton.
 2. Ibid., deposition of William Dickens of Burton Lazars.
 3. Supra, pp. 247-8.
 4. L.R.O., DG.36/159/7; ibid., Wills and Inventories, 1574, inventory of John Hinman, March, 1574.
 5. Knipton is 9 miles distant from Melton and 10 miles from Burton Lazars. See Map I.

V

CONCLUSION

The Wreake Valley in 1720 bore a completely different aspect from that of the mid-sixteenth century. The total enclosure of the common fields in perhaps two thirds of the townships meant that the local balance of population had altered dramatically. Common field husbandry was now confined to a minority of the townships, and the grazing farmer had become the outstanding agrarian figure.

As an urban centre, meanwhile, the Melton Mowbray of 1720 was a good deal more impressive than the town of 1549, the year of the enfeoffment which created the Town Estate. The range of retail shops and specialist and professional services had broadened at the same time as the influence of the town's farming community had declined, a decline which was manifest in the changing character of local administration. Moreover, the population of the town in relation to that of the surrounding villages was, in all probability, far greater than it had been in the sixteenth century.

A further sign of the urbanisation of Melton was the swelling numbers of poor craftsmen and wage-earners and their families at the base of the social hierarchy. Indications of the pressure being exerted at the lower end of the social scale are to be found in the defensive attitude of Melton's ruling elite to common rights in the township, especially during the Elizabethan period. That perhaps one third of Melton's population was wiped out by the plague in 1636 and 1637 emphasises the poverty and squalor in which so many of the inhabitants lived. Even in 1670, when the surge of immigration and natural growth was probably over, 41 per cent of Melton's households were

exempted from paying the Hearth Tax on the grounds of poverty. In a simple market town like Melton, where the limited employment opportunities could not match the numbers of people seeking work, poverty on a wide scale was inevitable.

Throughout these agrarian, economic and social changes the intimate relationship between the market town and its marketing area endured. Indeed, perhaps the links between the two were even stronger by 1720 than previously: the multiplication of permanent shops and specialist services, and the great increase in the numbers of landless persons in the valley surely meant that the town was of greater value to the rural population as a whole than in the Tudor period.

This close relationship between a market town and its marketing area has largely been ignored by historians, not least because the market town has rarely been seen as a worthwhile subject for analysis. The larger provincial centre, by contrast, has been studied at great length, and the "material presence" of the fortified, densely populated, incorporated medieval and early modern city which so dominates the landscape of urban historiography has stimulated a dualistic approach to town and country. Lip-service has often been paid to the integrity of town and country, but the fact remains that this integrity has been little researched by historians.

Two recent works have gone some way to redress this gross imbalance in urban studies. Moxon's study of Ashby de la Zouche, unfortunately, pays no more attention to the town's role within a wider area than previous analyses of larger settlements.¹ Goodacre's work on Lutterworth and its market area is far more wide ranging in its assessment of the role of the market town in the sixteenth and seventeenth

1. Moxon, Ashby-de-la-Zouche: a social and economic survey of a market town - 1570-1720.

centuries.¹ Goodacre's approach is to explore the relationship between the economic development of the market town and changes in the local farming economy. This throws into relief the futility of studying the market town outside the agrarian context.

The simple relation of a market town to the local farming economy can be taken somewhat further, especially in light of the findings made by anthropologists, geographers and sociologists.² Melton Mowbray was not only the Wreake Valley's marketing point, but was also the local social and cultural centre as well as being the greatest concentration of population. Can the economic and social relationships in the valley which we have been studying be usefully described as a 'local market system'? If we accept that Melton's market area can, in economic terms, be regarded as the elemental unit in which village and market town operated symbiotically; and if the postulation of a social area focusing on the market town has any validity; then a local system, based ultimately upon the town's marketing role, and encompassing a wide variety of other economic, social and cultural relationships, may be seen as being co-extensive with that market area.

None of this is intended to imply that the extent of any such local market system was static, or ever easily definable. The relationship between any village and a nearby market was not monogamous. Some villagers - and townsmen - visited different markets on different days, would travel to all accessible fairs, and would maintain other links with neighbouring and more distant villages: it is the density of the relationships between villages and their local market which implies the existence of a local market system.

1. Goodacre, Lutterworth in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries.

2. Supra, Ch. I, pp. 2-4.

In addition, price differentials between market centres, the spacing of their market days, the flourishing and decline of rival markets, the foundation of new fairs, or longer term changes in communications - all serve to complicate and frustrate the recognition of interlocking market areas and systems.

Melton itself was ringed by market towns of various sizes and, presumably, by market systems of varying extent within which villagers looked primarily to their respective towns. A circle drawn to represent a seven mile radius from Melton in Maps VI to XII demonstrates very simplistically the area of concentrated relationships between the town and the surrounding villages, and shows how these relationships thinned out as the ambit of another town was entered.

Moreover, other systems undoubtedly overlay those which, arguably, focused on market towns: for example, long-distance migration; or the movement around the country of fish, fuel, meat, salt, stone, wool or yarn; or the shipment of animal skins to where tanning could be undertaken; or even, perhaps, the more heterogeneous economic (and social?) systems which focused on larger county or regional urban centres.¹

It is the contention of the present work that neither the blending of market areas nor their overlaying by wider economic and social systems invalidates the basic concept of the local market system, a concept which may be of some value in the contexts of urban studies, the analysis of social networks, and the investigation of regional cultures.

1. Cf. Alan Everitt, 'Country, County and Town: Patterns of Regional Evolution in England', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Fifth Series, XXIX (1979), pp. 79-108.

APPENDIX I The social and occupational topography of Melton in
the seventeenth century

Several stages of investigation are involved here, at each of which conjecture plays some part. The document which initially makes possible any attempt to reconstruct the social and occupational topography of Melton is the Hearth Tax return of Michaelmas, 1670, which listed 339 households (including the manorial bakehouse) by street.¹ Unfortunately, the 139 exempt households were grouped together: thirty-five of them were accorded a topographical heading, the rest were lumped together under compound street names. A further thirty-three persons who were taxed were also grouped under no specific heading. Furthermore, it is no straightforward task to locate some of the 1670 street names by using modern or nineteenth century maps.

(i) Street location

The names given in the Hearth Tax were (in order) Roundtable, Merridge End, Spittal End, Pump Court, King Street, The Street to Sage Cross, Thorpe End, Burton End and The Other Roundabout. In addition, the exempt were listed under Timber Hill, Church Yard, Kettleby End, Merridene, Backside and The Roundtables. The location of these is explained below.

Spittal End, King Street, Thorpe End, Burton End, Church Yard.

Three of these names survive to the present day. Spittal End is now called Nottingham Street. Its former name derives from the site of the Spittal Chapel, a chapel of the Knights Hospitaller, at the junction of

1. P.R.O., E.179.240/279; ibid., E.179. Bundle 332.

the roads leading from Nottingham and Scalford. Church Yard probably referred to the dwellings along the north and west sides of St. Mary's churchyard.

Roundtable, The Other Roundabout, The Roundtables. These names referred to the infills in the market place. First mentioned in 1557 they were still known as such in the nineteenth century when they were described as the Large Table and the Small Tables, numbers one and two.

The Street to Sage Cross. Not the present Sage Cross Street, but the main route leading east from the market place. Now known as Sherrard Street its former names also include Beast Market, Neat Market and Flesh Market.

Timber Hill. In the mid-nineteenth century the name referred to the eastern continuation of King Street, but in 1670 it probably also included the present day Sage Cross Street.

Pump Court. Impossible to decipher with certainty in the Hearth Tax return, to locate this in the town it is necessary to turn to the next stage of investigation. In both 1677 and 1681 the Melton manor court listed all the residents owing suit to the manor.¹ Both lists contained over 300 names, and a perusal of the order of the listings reveals that the names which were grouped by street in the 1670 Hearth Tax appeared in more or less the same order in 1677 and 1681. In other words, the lists of suitors were compiled topographically, and (unlike the Hearth Tax) resembled true perambulations. The lists began with noble and gentry suitors, and then followed Pump Court and Roundtables residents, then those of Spittal End (and Merridene and Backside), Merridge End, Pump Court and Roundtables again, Church Yard and Kettleby

1. Huntington Library, San Marino, California, Leicestershire Manorial Paper Box 18 [L1L9] Melton Mowbray Draft Court Rolls, May, 1677, Oct., 1681.

End, Burton End, King Street, Street to Sage Cross, Thorpe End, and Burton End again. Between Church Yard and Burton End appeared the group who were taxed but who were not accorded a specific location in the town.

Pump Court appeared twice in relationship with the Roundtables, and it looks as though the market place was the site. Why 'Pump' Court? There was a pump in the market place in front of John Brown's door on the Roundtable. Pumpwardens of this particular pump in 1677 and 1681 were John Brown and Roger Waite - who lived in Pump Court.¹ The task of pumpwardens and wellwardens in looking after the six pumps and two wells was to ensure that no manure or other refuse was left lying in the streets nearby. Where it is possible to check, pumpwardens and wellwardens invariably lived close to their charge.

The third stage in this investigation is the study of the list of 132 ancient cottages which had pasture rights in Melton in 1685.² Once again, comparison with the 1670 Hearth Tax and the 1677 and 1681 manorial lists shows clearly that the 1685 list was compiled topographically. Beginning with Pump Court the perambulation went along King Street, the Street to Sage Cross, Thorpe End, Burton End, the street or area wherein lived the thirty-three persons accorded no topographical heading in 1670, Merridge End, Spittal End, and back to the Roundtables and Pump Court. As in the 1677 and 1681 manorial lists, people living in Pump Court and Roundtables (according to the Hearth Tax) were mixed together. We can conclude almost certainly that Pump Court was the name given in 1670 to part of the market place.

1. Ibid.

2. L.R.O., DG.25/1/1, ff.111-2.

Merridge End, Merridene, Kettleby End, Backside. The only area of the town not yet accounted for was to the west of the market place. The names of the inhabitants of these streets in 1670 appeared in the manorial and cottage lists of 1677, 1681 and 1685 between those of the market place and Spittal End, so we can be sure that the two modern roads leading from the market place westwards to Kettleby Bridge mark the site of these 1670 streets. Moreover, the thirty-three persons who appeared under no specific street heading in 1670 can similarly be shown to have been living in the same area.

The fourth stage in this limited reconstruction of Melton's social and occupational topography is the comparison of the lists of cottages made in 1685 and 1629.¹ Numbered from 1 to 132, it is evident that the cottages in 1685 were the same sites or buildings as the ones listed in 1629. This can be demonstrated by looking at the owners in the respective years. For example, the Town Estate owned cottages numbered 1, 4, 39 and 40 in both years. Henry Mytton owned numbers 33 and 34 in 1629; John Mytton owned the same numbers in 1685. Robert Hudson owned numbers 41-43 in 1629 and Edward Hudson owned the same ones in 1685. Somewhere between numbers 56-60 the two lists went out of sequence, so that number 61 in 1629 was numbered 62 in 1685, and so on. Thus the town owned numbers 109-18 and 122-3 in 1629, and numbers 110-9 and 123-4 in 1685. In 1629 John Kightley the innkeeper of the Swan which is known to have been at the south-west corner of the market place, occupied cottage number 80. In 1685 Thomas Fox, vintner, who was taxed on twelve hearths in 1670, occupied cottage number 81. Fox can thus be identified as the innkeeper of the Swan by the 1670s. He

1. Ibid., ff.49-50.

was the first person to be listed in the 1670 Hearth Tax, at the top of the list of the thirty-three who were not specifically located.

This suggests that these people lived along Eyegate, now Leicester Street. Kettleby End was undoubtedly the westernmost part of Eyegate, which led over the Kettleby bridge.

Merridge End was the seventeenth century name for the western end of the modern High Street. This is proved by the fact that John Mytton, Esq., lived in Merridge End and his residence was the Park House - since rebuilt and renamed Egerton Lodge, which still stands. Although Merridene and Backside cannot be located with certainty they too, in all probability, were to be found in the same vicinity of the town.

(ii) A social and occupational topography

We are now in a position to consider the social and occupational topography of Melton in 1629 and 1670. In both these years we have some idea in which part of the town lived a good number of the population. The names of those people for whom we have this information in 1629 can be matched up both with their occupations as given in probate records and in the parish register from 1636, and with the amounts they paid in the 1634 church levy, which appears to have been a reliable guide to the relative economic standing of Melton's inhabitants.¹ While there is no comparable measure of economic standing for the people named in the 1670 Hearth Tax the location in this record of the habitations of the exempt does give us the whereabouts of the 'pockets of poverty'; occupations for those included in the Hearth Tax can also be derived from probate records and the parish register.

1. Ibid., 1.D41/4/XVII/77; infra, Appendix II, pp. 273-4.

In 1629 the areas where there was a high proportion of wealthy households were the market place, Merridge End and the Street to Sage Cross. Of the forty persons whom we know to have been living in one of these three areas twenty-eight (= 70 per cent) were sufficiently wealthy to be levied in 1634, and fifteen of these paid 2s 0d or more.¹ By contrast, of the eighty-five persons living in Burton End, Eyegate, Spittal End and Thorpe End only thirty-nine (= 46 per cent) were levied in 1634, and only nine of these paid 2s 0d or more.²

As for occupations there was no recognizable concentration of any trade anywhere in the town, except that there was a high proportion of retailers living in the market place.³ There were also quite a few labourers living along Spittal End (four out of nine persons of whom we know the occupations) and Thorpe End (six out of eighteen) but this is to be expected as these streets were where the poorer households were concentrated.

In 1670 the presence of seven households (out of fourteen) in Merridge End which had four hearths or more is perhaps sufficiently strong evidence of a concentration of wealth to overcome our doubts about the wisdom of trusting hearth-counting as an indicator of economic and social standing. Other than this we can only affirm that the poor

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1. In the market place, out of 17 persons 13 were levied, of whom 7 paid 2s 0d or more; in Merridge End, out of 7 persons 5 were levied, of whom 3 paid 2s 0d or more; in the Street to Sage Cross, out of 16 persons 10 were levied, of whom 5 paid 2s 0d or more.
 2. In Burton End, out of 22 persons 9 were levied, of whom 3 paid 2s 0d or more; in Eyegate, out of 12 persons 5 were levied, of whom 1 paid 2s 0d or more; in Spittal End, out of 18 persons 9 were levied, of whom 2 paid 2s 0d or more; in Thorpe End, out of 33 persons 16 were levied, of whom 3 paid 2s 0d or more.
 3. 5 of the 13 persons of whom we know the occupations were retailers (3 mercers, a chandler and a haberdasher, who paid £1, 14s 0d, 6d, 3s 4d, and 6s 8d respectively in 1634).

were to be found in large numbers in Burton End, Church Yard, Kettleby End, King Street, Timber Hill and Thorpe End.

As in 1629 there were no concentrations of trades in the town, and by now even the number of retailers in the market place was not remarkable. It is possible to locate the homes of twenty-seven victuallers, and although there were six in Eyegate and six in Burton End the rest were scattered around the town.¹

Thus it can be seen that Melton, while too small to have anything other than a heterogeneous occupational topography, did have recognizable concentrations of poor inhabitants living along the streets leading out of the town. It could well be that the influx of immigrants, many of them poor, from the mid-sixteenth century led to the formation of ribbon developments on the main routes on the outskirts of the town, as well as the subdivision and infilling of tenements closer to the centre.

1. There were 4 in the market place, 3 each in Spittal End and Thorpe End, 2 each in Merridge End and the Street to Sage Cross, and 1 in King Street.

APPENDIX II The 1634 Melton Mowbray church levy

It is obvious from the archdeaconry court case of 1634-6 between the Melton Churchwardens of 1634 and one of the town's inhabitants, Thomas Sargeant, that local levies and assessments were made with great care and attention to detail.¹ At least nine men, including the Churchwardens and some of the "better sort of inhabitants", had met in the church on the 4th October, 1634. They assessed people in Melton either on the quantity of land they held or on their personal estate, whichever would yield the greater sum, in order to pay for the repair of the parish church. After being asked to contribute 8s 9d Sargeant refused, claiming that his assessment was too high. In the ensuing court case several deponents were called to give evidence as to Sargeant's ability to pay the said amount. It was generally agreed that Sargeant held two and a half yardlands, that his annual revenues and rents from this land amounted to at least £40, and that his practice as an attorney earnt him even more money. Sargeant's wealth was compared with that of other named townsmen, and most of the deponents declared that he was fortunate not to have been taxed even higher. While we might suspect collusion on the part of the deponents there is no doubt that Sargeant's assessment was no mere rough estimate, but that a good deal of informed local knowledge had been used in making the levy.

1. L.R.O., 1.D41/4/XVII/65-78.

TABLE V: The 1634 Melton church levy

Occupations	Assessment									TOTAL
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)	(i)	
Husbandmen	1	3	2	1	2	2	4	1	-	16
Mercers	-	2	1	-	3	1	-	-	1	8
Gents.	-	1	3	1	2	1	-	1	-	9
Lawyers	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Chandlers	-	-	-	-	2	1	2	-	-	5
Drapers	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	2
Haberdashers	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Schoolmasters	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Vintners	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	2
Innkeepers	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	2
Blacksmiths	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	2
Cobblers	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Shoemakers	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	4	2	9
Carriers	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	1	4
Labourers	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	5	15	21
Curriers	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Saddlers	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Surveyors	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Glovers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	5	9
Butchers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	6
Tailors	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	4	6
Carpenters	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	3	5
Weavers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	4
Ropers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	3
Victuallers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2
Dyers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Horseriders	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Joiners	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Masons	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Painters	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Slaters	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Whittawers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Musicians	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Millers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Shepherds	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
TOTAL	1	6	6	3	12	11	15	37	42	133 ¹
% of total	0.75	4.5	4.5	2.25	9.0	8.3	11.3	27.8	31.6	

(a) Over £1 (b) 16s 0d - £1 (c) 11s 0d - 15s 11d (d) 8s 0d - 10s 11d
(e) 6s 0d - 7s 11d (f) 4s 0d - 5s 11d (g) 2s 0d - 3s 11d (h) 1s 0d -
1s 11d (i) 0d - 11d

1. In addition to the 133 persons whose occupations were known there were 11 widows and 48 men whose occupations are not known included in the levy. In the parish registers, 163608, there appeared 159 men whose occupations are known and who were not included in the 1634 levy. Many of these would have been adult householders in 1634, and were probably excluded because of poverty: among these 159 were 81 labourers, 14 shepherds and 12 shoemakers.

TABLE VI: Melton occupations in 1572¹

		<u>Notes</u>
AGRICULTURE		
Farming gents., yeomen and husbandmen	24	1. L.R.O., DG.36/159/7.
Shepherds	1	2. In this as in the follow- ing tables tailors are included under textiles, although strictly speaking they were service craftsmen who need not be viewed as part of any local textiles manufacture.
	25	3. One innkeeper farmed 3 yardlands.
LABOURERS	30	4. Two mercers farmed 3 and 2 yardlands respectively.
TEXTILES		5. Three drapers farmed 4, 3 and 1 yardland respectively.
Tailors ²	4	6. Both Staplers farmed 4 and 3 yardlands respectively.
Weavers	5	
Fullers	2	
	11	
LEATHER		
Shoemakers	5	
Glovers	3	
Whittawers	1	
	9	
PROVISIONING		
Victuallers	9	
Butchers	3	
Innkeepers	2 ³	
Fishmongers	1	
Salters	1	
	16	
RETAILING		
Mercers	4 ⁴	
Drapers	4 ⁵	
Chandlers	3	
	11	
BUILDING		
Carpenters	2	
	2	
WOOD and METAL		
Smiths	3	
Wrights	1	
	4	
MISCELLANEOUS		
Merchant Staplers	2 ⁶	
Carriers	1	
Clergy	2	
	5	
<u>TOTAL</u>	113	

TABLE VII: Occupations in the Melton parish registers: 1636-71, 1679-88, 1695-6, 1698-1713, 1715-8

I	AGRICULTURE	1636-8	1639-41	1642-4	1645-7	1648-50	1651-3	1654-6	1657-9	1660-2	1663-5	1666-8	1669-71	1679-85	1686-8	1695-6	1698-1700	1701-3	1704-6	1707-9	1710-3	1715-8
	Husbandmen	15	11	9	9	8	8	8	5	2	1	2	4	1	8	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Shepherds	15	8	11	7	4	8	8	6	5	4	7	5	4	4	6	6	7	6	5	2	1
	Yeomen	7	9	5	9	3	3	3	5	6	5	3	3	-	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	-
	Gardeners	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	3	-	1	1	1	-	-	-
	Pinders	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Graziers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-
	Neatherds	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	-	-
	Farmers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	6	8	5	3	4	4
	TOTAL	37	28	25	25	16	19	19	16	14	10	14	14	6	15	16	14	21	16	12	5	5
II	% OF TOTAL OCCUPATIONS	12.3	15.1	11.1	12.9	9.2	9.9	9.8	8.6	9.5	6.0	8.2	9.5	6.4	8.9	12.6	9.7	13.6	12.0	11.2	5.2	6.0
	LABOURERS	101	63	71	62	59	69	59	55	45	44	38	39	25	46	26	24	21	27	20	22	9
II	% OF TOTAL OCCUPATIONS	33.7	33.9	31.4	32.0	33.9	36.1	30.6	29.6	30.6	26.3	22.4	26.5	26.6	27.4	20.5	16.7	13.6	20.3	18.7	22.9	10.7

TEXTILES	1636 -8	1639 -41	1642 -4	1647 -7	1645 -50	1648 -50	1651 -3	1654 -6	1657 -9	1660 -2	1663 -5	1666 -8	1669 -71	1679 -85	1686 -8	1695 -6	1698 -1700	1701 -3	1704 -6	1707 -9	1710 -3	1715 -8
Tailors	13	7	14	11	12	12	8	10	9	9	9	6	7	5	8	10	7	8	9	10	9	7
Weavers	10	4	8	8	10	10	4	3	4	4	4	10	5	2	5	5	3	3	1	1	1	3
Dyers	1	1	-	1	2	2	1	-	-	-	1	1	2	-	2	3	2	1	2	2	2	2
Bonelacemakers	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hatters	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Feltmakers	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Shearmen	-	1	2	1	2	2	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jerseyweavers	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jerseycombers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	-	1	-	-
Clothiers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Stockingweavers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	3
Spinners	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	26	15	25	22	26	26	15	14	14	16	17	18	16	8	17	21	15	15	16	16	14	15
% OF TOTAL OCCUPATIONS	8.7	8.1	11.1	11.3	14.9	14.9	7.9	7.3	7.5	10.9	10.2	10.6	10.9	8.5	10.1	16.5	10.4	9.7	12.0	15.0	14.6	17.9

LEATHER	1636 -8	1639 -41	1642 -4	1645 -7	1648 -50	1651 -3	1654 -6	1657 -9	1660 -2	1663 -5	1666 -8	1669 -71	1679 -85	1686 -8	1695 -6	1698- 1700	1701 -3	1704 -6	1707 -9	1710 -3	1711 -8
Shoemakers	21	11	17	18	9	17	18	16	10	9	12	9	3	11	7	7	8	6	5	4	4
Glovers	11	5	8	4	3	3	5	4	4	4	6	2	1	1	-	-	-	2	3	2	1
Cobblers	4	1	1	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Saddlers	2	1	1	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	1	2	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	-
Curriers	1	-	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	-	1	1	-	-	3	1	1	1
Whittawers	1	2	2	-	-	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	1	1	-	-	-
Skinners	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Tanners	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fellmongers ¹	-	-	-	1	-	2	1	2	4	3	3	3	4	3	2	3	2	2	2	-	1
Codders	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Heelmakers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-
Collarmakers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Shoemenders	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	40	22	31	25	15	27	29	27	22	20	24	18	10	21	14	16	14	16	13	9	7
% OF TOTAL OCCUPATIONS	13.3	11.8	13.7	12.9	8.6	14.1	15.0	14.5	15.0	12.0	14.1	12.2	10.6	12.5	11.0	11.1	9.1	12.0	12.1	9.4	8.3

1. Classified with leather workers although at least as likely to be wool dealers.

PROVISIONING	1636 -8	1639 -41	1642 -4	1645 -7	1648 -50	1651 -3	1654 -6	1657 -9	1660 -2	1663 -5	1666 -8	1669 -71	1679 -85	1686 -8	1695 -6	1698- 1700	1701 -3	1704 -6	1707 -9	1710 -3	1715 -8
Butchers	7	3	3	2	2	1	4	5	3	3	2	1	1	4	-	4	2	3	1	3	2
Millers	3	5	5	1	4	3	3	2	3	4	5	2	-	1	1	2	2	1	-	1	2
Vintners	3	2	2	2	3	3	2	1	-	-	1	2	1	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
Bakers	2	1	2	1	4	2	2	1	3	2	1	2	2	1	3	3	2	4	1	1	1
Innkeepers	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-
Horseriders	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tapsters	-	1	1	-	1	-	1	1	-	2	2	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Victuallers	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4	4	3	3	5	2
Stillers	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ostlers	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Loadsmen	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Maltsters	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	2	2	4	1	1	1	1
Winedrawers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Maltmillers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mealmen	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	19	13	13	8	14	9	13	14	9	12	14	9	6	10	12	17	16	12	6	11	8
% OF TOTAL OCCUPATIONS	6.3	7.0	5.8	4.1	8.0	4.7	6.7	7.5	6.1	7.2	8.2	6.1	6.4	6.0	9.4	11.8	10.4	9.0	5.6	11.5	9.5

RETAILING	1636 -8	1639 -41	1642 -4	1645 -7	1648 -50	1651 -3	1654 -6	1657 -9	1660 -2	1663 -5	1666 -8	1669 -71	1679 -85	1686 -8	1695 -6	1698- 1700	1701 -3	1704 -6	1707 -9	1710 -3	1715 -8
Mercers	8	6	4	5	2	3	5	5	2	3	2	2	3	1	2	3	3	1	2	2	1
Chandlers	6	2	2	4	3	6	6	5	4	7	3	6	-	4	3	2	1	1	1	-	2
Drapers	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pedlars	-	2	-	-	2	-	2	1	1	1	3	1	-	-	1	3	1	1	1	1	1
Barbers	-	1	-	1	2	1	1	1	1	3	3	1	-	-	2	2	2	2	1	1	-
Haberdashers	-	-	1	1	1	1	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Milliners	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	-	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Apothecaries	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	1	1	2	1	-	2	2	1	1	2	1
Ironmongers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Hucksters	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Silk merchants	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Grocers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Shopkeepers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
TOTAL	16	12	8	12	11	13	18	16	12	20	14	13	5	9	9	14	9	8	6	6	5
% OF TOTAL OCCUPATIONS	5.3	6.5	3.5	6.2	6.3	6.8	9.3	8.6	8.2	12.0	8.2	8.8	5.3	5.4	7.1	9.7	5.8	6.0	5.6	6.2	6.0

BUILDING	1636 -8	1639 -41	1642 -4	1645 -7	1648 -50	1651 -3	1654 -6	1657 -9	1660 -2	1663 -5	1666 -8	1669 -71	1679 -85	1686 -8	1695 -6	1698- 1700	1701 -3	1704 -6	1707 -9	1710 -3	1715 -8
Carpenters	12	4	6	6	3	4	3	3	3	4	5	1	1	4	3	5	6	4	3	3	3
Slaters	3	4	3	2	3	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	2	-	1	2	2	3	2	2	1
Glaziers	3	-	-	-	1	1	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	2	-	-	3	1	-	1	2
Painters	2	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Masons	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	-	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Joiners	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	3	1	2	2	2	3	2	1	-	1
Thatchers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Plumbers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	2	1
TOTAL	22	11	12	11	10	7	7	9	8	11	11	9	6	11	7	11	16	12	7	9	9
% OF TOTAL OCCUPATIONS	7.3	5.9	5.3	5.7	5.7	3.7	3.6	4.8	5.4	6.6	6.5	6.1	6.4	6.5	5.5	7.6	10.4	9.0	6.5	9.4	10.7

WOOD and METAL	1636 -8	1639 -41	1642 -4	1645 -7	1648 -50	1651 -3	1654 -6	1657 -9	1660 -2	1663 -5	1666 -8	1669 -71	1679 -85	1686 -8	1695 -6	1698- 1700	1701 -3	1704 -6	1707 -9	1710 -3	1715 -8
Blacksmiths	4	4	6	6	5	6	5	3	-	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	1	-	1	-	-
Brasiers	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	2	1	3	1	1	1	-
Coopers	-	1	2	2	3	2	1	-	1	-	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	-
Locksmiths	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	2	2	2	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pinners	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	1	1	1	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Metalmen	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tinkers	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	-	1	-	1	1	1	3	1	2
Wheelwrights	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	1	1	-	-	2	-	1	1	1	1	-	-
Turners	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	1	1	-	-
Cutlers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	-
Famiers/ Smiths	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	4	4	1	-	-
Whitesmiths	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	3	2	-	3	1	2
Sievementmakers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cabinetmakers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chairturners	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
TOTAL	5	7	10	11	9	10	11	11	9	8	12	9	4	10	9	10	16	11	13	4	5
% OF TOTAL OCCUPATIONS	1.7	3.8	4.4	5.7	5.2	5.2	5.7	5.9	6.1	4.8	7.1	6.1	4.3	6.0	7.1	6.9	10.4	8.3	12.1	4.2	6.0

IX	MISCELLANEOUS	1636 -8	1639 -41	1642 -4	1645 -7	1648 -50	1651 -3	1654 -6	1657 -9	1660 -2	1663 -5	1666 -8	1669 -71	1679 -85	1686 -8	1695 -6	1698- 1700	1701 -3	1704 -6	1707 -9	1710 -3	1715 -8
	Gentlemen	8	4	5	2	4	6	9	5	2	6	7	4	7	4	4	4	1	-	-	4	3
	Servants	6	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Ropers	5	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	3	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	-	-	-	2
	Clergy	4	3	4	3	3	1	3	6	3	3	3	3	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	2
	Carriers	3	1	3	5	3	5	5	5	-	2	1	-	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	1	1
	Musicians	3	1	3	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	2	3	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	4
	Surgeons	2	2	2	1	-	2	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	3	2	2	1	-
	Lawyers	1	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	1	2	1	3	4	-	-	-	4	2	2	2	1
	Potters	1	1	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Apprentices	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Soldiers	-	-	9	1	-	3	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	4	1	1	-	-	-
	Hempdressers	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	2	-	-	-	1	3	2	1	2	1	1
	Schoolmasters	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	-	-	1	-	1	1	-	-	-
	Furriers	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
	Pipemakers	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	3	2	3	2	2	1	3	-	1	3	1	1	-	1
	Basemakers/ Matmakers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	2	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
	Watercarriers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Surveyors	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

continued

MISCELLANEOUS Continued	1636 -8	1639 -41	1642 -4	1645 -7	1648 -50	1651 -3	1654 -6	1657 -9	1660 -2	1663 -5	1666 -8	1669 -71	1679 -85	1686 -8	1695 -6	1698- 1700	1701 -3	1704 -6	1707 -9	1710 -3	1715 -8
Signmakers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hairbuyers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Brushmakers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wigmakers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Writers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Excisemen	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
Beehivemakers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Cryers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Coachmen	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Supervisors	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Clockmakers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Apparitors	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
TOTAL	34	15	31	18	14	22	23	24	12	25	25	20	24	29	13	23	26	15	14	16	21
% OF TOTAL OCCUPATIONS	11.3	8.1	13.7	9.3	8.0	11.5	11.9	12.9	8.2	15.0	14.7	13.6	25.5	17.3	10.2	16.0	16.9	11.3	13.1	16.7	25.0
TOTAL NUMBER OF OCCUPA- TIONS	300	186	226	194	174	191	193	186	147	167	170	147	94	168	127	144	154	133	107	96	84

TABLE VIII: Occupations in the Melton parish registers: summary of percentages by trade

	1636 -8	1639 -41	1642 -4	1645 -7	1648 -50	1651 -3	1654 -6	1657 -9	1660 -2	1663 -5	1666 -8	1669 -71	1679 -85	1686 -8	1695 -6	1698- 1700	1701 -3	1704 -6	1707 -9	1710 -3	1715 -8
AGRICULTURE	12.3	15.1	11.1	12.9	9.2	9.9	9.8	8.6	9.5	6.0	8.2	9.5	6.4	8.9	12.6	9.7	13.6	12.0	11.2	5.2	6.0
LABOURERS	33.7	33.9	31.4	32.0	33.9	36.1	30.6	29.6	30.6	26.3	22.4	26.5	26.6	27.4	20.5	16.7	13.6	20.3	18.7	22.9	10.7
TEXTILES	8.7	8.1	11.1	11.3	14.9	7.9	7.3	7.5	10.9	10.2	10.6	10.9	8.5	10.1	16.5	10.4	9.7	12.0	15.0	14.6	17.9
LEATHER	13.3	11.8	13.7	12.9	8.6	14.1	15.0	14.5	15.0	12.0	14.1	12.2	10.6	12.5	11.0	11.1	9.1	12.0	12.1	9.4	8.3
PROVISIONING	6.3	7.0	5.8	4.1	8.0	4.7	6.7	7.5	6.1	7.2	8.2	6.1	6.4	6.0	9.4	11.8	10.4	9.0	5.6	11.5	9.5
RETAILING	5.3	6.5	3.5	6.2	6.3	6.8	9.3	8.6	8.2	12.0	8.2	8.8	5.3	5.4	7.1	9.7	5.8	6.0	5.6	6.2	6.0
BUILDING	7.3	5.9	5.3	5.7	5.7	3.7	3.6	4.8	5.4	6.6	6.5	6.1	6.4	6.5	5.5	7.6	10.4	9.0	6.5	9.4	10.7
WOOD and METAL	1.7	3.8	4.4	5.7	5.2	5.2	5.7	5.9	6.1	4.8	7.1	6.1	4.3	6.0	7.1	6.9	10.4	8.3	12.1	4.2	6.0
MISCELLANEOUS	11.3	8.1	13.7	9.3	8.0	11.5	11.9	12.9	8.2	15.0	14.7	13.6	25.5	17.3	10.2	16.0	16.9	11.3	13.1	16.7	25.0
TOTAL NUMBER OF OCCUPA- TIONS	300	186	226	194	174	191	193	186	147	167	170	147	94	168	127	144	154	133	107	96	84

TABLE IX: Turnover of personnel in Melton's poorer occupations in
the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries

I	CARPENTERS	Occurrence among carpenters in parish registers			
		1636 -8	1639 -44	1663 -71	1698- 1718
	Berridge	✓			
	Blankley	✓			
	Browne	✓			
	Bullivant	✓			
	Earsby	✓	✓		
	Harrison	✓	✓		
	Huckerby	✓			
	Hudson	✓			
	Jesson	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Smith	✓			
	Cope		✓		✓
	Henson		✓		
	Pare		✓	✓	
	Blacke			✓	
	Blackwell			✓	
	Cliften			✓	
	Graves			✓	
	Stirges			✓	✓
	Alsop				✓
	Haislewood				✓
	Hutton				✓
	Mane				✓
	Peat				✓
	Smart				✓

II	LABOURERS	Occurrence among labourers in parish registers					Occurrence among labourers in parish registers			
		1636-8	1639-44	1663-71	1698-1718		1636-8	1639-44	1663-71	1698-1718
	Abbot	✓				More	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Allen	✓				Motte	✓			
	Armes	✓				Musson	✓			
	Baker	✓	✓			Neale	✓	✓		
	Barrow	✓				Newton	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Beeby	✓	✓	✓	✓	Olave	✓	✓		
	Blacke	✓				Painter	✓			
	Bonny	✓	✓			Parker	✓		✓	✓
	Botte	✓	✓		✓	Potter	✓			
	Boys	✓				Queniborough	✓			
	Brewin	✓	✓		✓	Read	✓			
	Baley	✓		✓	✓	Remington	✓			
	Bullocke	✓				Renolds	✓			✓
	Caxon	✓	✓			Richardson	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Cheetham	✓	✓			Robinson	✓	✓		
	Coddington	✓	✓			Russell	✓			
	Cooke	✓	✓	✓		Shaw	✓			
	Cooper	✓				Slater	✓	✓		
	Cottram	✓				Stokes	✓			
	Dawson	✓	✓	✓		Stringer	✓			
	Day	✓	✓	✓		Surgay	✓			
	Dexter	✓				Sutton	✓	✓		
	Ditchfield	✓				Taylor	✓		✓	✓
	Emins	✓				Thornton	✓	✓		✓
	Fisher	✓	✓	✓	✓	Wade	✓			
	Fowler	✓	✓	✓	✓	Wall	✓	✓		
	Geale	✓				Warren	✓			
	Grococke	✓				Wells	✓			
	Halstead	✓	✓			Weste	✓			
	Harby	✓	✓	✓		Whitehead	✓	✓	✓	
	Harris	✓				Wilde	✓			✓
	Harrison	✓				Wilford	✓	✓	✓	
	Hastings	✓	✓	✓	✓	Worsdale	✓	✓		
	Hinman	✓			✓	Wright	✓	✓		
	Holding	✓	✓			Ashton		✓		
	Holt	✓			✓	Brittaine		✓		
	Huckerby	✓	✓			Brooksby		✓		
	Hurdall	✓				Burton		✓		
	Jackson	✓	✓			Camlin		✓		
	Johnson	✓	✓			Campion		✓		
	Kembe	✓	✓	✓	✓	Compton		✓		
	King	✓	✓			Cecill		✓		
	Lea	✓		✓	✓	Clarke		✓		
	Leadbetter	✓	✓			Close		✓		
	Levitt	✓				Drinkwater		✓		
	Lummas	✓				East		✓		
	Mafiield	✓	✓			Englefield		✓		
	Marste	✓				Flower		✓		
	Mason	✓	✓	✓	✓					

Occurrence among labourers in parish registers					Occurrence among labourers in parish registers				
Family name	1636-8	1639-44	1663-71	1698-1718	Family name	1636-8	1639-44	1663-71	1698-1718
Freeman		✓	✓	✓	Hough			✓	✓
Gamble		✓	✓	✓	Hunt			✓	
Gray		✓		✓	Ingele			✓	
Green		✓			Jackson			✓	
Harde		✓			Jenkinson			✓	
Hardell		✓	✓		Jesson			✓	
Harlow		✓			Lord			✓	
Hart		✓	✓		Louth			✓	✓
Hartson		✓			Markham			✓	
Holioke		✓			Martindale			✓	✓
Hubbard		✓		✓	Newin			✓	
Hudson		✓	✓		Parkes			✓	✓
Kellam		✓			Parr			✓	✓
Lockwood		✓			Rudder			✓	
Man		✓			Selby			✓	
Noble		✓	✓		Sussell			✓	
Orme		✓			Sutherinton			✓	✓
Ridgeway		✓			Tackett			✓	✓
Sansom		✓	✓		Till			✓	✓
Selvey		✓			Timson			✓	
Sharpe		✓			Toogood			✓	✓
Smeeton		✓			Toone			✓	✓
Smith		✓	✓	✓	Trentum			✓	
Spencer		✓	✓		Wallace			✓	✓
Spreckley		✓	✓	✓	Ward			✓	✓
Trivitt		✓			Whalley			✓	
Watts		✓		✓	Williamson			✓	
Webster		✓			Wyman			✓	
Welch		✓			Alphin				✓
Wilson		✓	✓		Alstin				✓
Annet			✓		Ashby				✓
Barnes			✓	✓	Bagshaw				✓
Bentley			✓		Biddle				✓
Bickerstaffe			✓		Brand				✓
Blankley			✓		Burgaine				✓
Bobley			✓		Canner				✓
Bradford			✓		Cole				✓
Brewster			✓	✓	Crosse				✓
Cave			✓		Dickens				✓
Collinton			✓		Dormond				✓
Cullbine			✓		Ellott				✓
Dennis			✓		Finn				✓
Earsby			✓		Frisby				✓
Flood			✓		Gervase				✓
Frost			✓		Gibson				✓
Gray			✓		Gregson				✓
Hackett			✓	✓	Grooby				✓
Harley			✓	✓	Hasted				✓
Homes			✓	✓	Henfrey				✓
					Henson				✓

Occurrence among labour- ers in parish registers				
Family name	1636 -8	1639 -44	1663 -71	1698- 1718
Herrick				✓
Hunot				✓
Ingleby				✓
Kemp				✓
Lamb				✓
Loseby				✓
Miles				✓
Muston				✓
Newcombe				✓
Peat				✓
Pepper				✓
Pick				✓
Rowell				✓
Sen				✓
Simkin				✓
Spree				✓
Stacey				✓
Sturgis				✓
Tansley				✓
Thorp				✓
Tyler				✓
Walton				✓
Wortley				✓

III SHOEMAKERS Occurrence among shoemakers in parish registers

Family name	1636-8	1639-44	1663-71	1698-1718
Archer	✓			
Bayly	✓			
Booth	✓	✓		
Bore	✓	✓	✓	
Cooper	✓	✓		
Dawson	✓			
Freeman	✓			
Henson	✓			
Hoe	✓			
Mabbes	✓			
Marshall	✓			
Painter	✓			
Sansom	✓	✓	✓	✓
Stanham	✓	✓		
Watcherne	✓	✓		
Wormwell	✓	✓		
Beeby		✓		
Bickerstaffe		✓	✓	
Body		✓		
Burnesby		✓		
East		✓		
Gilbert		✓		
Ilson		✓		
Kembe		✓		
Noble		✓	✓	
Peete		✓		
Thorpe		✓		
Bolton			✓	✓
Greene			✓	
Holding			✓	
Johnson			✓	✓
Needham			✓	
Preston			✓	
Squire			✓	
Swift			✓	
Wad			✓	
Wildbore			✓	✓
Wright			✓	✓
Bridges				✓
Clark				✓
Cox				✓
Garland				✓
Horstead				✓
Olphin				✓
Speed				✓
Trentham				✓
Walton				✓

IV	TAILORS	Occurrence among tailors in parish registers				Occurrence among tailors in parish registers				
		Family name	1636 -8	1639 -44	1663 -71	1698- 1718	Family name	1636 -8	1639 -44	1663 -71
	Baggeley	✓	✓			Keen				✓
	Barker	✓	✓			Matchett				✓
	Coley	✓		✓		Matthew				✓
	Franklin	✓				Orson				✓
	Hewet	✓				Pim				✓
	Jackson	✓		✓		Raines				✓
	Langforth	✓				Rowe				✓
	Peabody	✓	✓	✓		Scot				✓
	Richardson	✓				Spreckly				✓
	Sothernwood	✓				Swift				✓
	Wadde	✓								
	Wildman	✓								
	Wood	✓								
	Barnett		✓	✓						
	Bumby		✓							
	Croson		✓							
	Mason		✓							
	Parker		✓							
	Peete		✓							
	Reynolds		✓							
	Stokes		✓							
	Wilcox		✓							
	Wright		✓							
	Dawson			✓						
	Emins			✓	✓					
	Garland			✓						
	Hinman			✓						
	Homes			✓						
	Newton			✓						
	Rollinson			✓						
	Stringer			✓						
	Vye			✓						
	Webster			✓						
	Allot				✓					
	Bass				✓					
	Bennett				✓					
	Dennis				✓					
	Dolby				✓					
	Fowler				✓					
	Gamble				✓					
	Harper				✓					
	Henfrey				✓					
	Hose				✓					

V	WEAVERS	Occurrence among weavers in parish registers			
		1636 -8	1639 -44	1663 -71	1698 1718
	Bast	✓	✓		
	Lord	✓	✓	✓	
	Power	✓	✓	✓	
	Webster	✓			
	Willoughby	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Wormwell	✓	✓		
	Hainsworth		✓		
	Harrison		✓		
	Henson		✓		
	Smith/Cooke		✓		
	Ammon			✓	
	Grooby			✓	
	Harley			✓	
	Johnson			✓	✓
	Lee			✓	
	Peares			✓	
	Presson			✓	
	Sharpe			✓	✓
	Wall			✓	✓
	Fisher				✓
	Line				✓
	Thornton				✓
	Wildbore				✓
	Wilford				✓

TABLE X: Non-agricultural occupations in village parish registers in the
1630s and 1640s (excluding servants)

	All 15 vil- lages	4 common field vil- lages ¹	7 enclosed/ enclosing villages ¹	Burton Lazars and Kirby Bellars
TEXTILES				
Tailors	17	8	4	3
Weavers	14	7	2	4
Clothworkers	2	2	-	-
Shearmen	1	1	-	-
Silkweavers	1	-	-	-
	35	18	6	8
LEATHER				
Glovers	1	1	-	-
Whittawers	1	1	-	-
	2	2	-	-
PROVISIONING				
Millers	7	1	3	2
Victuallers	3	1	-	1
Butchers	2	2	-	-
Bakers	1	-	1	-
Vintners	1	1	-	-
	14	5	4	3
RETAILING				
Pedlars	2	-	-	2
Mercers	1	-	-	-
Chandlers	1	-	-	1
	4	-	-	3
BUILDING				
Carpenters	6	2	3	2
Slaters	2	1	-	1
Masons	1	1	-	-
	9	4	3	3
WOOD and METAL				
Blacksmiths	9	5	-	3
Locksmiths	3	3	-	-
Coopers	2	-	1	1
Joiners	2	1	-	1
Wheelwrights	1	-	1	-
Shovelmakers	1	-	-	-
	18	9	2	5
MISCELLANEOUS				
Lawyers	1	1	-	-
	1	1	-	-
TOTAL	83	39	15	22

See over for note

Note to TABLE X

1. Excluded from these columns are the villages of Abkettley (common field) and Holwell (enclosing) because they comprised a single parish and it is not known in which of the 2 villages lived the 2 tailors, the weaver, victualler, miller, mercer, blacksmith and shovelmaker who are named in the register.

TABLE XI: Village craft inventories 1602-46

<u>Village</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Inventory total</u> (£ s d)	<u>% Agricultural stock</u>	<u>Occupation</u>
Scalford	1639	123 18 2	76	Clothworker
Freeby	1627	95 17 4	46	Carpenter
Asfordby	1616	57 19 8 ¹	57	Tailor
Freeby	1646	56 12 8	41	Miller
Kirby Bellars	1627	40 11 4 ²	52	Weaver
Burton Lazars	1631	37 19 0	32	Blacksmith
Freeby	1627	36 19 8	44	Roper
Sysonby	1636	36 17 6	49	Locksmith
Asfordby	1635	36 13 4 ³	81	Miller
Little Dalby	1637	35 13 2	35	Carpenter
Burton Lazars	1626	33 11 8 ⁴	46	Weaver
Kirby Bellars	1628	33 10 0	75	Weaver
Thorpe Arnold	1626	31 6 8	67	Tailor
Kirby Bellars	1602	30 9 0	57	Tailor
Asfordby	1636	29 6 4	32	Blacksmith
Scalford	1640	27 13 10	7	Tailor
Freeby	1624	26 9 10	60	Joiner
Burton Lazars	1620	24 10 11	-	Petty Chapman
Asfordby	1606	23 17 10	27	Glover
Sysonby	1626	23 8 4	60	Carpenter
Asfordby	1632	22 10 2	29	Carpenter
Sysonby	1621	17 2 4	24	Plumber
Holwell	1606	13 6 8	56	Mason
Freeby	1632	12 14 8	26	Carpenter
Great Dalby	1640	11 0 0	33	Weaver
Asfordby	1638	10 13 4	47	Butcher
Asfordby	1635	10 5 0	13	Weaver
Kirby Bellars	1634	10 1 8	75	Slater
Kirby Bellars	1638	9 4 0	60	Weaver
Burton Lazars	1626	8 5 4	52	Tailor
Kirby Bellars	1628	7 10 0	27	Carpenter
Scalford	1638	6 1 4	-	Shearman
Great Dalby	1631	4 16 8	27	Tailor
Asfordby	1635	2 18 4	-	Tailor

-
1. Plus credits worth £10, L.R.O., PR/1/27/70, inventory of -Chenne, Asfordby, Nov., 1616.
 2. Plus credits worth £11, ibid., PR/1/32B/137, inventory of Edward Wilforth, Kirby Bellars, Sept., 1627.
 3. Plus credits worth £10 6s 0d, ibid., PR/1/37/163, inventory of John Wister, Asfordby, Aug., 1635.
 4. Plus credits worth £10, debts of £9 6s 8d, ibid., PR/1/32A/26, inventory of John Mason sen., April, 1626.

TABLE XII: Village craft inventories 1660-1711

<u>Village</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Inventory</u> <u>total</u> (£ s d)	<u>% Agricultural</u> <u>stock</u>	<u>Occupation</u>
Burton Lazars	1685	197 9 0	87	Millwright
Burton Lazars	1679	147 12 8	69	Blacksmith
Scalford	1689	121 1 8	21	Physician
Asfordby	1669	96 1 0 ¹	15	Whittawer
Scalford	1669	93 17 8 ²	9	Plumber
Asfordby	1685	77 5 0	74	Blacksmith
Scalford	1691	66 10 0	39	Carpenter
Great Dalby	1660	62 12 0	84	Tailor
Abkettleby	1666	39 13 8	32	Baker
Scalford	1666	38 1 6 ³	16	Plumber
Scalford	1711	36 7 0	35	Blacksmith
Scalford	1680	34 4 4	30	Weaver
Asfordby	1705	33 11 6	26	Chandler
Burton Lazars	1696	33 10 0	52	Roper
Wyfordby	1669	32 0 0	50	Weaver
Freeby	1684	31 10 0	29	Woolwinder
Kirby Bellars	1670	30 5 6	29	Locksmith
Great Dalby	1680	29 13 6	72	Carpenter
Scalford	1702	27 7 6	50	Butcher
Scalford	1695	26 17 4	63	Basketmaker
Kirby Bellars	1667	26 11 2	27	Carpenter
Abkettleby	1685	25 3 4	18	Weaver
Scalford	1671	24 18 4 ⁴	-	Blacksmith
Great Dalby	1661	23 0 0	70	Tailor
Great Dalby	1696	22 6 0	75	Slater
Kirby Bellars	1660	21 0 0 ⁵	52	Slater
Asfordby	1661	19 19 6	23	Blacksmith
Abkettleby	1698	19 6 8	91	Mason
Asfordby	1686	17 14 0	49	Sleamaker
Burton Lazars	1703	16 10 10	58	Carpenter
Asfordby	1672	16 6 0	43	Mason
Great Dalby	1669	14 3 4	61	Blacksmith
Asfordby	1665	13 5 2	30	Weaver
Welby	1664	10 19 0	32	Blacksmith
Kirby Bellars	1697	10 0 10	60	Carpenter
Holwell	1693	9 18 0	76	Weaver
Holwell	1673	9 13 0	61	Weaver
Great Dalby	1694	1 17 0	-	Carpenter

1. Plus credits worth £50, L.R.O., PR/1/67/147, inventory of Nathaniel Parte, Asfordby, March, 1669.

2. Plus credits worth £80, ibid., PR/1/69/170, inventory of John Fann, Scalford, Dec., 1669.

3. Plus credits worth £45, ibid., PR/1/65/42, inventory of John Fann, Scalford, April, 1666.

4. Plus credits worth £31 10s 0d, ibid., PR/1/71/152, inventory of William Awood, sen., Scalford, Oct., 1671.

5. Plus credits worth £50, ibid., PR/1/53/7, inventory of Thomas On the 11th of February 1660, Feb., 1660.

TABLE XIII: Non-agricultural occupations in village inventories 1602-46

	All 15 vil- lages	5 common field vil- lages	8 enclosed/ enclosing villages	Burton Lazars and Kirby Bellars
TEXTILES				
Tailors	7	4	1	2
Weavers	6	2	-	4
Clothworkers	1	1	-	-
Shearmen	1	1	-	-
	15	8	1	6
LEATHER				
Glovers	1	1	-	-
	1	1	-	-
PROVISIONING				
Millers	2	2	-	-
Butchers	1	1	-	-
	3	3	-	-
RETAILING				
Petty Chapmen	1	-	-	1
	1	-	-	1
BUILDING				
Carpenters	6	3	2	1
Slaters	1	-	-	1
Masons	1	-	1	-
Plumbers	1	-	1	1
	9	3	4	2
WOOD and METAL				
Blacksmiths	2	1	-	1
Locksmiths	1	-	1	-
Joiners	1	1	-	-
	4	2	1	1
MISCELLANEOUS				
Ropers	1	1	-	-
	1	1	-	-
TOTAL	34	18	6	10

TABLE XIV: Non-agricultural occupations in village inventories 1660-1711

	All 15 vil- lages	5 common field vil- lages	8 enclosed/ enclosing villages	Burton Lazars and Kirby Bellars
TEXTILES				
Tailors	2	2	-	-
Weavers	6	3	3	-
Woolwinders	1	1	-	-
	9	6	3	-
LEATHER				
Whittawers	1	1	-	-
	1	1	-	-
PROVISIONING				
Butchers	1	1	-	-
Bakers	1	1	-	-
	2	2	-	-
RETAILING				
Chandlers	1	1	-	-
	1	1	-	-
BUILDING				
Carpenters	6	3	-	3
Slaters	2	1	-	1
Masons	2	2	-	-
Plumbers	2	2	-	-
Wrights	1	-	-	1
	13	8	-	5
WOOD and METAL				
Blacksmiths	7	5	1	1
Locksmiths	1	-	-	1
	8	5	1	2
MISCELLANEOUS				
Ropers	1	-	-	1
Basketmakers	1	1	-	-
Sleamakers	1	1	-	-
Physicians	1	1	-	-
	4	3	-	1
TOTAL	38	26	4	8

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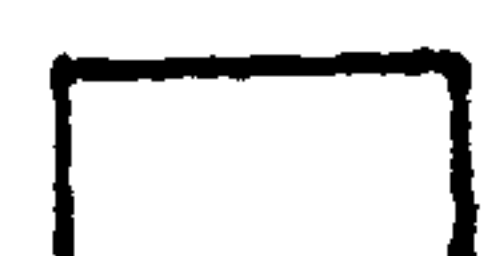
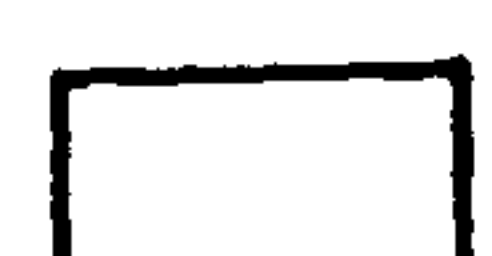
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FIGURE I Melton parish register events: decennial
totals of baptisms and burials

 baptisms
 burials

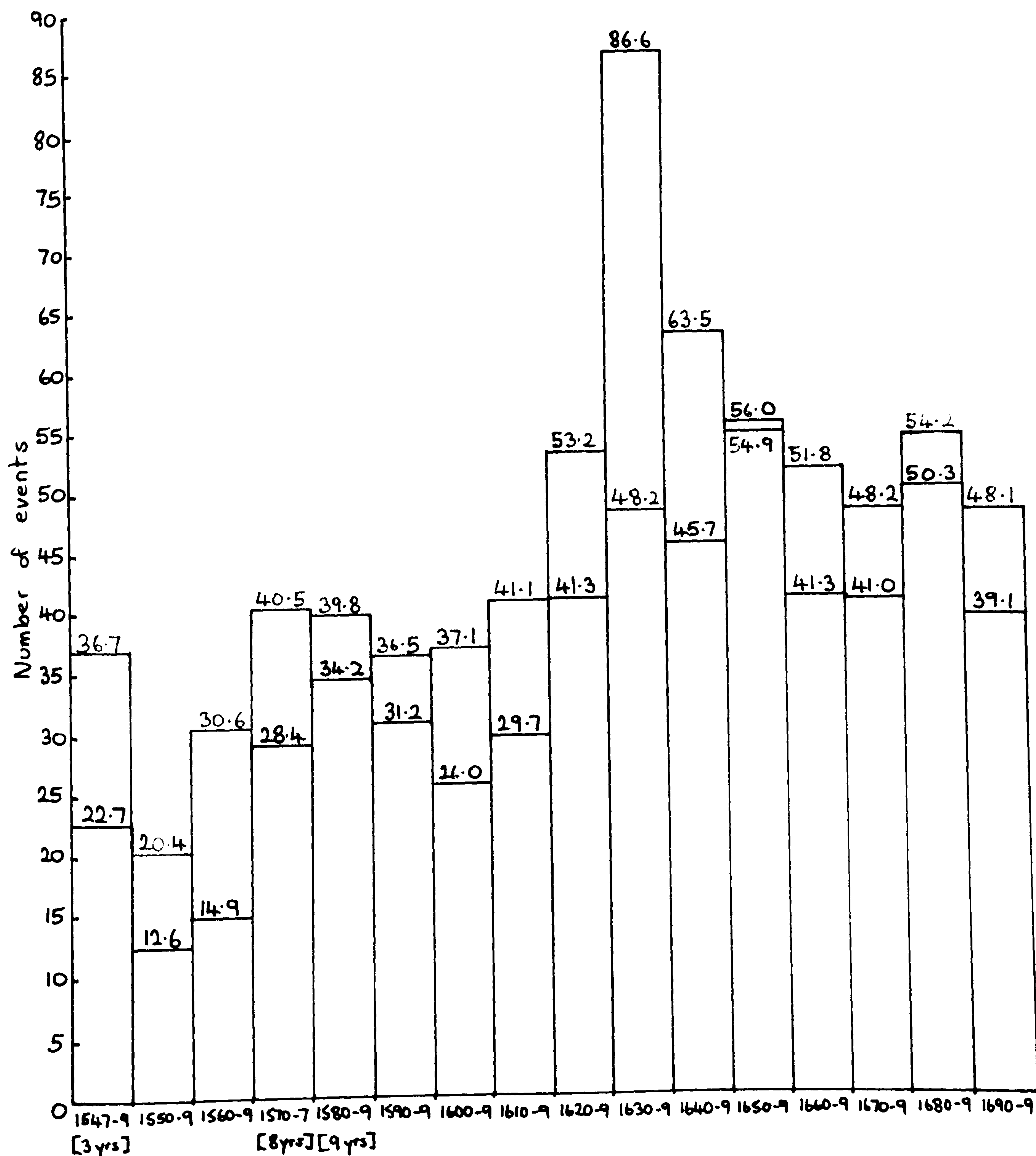
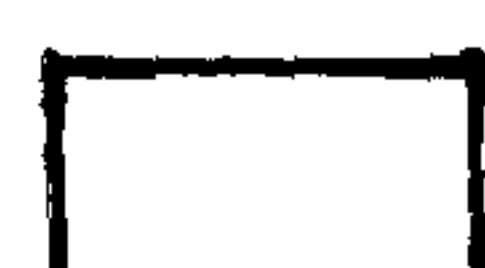
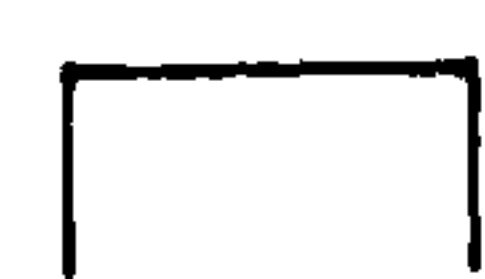
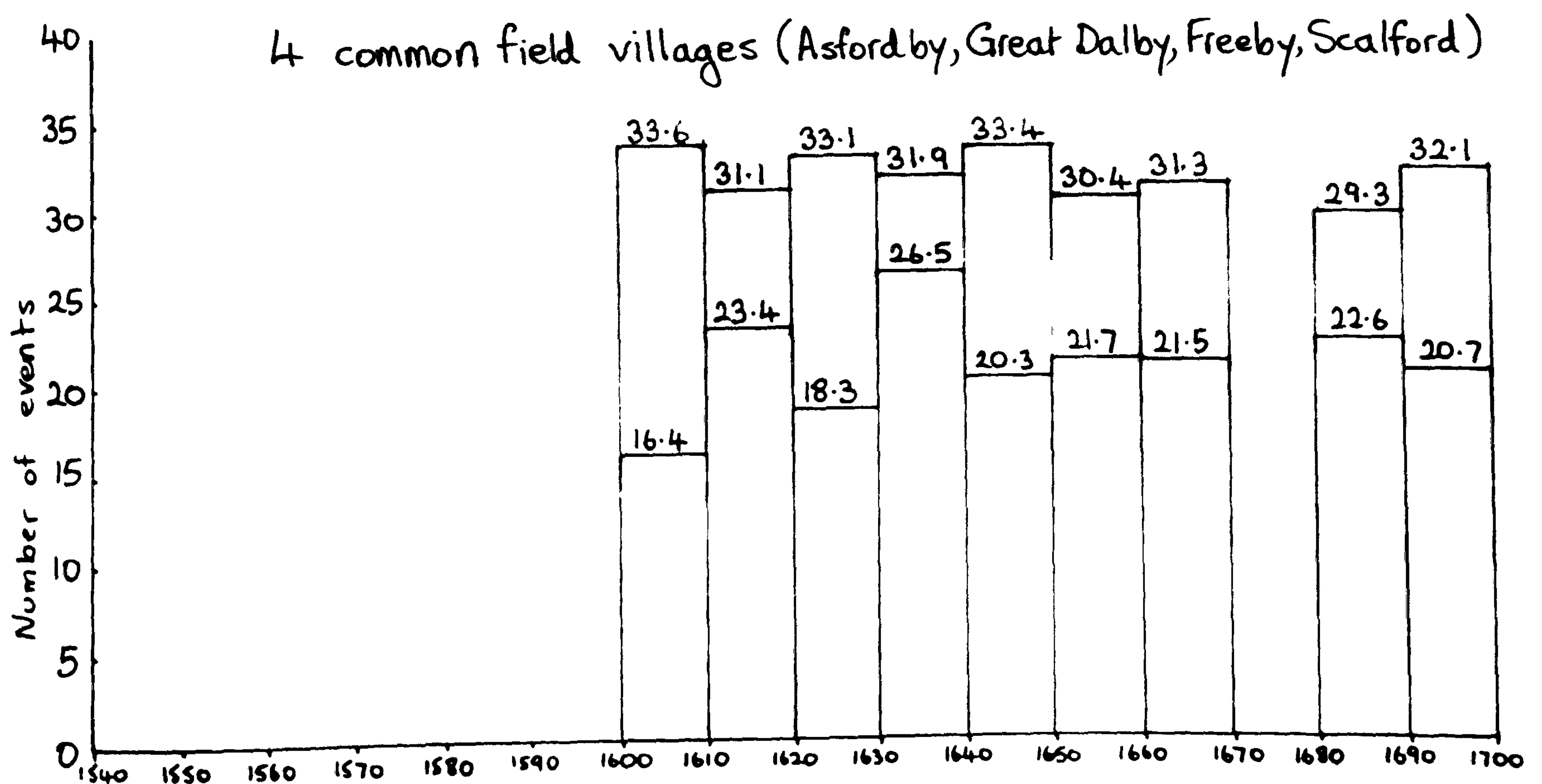
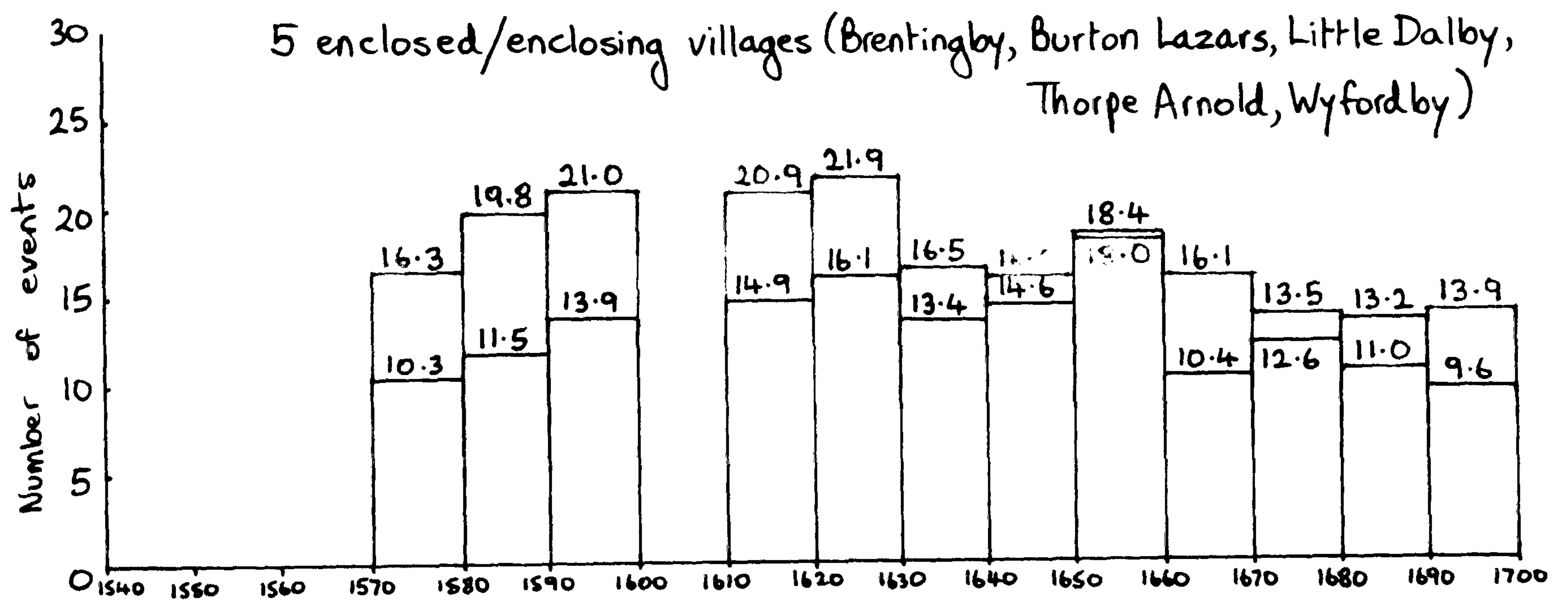
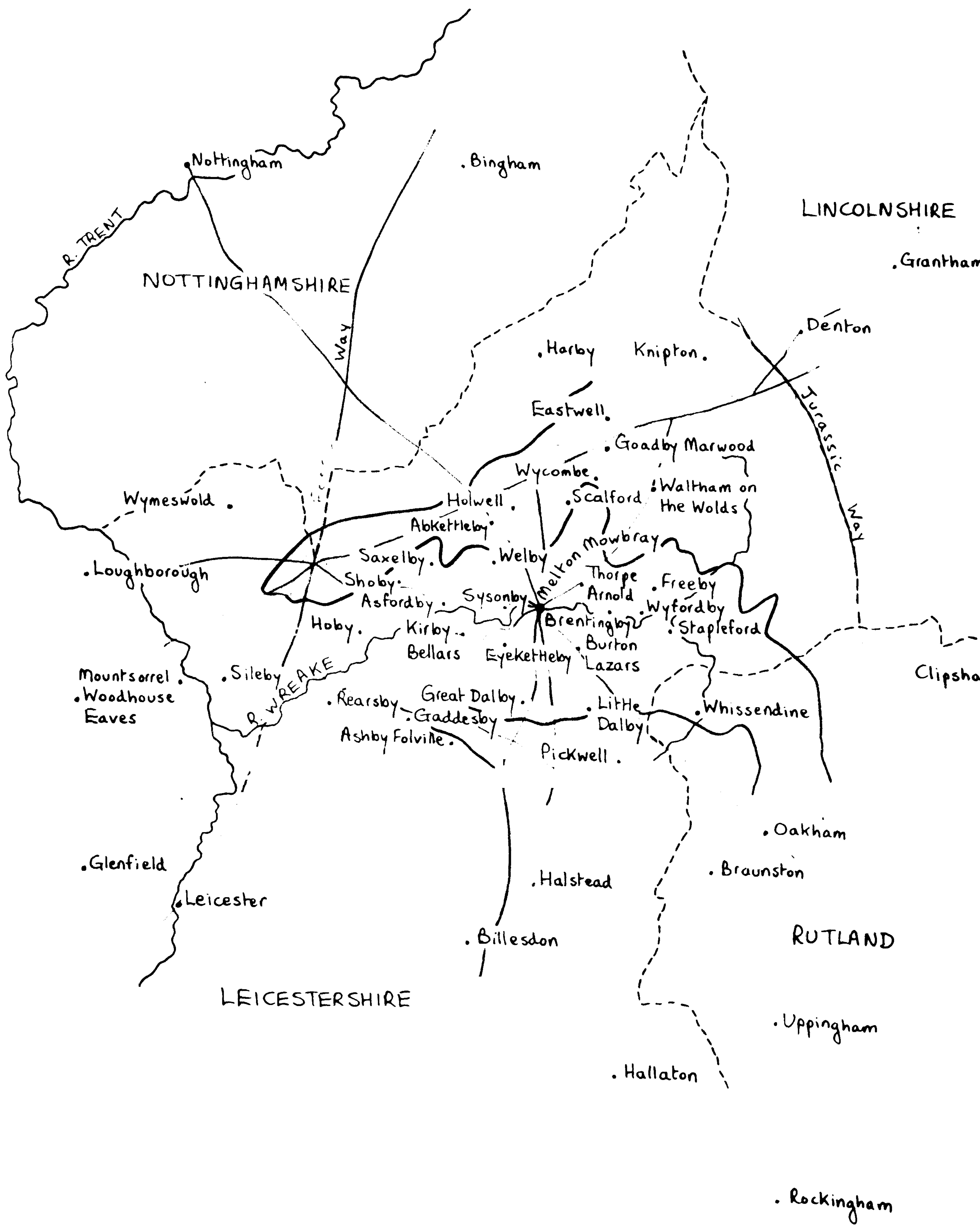


FIGURE II Village parish register events: decennial
totals of baptisms and burials

 baptisms
 burials



MAP I Places mentioned in the text



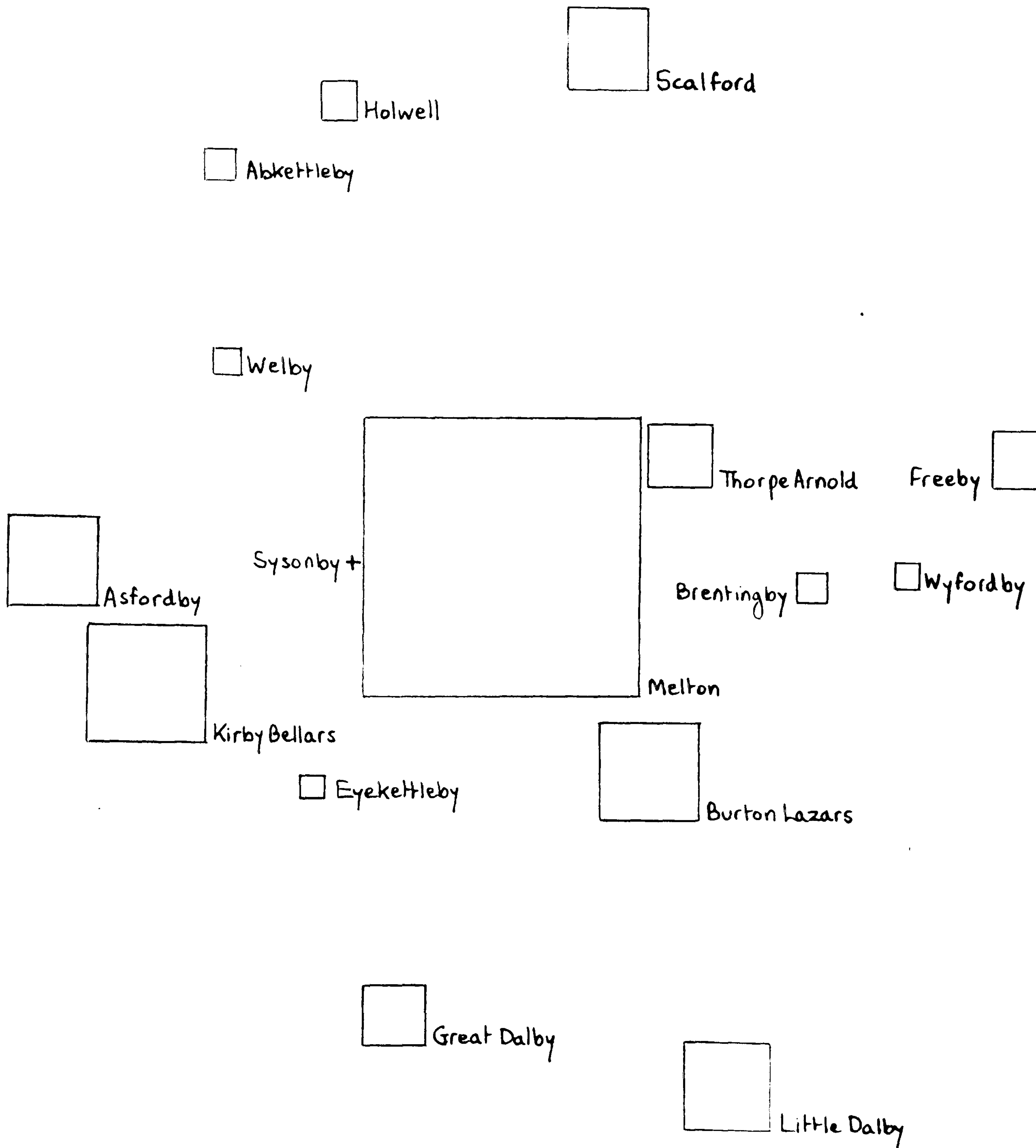
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— Roads and ancient routes
— Land over 400'

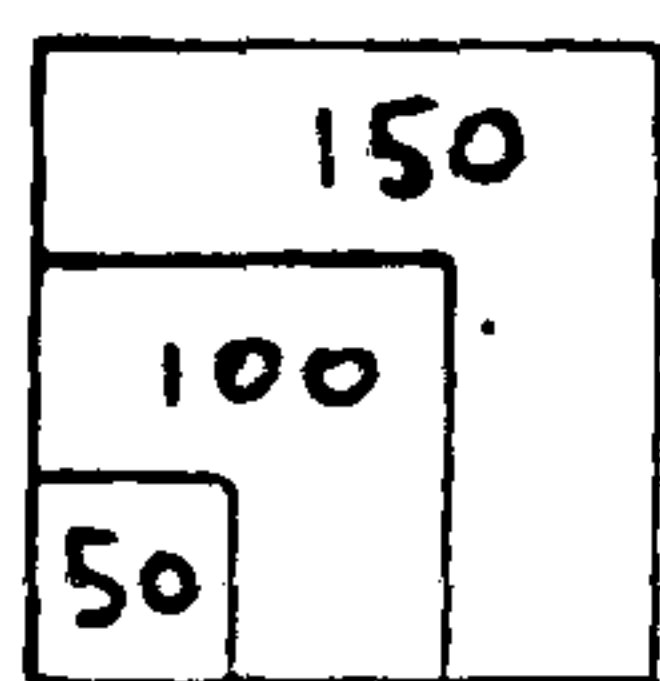
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MAP II Number of taxpayers in the Melton area in 1377



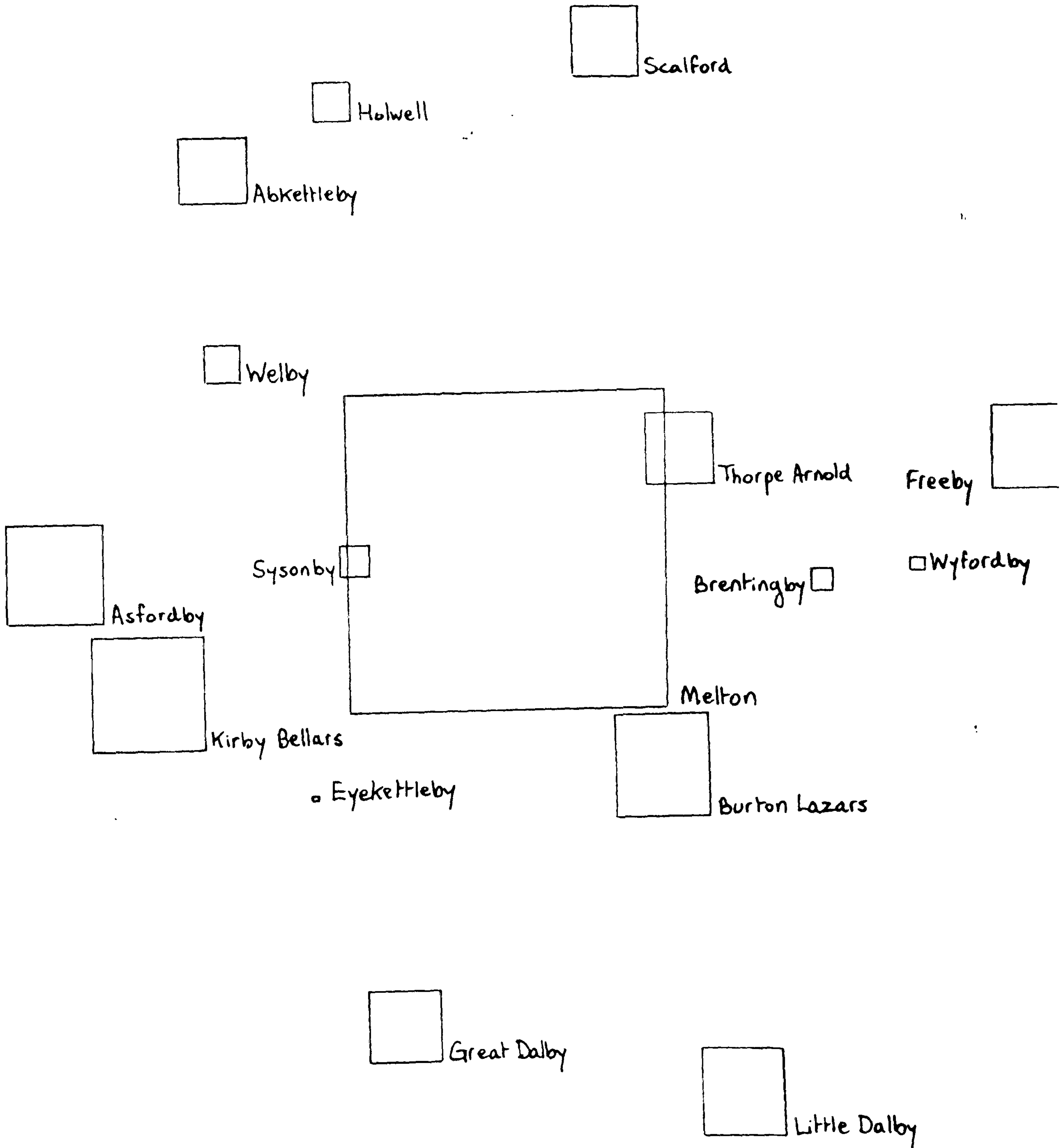
Number of taxpayers



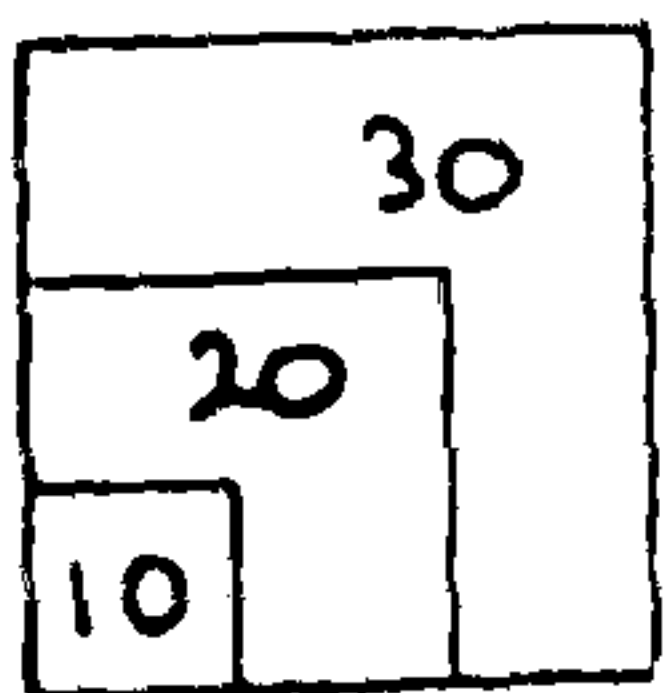
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MAP III Number of taxpayers in the Melton area in 1524

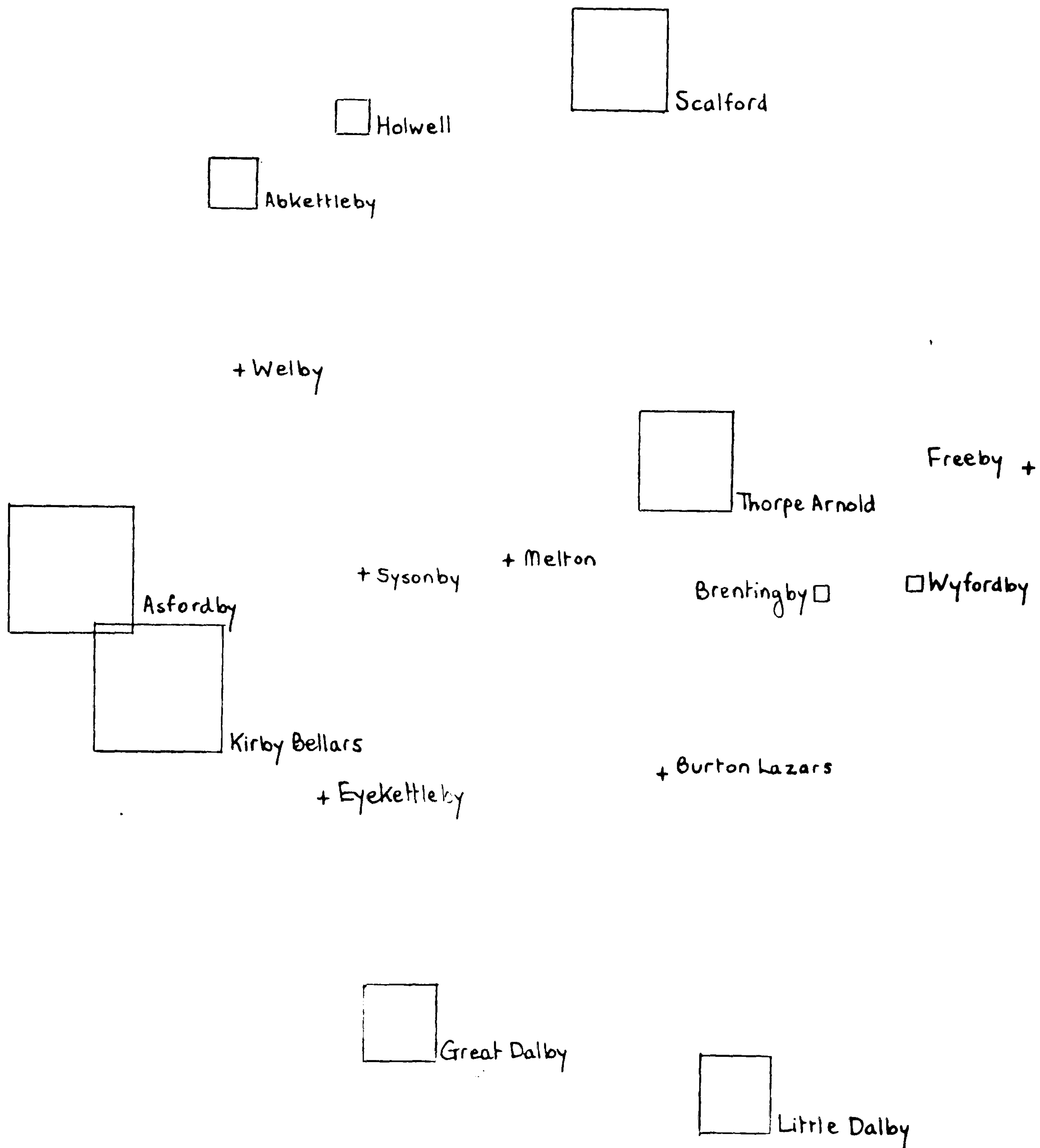


Number of taxpayers

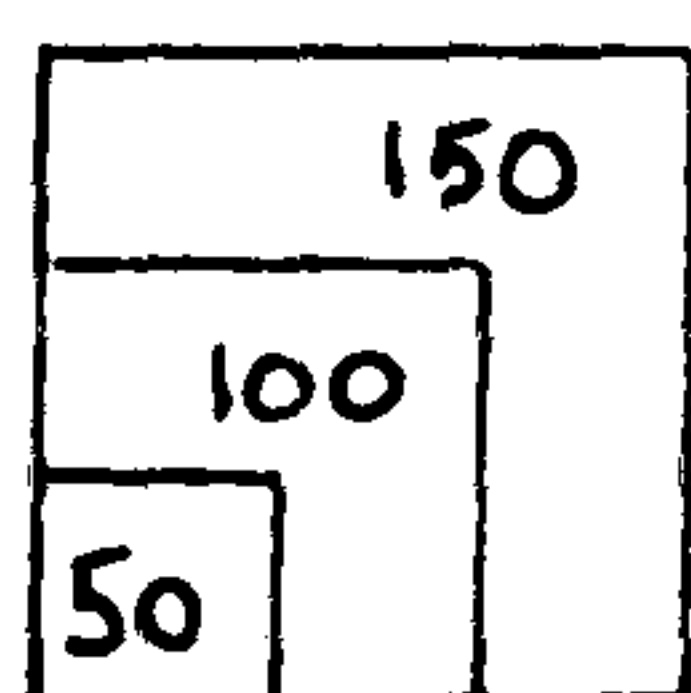


0 1 2 3 4 Miles

MAP IV Number of communicants in the Melton area in 1603



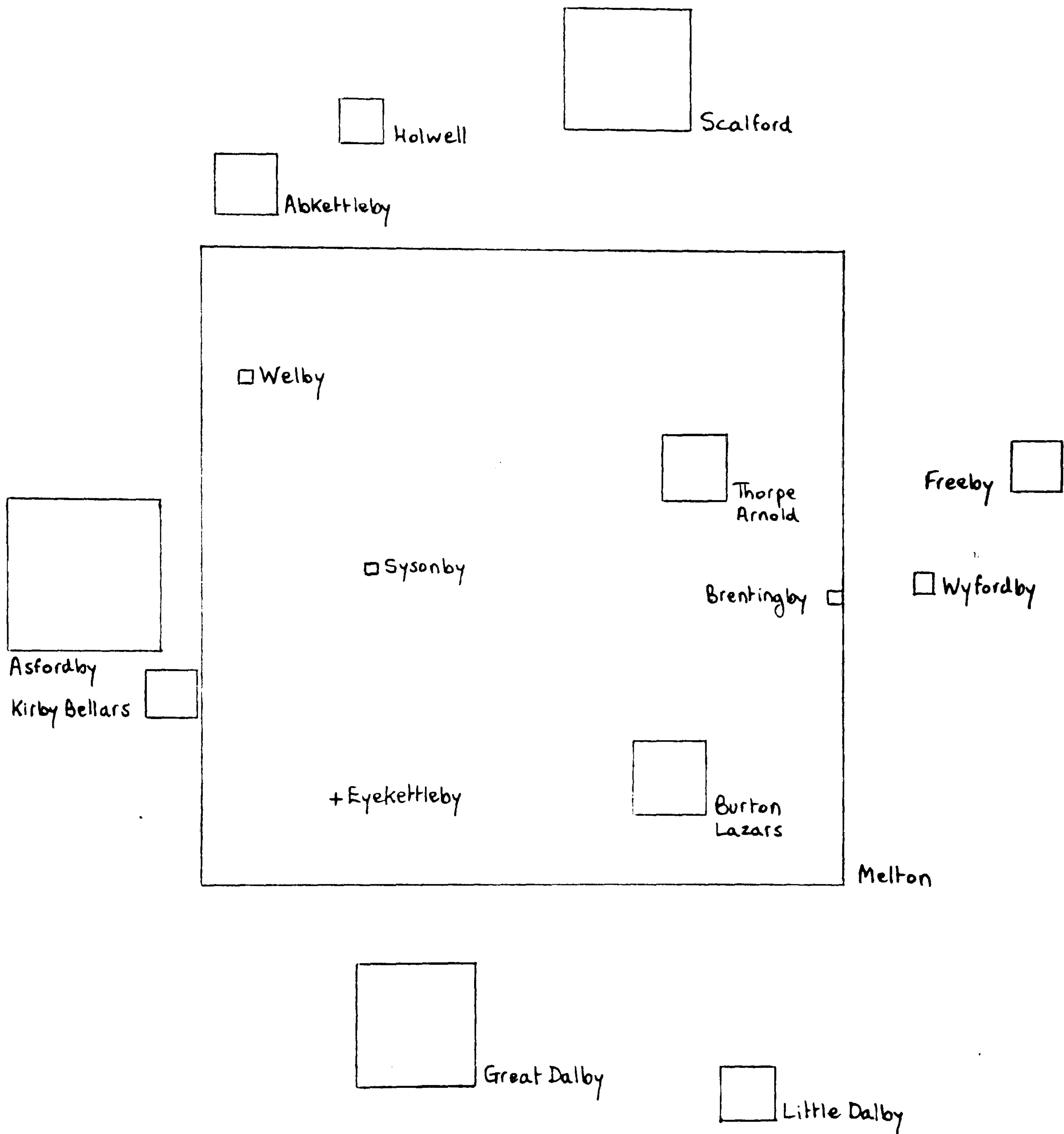
Number of communicants



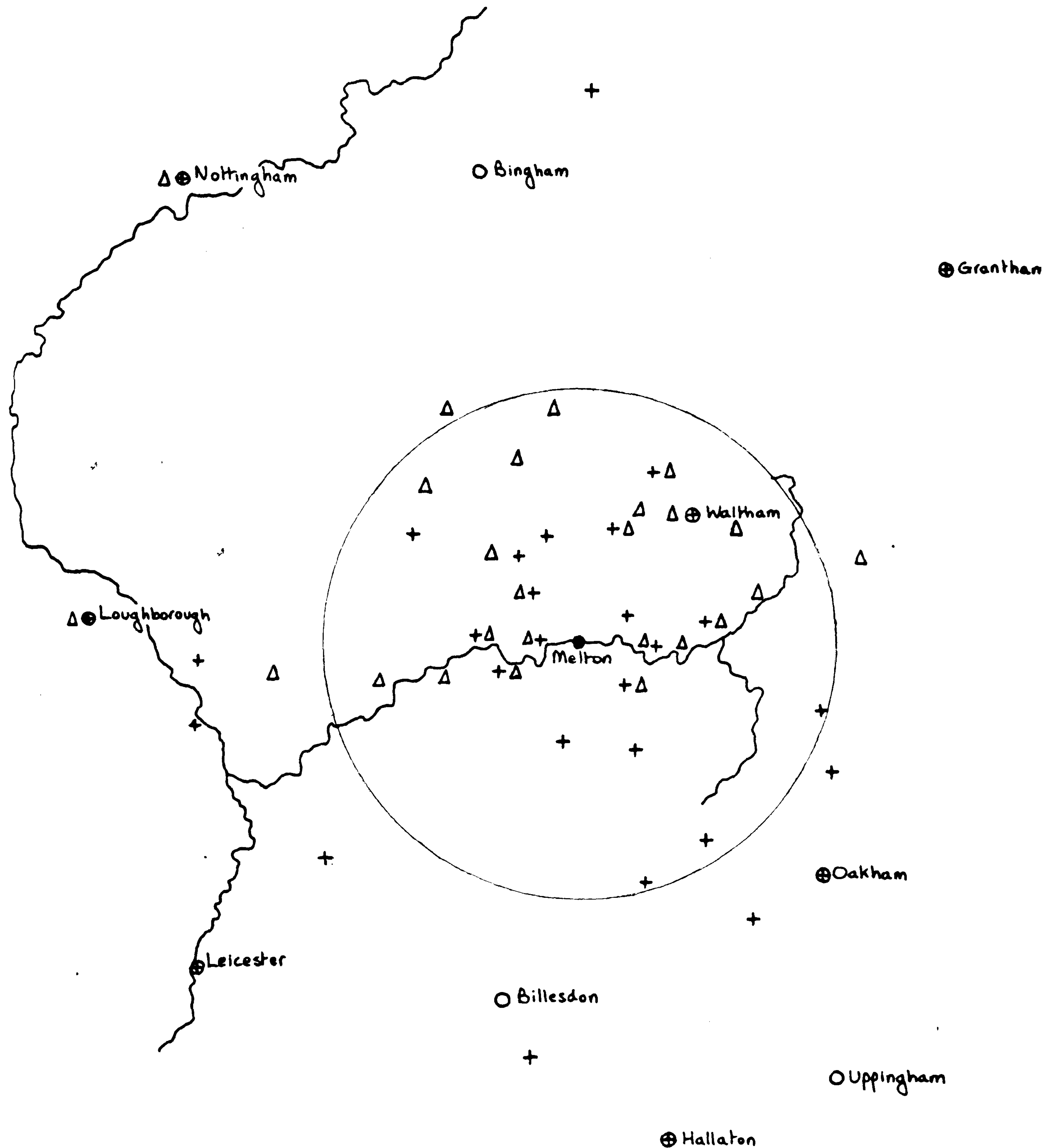
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0 1 2 3 4 Miles

MAP V Number of households in the Melton area in 1670



MAP VI Sixteenth century credit links between Melton and the surrounding area

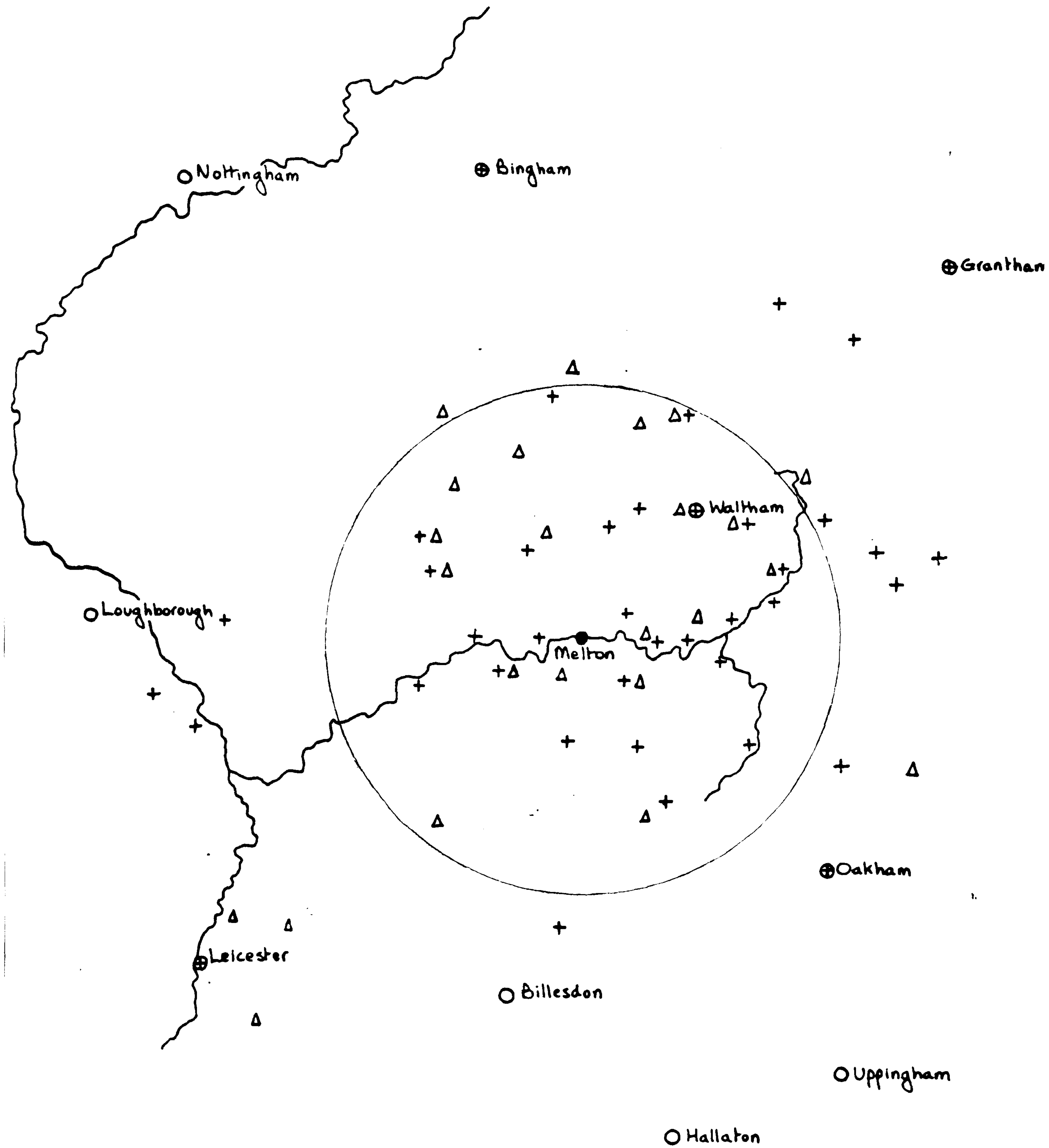


7 mile radius from Melton

- Markets
- + Links with Melton
- Δ Links with sample villages

0 1 2 3 4 Miles

MAP VII Seventeenth century credit links between Melton and the surrounding area

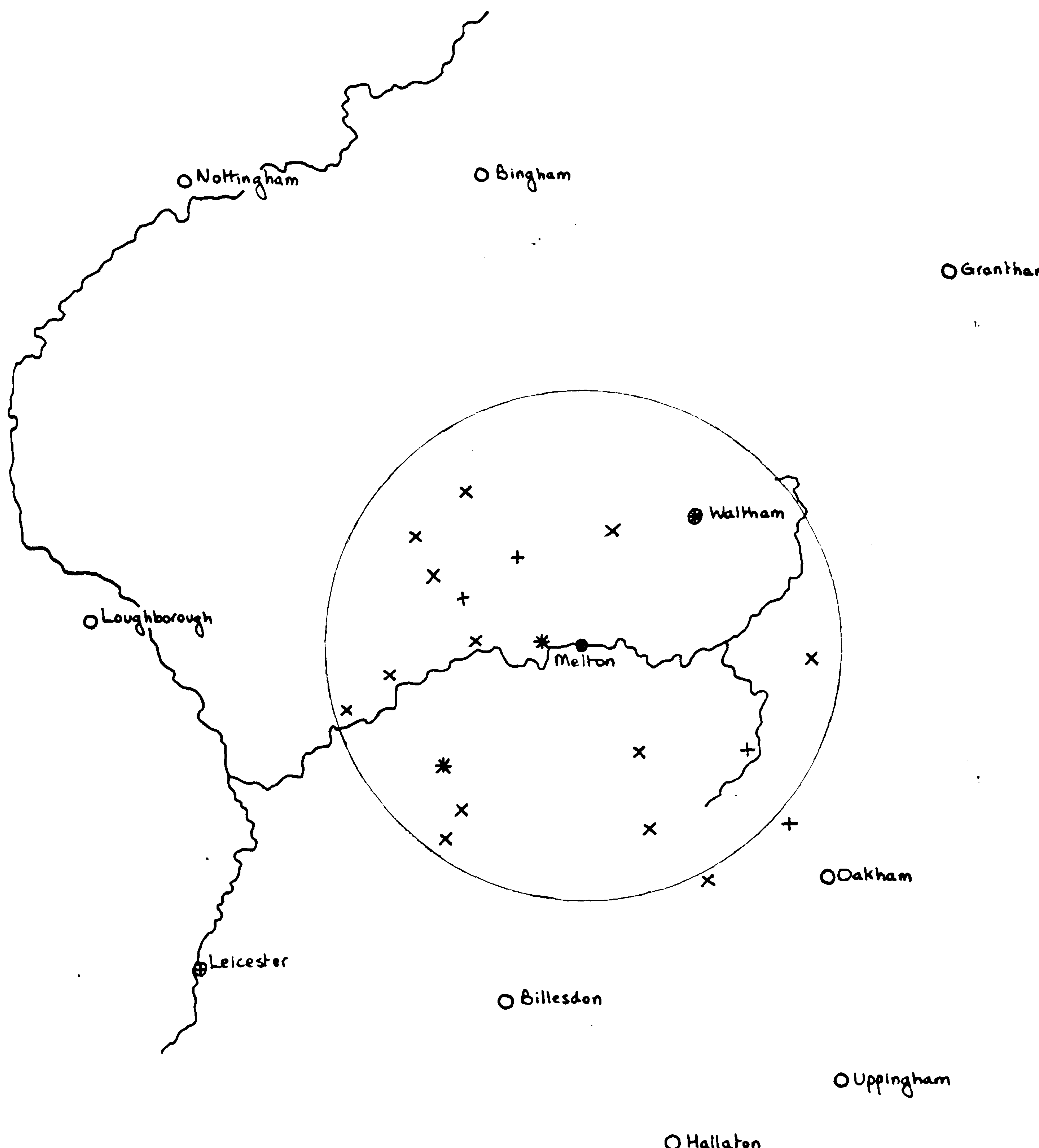


7 mile radius from Melton

- Markets
- + Links with Melton
- Δ Links with sample villages

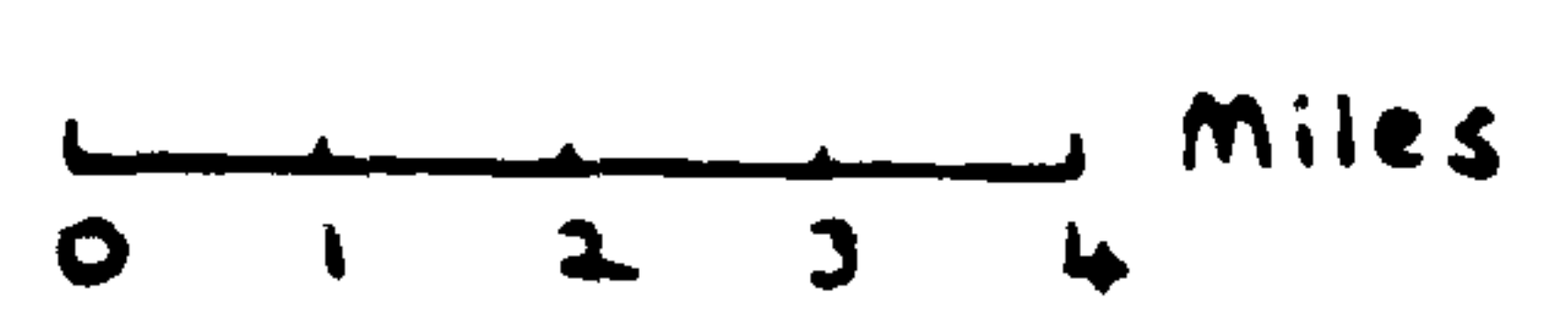
0 1 2 3 4 Miles

MAP VIII Origins of bakers and butchers presented in Melton manor court 1677-9

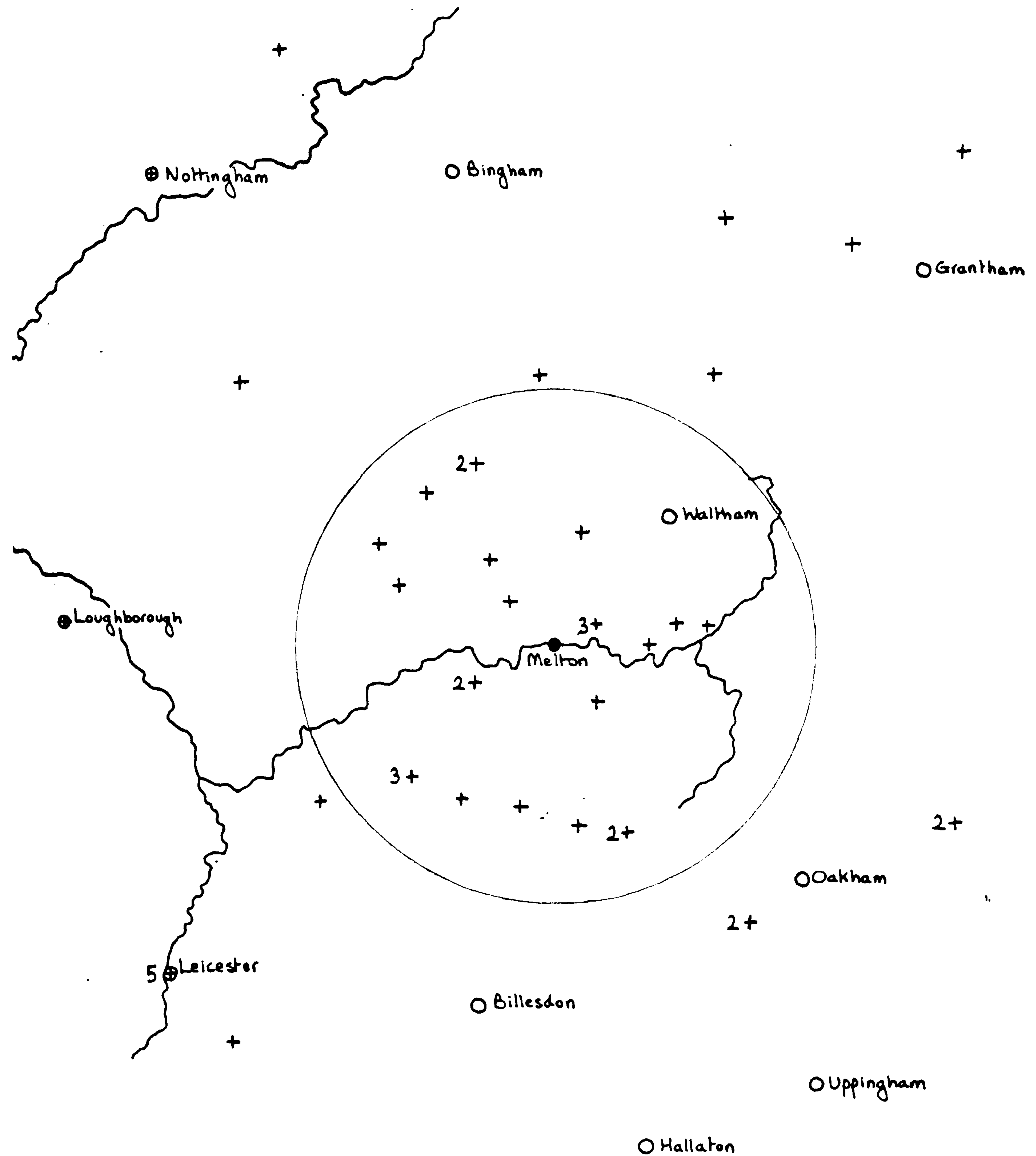


7 mile radius from Melton

- O Markets
- x Butcher
- + Baker



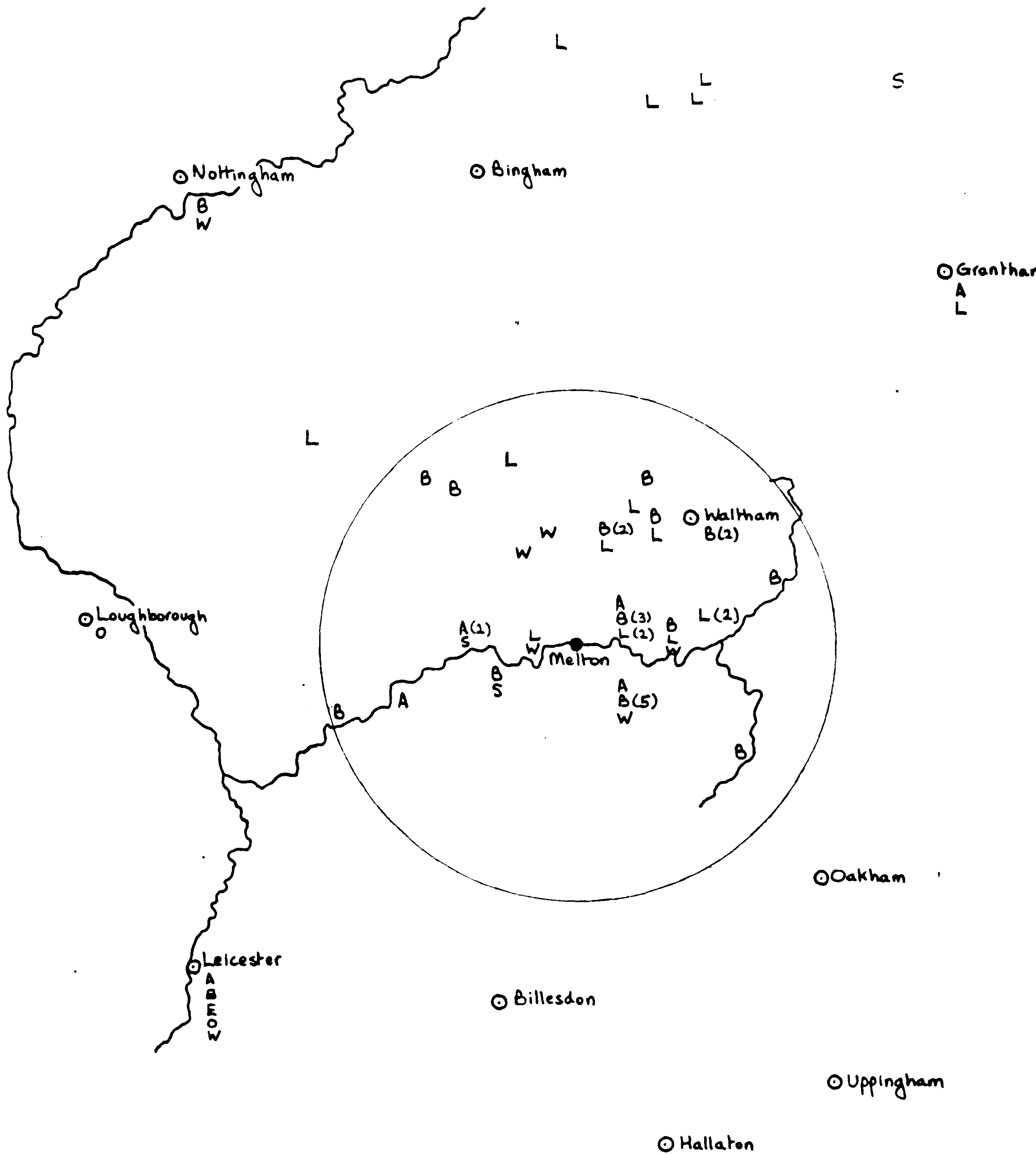
MAP IX Most recent origins of immigrants into Melton 1697-1729



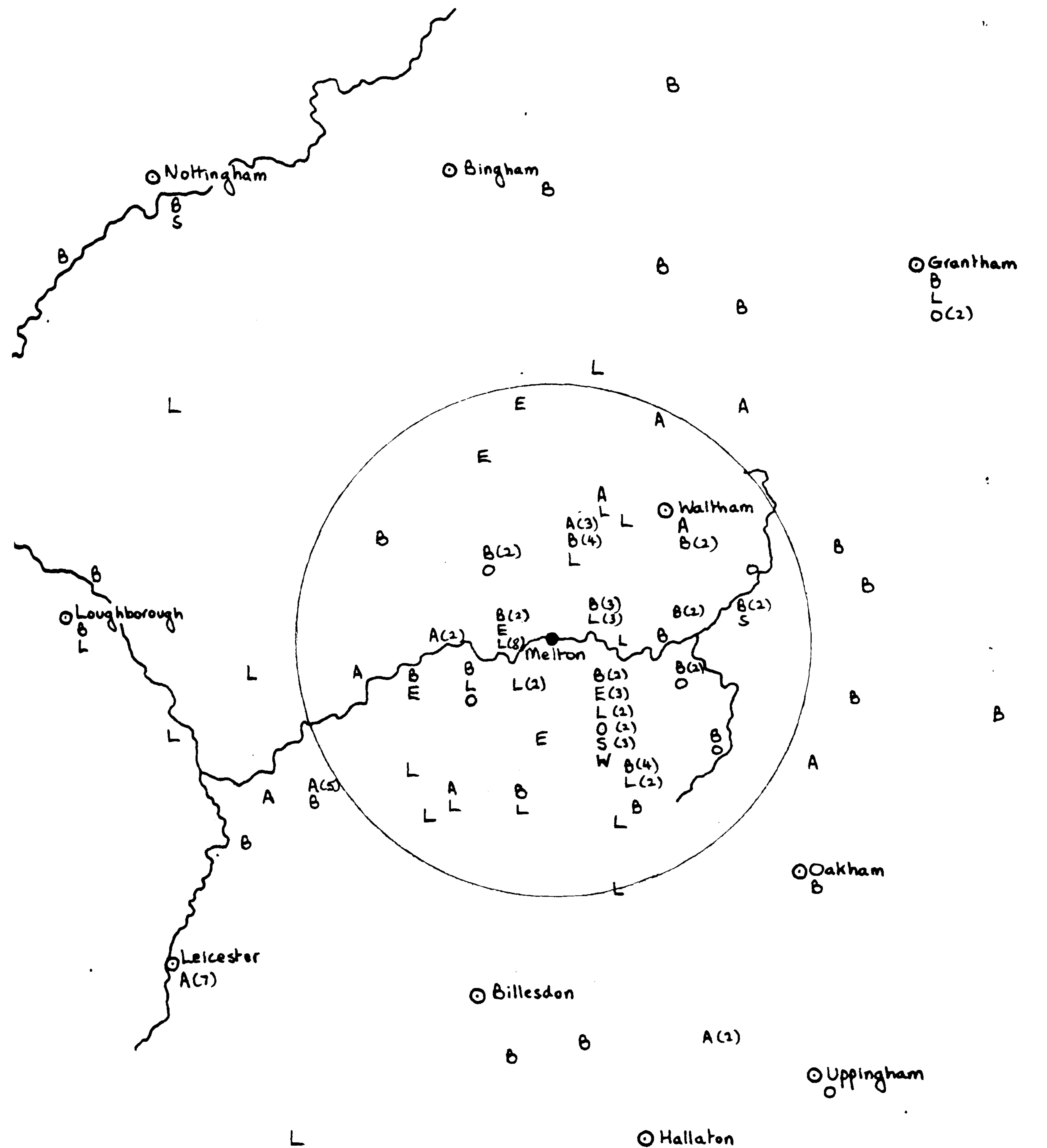
) 7 mile radius from Melton
 ○ Markets
 2+ Origin of immigrants

0 1 2 3 4 Miles

MAP X Administrators, bequests, executors, overseers, supervisors and witnesses in Melton wills and administrations in the sixteenth century and landholding-

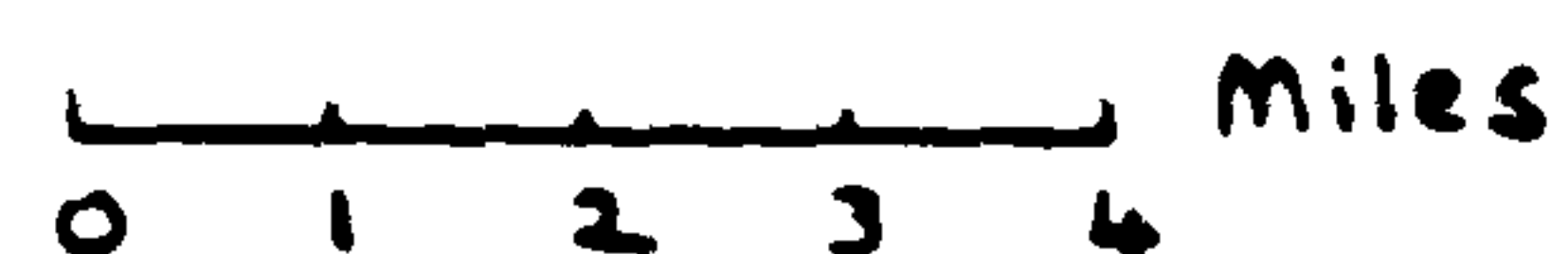


MAP XI Administrators, bequests, executors, overseers, supervisors and witnesses in Melton wills and administrations in the seventeenth century and landholding.

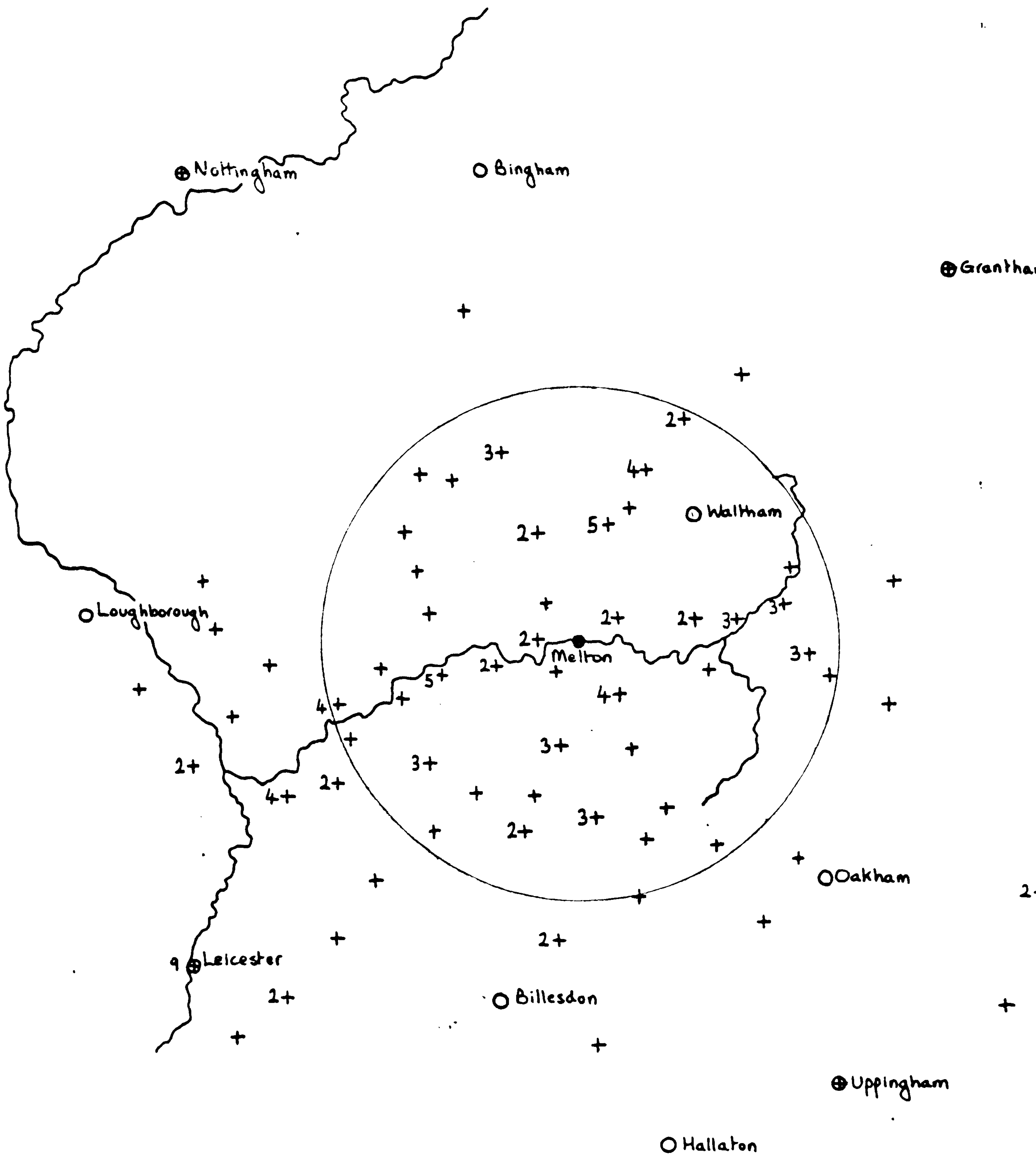


7 mile radius from Melton

- Markets
 Administrator
 Bequest
 Executor
 Land held by Meltonians



MAP XII Marriage links between Melton and the surrounding area 1654-1720



7 mile radius from Melton

○ Markets
 2+ Marriage links

0 1 2 3 4 Miles

Common street names in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries

