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"Wheatley 1550-1750 - some aspects"

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AUTHOR'S NOTES

The inventories transcribed in this Study form part of the probate records of the diocesan and courts of Oxfordshire which are deposited in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. The inventories have been placed in alphabetical order and given a number from 1 to 35 (omitting 15, 20, 27, 31, 32). Below the inventory number on the right-hand side in brackets is the Bodleian Library reference, in which the first number refers to the box, the second number to the bundle within the box, and the third number to the inventory within the bundle.

All spellings in the transcripts appear as written in the originals and where abbreviations have occurred in the original, brackets have been inserted around the added letters in the transcript. All "marks" have been traced from the originals onto the transcript and in a few instances where it has proved impossible to transcribe a word it has been traced from the original onto the transcript.

Finally, the author wishes to acknowledge the valuable assistance given by the following:-

The Bodleian Library, Oxford.

The Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading.

Oxford City and County Museum, Woodstock, Oxon.

Oxfordshire County Library, Holton Park, Wheatley, Oxford. (Local History Department).

CHAPTER IINTRODUCTION

An inventory listed and valued household furniture, articles of clothing and household uses, the quantity of corn and hay in the gerners and barns, crops growing on the ground, felled timber, cattle, swine and poultry; implements of husbandry and trade, stock in the shop and warehouse, ready money and debts owing. Its object was to protect the executors and administrators from excessive claims upon the estate of the dead person, and equally to defend his relatives from fraud; but the court also used the inventory as a basis for the assessment of its fees.⁽¹⁾ Thus, although the valuers were expected to be men well acquainted with the current market values and were sworn to make a full and perfect inventory, there was a natural tendency to keep the total as low as possible. Sometimes they were inexpert in writing and often they spelt their words as they spoke them. Again, the lists are not always complete. For a number of reasons there are omissions of obvious assets. A man's property is the right of his wife, if his wife dies before him, was excluded by law from the inventory of her goods and chattels. Certain things in the house were sometimes given away by a deed of gift before death, others were left in this will as heirlooms and were not legally within the power of the executor or administrator to distribute or sell. Occasionally the relatives of the deceased had come in advance of the valuers and had taken what they thought they were entitled to have, or again the valuers themselves had been careless and haphazard in making their list. At the foot of many inventories there occurs the phrase "things unseen or forgotten".

Methods of valuation varied considerably; there is a fairly frequent use of collective terms such as "all the goods in the house", or "all the goods in the shop" especially in the inventories of the more prosperous people at the end of the seventeenth century. Articles of household furniture and uses might be listed, each item separately under the heading of a room, or collected together like with like with no indication of their distribution within the house.

Even if valuations in particular instances are frequently untrustworthy, a comparison of the valuations of one kind of article with another will reveal

(1) Jones, B.C. Amateur Historian Vol. II No. 3 1954-5

what kinds of articles were regarded as marks of social standing and well-being, and what were the most treasured of the household possessions. In the sixteenth century for example, a man was judged by how comfortably he slept. The inventories will illustrate that the possession of a feather bed mattress and a panelled and canopied bed was then as much a mark of social standing as the enjoyment of a well-furnished parlour in the eighteenth century. Again, the number of beds in the houses of both rich and poor alike in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries will remind us of the overcrowding of those days, when poor relations and servants were often housed under the same roof.

In drawing up the list of debts owing to the deceased the valuer sometimes recorded information of the household archives of all sorts and conditions of man. Here will be found the amount of money owing by speciality i.e. by bond or bill, and of money out on mortgage or loan.

The probate inventory is a document which was required by ecclesiastical courts in connection with the granting of the probate of a will.⁽¹⁾ Its object was to safeguard the deceased's executors from excessive claims upon the estate, and to protect the next of kin from fraud. The Oxfordshire inventories mostly lie intermixed with their wills or administration bonds (these latter were used in place of wills by the executors when the deceased died intestate).

The inventories were usually drawn up by the deceased's neighbours or friends after the funeral. The majority of them contain a detailed list of all the deceased's personal estate with each item separately valued, while the best examples also give the name and contents of each room in his house. They provide a wealth of detailed information, which is occasionally given in a beautiful italic hand, but more commonly in a semi-illiterate scrawl. Many of the appraisers of the inventories were illiterate and signed at the bottom with their marks - the inventory having been written out by one of their number whose skill with the pen was more or less adequate to the task. In some cases this was the parish priest.⁽²⁾

Social Position of people leaving inventories

The great majority of the people who are represented in the following inventories were farmers and craftsmen. Occasionally a landed gentleman of the

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- (1) Haviden, M.A. - Household and Farm Inventories in Oxon 1550-1590
(Oxfordshire Record Society Vol XLIV) - page 1
- (2) Haviden, M.A. - Household and Farm Inventories in Oxon 1550-1590
(Oxfordshire Record Society Vol XLIV) - page 2

smaller kind is included, but the bulk of the landowning aristocracy and gentry, as well as the large merchants are absent because members of these classes usually preferred to have the probate of their wills granted by the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.⁽¹⁾ In addition, anyone who owned property in more than one diocese, whether he was rich or poor, had to have recourse to that Court; so that the small property owners are not completely represented either, particularly if they lived in parishes near the boundary of the diocese and had land which extended over it.

At the other end of the scale all these persons whose personal estate was worth less than £5 are normally unrepresented, because they were not required to make a will, although in some cases they did so. Inventories, therefore, are representative of a wide range of people between the very poor and the relatively wealthy. It is not possible to say with precision how large a proportion of the total population these people formed in the sixteenth century but reasonable estimates have been made from the comprehensive subsidy assessment of 1524 - 5. This was levied on moveable goods of all kinds and on wages of £1 a year or more; and it would seem that only a small proportion of the population escaped it altogether. There is no similarly reliable subsidy assessment for the later sixteenth century, but it would perhaps be not unreasonable to suspect that about a quarter to a third of the population of Oxfordshire would have been too poor to make a will;⁽²⁾ and accordingly that the classes represented in the inventories made up about two-thirds to three-quarters of the population, especially as the proportion of people excluded by reason of their wealth cannot have been large.

Although most of the Oxfordshire inventories are not individually very long, their total number - dating from 1580 to the early eighteenth century - runs into tens of thousands (after about 1720 inventories did not die out, but they became limited to brief summaries which are of little historical value). The number surviving from different decades varies considerably and it is plain that far fewer people made inventories in the sixteenth century than in the seventeenth. Again in Oxfordshire no inventories made before 1550 have survived, and only 67 made before 1580. The fact that the number of inventories surviving for each decade of the seventeenth century far exceeds those for any decade of

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- (1) The records of this Court are not amongst the Bodleian Library's collection, and so were not available for inclusion.
- (2) Haviden, M.A. - Household and Farm Inventories in Oxon 1550-1590 (Oxfordshire Record Society Vol. XLIV) - page 3

the sixteenth century, suggests that the habit of making wills and inventories had not become well established in Elizabeth's reign.

Wheatley Geographically

Wheatley is a large village six miles east of Oxford. It is bounded by the slopes of Shotover on the west, by the old road from London through Islip to Worcester on the north, by the river Thame on the east and on the south by Cuddeson brook, Coombe Wood and an ancient track which forms the Horspath boundary above a hill called the Howe since at least the thirteenth century.

Some older houses, with Tudor chimneys, windows and fireplaces, line the northern edge of a valley running from west to east. Along this ran a stream, the bed of which formed the High Street until it was covered over in 1858. The hills rise steeply on all sides except the east, which gradually falls to flood level. Wheatley is thus dominated physically, as it once was socially, by Shotover and Holton Parks to west and north and the plateau on the south whereon stands Cuddesdon Palace.

The earliest settlement at Wheatley was originally on the high, downlike ground to the south of the present village, and Roman dwellings and Saxon burials have been found in curiously close juxtaposition on both sides of Coombe Wood.

The valley settlement, originally part of the parish of Cuddesdon, was included in its boundaries as described in a charter of 956⁽¹⁾ and remained so until Wheatley became a separate parish nearly nine centuries later. From the time of St. Aethelwold until the dissolution of the monasteries the rents of Wheatley helped sustain the monks of Abingdon.

In the Hundred Rolls and the subsidy rolls Wheatley and Cuddesdon are distinguished as vills and in the seventeenth century Wheatley had separate overseers of the poor: their records survive, alone in the county, for the Civil War. One aspect of Wheatley's history is its growth in population and wealth compared with the mother parish and its gradual attainment of parochial independence.

(1) Hassall, W.O. Wheatley Records 956-1956
(Oxfordshire Record Society Vol XXXVII - 1956) page

The name of Wheatley is first noticed by the Place Name Society as occurring in 1163⁽¹⁾ but it occurs in the Chronicle of Abingdon in a charter granted by Henry I. The name actually means the "clearing (leah) where wheat is grown", The word would perhaps at first have applied to the dry arable, partly iron-stone and partly coolite beneath, which caps a plateau to the south. On this the earliest settlement lay.

Wheatley grew up by the side of an important cross-country route which ignored the existence of Oxford and was called a "street" in 956 as if it had been paved. Wheatley lies west of the point where this route crossed the Thame at a ford to surmount a barrier of high ground and reach in six miles a passage over the river Ray at Islip. This position made Wheatley an important post on the road from London to South Wales and it is marked accordingly on many maps which omit as insignificant the old road to Oxford. Traffic fostered the rise of taverns, maltsters, wheelwrights and smiths and brought into the village many strangers. An unfortunate consequence of contact with the outside world was an outbreak of plague in 1665,⁽²⁾ the year Charles II came to Oxford to avoid it.

A riverside position on the eastern approaches to royalist headquarters made Wheatley often figure in civil war records as a scene of skirmishes, and it was a frontier point in the Treaty of Uxbridge and overcrowded billets which brought typhus.

Proximity to Oxford meant little until the twentieth century. Wheatley was midway between Oxford and Thame and at times had its own cattle market. The shops were well stocked, the village tailors served the neighbouring gentry, and the inadequacy of acres to support a large agricultural population was offset by the presence of various trades such as fellmongering, coopering, tobacco-pipe-making and the processing of ochre and timber.

The villagers were predominantly not tenants of the manor, and manor courts ceased to be held in the sixteenth century though a few manorial quitrents survived another three centuries. The people of Coombe, subject to a lord in a different parish, shared the same common fields, wherein probably lies the

(1) Hassall, W.O. Wheatley Records 956-1956
(Oxfordshire Record Society Vol XXXVIL - 1956) page

(2) Debfield noted that the Cuddesdon Register is too ill kept at this date to assess losses.

reason why the waste was controlled by the townsmen of Wheatley and not by the lord of the manor. A manorial attempt to claim control of the waste failed in the early eighteenth century, but the increased prestige and property of the absentee lord led the inclosure commissioners in 1809 to allocate the former Green as freehold to him in lieu of manorial rights to the waste, which in fact he did not possess.

CHAPTER IIECONOMIC & SOCIAL HISTORY OF 16TH & 17TH CENTURY RURAL ENGLAND

The century and a half from 1600-1750 were regarded as the preparation, economically and socially as well as politically, for the changes that were to revolutionise society in Britain in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was a time when commercial enterprise was changing the face of the old agrarian customary economy. Agriculture remained the source of income for by far the majority of the people, but it was itself increasingly marked by the application of capital, enterprise and quest for markets.

Economy and society alike were poised between medievalism and modernity. The economy was, in important aspects, still a congeries of local or regional economies rather than a genuinely unified whole. Social, political and legal systems had not become one of freedom - but serfdom had gone. For more than a century the royal courts of law had been enforcing manorial custom. Yet law and government were still inextricably entangled with property rights. The landed classes and the recruits from trade, and professions, enjoyed the greatest social privileges but also paid the heaviest taxes and discharged the unpaid offices of Sheriff and Justice of the Peace.

The period from the beginning of the seventeenth century to about 1660 was one of economic readjustment which followed due to the price inflations of the previous century. After the Restoration there was economic optimism, and the years from 1660-1700 saw a most fertile and progressive period of English history. The nation's trading and shipping expanded; home production of food steadily increased; and with the increase in corn and coal exports, there was a new demand for shipping.

The society which owned, operated and benefited from this growth in economy was roughly stratified by contemporaries into the nobility, gentry, merchants, professions, yeomen, freeholders, customary tenants, leaseholders, shopkeepers, craftsmen, labourers and the great mass - perhaps third or more of the total - they called "the poor". Yet, nobles apart, these labels did not imply legal definition of social status, though a man might be labelled knight, esquire, a gentleman, yeoman, or husbandman in order to be assessed

when a direct tax was being raised. Throughout the period there was a remarkable degree of social mobility. Many families contained representatives of the peerage, gentry, merchants and professions to say nothing of poor relations, at the same moment in time. The man of enterprise who made money by luck, good management or good marriage could move upwards. The number of men who did so probably never represented more than a small proportion of the total, but they were enough to influence powerfully the character of English society, and of English economic and social policy.⁽¹⁾ The picture of our economy and society that emerges is one of epic contrasts, of opulence and poverty, of economic gains precariously won and easily lost, of wide fluctuations between periods and wide differences of fortune between one locality and another, of a society still frighteningly at the mercy of the weather, of the good or bad harvest that meant prosperity or ruin for many.

The price rise of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is commonly thought to have been influenced by the rapid increase in population. The population was rising steadily from the early sixteenth century to 1640, except for two brief intervals in the hard times of the 1550's and 1590's. The total increase in population from the late fifteenth century to the early seventeenth century may have been between 75% to 100%. There are also external signs of the population increase in the form of land hunger and housing shortage.

England's population by the end of the sixteenth century is estimated that as approximately four millions⁽²⁾ The majority of these still lived on the land. There was a trend towards the towns, however, in this century owing to unemployment and poverty in the country. This was due partly to the enclosure of land for pasture and partly to the upheaval following the dissolution of the monasteries with a consequent change, often for the worse, of landlords. The increase of sheep pasture and decrease of land under the plough naturally led to less work for farm labourers.

By the end of the seventeenth century, the population numbered about 5½ million,⁽³⁾ most of whom still lived in the country. However, the towns were still growing, and London absorbed over half a million people. The standard of sanitation was appallingly low everywhere, but whereas in the country

(1) Wilson, C. Englands' Apprenticeship 1603-1763 (page xiv)

(2) Yarwood, D. The English Home (page 65)

(3) Yarwood, D. The English Home (page 130)

this state was alleviated by the open air, and the small number of people living together, in towns, particularly London, the result was most unpleasant.

The law was very severe on offenders, with hard punishments for even trivial offences. Prison conditions were appallingly bad; moreover the unfortunate culprit often had to languish in jail for months without being brought to trial. Consequently, even painful punishment was usually preferred to imprisonment. Beggary had become so common because of much unemployment, particularly amongst soldiers returning from campaigns, that new laws had to be made against vagabonds. Punishment for begging ended in death after three convictions. For other minor misdeeds, the pillory or stocks were the result, but other forms of punishment for more serious offences included hanging, burning, boiling, branding and tortures - including the rack. By the seventeenth century offences against the law were still heavy, particularly for theft, even of small items. Hanging was still enforced for comparatively minor misdeeds, and these hangings were public and drew large crowds. Imprisonment was still something to be dreaded, as the conditions had not improved from Tudor times, and they were overcrowded, with drainage almost non-existent. The prisoners were fettered in irons under damp and filthy conditions, and gaol fever was general. Many offenders, and even the innocent, had to wait months for the possibility of trial, which might be postponed indefinitely.

Knowledge of medicine was improving by the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century. Many doctors who had studied in Italy came back to England to practice. Instruments were kept a little cleaner, and methods of treatment, although "rough and ready" were more sensible. However, an amputated limb was still immediately dipped in boiling pitch - an effective antiseptic but the patient was liable to die of shock - and bleeding was a palliative for various ills. Herbs were also in general use. Later in the seventeenth century some research was being carried out and new discoveries were being made. Of note was William Harvey's work in connection with the circulation of the blood. Leprosy was now almost under control, but the recurrent plagues still exacted a heavy toll in cities. The insane were regarded as a danger and menace to society and were kept in chains. But the protagonists of medical science fought an almost losing battle against the people's strong belief in superstition,

witchcraft, magic charms and patent medicines which were considered capable of curing all ills from rheumatism to venereal disease. Infant mortality, under the age of five, was reputed to be 45% and reduced the population considerably. Smallpox also took a heavy toll until vaccination was established later in the eighteenth century by Jenner; although there was a great deal of prejudice against the idea.

By the middle of the sixteenth century it is calculated that an agricultural labourer's daily wage averaged 7d. and towards the end of the sixteenth century about 9d. a day. By the beginning of the seventeenth century the average daily wage ranged from 9½d. to 14d.⁽¹⁾ Although these wages sound meagre, prices were in keeping with the scale; for example, beef was a ½d. per lb. and a hen could be bought for 3d.⁽²⁾

Petty writing after the Restoration affirmed that "the husbandman of England earns but about 4s. per week"⁽³⁾ which gives an average of 8d. per workday. Local variations are illustrated in North's statement that "in Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex a labourer hath 12d. a day, in Oxfordshire 8d., in the North 6d. or less".⁽⁴⁾ The most abundant evidence of agricultural wages is contained in Young's "Tours" covering the years 1767-1770.⁽⁵⁾

The winter wages which he enumerates vary from 6d. (usually with board) to 1s.6d. a day. Out of 173 items, the entries are recorded roughly as follows:-

<u>Daily Wage</u>	<u>Entries Recorded</u>	<u>Daily Wage</u>	<u>Entries Recorded</u>
20d.	1	6d.	12
18d.	8	5d.	1
17d.	1		
16d.	2		
14d.	19		
12d.	68		
10d.	34		
9d.	10		
8d.	16		
7d.	1		

(1) Lipson, E. The Economic History of England (page 388)

(2) Yarwood, D. The English Home (page 70)

(3) Petty - Economic Writings

(4) North - A Discourse of the Poor (1753)

(5) Young, A. - The Farmer's Letters (1768)

To determine the standard of life of an agricultural labourer, it is necessary to know the amount of his budget and the extent to which his wages were supplemented from other resources.

Arthur Young framed a budget "drawn up from the actual outgoings of four (labourers) who gave me the particulars the following is in every article the medium of the four".⁽¹⁾ In each case the family consisted of a man, wife and three children.

Bread and cheese	£19. 10. 0.
Beer	3. 18. 0.
Soap and Candles	1. 5. 0.
Rent	1. 10. 0.
Clothes	2. 10. 0.
Fuel	2. 0. 0.
Illnesses, etc.	1. 0. 0.
Infant	2. 12. 0.
	<hr/>
	£34. 5. 0.
	<hr/>

This budget, representing the expenditure of a year, averaged 13s.2d. a week, although as we have remarked, wages were scarcely half this amount. It is evident that an agricultural labourer had to rely upon other resources. In manufacturing areas his wife and children might earn money spinning wool, flax or cotton, but when opportunities for employment were restricted, then the labourer's own wage became the mainstay of the family.

Wheatley

The Cuddesdon charter of 956 indicates that there was arable land above Littleworth, close to Wheatley, in the Saxon period; moreover the name "Wheatley" ('the Wheat Lea') is itself testimony to arable farming. Very little is known about the medieval agrarian economy. There were four fields by 1593 at latest; Upper (near Cuddesdon), Middle, Lye (on the north), and West.⁽¹⁾ The villagers had rights of common in the forest of Shotover. The type of farming at Wheatley may be illustrated from the will of John Collys, made in 1530, whose goods included 4 steers valued at 48s., 2 kine, a bull, 2 heifers, 2 yearlings, 5 calves, 5 horses, 2 mares, 40 hogs, 13 score sheep valued at £33., 3 carts, 2 ploughs and "3 stokkes of bees". The grain in

(1) All Souls College Archives Map for 17th century field and furlong names see P.N. Oxon (E.P.N.S.)

his barns included wheat, rye, pulse and barley.⁽¹⁾ Arthur Young noted the open fields of Wheatley, and on the eve of the inclosure award (1813) nine-tenths of the township's 920 acres south of the village were closes.⁽²⁾

The main period of Wheatley's expansion was the era of the stage coach. Crown Road, until 1775 the "way from Oxford to London" lay along the main coaching route, and the year 1669 when the Oxford flying coach reached London in a day despite the roughness of the road, marks the beginning of a period of prosperity. Many inns sprang up to meet the needs of travellers. Already in the sixteenth century there is documentary evidence for the "Signe of the Crowne" (1544), which belonged to John Parsons of Cowley and was worth £30, and the "George" (1576) the property of the House family.⁽³⁾ "The White Hart" is mentioned in 1677, and the "Bell" in 1701. Their owners were prosperous, and in some cases married their daughters to gentlemen. The diversion of the traffic along Back Street (now Church Road) in the eighteenth century led to the opening of other inns - the "Sun", for example, and the "King's Arms" (1758), the "Royal Oak" by Frampton's Lane, and the "Crown Tap" in Church Road. All the ancient inns, however, except the "Bell" had, or could arrange, access to Back Street, and could thus attract customers from the new route. In 1734 Wheatley was described as the "the properest place to bait at between Beaconsfield and Woodstock."

lancaster
tw.
JF

Although agriculture has always been the main village industry, one other, the quarrying industry, has been of considerable importance since medieval times. The site of the medieval quarries was at Chalgrove (ceorla graf on the 956 charter) which, although part of Wheatley, lay within the bounds of Shotover forest. Consequently royal licences to quarry were needed.

In 1327 41 people in Wheatley were assessed for taxation, which suggests that by then the village was comparatively large and prosperous. In 1377 110 people over fourteen were returned for the Poll tax. The expansion of Wheatley's trade from the late sixteenth century onwards seems to have led to an increase in numbers. The hearth tax return of 1665 records 35 fairly substantial householders.⁽⁴⁾ In 1759 the incumbent estimated the population at not less than 800, living in about 140 houses,⁽⁵⁾ but the 1801 census gives

(1) Som. House Oxon. Wills ser.i, vol. i, F.32

(2) Young - "Oxon Agriculture 12"; O.R.D. Incl. Award (the original in Bodleian)

(3) Som. House Oxon. Wills ser. i, vol. ii F.52; C3/225/59

(4) Hearth Tax Oxon No. 58

(5) ~~V.C.H. Oxon ii, 248.~~

(5) Oxon. Dioc. Pp. d 557, F.148

a more conservative figure of 685. During the nineteenth century numbers rose to 1,041 in 1870, but declined again in 1901 to 872.⁽¹⁾ The census of 1931 showed an increase to 1,268, the result of the overflow from Oxford. The 1951 population was 1,532.

With a community of this size, local government was of more than average importance, It had been customary for the Hundred Court at Wheatley, to elect the constable, the tithing man, and hayward, and conduct other business, but by the mid-seventeenth century much of their business was in the hands of the overseers, whose accounts for Wheatley are roughly complete from 1638 to 1661 and from 1701 to 1836.

Throughout most of this period two overseers were appointed annually by the justices; but from 1641 to 1647 they ceased to make appointments, and the two men, appointed in 1639, remained in office until 1646.

The disbursements during the first period reflect the social chaos of the Civil War. In 1639 £24 was spent, but during the following years payments dropped to £16 and in 1646, when only £4 was given in casual relief, they virtually ceased. In 1647 they were resumed with an expenditure of £10, and during the following decade the amount paid out varied from £18.7s.9d. (1652) to £31 (1659) with six to thirteen people receiving regular relief. During the first two decades of the eighteenth century expenditure varied from £80 to £90 per year. Originally the money was raised by one annual town rate but after 1658 three additional rates were levied annually.

Apart from the regular weekly payments for relief, money was paid out for funerals and clothes; for repairing and thatching houses; and in the eighteenth century there was regular payments for a doctor from Headington. In 1684 £4 was spent on apprenticing a girl for seven years, but though generally the overseers arranged for a number of apprenticeships in neighbouring parishes, they do not appear to have paid the premiums. Unusual entries relate to lodgings for the constable and his wife £2.7s.0. in 1653 and to William Plat, who was paid 10s. per annum from 1654 as compensation for eviction from the house he had built himself on the common. One of the significant features of

(1) Victoria County History Oxon. ii., 218.

these accounts is the high cost of litigation - in 1702 £2.11s. at Abingdon sessions and £6.16s. at Newbury - and the amount of journeying and work undertaken by the overseers.

A number of entries suggest an increase in pauperism in the early eighteenth century. In 1704 6s. was spent on making "badges for the poore"; in the following year £3.18s. was spent on cloth to provide work for them; and in 1710 and 1711 meetings were held to discuss this problem of unemployment. Possibly the entries for repairs to highways in 1711 were the result.⁽¹⁾

The coaching trade and the quarry industry, together with a constantly changing population, made Wheatley more turbulent than its purely agricultural neighbours. Another reason for instability was the plurality of landowners - the lord of the manor owning but a portion of Wheatley land - and consequent absence of the normal hierarchy of village society. In addition, the moral influence of a resident incumbent was lacking. Of 24 names of the chief villagers in the period 1638-61, only 8 recur in the period 1701-17, and 6 are by then classed as paupers.⁽²⁾

Cricket was played from the mid-eighteenth century at least, for in 1764 the townsmen played the gentlemen's servants on the Green.⁽³⁾ Bull-baiting, for which crowds came from Oxford, was a sport until 1824, when it was stopped through the appeals of the rector of Holton. The garlanded bulls were baited by bulldogs in the stonepits; another annual sport, badger-baiting, was also brought to an end. In the eighteenth century a fair was held on 29th September, but it had been discontinued by 1888. A cattle market held at the "Crown" was discontinued in 1909, when Oxford market became weekly. To the end of the nineteenth century there were mummers, May-Day celebrations, and Morris dancing.

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- (1) Par. Rec. Overseers' Accounts.
 (2) Ibid Overseers' Accounts
 (3) Oxford Journal 1764

CHAPTER IIIHOUSING

Post-Reformation Wheatley had more than one period of expansion. The first for which there is evidence was in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. In 1581 31 cottages were newly built, and subletting and unauthorised building were problems a few years later.⁽¹⁾ By 1625 32 houses lined the south side of High Street and Crown Road, and 45 the north. Nine new cottages were built upon the waste about the same time.⁽²⁾ Owing to the rapid expansion of Wheatley during the stage coach era, many inns sprang up to meet the demands of the travellers and this increased prosperity led to a housing shortage, and in 1721 18 cottages known as "Blenheim" were built near the green.⁽³⁾ By 1759 140 dwellings housed some 800 inhabitants and there was much over-crowding among the poorer families.⁽⁴⁾ In 1327 41 people in Wheatley were assessed for taxation which suggests that by then the village was comparatively large and prosperous. In 1377 110 people over fourteen were returned for the Poll Tax.⁽⁵⁾ The expansion of Wheatley's trade from the late sixteenth century onwards seems to have led to an increase in numbers. The hearth tax return of 1665 records 35 fairly substantial householders. One householder, perhaps the tenant of the manor-house, had 12 hearths, two had 10 and 9 respectively, seven had 5 or 6 or 7, and the remainder had between 1 and 4 each. Three were discharged by poverty.⁽⁶⁾ These figures make a sharp contrast with those of the average rural village.

Hearth Tax Returns 1662 - (P.R.O.E. 179/255/3)

This year 57 names and 176 hearths were returned compared with 35 names and 133 hearths for 1665. Despositions of 1687 show that there were in fact still more cottages too poor for inclusion and the Overseers' Accounts for 1660-1 reveal the names of some of the very poor:-

Geoffrey Brock - Richard & Goodie Constable - John & Goodie
Dandreidge - William Day - Widow Cadbury's daughter -
Old Hitchen - William & Goodie Howell - Thomas Latham -
Elizabeth Webb - and widows Kemps - Harris - Pentecost -
Smith - Venfield - Wamborne or Wooburne.

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- (1) E 134, 23 & 25 Eliz. Mich 8; Bodl. MS Rolls Oxon 117
(2) Oxon Dioc. Pp. (unreferenced)
(3) E 134, 11 Geo I, East 11
(4) Oxon. Dioc. Pp d 557, F.48
(5) E 179/161/9, 40
(6) Hearth Tax Oxon 58

1612/13 presence Carter's survey
y March 1613

(The names of Day, Harding, Page, Powell, Price, Russell, Symes and Temple recur among the chief townsmen in 1701 - 17).

<u>NAME</u>	<u>NO. OF HEARTHES RECORDED</u>
Thomas Powell	i
John Powell (fellmonger)	iiij
Edward Pangborne (overseer)	iiij
Thomas Clarke	vj
Richard Freeman	iiij
Gilbert Jackson (of the Vent)	ix
John Barnes	v
John Newport	vij
Robert Barnes	ij
Francis Page	ij
John Franklin	ij
Henry Munt (MX Oxon Will 83/4/46) - Laborer	i
Walter Simons	ij
William King	i
Roger Neele	i
Richard Symes	ij
William Smart (M/S Oxon Will 61/4/2) - Yeoman	iiij
John Sheene	ij
Isaac Munt	i
William Munt	i
Edward Paine (M/S Oxon Will 84/4/32) - Thatcher	ij
Stephen Sidmun	ij
Thomas Wilcox	xij
Michael Garner	j
Phillip Day	x
Edward Simpson	ij
Ralph Pangbourne	iiij
Thomas Darbie (M/S Oxon Will 164/1/32) - Husbandman/Victler	iv
Thomas Russell (M/S Oxon Will 147/2/10) - Butcher	ij
Mathew Langston	iiij
Francis Price	vij
Anthony Russell sen.	i
Anthony Russell jun.	v
George Page	iiij
William Green (M/S Oxon Will 129/3/27) - Yeoman	i
Edward Hilsdon	i
John Harding	x
Thomas Messenger	iiij
Thomas Symes	v (see ij below)
Richard Brock (M/S Oxon Will 115/5/12) - Husbandman	i
Richard Cox (M/S Oxon Will 120/4/4) - Sawyer	ij
John Garner	i
Graland Page	iiij
Richard Roberts	i
Richard Robinson	i
Thomas Tomes	ij
John Robinson	iiij (see ij below)

Simon Hedcup	ij
Joseph Church	ij (see i below)
Robert Ardin	i
*Thomas Temple (M/S Oxon Will 67/2/18) - Grocer	ij
Gilbert Jackson	i
Anthony Titt	ij
Joseph Church	i (see note above)
John Robinson	ij (see note above)
Thomas Symes	ij (see note above)

* No hearths entered in Wheatley Records pages 68-70.
Hearth returns obtained from copy shown on page 155.

Due to the rapid rise in prices in the sixteenth century the farmers were in a particularly good position for benefiting from this process, because the prices which they received for their produce rose more rapidly than their costs which were relatively fixed. It is not surprising that some of this accumulated wealth should have been expended on improvement in housing, and this was particularly true of freeholders or farmers with long leases. The improvement and embellishment of farm houses could take many forms. Hoskins ⁽¹⁾ has suggested that the years between 1570 and 1640 were the ones which saw most of these developments in southern England, and Barley ⁽²⁾ has expanded and amplified his conclusions emphasising the regional variations. It seems that the distinctive Cotswold style of vernacular architecture reached its mature form in this period, but these stone built houses are hard to date. Too few inventories from the period before 1570 have survived to make any statistical comparison with later periods possible but it is noticeable that from inventories before 1570 in Oxfordshire housing conditions were relatively simple. Most of the houses appeared to have only rooms on the ground floor. The average size house in Wheatley during the period 1600-1700 would probably have consisted of a hall, chamber and one or possibly two other rooms. In 8 cases of the Wheatley inventories surveyed no rooms were specified and whereas this may have been because the appraisers forgot to list them, it is more likely that in these houses the hall was the only real room, although the sleeping and storage space was perhaps marked off by moveable partitions or screens, or even by pieces of furniture or hangings.

(1) Hoskins, W.G. The Rebuilding of Rural England 1570-1640
 (2) Barley, M.W. The House and Home

The great value of inventories lies in their capacity to say how many rooms a house contained at a given date and the uses to which these rooms were put. An inventory may only provide indirect evidence of the size of the rooms and a plan of the house, but it can be useful for solving the question of chronology and construction, if it can be related to an existing house. Sixteenth century inventories come from a period of major change and improvement in English domestic architecture. In view of their economic position it is not surprising that only a few of the people whose inventories are included in this research lived in large houses.

TABLE I - HOUSE SIZES

<u>No. of Rooms in House</u>	<u>No. of Houses</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
None specified	8	27.6
2	3	10.3
3	1	3.4
4	4	13.9
5	6	20.7
6	4	13.9
7	1	3.4
11	1	3.4
14	1	3.4
	<u>29</u>	<u>100.0</u>

All the rooms in the 12 houses in which they were specified, are listed in Table II. Of the houses with 2, 3, or 4 rooms, a hall and chamber or parlor predominate, while the slightly larger houses contained in addition a kitchen, shop or second chamber plus an addition of a specialised service room such as a brewhouse, buttery, corn chamber or milkhouse.

TABLE II - Size of houses of 21 inventories in
which all the rooms were specified

<u>Inventory No.</u>	<u>2 Roomed Houses</u>
2	Hall, Chamber

12 Chamber, Milkhouse

28 Hall, Lower Room

3 Roomed Houses

23 Hall, Chamber Parlour, Loft

4 Roomed Houses

3 Hall, 2 Chambers, Buttery

8 Hall, 2 Chambers, Buttery

9 Hall, 2 Chambers, Buttery

25 Hall, 2 Chambers, Kitchen (Backside)

5 Roomed Houses

6 Hall, 2 Rooms, Shop, Oathouse

17 Hall, 2 Rooms, Parlour, Buttery

21 Hall, Chamber, Inner Chamber, Backhouse, Shop

24 Hall, 2 Chambers, Buttery, Kitchen (Backside, Barn)

30 Hall, 2 Chambers, Kitchen, Buttery

6 Roomed Houses

1 Hall, 2 Chambers, 2 Parlors, Brewhouse

18 4 Chambers, Kitchen, Spence & Buttery, (Warehouse, Yard, Barn)

19 "As above"

26 Hall, 3 Chambers, Parlour, Butterie (Backside)

7 Roomed Houses

33 Hall, 2 Chambers, Kitchen, Room, Shop, Buttery.

11 Roomed Houses

14 Hall, 4 Chambers, Cockloft, Parlor, Kitchen, Butterie,
Cellar, Lower Kitchen (Backside)

14 Roomed House

5 Hall, 7 Rooms, Cellar, Great Garrett, Buttery, Kitchen,
Parlor, Brewhouse.

Where brackets occur the outhouses are suspected of being detached and have not been counted.

In some of the inventories the relationship of the rooms to one another is stated more clearly than in others and the following table illustrates this:-

TABLE III - SOME HOUSE TYPES

<u>Inventory No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Value to nearest £</u>	<u>Ground Floor</u>	<u>Upper Stories</u>
1	1632	Brewer	79	Hall Chamber Parlor Brewhouse	--- Chamber
3			8	Halle Buttery	Chamber Chamber
5	1700	Innholder	98	Seller Great Room Rubb Room Great Garrett Hall Buttery Kitchen Trap Room Parlor Brewhouse	--- Room --- Room --- Room
6	1696	Husbandman	11	Shop Hall Outhouse	--- Room --- Room
8	1683	Wheelwright	61	Hall Buttery	--- Chamber --- Chamber
9	1675	Sawyer	112	Hall Buttery	--- Chamber --- Chamber
14	1660	Gent	45	Chamber Corn Chamber Great Chamber Parlor Hall Kitchen Butterie Cellar Lower Kitching Barnes Backside	--- Chamber Cockloft
17	1706	Taylor	13	Parlor Buttery Hall	--- Room --- Room

Grubbing.

21	1639	Blacksmith	48	Hall Inner Chamber Backhouse Shoppe	-	Chamber
24	1642	Yeoman	35	Chamber Hall Butterie Kitchen Backside Barne	---	Chamber
25		Butcher	98	Hall Kitchen Backside	---	Chamber Chamber
26	1644	Baker	13	Lower Chamber Hall Parlor Butterie Backside	---	Chamber Chamber Room
30	1639	Baker	79	Room Hall Kitching Butterie Barn	---	Chamber Chamber
34	1718	Collermaker	11	Kitchen Shop Buttery	---	Room Room

The simplest house would have a hall, chamber on the ground floor with no rooms over them. A slightly larger house would have a second chamber placed in the roof space, probably by ceiling over the bed chamber, with the halls left open to the rafters. Many of the other houses are variations of this pattern usually with additional service rooms, such as kitchens, and butteries on the ground floor, and additional chambers on the first floor. It is not always clear whether some of the more specialised rooms were part of the main structure, or detached outbuildings.

The names given to the rooms are interesting, because of the predominance of French derivations - suggesting that terms which had formerly referred only to the households of the aristocracy had begun to filter down the social scale. This must be taken as another indication of the advancing status of the peasantry. For instance, the old English "bower" for bedroom

had been replaced by "chamber", while the "parlour" (the room for private talk or withdrawal) and the "buttery" (from "Bouteiller") were relatively new additions to the village household.

THE HALL was still the principal living room in most houses. Besides being used for dining, the cooking was frequently done there and valued possessions, such as brass and pewter were usually stored in the hall. The hall had however, generally ceased to be a room used for sleeping in, except in those houses in which it was the only room.

PARLOURS were used as bedrooms in most houses. There are six inventories which specifically mention a parlour, three of which do not contain beds. Inventory No. 14 shows the parlour as being a well-furnished withdrawing room in which the family could have more privacy than was possible in the Hall. It was furnished with a "drawing table", 2 formes, 1 chair, one court cupboard, 1 coffer and 3 cushions. In houses in which there was a parlour as well as chambers, the parlour was often the best bedroom.

BEDCHAMBERS in the seventeenth century were not necessarily reserved for sleeping only; it was also used as a sitting room or a bed-sitting room. The chief item of furniture in it would be the bed, and a chest or a cupboard, and a chair or stool. Of the 17 inventories specifically stating "chambers" only 2 of them were used for other than sleeping purposes. Inventory No. 12 included pewter, brass and cooking implements as well as the usual bed and linen. Inventory No. 25 included pewter, a spit, an old jack, dripping pans, candlesticks and andirons as well as the bed and linen.

BEDS -In nearly all houses these were considered to be the most essential and important item of furniture - it was without doubt the most important. The massive poster bedstead was the valued property of well-to-do-people; whereas in other houses, a wood bedstead, panelled head and foot, with rope-mesh or board base, was in use. The bedding varied according to wealth, with feather mattresses for the rich, and flock or straw for the less well-to-do. There were sheets, blankets, bolster and pillows and

embroidered coverlets placed on top.

BUTTERIES, also sometimes called SPENCES, were usually next to the hall, and were sometimes described as being within it - being separated from it by a partition. They nearly always contained various barrells of beer, and sometimes "powdering troughs", (in which meat was salted), and other stores. In 13 of the inventories used a butterie is mentioned.

KITCHENS in 9 houses there was a separate kitchen. From the inventory items it is clear that they were either used for cooking purposes or for general storage purposes. No inventory listing a kitchen shows that it was used as sleeping accommodation for servants.

In the average cottage and farmhouse, the kitchen and cooking equipment changed little during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Roasting was done on spits over an open fire in a fireplace and boiling and simmering in huge metal cauldrons hung from a chimney crane with a system of chains and pulleys. In smaller kitchens brick ovens were still in use. Kitchen furniture was still sparse and strictly utilitarian; racks on the walls for hanging utensils, trestle tables and possibly a cupboard for storage. The majority of vessels were of metal, brass, bronze and iron, with some earthenware. The kitchen utensils would include cauldrons, pots, skillets, frying pans, tubs, barrels, fire implements - poker, shovel - pot hooks, ladles, skimmers, mortar and pestle, chafing dishes.

Coal was replacing wood more as fuel for cooking by the end of the seventeenth century, so that the crude dog-grate with bars and iron dogs was necessary. In both town and country servants were easily available and were cheap to hire.

MISCELLANEOUS FURNITURE - there were a considerable variety of cupboards for divers uses. The antecedent of these, the chest, or coffer, was still very much in favour, both as a seat and for storage purposes. Other types of cupboard for storing clothese and linen existing, but these did not have hanging space. Chairs had become more common items of furniture, although there was still a tendency for them to be reserved for important guests

and the older members of the household.

However, the majority of people sat on stools, forms or chests. Stools, were for the most part, of joint type, fairly tall, with a rectangular seat. The stool was particularly a convenient method of seating when hooped skirts returned to favour in the late seventeenth century.

Another improvement which was being made to houses in this period was the addition of staircases in place of ladders for reaching chambers on the first storey, but stairs are not mentioned in the inventories surveyed. As stairs were an integral part of the structure of the house, they did not form part of the deceased's personal estate, and so there was no necessity for the appraisers to mention them, and the lack of reference to them rather implies that many houses were still equipped with ladders.

Like stairs, glass in window casements may also have been omitted from the inventories because it was regarded as part of the house. Had there been more inventories before the 1580's it is quite possible glass would have been mentioned.

Another fitting which like glass, was in the process of changing from a moveable to a permanent feature was wainscoting, or panelling. It was used for reducing draughts and sometimes only consisted of a small panel behind a bench or form.

The variety of service-rooms and outhouses described by the inventories provides an illustration of self-sufficiency of domestic life. Two inventories show the existence of Brewhouses which contain "brewinge vessells and thinges belonging to Brewhouse". Inventory No. 12 contained a Mylk House but the only item listed in it is a "powdringe troffe" used for salting down meats. Inventory No. 21 describes a Backhouse which contained "a dowe kiver, a mouldinge board, yellvate mesh, tubbes, barrells and mall tubbes, " and which was obviously used for a variety of services.

CHAPTER IVOCCUPATIONSTABLE IV - OCCUPATIONS FROM THE INVENTORIES USED

<u>Inventory No.</u>	<u>Year of Inventory</u>	<u>Occupation</u>
1	1632	Brewer
2	1611	Shepperd
3	1634	---
4	1627	Widdowe
5	1700	Innholder
6	1697	Husbandman
7	1637	Husbandman
8	1663	Wheelwright
9	1676	Sawyer
10	1666	Husbandman/Victler
*11	1666	Laborer/Yeoman
12	1616	Yeoman
13	1629	Gent
14	1661	Gent
*15	1621	---
16	1631	Widdowe
17	1707	Taylor
18	1723	Yeoman
19	1724	Widdow
*20	1611	---
21	1639	Blacksmith
22	1614	Taylor
23	1620	Laborer
24	1642	Yeoman
25	1711	Butcher
26	1644	Baker
*27	1606	Husbandman
28	1636	Laborer
29	1710	Millwright
30	1639	Baker
*31	1631	---
*32	1638	Yeoman
33	1692	Grocer
34	1718	Collermaker
35	1721	Cordwagner

*These inventories not used in this survey

TABLE V - Summary of Occupations of Wheatley Inventories from 1550-1750

<u>Occupations</u>	<u>How many</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
Baker	3	3.2
Blacksmith	3	3.2
Brewer	1	1.0
Butcher	2	2.2
Collermaker	1	1.0
Cordwagner	1	1.0
Cowper	1	1.0
Esquior	1	1.0
Fuller	1	1.0
Gent	3	3.2
Grocer	2	2.2
Husbandman	11	11.5
Innholder	5	5.2
Laborer	13	13.5
Malster	1	1.0
Mason	1	1.0
Miller	1	1.0
Millwright	1	1.0
Sawyer	1	1.0
Shepperd	1	1.0
Shoemaker	1	1.0
Spinster	1	1.0
Taylor	3	3.2
Thatcher	1	1.0
Wheelwright	1	1.0
Widow	19	19.8
Widdowers	2	2.2
Yeoman	14	14.6
	<u>96</u>	<u>100.0</u>

139 Wills and Inventories between 1550 and 1750

96 state occupation

43 give no indication

Of the 96 which state occupation they break-down as above shown.

TABLE VI - Dates of Inventories to the various occupations

Baker	1639, 1644, 1719
Blacksmith	1580, 1604 (Hurste), 1639 (Hurste)
Brewer	1632
Butcher	1702, 1711.
Collermaker	1716.
Cordwagner	1721.
Cowper	1626
Esquiroer	1631
Fuller	1620
Gent	1577, 1629, 1661.
Grocer	1692, 1730.
Husbandman	1558, 1573, 1598, 1601, 1606, 1637, 1666, 1681, 1684, 1697, 1698.
Innholder	1665, 1674, 1700, 1711, 1717.
Laborer	1561, 1591, 1607, 1608, 1620, 1631, 1636, 1639, 1642, 1666, 1682, 1687, 1693.
Malster	1602
Mason	1721.
Miller	1678
Millerwright	1710
Sawyer	1676
Shepperd	1611
Shoemaker	1602
Spinster	1705
Taylor	1574, 1614, 1706.
Thatcher	1687
Wheelwright	1683
Widdow	1598, 1600, 1621, 1627, 1628, 1631, 1632, 1639, 1664, 1670, 1682, 1688, 1693, 1693, 1693, 1698, 1698, 1701, 1720, 1720, 1724.
Yeoman	1587, 1591, 1606, 1616, 1633, 1638, 1642, 1670, 1684, 1687, 1697, 1708, 1723, 1732.

(Also 43 unknown occupations)

Gentry - Only three members of this class occur in the 139 wills and inventories for Wheatley during 1550-1750; two of these are included in this research; Nos. 13 and 14. Of these two an inventory is only available for John Gadburie dated 1661 and whose estate was worth £45. 18. 00. The inventory is of interest because his domestic comforts, while not luxurious, were considerably more elaborate than those to be found in other houses. His house consisted of five main rooms - a hall, a parlour, a great chamber and two chambers - six service rooms - a kitchen, butterie, a lower kitchen, a corn chamber (which was also used as a bedroom as well as for storage), a cockloft, and a cellar - and two outbuildings - barnes and a backside. His furniture included a drawing table and three feather and 3 flock beds. His Parlor was obviously used as a withdrawing room for the family as it included "formes, chairs and cushiones", while all the cooking took place in the kitchen. He also left "wearing apparell and money in his purse" to the value of £2. 6. 8. Like many of the gentry of this period he had some interest in farming as his inventory shows wheat and beanes in the Corn Chamber worth £2. 6. 0.; corn growing upon the ground worth £4. 0. 0.; and a plough and cart worth £1. 5. 0.

Yeomen and Husbandmen - In so far as generalisation is possible, it seems that the people who prospered were often yeomen. The exact status of a yeoman is hard to define, but he would probably occupy a moderately substantial farm, held on a long lease. He would possibly have servants and perhaps sub-tenants, and be able to vote at parliamentary elections, or sit on juries, but would not indulge in the expensive habits of gentility. There was no legal control on claims to the title of a yeoman, although there was some practical control through neighbours. Many people drew up their wills describing themselves as yeomen, but their probate inventories, drawn up by their neighbours, described them as husbandmen. Whether there was an economic boundary between yeomen and husbandmen is hard to say, both lived roughly similar lives, but there was certainly a difference in local reputation.⁽¹⁾

Of the 139 inventories available for Wheatley between 1550-1750 14 were described as yeomen, of which 4 were used in this research, namely numbers 11, 12, 18, 24. It is probably that many inventories for members of this class were too wealthy to have had their wills proved in the local courts, and that they used the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. The four examples

(1) Havinden, M.A. - Household and Farm Inventories in Oxon 1550-1590
(Oxfordshire Record Society Vol XLIV) - page 10

illustrate also the wide variations in wealth which could exist amongst yeomen. Thomas Day (No. 11) had goods valued at only £8.0.0. but had "good and bad debts" worth £60.0.0.; John Franklin (No. 12) had goods valued at £101.5.4.; William Hart (No. 18) had goods valued at £147.1.0.; and Richard Pokins (No. 24) had goods valued at £34.16.11.

Of the inventories for Wheatley 11 were specified as husbandmen, of which 3 are included in this research, - numbers 6, 7, and 10. Richard Brock (No. 6) left an estate worth £11. 10. 0.; Thomas Chayre (No. 7) left an estate worth £34.3.2., of which only £3.12.4. was for personal items, the rest being in crops, livestock and farming tools - Thomas Darbie (No. 10) left an estate worth £8.14.6. An interesting item on his inventory is "one bible with other books" valued at 8/0s. The only indication of the size of house a husbandman might live in is given in the inventory of Richard Brock which shows his house consisted of a shop and a room over the shop, a hall and a room over the hall, and an outhouse.

Craftsmen, Tradesmen and Laborers - Craftsmen and Tradesmen were generally less wealthy than farmers, but the value of the personal estate can be misleading as a guide to standard of living, for in the case of tradesmen or craftsmen, who had no stock to swell the total of their personal estate, and whose wealth therefore lay mainly in their household goods, a quite modest total value might relate to a fairly extensive and well furnished house.

John Hurste (No. 21) a blacksmith, left an estate worth £48.1.6. of which his shoppe, tools and irons were worth £2.10.0. and his hogges, kine and sheepe were worth £10.6.8., leaving his household goods to be worth £35.4.10. which was quite considerable.

The main body of labourers who were not free to move were the upper classes of laborers, who owned small amounts of land. Perhaps a quarter of laborers owned land but it was not often very much; probably about four acres or less. Some laborers might have enough to keep a cow, and would be guaranteed a certain amount of milk, butter and cheese. Some kept bees, as this was the main sweetner (as sugar was about the same price as today), and a number kept a pig. Our knowledge of labourers is limited by the fact that our chief source of information is inventories of their goods, drawn up for probate,

and only the richer laborers had inventories made. Four-fifths of laborers who left inventories were not solely dependant on agricultural labour, but had some by-employment. Generally the laborers were poorer than most craftsmen and tradesmen, but one inventory, considered, that of laborer Thomas Munt (No. 23) shows that he left an estate worth £31.19.8. of which £5.5.0. was for corn and a lease.

SMITHS AND FARRIER'S SHOP

OR VETERINARY FORGE

The English Farrier

or

Country-Mans Treasure

Shewing approved Remedies to cure all Diseases, hurts, maymes, maladies and griefes, in Horses: and how to know the severall Diseases that breed in them, with a description of every Veine, how and when to let them blood, according to the nature of their Diseases.

With directions to know the severall Ages of them.

Faithful'y set forth according to Art and approved experiment, for the benefit of Gentlemen, Farmers, Inholders, Husbandmen, and generally for all.

At London printed by John Beale, and Robert Bird, 1636

(Copied from a notice in the Museum of English Rural Life, Reading.)

Domestic Life - The farmworkers' cottage has often been described as a one-room hovel of sticks and dirt and it was possible that the majority of landless laborers did live like this,⁽¹⁾ but the term "cottage" was almost as useless in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as it is today as an indication of the size of a dwelling. The commonest type of cottage would have had a hall/living room and a chamber/bedroom alongside, and possibly a storage loft over one of the ground-floor rooms. Of the three inventories of laborers surveyed, two state having a Hall and a Chamber. Cooking was generally done in the laborer's hall as few cottages had separate kitchens. In neither of these inventories is there mention made of any kind of outhouse. Probate inventories, it must be remembered, only represent the upper levels of the labouring population. For a description of the houses of farmworkers who were too poor to leave an inventory we must rely on sources from contemporary travellers and topographers such as Richard Carew and Robert Reyce.⁽²⁾ They described the old cottages as being built with "walls of earth, low thatched roofs, few partitions, no planchings (floor-boards) or glass windows and scarcely any chimneys other than a hole in the wall to let out the smoke" The furniture in laborer's cottages was often listed in great detail in probate inventories. Thomas Day, Yeoman/Laborer, who died in 1666 (No. 11) left belongings worth only £5.0.0. with one cow and calf worth £3.0.0. but had good and bad debts owing him to the value of £60.0.0. Thomas Munt, laborer, who died in 1620 (No. 23) left furniture and possessions to the value of £26.7.8., with corn and a lease valued £5.0.0. and two piggis valued 12/6d. Richard Simpson, laborer, who died in 1636 (No. 28) left furniture and possessions to the value of £6.10.2. One telling indication of the rising standard of living amongst the better-off laborers is seen in Thomas Munt's inventory (No. 23) where the people responsible for drawing-up the inventory have carefully described "5 Joined stocles". Furniture previously would have been rough carpentry work of small value, where the possession of joined furniture, properly constructed by a trained craftsman, gave a new touch of modest luxury to his home.

It is interesting to note that Thomas Munt's wearing apparell was valued at £7.0.0. Generally speaking it would be worth 7% of his total wealth, A laborer's apparell was worth, on the average about £1.0.0. On working days laborers often wore clothes made of sack-cloth, canvas or skins; their

(1) (Thirsk, J. - Agrarian History of England & Wales Vol IV 1500-1640 (page 442)
(Finberg, H.P.R.

(2) Survey of Cornwall 1602

holiday wear might consist of a suit of woollen cloth, containing 6 yards of material, and lasting them perhaps two years. At the end of each years service, their master might provide them with a new smock (see illustration xiii) or shirt, and a pair of shoes and stockings and at harvest time with a pair of gloves. (1)

In the domestic sphere, the average housewife of a large or medium-sized house had to be a capable woman, well versed in many crafts. Apart from general housework, she often looked after the garden and orchard, and even poultry. On a farm, she might also attend the pigs, and help with sheep-shearing. The dairy work came under her control. In the house she would spin, weave, embroider, preserve fruit and prepare medicine from herbs. In the smaller cottages women were busy in the fields as well as spinning and weaving for their families and to sell. Many women and children worked in the home, particularly in the country, weaving cloth and spinning yarn to earn money. Industrialisation of cotton and woollen industries had not yet started so there was ample scope for this work to be done in villages and marketed in the towns. The women had to be both capable housewives and nurses, as there was little medical assistance in case of illness. They bore many children, many of whom died in infancy. Houses were well-kept and efficiently run despite the lack of conveniencies but many of the houses of the labouring classes were still poor in standard. Most cottages consisted of a living room and bedroom, with low ceiling, small windows and an earth floor. Water supplies were inadequate, probably being delivered twice a week, or having to be carried from an outside pump, and drainage was poor and insanitary. (For an illustration of the many crafts a housewife was expected to be capable of doing see the following entitled "The English Housewife" - page 36).

In the early sixteenth century people generally ate well but as the century progressed the standard decreased because the price of food rose more than wages. Bread and meat were the staple diet and more vegetables became available as root crops were grown, but these were largely utilised in soups. The diet was made more varied with the introduction of foreign fruits and other foods. In the towns, meat, fish and butter went bad quickly, so many recipes were available for disguising this deterioration and making the food palatable. Milk could not be kept in the towns and had to be fetched in from

(1) (Finberg, H.P.R. - Agrarian History of England and Wales
(Thirsk, J. Vol. IV 1500-1640 (page 450)

the country as required. Beers and ales were drunk in great quantity by most people. The main meal of the day was dinner, taken at 10.30. - 12 noon. A light breakfast at 6.30 a.m. preceded it, consisting probably of bread and butter and a little meat, and wine or ale. Supper was about 4 - 6 p.m., a smaller version of dinner.

Meal times and the type and standard of food eaten in the first half of the seventeenth century were similar to those of the sixteenth century. The labouring classes lived chiefly on bread and cheese, beer and some meat. Eggs, dairy produce and poultry were inexpensive, as the majority of people still lived on the land and kept hens. Sugar was now imported from the West Indies and began to replace honey for sweetening purposes.

However, it was still costly - a shilling per pound approximately, and a shilling was worth a good deal of money in the seventeenth century. Most people drank home-brewed ales and beer; some of these brews were very strong but children drank the milder varieties.

In the latter half of the seventeenth century cooking was considered to be an important art, and meal-times were long and much was eaten. The diet of most people contained insufficient fruit and green vegetables - leading to scurvy - but a great deal of meat and bread. Butter was only used in the kitchen by well-to-do-people, but was enjoyed by the less wealthy folk. There were still inadequate methods of keeping food; in consequence, meat had to be salted and milk often had to be made into butter and cheese. Poor people suffered a good deal at this time from malnutrition; this was partly due to the high price of corn and wheat, and partly because wood for fuel was now becoming scarce in many country areas, and it was difficult to cook food in many country cottages, so the staple diet had to be ale, cheese, and bread, with meat about once a week.

In the first half of the eighteenth century though food was more plentiful and it was not often fresh and was most unhygienically handled, according to twentieth century methods. Milk was taken round in open pails and meat was often nearly bad when sold. Breakfast was a light meal taken fairly late. A snack or small meal about noon was followed by dinner, which was the main

meal of the day. The wealthy people ate extremely well with a great deal of meat and good quality bread, and home-produced foods. The average laborer did not fare badly, living on bread, cheese, some meat, ale and vegetables. Often little cooking was done in poor cottages, owing to shortage of fuel, and the inadequacy of cooking facilities, so bread, cheese and ale still made up the staple diet in these homes. Ale was the national drink, although it was partially being replaced by tea and coffee, as these grew more popular. However, as they were still expensive - tea was as much as 9/0s. - 10/0s. a pound - the laborer kept to his ale. Sugar was now more in use for tea and coffee; hitherto it had been a rarely-seen luxury. Meat had become more plentiful, owing to the improvements in agriculture. Methods of cooking were little altered; baking was still done in a circular brick-oven at the side of the fire; wood was burnt in the bottom of the oven, then the ashes were raked aside, the food put in and the iron door closed tight; the bricks retained the heat for a considerable period. Other cooking was done over the fire, on a girdle for cakes, a frying pan or kettle. A turning spit was still used for roasting large joints; a dog or small boy supplied the rotary power by a wheel or a handle, but the clockwork jack was now becoming more common. Meat was basted as it was cooked, from the dripping which fell into a pan below.

(For an illustration of cooking methods see the following entitled "The Queen's Royal Cookery" - page 37).

THE ENGLISH HOUSE-WIFE

containing

The Inward and Outward Vertues which
ought to be in a Compleat Woman

As her skill in Physick, Cherurgery, Cookery, Extraction of Oyls, Banqueting stuff, Ordering of great Feasts, Preserving of all sort of wines, conceited secrets, Distillations, Perfums, Ordering of Wool, Hemp, Flax: Making Cloath and Dying; The knowledge of Dayries; Office of Malting; of Oats, their excellent uses in Families: or Brewing, Baking and all other things belonging to an Houshold.

A Work generally approved, and now the Ninth Time much Augmented, Purged, and made most profitable and necessary for all men, and the general good of this NATION.

By G. Markham

London

Printed for Hannah Sawbridge, at the Sign of
the Bible on Ludgate Hill, 1683.

(Copied from a notice in the Museum of English Rural Life, Reading.)

THE QUEEN'S ROYAL COOKERYTo Bake a Duck-Pye

Truss and fit your Ducks for a Pye, then give them three or four Cuts along the breast, lard them with reasonable small Lard, and season them with Pepper, Salt, Nutmeg, Cinnamon, and Cloves beaten, Bay-leaves, and put them into Paste, not too fine, not too coarse, either raised or flat made, four-square with Lard beaten and laid under and larded over them; cover them up, and indure the Crust with the Yolks of Eggs as you do the others, and let your Pye bake two small hours.

To Bake a Goose

You must make this Pye exactly as you do the Duck-Pye, only you should put Salt, and feed him better with Lard, and let him bake longer, and when he is baked, put in at the Funnel, a Clove of Garlick, and stop up the Funnel.

(Copied from a book entitled "The Queen's Royal Cookery" displayed at the Museum of English Rural Life, Reading.)

CHAPTER V

FARMING

The England of 1550-1750 was vastly different to today's England. For one thing, there was not then one-tenth of the people living in the whole country. The whole population of the kingdom in the 1550's was not more than $4\frac{1}{2}$ million at the most, and very likely less than that. Nearly everyone lived in tiny villages; some in hamlets of only a few families. People lived in the same place as their fathers before them and life was lived according to tradition. The villages would be small and scattered and because roads and lanes were not established, travel was not encouraged, and indeed there was little reason to travel farther than the next village.

But as time passed many political and economic changes took place and these were to influence the lives of the men of the land. They improved their tools and invented new ones. They adopted crops and manures and devised new ways of draining their land.

But there were many misfortunes. Severe outbreaks of plague occurred in 1603 and 1625; in 1595, 1596 and 1597 there were three years of bad harvests; in 1608 and 1630 there was famine and great scarcity in the 1620's and from 1646 - 1650 there were poor harvests and continuous scarcity of food.

During the 1640's the most rapid rise in grain prices was at Oxford. This is probably due not to variations in Oxfordshire agriculture, but to the arrival of the king's court at Oxford at the beginning of the civil war; and it is not surprising that the increased demand in the Oxford market sent up prices.⁽¹⁾

Open Field System Farming

Under the open-field system, those parts of England covered by it consisted of communities living in a village concentrated on one spot, and who farmed them to provide their own subsistence, rather than to produce for sale.

(1) Russell, C. - The Crisis of Parliaments 1504-1660 (1971)

The land fell into three categories; the greater part was kept under plough to produce corn for man and straw for beasts; a smaller part would produce hay, for winter feed for livestock; and the third part would consist of the remained left in its natural state of woodland or waste.

The extent of the arable land lying in open fields, would be subject to the number of ploughs in the community, and would be allotted amongst its members in strips representing a day's work with the plough, so that each man's strips alternated with those of his neighbours as day followed day. The land was farmed in a rotation under which one-third was cropped with autumn-sown corn, one-third was cropped with spring-sown corn, while the other third was rested in fallow. At seasons of the year when any part of the open fields had no crop on it, the livestock of the community grazed together over it on the stubbles and on the balks and sikes.

The meadow land was allotted amongst the community under a system the same as that which was applied in the allocation of the ploughlands, giving each man little scattered strips of grass to mow for hay. After the hay harvest, the meadows were grazed in common.

The waste lands, or commons, were not cultivated, nor were they mown. They served two purposes; first, to provide a permanent grazing ground for the livestock, and secondly, to allow for the expansion of the arable land as the community grew; the limit of expansion being set by the need to maintain a minimum of grazing ground.

Each of the village farmers had so much land as his own hands and implements could cultivate in the year. Each one followed the same system of husbandry. The method by which the holdings were distributed followed upon the simultaneous employment of every one upon the same task in the same season of the year, both in the arable fields and in the meadows. It resulted in holdings divided into strips of a day's work each, scattered evenly over the whole of the land, giving to everyone an equal share in the advantages and in the disadvantages of soils and situation.

Further, the farming system thus evolved spared the work evenly through the seasons. Autumn sowing on the fallow was followed by winter cultivation of the stubble and spring sowing, after which fallow cultivation and hay-making occupied the farmer until the corn harvest finished the farming year. The livestock fitted naturally into this system, the common and the aftermath of the meadows providing their summer and autumn keep, which was supplemented after harvest by the stubbles and sikes of the open fields, while the hay and straw kept them through the winter, until, in springtime, the grass on the commons began to grow again.

In the seventeenth century Oxfordshire was, with the exception of a small area of Chiltern country in the extreme south, an almost entirely open-field county;⁽¹⁾ but this does not mean that it was an isolated backwater of subsistence farming. On the contrary, the fertile lowland area between the Cotswolds and the Chilterns had long been supplying London with wheat and malt, which was shipped down the Thames on barges; while the whole of the upland region in the north of the county swarmed with livestock. Cattle were important as well as sheep, and the cheeses of Banbury were as prized in London as the celebrated Cotswold fleeces. Oxfordshire farmers were thus in the fortunate position of serving an ever-expanding metropolitan market, and therefore had an incentive to improve their methods.

The farmers did not all grow the same crop in the same field, and, more important, a measure of convertible husbandry had been introduced by the practice of sowing leys in the open field. Because of the problem of common grazing rights on the stubbles and fallow fields, leys were usually sown by all the farmers as part of a general agreement. In this way nobody gave his neighbour unrequited free grazing, and the value of the stubble and fallow grazing was enhanced for all. It used to be argued that the existence of the right of fallow grazing on the open fields prevented the introduction of new and improved crops, particularly the clovers and turnips, since no one could be expected to grow these crops for the benefit of his neighbour's livestock. This argument is however no longer capable of general application, even though it may have been true in certain cases. In fact, a variety of new and improved legumes and grasses were introduced on the open fields in

(1) Minchinton, W.E. - Essays in Agrarian History
 Havinden, M.A. - Agricultural Progress in
Open-Field Oxfordshire (1961) -
 page 149

Oxfordshire in the seventeenth century. These included rye grasses, clover, trefoil and lucerne; but by far the most important was sainfoin, a deep-rooting legume which is particularly suitable for use on the thin, dry soils which occur in limestone country. It was therefore widely adopted in Oxfordshire, and especially in the northern part of the county. The growing of sainfoin represented an important advance, for it was both more productive and more nutritious than the indigenous grasses. Trow-Smith has said that "the increase in food value of a stand of lucerne or sainfoin, either pure or in association with some of the improved grasses, over a permanent pasture of indigenous species was one of roughly 100% considered as hay"⁽¹⁾ Secondly, and perhaps even more important, the nitrogen-fixing mechanism in the root modules of the legumes increased the fertility of the land on which they were grown. Sainfoin was introduced into Oxfordshire in the second half of the seventeenth century, and was being grown on the open fields as early as 1673.⁽²⁾

The introduction of new crops is only one aspect of agricultural progress, but it is an important one because it sometimes stimulates and makes possible the re-organisation of an old system along more advanced lines. This was certainly the case with the introduction of sainfoin in Oxfordshire.

The redivision of the two-field system into four or more fields was common all over Oxfordshire in the seventeenth century. The primary object of field redivision was to reduce the area of fallow land. Clearly fallow grazing was one of the least efficient ways of feeding livestock, although it served a useful purpose in manuring and consolidating the arable land and also in keeping it free from weeds. It could therefore not be abandoned altogether; but as the fallow land could produce more food for the livestock if it were sown with fodder crops such as peas, beans, or vetches, than it could by growing weeds, the object was to reduce the fallow area to the smallest possible amount. These reductions were possible because the fodder crops which replaced the fallow were legumes, and they did not exhaust the land.

The practice of growing fodder crops on the fallow field was called "Hitching", It was probably first practised in a small way. Perhaps one or two furlongs would be temporarily fenced off from the fallow field and sown

(1) Trow-Smith, R. - A History of British Livestock Husbandry to 1700 (1957) - page 257

(2) Havinden, M.A. - Agricultural Progress in Open-Field Oxfordshire (1961) - page 152

with pulses. By the early eighteenth century field division had become complex, particularly in the north of the county. The open arable land would be divided into twelve parts in which the tenants' lands lay in intermixed strips. In fact not all these strips were used as arable, since the survey makes it clear that some of them were leys; but excluding the leys, the apportionment of the crops was roughly as follows; a quarter of the land (three of the twelve parts) normally grew wheat, and another normally grew barley, while a sixth (two of the twelve) normally grew pease. The remaining third of the land (four of the twelve parts) was either fallow or hitched with peas, or divided between the two "as the parish agreed."⁽¹⁾

There appears to have been an ascending spiral of progress in open-field Oxfordshire. It began with an increase in the area of grassland by means of leys. This led to more livestock and more manure. Then the demand for better winter food for the livestock led to the introduction of the legumes like sainfoin and clover. These, in conjunction with the increased supply of manure, helped to raise the fertility of the land, and enabled it to be more intensely cultivated by the partial elimination of fallows. As a result of more intensive cultivation, the supply of fodder for the livestock was further augmented (in the form of pulses), while the supply of grain was not only maintained, but actually improved in quality by means of the enlarged wheat acreage. Thus each advance, while small in itself, stimulated further advances in another sector, and the spiral was able to being again at a higher level.

CROPS

One of the advantages of probate inventories as a source for agricultural history is that they illustrate the normal and everyday practices of husbandry in contrast to the many records of the period. Although there are only twelve inventories of the thirty researched with mention of crops, the information is of considerable interest.

(1) Havinden, M.A. - Agricultural Progress in Open-Field Oxfordshire (1961) - page 155

TABLE VII - Crops mentioned in Wheatley Inventories

<u>Inventory Number</u>	<u>Value to Nearest £</u>	<u>Crop mentioned with its value (where given)</u>
1 (1632)	£79	Hay £2.0.0.
4 (1627)	£89	Haye
5 (1700)	£98	15 Quarter Oats £9.0.0. 1 Quarter Beans £1.8.0. 2 Cockes & a peice of a cocke of Hay £30.0.0.
7 (1637)	£34	1 acre wheat) 1 acre maselin) growing valued 3 acres pulse) at £14.0.0. 3 acres barley)
9 (1575)	£112	1 mow and 1 parcel hay £3.0.0. Barley £5.0.0.
12 (1616)	£101	10 bushell maselin £1.10.0. parsell of haye £1.0.0.
14 (1661)	£46	8 bushell wheat £2.0.0. 3 bushell beans 6/Od. corn growing £4.0.0.
18 (1723)	£147	6 Quarters beans @ 2/Od. bushell £4.16.0. Reck of wheat) Bay of wheat) £19.14.0. Hay in sacks £16.8.0. Reek of beans £3.0.0.
23 (1620)	£32	Corn
24 (1642)	£35	1 parcel hay) 1 parcel straw) 6/Od.
29 (1710)	£8	Hay £1.10.0.
30 (1639)	£79	Barlie in the barn £1.6.8. Hay £1.0.0. 1 Acre winter come in the field 15/Od.

Pulse crops are shown to have been grown which are not usually allowed for in descriptions of open-field farming. All three types of crops - winter corn consisting of wheat or rye (or a mixture of the two known as 'maslin'); a spring corn consisting of barley or oats; and pulses, usually beans or peas, but with vetches - are mentioned. In Inventory No. 7 three acres each of pulse and barley are grown as against 1 acre of wheat and maslin. Only two other inventories mention crops growing; No. 14 which gives corn growing valued at

£4.0.0. and No. 30 which gives 1 acre winter corn in the field valued at 15/6d.

It is possible that the spring cereals, and particularly barley, nearly always exceeded the winter cereals in area. This seems strange in the light of what has so often been said about open-field villages being strictly divided into winter corn, spring corn and fallow; but it seems clear from the inventories that even though some farmers may have had unequal amounts of land in each field, the strict divisions were unreal. If bad weather delayed the autumn sowing of wheat and rye, the land left unsown in the winter corn field was planted with pulses or barley in the spring. The pulses, especially beans, were particularly useful in this connection, because they could be dropped into the furrow behind the plough in the winter and did not require the preparation of a seed bed.

It seems likely that the acreage of wheat was limited by another important factor besides the weather. For it was necessary to grow a sufficient quantity of crops which could be fed to livestock as well as people - like barley, oats, beans and peas - because the livestock were almost the only source of manure - and in many open-field villages the supply of meadow and pasture land on which they fed were scanty.⁽¹⁾ Farmers therefore had to devote some of their land to growing crops for the livestock as well as themselves. This would account for the popularity of barley; which had three uses. It could be sold for malting (and made into home-brewed beer), be ground up and fed to animals, and if wheat was short, made into bread.⁽²⁾ Being a spring grown crop it was also less affected by bad weather.

LIVESTOCK appeared to have been small and unproductive by modern standards. The main function of the cattle was to plough. Both oxen and cows could work together in an ox team, but the cows were also expected to produce some milk for maturing into butter or cheese. The most important animal was the sheep for apart from producing wool for clothing, the Ewes produced milk which was almost exclusively used for butter and cheese - cheese providing a very important protein element in the diet during the winter months. Pigs were the main providers of fresh meat.

(1) The Rural Economy of Oxfordshire 1580-1730 (Page 92)

(2) Havinden, M.A. - Household and Farm Inventories in Oxon 1550-1590 (Oxfordshire Record Society Vol XLIV) - page 36

The following table reinforces the information from the inventories that farming was on a small scale in Wheatley.

TABLE VIII - Livestock mentioned in 15 Wheatley Inventories

<u>Inventory Number</u>	<u>Value of Inventory to nearest £</u>	<u>Livestock mentioned with its value (where given)</u>
1 (1632)	£79	1 geldinge £2.0.0. 1 colte £1.0.0. 1 cowe £2.0.0. 7 Hogges £5.0.0. 1 Draye 10/0d.
2 (1671)	£8	12 shepe £2.10.0.
5 (1700)	£98	2 Hogges £3.0.0. 1 Cow £2.10.0. 1 Colt £1.5.0.
7 (1639)	£34	3 mares £6.0.0. 2 kine £7.10.0.
10 (1666)	£9	1 mare } 3 colts } £5.0.0.
11 (1666)	£68	1 cowe) 1 calfe) £3.0.0.
12 (1616)	£101	7 poore horses £7.0.0. 6 beast and bullocks £10.13.4. 11 swine small and great £3.6.0. (xlix)? sheepe of all sortes £16.0.0.
18 (1723)	£147	1 Horse £3.15.0.
21 (1639)	£48	2 hogges £1.6.8. 3 kine) 3 sheepe) £9.0.0.
23 (1620)	£32	2 store pigs 12/0d.
24 (1642)	£35	2 kine £5.10.0.
25 (1711)	£98	3 mares £9.0.0. 2 cowes £6.0.0. 2 bullocks £3.0.0.
26 (1644)		2 flocks of bees 6/8d.
29 (1710)	£8	1 horse £1.10.0.
30 (1639)	£79	Four store and 17 sheepe £16.10.0.

15 of the 30 inventories give details of livestock. The largest sheepe flock, consisting of 4 store and 17 sheepe valued at £16.10.0. belonged to

Mr. Temple (No. 30). The only other detail of sheep is in Inventory No. 21 which mentions 3; in inventory No. 12 which mentions xlix(?) sheepe of all sortes valued at £16.0.0.; and in inventory No. 2 (a shepperd) where there are 12 sheepe valued at £2.10.0.

The majority of the inventories showed few dairy cows and a few beef animals, usually referred to as beasts, bullocks or steers, but these latter were probably also used on occasion as draught animals for ploughing and other tillage operations. None of the beast or bullocks listed are stated specifically as being plough animals. Only 2 of the inventories (No. 12 and 14) give any indication of a plough or cart. No mention is made in the inventories of a bull. In most villages there were communal bulls, and it was frequently the duty of the parson to keep the village bull. Only farmers with enclosed ground, where they could keep their cattle separate from the common herds, could attempt to improve the breeding of their cattle by keeping their own bulls.⁽¹⁾

Climatic Conditions on Farming

The turning wheel of the seasons is a very important determinant of the farming round, setting the scene of the countryman's days, limiting the total produce of the land and imposing a seasonality on the output of most industries. Inclement weather - hard winters, summer droughts, and very wet summers - has led repeatedly to severe physical destruction of food crops and animal fodder crops. But weather which was harmful in one sense might produce a different beneficial effect elsewhere. But because of the diversity and changeability of the weather, together with the variety of the farming pattern, the weather's influence under English conditions always looks brighter on the national horizon. Physical loss was not what the average farmer had to fear. Farmers will tend to recuperate their losses, but a small loss of foodstuff for which demand is inelastic, will often cause the price of the remainder to rise disproportionately. Generalisations about the weather's effects on agriculture having a direct influence on the whole economy can be formulated, but any realistic analysis of the economic history of agriculture must pay attention to its effect on the detailed timing of events.

(1) Havinden, M.A. - Household and Farm Inventories in Oxon 1550-1590
(Oxfordshire Record Society Vol XLIV) - page 38

The following is enough to indicate the chief implications of unfavourable weather for farm production. The quotations record what agriculturists at the time and on the spot thought the effects of the weather on their business to be.

- 1728 A severe winter preceded a wet summer. Deficient harvest. Wheat and barley prices doubled and remained at that level for 12 months.
- 1729 A hard winter 1728/29 frost lasting 9 weeks from the third week of January. Drought in June. The seasons 1728 and 1729 were marked by a "great dearth".
- 1730 The first year of a decade of good harvests; from 1730-1739, both years included. There does not appear to have been one season with any generally or marked deficiency.
- 1733 In July weather was so excessively hot for the most part of this month that it was scarcely tolerable; horses dying on the roads. A large crop and export of grain and a plentiful cider crop. Many cattle slaughtered in the autumn because grass was scarce.
- 1734 Again a hot summer with a large export of wheat
- 1735 A very wet winter and early spring - produced a severe outbreak of sheep-rot generally. A cold wet summer which laid the corn flat, and much hay spoiled by flood in the valley of the Thames.
- 1736 An extremely wet year. From the beginning of March such continuous rains the like not known in the memory of man. All the low meadows in the kingdom flated, and the hay and corn carried away and spoiled.
- 1737 Food riots in some districts.
- 1738 Great showers between May and the end of June which occasioned the rotting of great numbers of sheep.
- 1739 A wet, late harvest.
- 1740 Winter 1739/40 exceptionally severe. This extraordinary winter followed by an equally uncommon spring - it was still cold in July, and vegetation was still then further hindered by drought. The harvest was not over till late in the autumn and by middle of October the frost had returned. Wheat was killed in the ground and its price trebled.

Other provision prices rose. Thousands of acres of turnips rotten.

1741 Dry summer - excellent harvest.

1742 Again a dry year with an excellent harvest

1743 A year of plenty. A fine harvest and bread at its cheapest and plenty of everything else.

1744 Third quarter wet.

1745 A very wet year, especially at harvest and during the autumn. No grain sown until December. Many rotten sheep.

1746 Great frost from February 1st till middle of March killing many four-footed beasts. Cold long spring and a hot, dry summer. A high production of barley, the price of which slumped.

1747 Long dry period from February to May. Grass very backward - no growing. Severe sheep-rot, brought about by great rains before and about Midsummer. Thereafter a warm dry summer and an excellent harvest.

1748 A hard January with multitudes of sheep lost under the snow.

1749 Winter 1748/49 and summer of 1749 were both mild. The harvest was abundant, grain exports reaching a new peak.

1750 Again a mild winter and an extremely hot summer, an abundant harvest and another peak in grain exports.

Farmhouse and living conditions of farm workers

The period 1550-1660 midway between the Middle Ages and the social turmoil of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, has been described as the Age of Cottage Building. During these years characteristic regional differences in style were strongly marked and use was made of all available material. Houses were invariably built with the materials that came most easily to hand, though similarity of building material did not alone dictate the style. Differences of temperaments, traditions of workmanship, ways of life, and no doubt, the aspect of the land, all contributed their share and accounted for the remarkable differences.

Growth in population was one of the principal reasons for the expansion in building during 1575 - 1725. The growth in population went along with a marked economic expansion. The building industry was still organised on a strictly local basis. Brick, a material that had little been used previously, came into wide use, both socially and geographically, and was used for outbuildings, and eventually farmhouses and cottages. The stone-mason held his own in these changing times and the first result of an increase in timber prices was the use of stone, if it was reasonably near at hand.

The first consequence of this new economic and social climate was that the growing number of aged poor for whom villages found themselves forced to accept responsibility, were given, at the most, two rooms, either in "poor houses" built specially for the purpose, or in endowed almshouses. A labourer's cottage would have a separate sleeping room and by the end of the seventeenth century probably had a third room as well. It was not called the kitchen, for the living room, the only room with a fire, was and continued to be, the place for cooking. Most people called it the buttery. Some farmers had kitchens but many of them were used for brewing ale and baking bread and most of the cooking was still done in the hall. Extra chambers were usually used for storage and hanging food as well as for sleeping. The planning of the farmhouses still stemmed from medieval tradition, with the hall-living room being the focus of the plan, and the entrance gave onto it. The parlour was still the best bedroom; and many gained extra rooms by chambering over one or more of the ground-floor rooms.

The farmhouse was a factory where foodstuffs were produced, processed and stored, and the successful farmer wanted room for storage and comfort for his family. He also wanted more space for farm work necessarily done in the house - milk production, cheese making and ripening, etc. - and for storing food intended later for the market.

A Farm Worker's Day

For the farm worker in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries he worked from his rising to his lying down. His day began at 4 o'clock in the morning, and after saying his prayers, he went at once to the stable to fodder his cattle and muck-out the house. He rubbed down the plough oxen, curried the cart horses, took them both to water and then fed them back in the stable. While the animals were eating he would prepare the harness and once everything was ready to begin work, he then had his breakfast. By about 7 a.m. he would be ready to set off to the fields and would work until two or three in the afternoon. He then brought the cattle home, rubbed them down, cleaned and fed them, and would then take his dinner with his family at about 3 - 4 p.m. After dinner he would prepare a supply of food for the next day and water and fodder the cattle and horses again. His supper would be ready about 6 p.m. after which he would spend a couple of hours sitting by the fire doing all the jobs that had to be done in a self-sufficient household. At 8 o'clock he would attend to the cattle making sure they were safely tied for the night. The strenuous day was over when this was done and he could rest, after a 17 hour day. ⁽¹⁾

Farm Tools and their uses

For centuries the work of farming was carried out by hand, with tools fashioned in wood or iron, often with considerable ingenuity in fitting the implement for the exact task. Apart from the use of the ox and the horse, man had little to help him in his constant struggle with the elements. Local traditions played a part in determining the precise shape a tool assumed. Time had a hand in altering fashions but it was not as important as geography.

Ploughing - At least a thousand years ago farmers were using implements that were in the main like the ploughs we use today. Cultivation of the soil

(1) Fussell, G.E. & K.R. - The English Countryman - his life and his work 1500-1900

at one time was done by hand with a single tool but by the latter half of the seventeenth century ploughs, although still rather crudely made, varied in both design and in the quality of the work they did. The job of the ploughman was one of the most skilled on the farm. Most ploughs were made by village craftsmen, and although they were copied from recognised designs, two ploughs would very rarely work alike. Ploughs were still being made of wrought iron and when worn, would be returned to the blacksmith for re-sharpening.

The necessary tools and equipment of the arable husbandman were the plough, the harrow, the clodding beetle, the drag, roller, fork, weedhook, reaphook, scythe, sickle, pitchfork, dung cart and corn cart.

Many different ploughs were at his disposal, varying in shape and detail according to the depth and strength of the soil they were intended to plough. It was usual to classify ploughs into four groups; the double-wheeled, the single-wheeled and foot ploughs, the ploughs without wheel or foot, and the plain Dutch ploughs.⁽¹⁾ The double-wheeled plough was used on flint or gravelly soil, was drawn by horses or oxen double abreast, and the wheels could be adjusted deep or shallow. The one-wheeled plough was a short, neat implement which on light soils could be drawn by one horse. However, in Oxfordshire, where it is deep claylands, the foot plough was preferred to the one-wheeled plough, and was drawn by horses in a string, walking in the furrow. The plain plough without foot or wheel was the common man's plough, the cheapest and simplest of all, usable in most conditions and indispensable on uneven hilly ground, where the wheeled plough was useless. The Dutch plough was used in the fens and marshlands.

Weeding - On arable land the need for weeding has always been greater than on pasture, and a light harrow was used to weed crops in the early stages of their growth. The stage chosen is when the crop has sufficient hold in the soil not to be damaged by the harrow. Hand weeding was also an important form of cultivation, and this was done in July.⁽²⁾ There were two methods of hand weeding. After rains when the ground was soft, weeds could easily be uprooted with a pair of wooden tongs or nippers. These had long handles and their pincer edges were notched in order to grip the

(1) Footnoted as follows in "The Agrarian History of England and Wales" Vol IV 1500-1640 - John Worlidge "Systems Agriculturae" p. 228 - Norden, op.cit p.191., - Blithe op.cit. p.198 - John Mortimer "The whole art of Husbandry, p.38)

(2) From a 14th century calendar in the British Museum

weed. If the ground was hard and dry, two separate implements were used, one in either hand. With a crotch, or long wooden stick forked at the end, the weed was held in place and cut with a weed hook or little sickle attached to a long handle. Hand hoeing as distinct from weeding, was never much practised in the growing crop until sowing in drills was introduced. Tull⁽¹⁾ explained that the main advantages of hoeing were not properly understood. He explained that it was not only the uprooting of weeds, but also in moving the earth round the plants so that moisture and air could reach them.

Sowing - the earliest and most common form of hand sowing was to broadcast seed. The sower used his right hand as he paced across the field, making a cast with each step. On his return he pushed his basket round to his right side and sowed with the left hand. The cast was always made inwards. Ploughing, sowing and harrowing were often done at the same time. The sower walked behind the plough and was followed by a light harrow which covered up the seed before the birds ate it. Another way of sowing was known as dibbing. The tool used was about three feet long, made of iron or wood, and ending in a point. The sower walked backwards holding a dibble or dibber in each hand, and making holes in the soil into which seed was dropped by women or children who followed him. Jethro Tull invented the first successful seed drill in 1701, which drilled three rows at a time.

The Hay Harvest - the first stage is cutting the grass, or mowing. The scythe⁽²⁾ has been used for this ever since Roman times. There are two main parts to a scythe, the curving metal blade, and the wooden pole. The scythe used in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries would have had a long straight pole with only one hand pin. The most usual material for the pole was willow, for this could be bent in hot water into the required shape. The scythe is used in a swinging motion to cut the grass and lay it in swathe. Many mowers were employed working behind each other spread out across the field. Once the grass was cut it was laid out evenly on the ground for the wind to dry it. Each evening it would be taken into cocks for fear of rain. Once the hay was 'made' it would be pitched onto a cart and unloaded with forks⁽³⁾ onto the stacks.

- (1) Tull, J. - Horse Hoeing Husbandry 1733
 (2) See illustration No. vi
 (3) See illustration No. viii

Corn harvesting - the earliest implement for reaping corn was the sickle.⁽¹⁾
The blade of the iron sickle was generally serrated up to an inch or two from the point. This point was not sharpened since its purpose was to divide the standing corn. The reaper stood or knelt, and grasping a bundle of corn in one hand, curved the sickle round it with the other. He then cut the straw by drawing the sickle towards him. The reapers were followed by binders who tied up the corn into sheaves. A special knot was used to tie the sheaves which varied according to the locality. The scythe was also used to cut corn, first for oats, then for barley and later for wheat. It was certainly used to cut all three crops in England before the end of the fifteenth century.⁽²⁾

(1) See illustration No. vii

(2) Beecham, H.A./Higgs, J. - The Story of farm Tools (page 29)