



Vale and Downland Museum – Local History Series

## The 1522 Muster Role for West Berkshire (Part 3) – Incomes in Tudor Berkshire

by Lis Garnish

Since my articles last year on the 1522 Muster Roll for West Berkshire (1 & 2) analysis of the Wantage section has continued and some queries have been considered. The 1522 Muster Roll (3) is unusual for the amount of fiscal information which it contains, relating not only to able-bodied males, liable for military service in the county militia, but also to retired men, widows, single women and children. The Commissioners were instructed to gather information on *"the yeerely value of every mans land ... and of every stocke and stockes of Cattell. or other things ..."* and also *"Item. the value and substance of every person being of 16 yeeres and above"* (4). The values given for lands in Wantage Parish range from 8d to £67, whilst goods are quoted from 10s to £80. Whilst it has been accepted previously that the figures for lands represent annual income doubt has been raised about the figures for goods. Were they annual income or could they be values for capital instead? Hoskins has taken the figures as capital and says *"Lands were reckoned at so much per annum (i.e. income) while goods and chattels were valued as capital"* (5). Cornwall seems to agree with this view and mentions *"the figures given to the House of Commons by Thomas Cromwell of £1m. for the total of income from lands, and £3m. representing the capital value of moveable property"* (6). Pound is more cautious however and makes no definitive statement about the nature of "goods", referring only to *"value of goods owned"* which refers to percentages of the total assessment and leaves open the question of the nature of the assessment (7). So when the Berkshire list states that *"Nycolas Radyshe householder (has) in goodes £20 (and is) tenant to the collage of wynsore"* (8) should we assume that this was his capital and that his income was some fraction of £20? Or does it mean that Nycolas Radyshe had a larger investment which yielded £20 per annum? I hope to show that the latter situation was more likely.

The relationship between the capital cost of land and the income it yielded can be demonstrated for Wantage Parish by reference to a will made fifteen years before the Muster Roll (9). Robert Tate was the son of an Alderman of London and he owned land in Wantage and Evenlode as well as elsewhere. He purchased the Manor of Franklins in Wantage shortly before his death in 1507 and mentioned in his will that it had cost him £140. In the Muster Roll we find *"Master Bylletes londe some tyme master Tates"* being rented by Thomas Webbe for £8 per annum (10). Allowing for some increased value between 1507 and 1522 this would suggest that 5% per annum was the expected return on capital invested in land. This would agree with numerous references made in later wills, where money was to be invested for the use of minors, and 5% per annum seems to have been the usual income expected. No such clear case can be quoted for "goods" as none of the earliest wills for Wantage have inventories with them. Instead we have to search for circumstantial evidence.

There are thirty-nine extant wills for Wantage proved during the fifty years following the Muster Roll. This limit was set because it was felt that by 1570 even the youngest persons

recorded in the Muster Roll were likely to have died. Examination of the thirty-nine wills produced fifteen which could be ascribed confidently to persons entered in the Muster Roll and one for the widow of an entrant. Whilst there are no inventories for these wills sums of money are mentioned as bequests and it has been assumed that the estates of the testators were sufficient to pay these bequests. In addition most wills mention goods such as malt, barley and wheat, usually by the quarter (336 lbs to 504 lbs), sheep, by the score, and furniture. In many cases the residue was left to a wife and was, presumably, sufficient to satisfy her thirds or dower. The information from the wills is summarized in Table 1.

In eight cases the monetary bequests were larger than the declared sum in the Muster Roll, in three cases they were roughly equal and in four cases they were less. However, when the values of bequests in kind and the wives' dowers are also taken into consideration it is likely that all the wills represent estates larger than the declared sum in the Muster Roll. Hoskins has noted the same sort of discrepancy. He mentions Sir Stephen Jenyns, merchant tailor of London, who was assessed in 1522 for £3,500. However, *"when he died in 1524 his benefactions alone totalled £2.693 and presumably he made substantial provision for his family"*. Also *"John Rudstone, alderman of the City ... was assessed at 2.000 marks (£1,333 6s 8d) in 1522, but his inventory only nine years later shows a clear total of well over £7.000 in personal estate"* (11). Hoskins attributes the discrepancy to successful concealment of wealth but I would argue that the Muster Roll figures could be annual income. There were no incomes of this magnitude for Wantage but £80 per annum for Robert Aldworth, tanner (see Table), does not seem unreasonable; McGrandle suggests that in 1450 a town priest might earn £100 per annum, a doctor and surgeon £50 per annum and a country parson £10-£15 per annum, whilst a merchant in Elizabeth's reign might be worth £100-£500 per annum (12).

Other evidence for incomes in Wantage is scanty but would seem to support the Muster Roll figures. In 1522 Sir Thomas Odams, the chantry priest at Wantage, was assessed for goods of £7. Wills of 1507 (9), 1512 (13) and 1525 (14) mention the sum of £6 13s 4d as the annual payment for a chantry priest, whilst in wills of 1512 (also reference 13), 1518 (15) and 1526 (16) £6 per annum was mentioned. External evidence for the income of a yeoman was given in a sermon made by Hugh Latimer before Edward VI in about 1550. He spoke of his childhood with his father *"who was a yeoman ... (and) had a farm of £3 or £4 a year at the uttermost"* (17). Thomas Kepe of Grove (see Table), who styled himself 'Yeoman' in his will, was assessed in the Roll for £3.

Information on the wages of skilled local craftsmen does not start until 1565, with the first book of the Wantage Churchwardens' Accounts, and inflation had probably doubled wages in the interim, but the mason, the plumber and the slater each charged between 10d and 1s per day, whilst their less skilled assistants cost about 8d (18). Continuous employment would be unlikely, with bad weather, holidays and lack of demand reducing their incomes, but a minimum of 120 days employment in the year would have given them £5 to £6 per annum, which would suggest an annual income of about £3 per annum for a skilled worker in 1522 (19). The Churchwardens' Accounts would also suggest that a carpenter might have earned between £1 5s and £2 5s per annum in 1522 and Harry Curtes, who appears in the Table above, was assessed for £2. (*See endnote*) Although the Berkshire Muster Roll mentions very few trades the Babergh Roll is more informative and in that Roll a mason was assessed for £1, two plumbers for £4 each and nine of the ten tilers averaged £3 8s each (20).

Again, many of the "servants" in the Wantage section were assessed for £1 and in 1512 William Gydynges, the vicar of Wantage, specified that two of his servants were each to receive 10s for their half-year's wages, as well as other bequests (13). Widows who remained unmarried usually received between one third and one half of their husbands' estates, but in

1542 John Rude (21) allowed his wife £4 per annum if she remarried, as well as the furniture of her chamber, all her clothes and a lump sum of £20. John does not appear in the 1522 Roll, having moved to Wantage from Lincolnshire, but a Lady Mawde Rede, widow, was assessed in the Roll for £4 in goods, which would seem to be a comparable annuity. From other sources we find that the annual salary for the Steward of Priorshold Manor, Wantage, was £1 per annum in 1532 (22) and that in 1538 the rent of Priors Mill, Priors Mead and Cokkerellis Close cost the miller £6 per annum (23). The miller for Wantage cannot be identified but John Stone, who was probably the miller at Letcombe Regis, was assessed in the Roll for £12.

So it can be seen that wherever independent evidence exists for the size of incomes around 1522 it supports the figures given in the Muster Roll, and indicates that they are reasonable incomes for servants, craftsmen or professionals to have earned.

The arrangement of the Roll itself would also suggest that the figures for "goods" represent income per annum. For example, on folio 8 the entry for Watchfield states that the "*Abbott of Abington (is) cheef lord ther & his landes is by yere £24*", followed by other freeholders. Further down the page is the church stock of four marks (£2 6s 8d) followed by "goods" for Thomas Rede at £62 and "goods" for five other people with varying amounts and the whole page was totalled at £118 17s 8d. Tudor accounting may have been shaky but surely they would not have assumed that one could add income (from lands) to capital (for goods) and arrive at a sensible figure. This pattern is repeated throughout the document, with each page totalled, each Hundred totalled and, finally, each "book" totalled. The assumption must be that all the figures were for income and that the total of £13,689 9s 11d for the first five hundreds was an annual, repeating sum which could be taxed by the Crown again and again. Otherwise the figures would be meaningless within one financial year as capital was reduced by taxation.

It is more difficult to suggest what capital investment the income from "goods" represented. As discussed above the return on "lands" seems to have been about 5% per annum but it seems possible that the return from "goods" was much higher. The sums quoted by Hoskins for John Rudstone would suggest a return of about 20% per annum. If the figures for cash bequests from the Wantage wills represented between one third and one half of a testator's true estate, allowing for the gifts in kind and the residual estate to a wife and/or children, then 20% per annum would fit many of the examples.

However, of the 99 people in the Wantage section of the Muster Roll sworn for less than £2 about half were specified as "servant" and it is likely that the figures were their annual salary. Many of the others with small figures for "goods" may also have been wage earners and they would have needed no capital beyond a small investment in tools and working clothes. Even a craftsman such as a tailor or carpenter, although his own master, might have had very little capital invested in a workshop, working tools and some spare cloth or wood since customers often brought the raw materials with them, or paid in advance to purchase what was necessary. The Hungerford section of the Roll gives "*Thomas Mason, Glover. £4*" (24) and the Newbury section "*John Benet, wever, 40s*" (25). For craftsmen in this income range it is probably more realistic to multiply their "goods" by only 2 or 3 to arrive at an approximate assessment of their invested capital. A multiplier of 5 is probably more applicable to husbandmen, tanners, cordwainers and the like; as all these crafts would have required a longer term investment in stock or raw materials and would have given a slower rate of return. The examples in the Table suggest that such people were generally assessed at more than £5.

If the conclusions drawn from the above information are correct - that the Berkshire Muster Roll figures for "goods" were annual income - then there are disturbing implications when comparisons are made with inventories of a century later. My long term study is the wills and

inventories for Wantage 1500 to 1700, work which is still incomplete. The wills have been grouped by decades, transcribed and analyzed. There are 65 wills for the decade 1620-29, three of which are P.C.C. wills with no inventories and one, from Oxford Record Office, has lost its inventory. Probate was not necessary for anyone whose estate was worth less than £5. which omitted the poor and some wage-earners. Between 1620 and 1629 some 340 people died in Wantage. Of these, 118 were children and a further 49 were wives. who had no independent right to make a will. This left 173 people who were, apparently, male adults or single or widowed female adults, and therefore able to make a will. 108 of these left no wills. which suggests that they had estates worth less than £5. The distribution of the values of inventories for 1620-29 are set out in a pie-chart. The 108 people with no wills have been included the "less than £5" category. A chart of the distribution of "goods" from the 1522 Muster Roll is also shown. Direct comparison is difficult as the figures from the Muster Roll are probably income and the totals from the inventories are capital. To simplify this, the suggested multiplier of five has been used in allocating the different ranges; i.e. it is assumed that the income range of £2 to £4.99 in 1522 was equivalent to a capital range of £10 to £24.99 in 1620.

The first thing which is obvious is that there was a dramatic increase in the size of the lowest group, those with incomes of £1 or less or goods of £5 or less, between 1522 and 1620-29. This is slightly less startling if it is accepted that the majority of people who had incomes of less than £2 in 1522 were wage-earners. Comparing the bottom two categories from each chart we can then see that the probable "wage-earners" had risen from slightly more than half the population in 1522 to nearly three-quarters of the population in 1620-29. Another group who also seem to have suffered badly were the £2-£4.99 (£10-£24.99) sector. These would probably have been the small, independent craftsmen described above. Many of these had moved into the wage-earning group, working for someone else. Examination of the inventories of the people who remained in this group in 1620-29 shows that they were shoemakers, tailors, labourers, a weaver, several widows and even three yeomen. Nearly all had only a few or minimal goods or stock, and some had no trade goods at all.

The remaining four groups, £5-£100 (£25-£500+) had fared rather better, being reduced from slightly over one fifth of the population to slightly under one fifth, most of this loss occurring in the £5-£11.99 (£25-£59.99) group. What the charts disguise, though, is that the top sector in 1620-29 contained three people with goods well above £500. The wills for these three people were proved in P.C.C. and have no inventories, but all left substantial bequests and one mentioned that a bond was to be entered into for £3,000, which would suggest an estate of at least £1,500 (26).

Moreover, the comparison has been made so far as if all other factors had remained the same between 1522 and 1620-29 and this is not the case. Inflation had increased the cost of living by about 350% in the hundred years (27). Thus, not only had many people slipped down into the wage-earning class but nearly all had had their standard of living reduced by the rate of inflation. The only exceptions may have been the three persons mentioned above, with wills proved in P.C.C. In the absence of inventories it is not possible to be sure of the sizes of their estates but these three, two gentlemen-farmers and a tamer, left bequests in excess of £500 and were probably worth more than £1,500 each. Polarization had taken place. The poor had become poorer, the middling people had seen their standard of living decline and a few had remained rich, had kept up with inflation and had bought up lands and tenements from the rest. For most people though, the 'Golden Age' of the Tudors had been very base metal.

*(Endnote)* Since the time of writing evidence has come to light for daily rates paid to masons, carpenters and labourers in Wantage in 1478-79. During the financial year Michaelmas 1478

to Michaelmas 1479 the bailiff of Wantage Priorshold Manor paid for repair work to the watermill and "*le mille howse*" (28). It is probable that the work took place during June and July of 1479 and it lasted six weeks. The masons were paid 4d per day plus 2d per day for "tabling" (food and drink). The carpenters were also paid 4d per day but received fractionally less than 2d per day for tabling (11d for six days work). The labourers were paid 4d per day but did not receive an allowance for tabling. As the figures from the Churchwardens' Accounts for the 1560s and 1570s include tabling then the comparable figures for 1479 are 6d per day for masons, fractionally under 6d per day for carpenters and 4d per day for labourers. Using the figure of a minimum of 120 working days per year this would give figures of £3 per annum for masons, £2 18s 4d per annum for carpenters and £2 per annum for labourers as a minimum income.

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12. L. McGrandle, The Cost of Living in Britain, Wayland, London, (1973) pp. 29 & 52.
13. Will of William Gydynges, Vicar of Wantage, 1512. Public Record Office, P.C.C. Wills, 10 Fetiplace.
14. Will of John Aldworth, Tanner, of Wantage, 1525. Public Record Office, P.C.C. Wills, 33 Bodfelde.
15. Will of John Selwode, Mercer, of Salisbury & Wantage, 1518. Public Record Office, P.C.C. Wills, 8 Aylofffe.
16. Will of Robert Walter of Wantage, 1526. Public Record Office, P.C.C. Wills, 17 Porch.
17. Bishop Latimer, Sermons, Parker Society, 1844, p.101.
18. Wantage Churchwardens' Accounts, 1564-1656. Bodleian Library, M.S. Top. Berks., c.44. Folios 3v, 5v, 12 & 34v. A transcript was prepared by the author and copies

- deposited in the Bodleian Library and Oxfordshire and Berkshire Record Offices in 1985.
19. W. G. Hoskins, *op. cit.*, p.111.
  20. J. Pound, *op. cit.*, pp. 23, 24, 25, 36, 78, 80, 85, 86, 96 & 97.
  21. Will of John Rudde of Wantage & Winterton, 1548. Public Record Office, P.C.C. Wills, 16 Populwell.
  22. Copy of Grant of Stewardship of the Manor of Wantage to John Latton, 1532. The Aerary, St George's Chapel, Windsor: Muniments of the College of the Dean & Canons of Windsor, Stewards' & Bailiffs' Rolls, XV.53.32
  23. Lease to John Hidde of a water mill in Wantinge, 1538. The Aerary, St George's Chapel, Windsor: Muniments of the College of the Dean & Canons of Windsor, Bec Herluin, XV.31.26
  24. M. R. W. B., f. 105.
  25. M. R. W. B., f. 109v.
  26. Will of Thomas Grove, Gentleman, of Grove, Wantage, 1621. Public Record Office, P.C.C. Wills, 95 Dale.
  27. R. B. Outhwaite, Inflation in Tudor and Early Stuart England, Macmillan, London & Basingstoke, (1969) pp. 11-16.
  28. Compotus of Richard Notsale Collector of Wantage, 1478 to 1479. The Aerary, St George's Chapel, Windsor: Muniments of the College of the Dean & Canons of Windsor, Bec Herluin, XV.53.11

In addition the following wills are used in the Table:

- Thomas Kepe, Yeoman, of Grove, 1529. Berkshire Record Office, Archdeaconry of Berks 1508-1652, D/A1/1/98.
- Thomas Estmond, Yeoman, of Wantage, 1530. Berkshire Record Office, Archdeaconry of Berks 1508-1652, D/A1/1/244.
- Henry Curtes of Wantage, 1531. Berkshire Record Office, Archdeaconry of Berks 1508-1652, D/A1/1/247.
- Thomas Webbe of Charlton, 1532. Berkshire Record Office, Archdeaconry of Berks 1508-1652, D/A1/1/254.
- William Pynnell, Shoemaker, of Wantage, 1533. Berkshire Record Office, Archdeaconry of Berks 1508-1652, D/A1/1/287.
- Richard Huyck of Wantage, 1542. Public Record Office, P.C.C. Wills, 16 Spert.
- Agnes Huyke, Widow, of Wantage, 1546. Public Record Office, P.C.C. Wills, 15 Alen.
- John Anger of Wantage, 1550. Public Record Office, P.C.C. Wills, 11 Coode.
- Robert Aldworth, Tanner, of Wantage, 1556. Public Record Office, P.C.C. Wills, 8 Ketchyn.
- Alice Aldworth, Widow, of Wantage, 1557. Public Record Office, P.C.C. Wills, 17 Wrastley.
- Richard Clement, Yeoman, of Grove, 1557. Public Record Office, P.C.C. Wills, 17 Wrastley.
- Nycolas Radyshe of West Lockinge, 1558. Public Record Office, P.C.C. Wills, 48 Welles.
- Thomas Wirdnam of Charlton, 1559. Public Record Office, P.C.C. Wills, 21 Chaynay.
- John Ottes, Weaver, of Wantage, 1560. Wiltshire Record Office, Salisbury Diocesan Registry Miscellaneous Index to Wills, Dean & Canons of Windsor, Bundle 14.

Name	Status	Died	1522 assess.	SUBSIDIES				
				1523 paid	1540 paid	1545 assess.	1549 paid	1550 paid
John Aldworth	Tanner	1525	£50	50s				
Robert Walter	Yeoman?	1526	£60	50s				
Thomas Kepe	Yeoman	1529	£ 3					
Thomas Estmond	Yeoman	1530	£13 6s 8d					
Henry Curtes	Carpenter ?	1531	£ 2					
Thomas Webbe	Yeoman?	1532	£25					
William Pynnell	Shoemaker	1533	£1 13s 4d					
Richard Huyck		1542	£30		11s			
Agnes Huyck	Widow	1546	£ 5			£20		
John Anger	Yeoman?	1549	£ 1 *			£ 5	18s	
Robert Aldworth	Tanner	1556	} £80 +	80s	15s	£25	19s	21s
Alice Aldworth	Widow	1557						
Richard Clement	Yeoman	1557	£18		12s 6d	£12	13s	13s
Nycolas Radyshe	Yeoman?	1558	£ 20		15s	£15	26s	
Thomas Wirdnam	Yeoman?	1559	£10					
John Ottes	Weaver	1560	£ 2					

\* Father assessed at £60

+ included for information on possible size of wife's dower and/or residual estate

Name	WILLS			
	Cash bequests	Bequests in kind	Residual legatees	Property mentioned
John Aldworth	£ 85 15s 8d	Minimal	Trustees for six children to adulthood	
Robert Walter	£ 77 6s 9d	Extensive	Wife - ½ goods	
Thomas Kepe	9s 4d	Few	Wife - ½, children - ½	Lands
Thomas Estmond	£ 32 1s 10d	Moderate	Wife - ½, daughter - ½	House & lands
Henry Curtes	£ 2 2s 7d	Few	Wife	
Thomas Webbe	£ 25 14s 10d	Extensive	Wife	House & lands
William Pynnell	14s 10d	Few	Wife - ½, children - ½	House & land
Richard Huyck	£ 24 15s 8d	Minimal	Wife	
Agnes Huyck	£111 16s 8d	Minimal	Executors	
John Anger	£ 12 13s 4d	Considerable	Wife	Lands
Robert Aldworth	£219 2s 4d	Considerable	Wife	House
Alice Aldworth	£294 7s 6d	Considerable	2 sons, ½ each	}
Richard Clement	£ 18 16s 4d	Considerable	Wife - ½, son ½	
Nycolas Radyshe	£216 17s 0d	Extensive	2 sons, ½ each	House & lands
Thomas Wirdnam	£217 11s 4d	Considerable	Wife	House & lands
John Ottes	2d	Moderate	Wife	

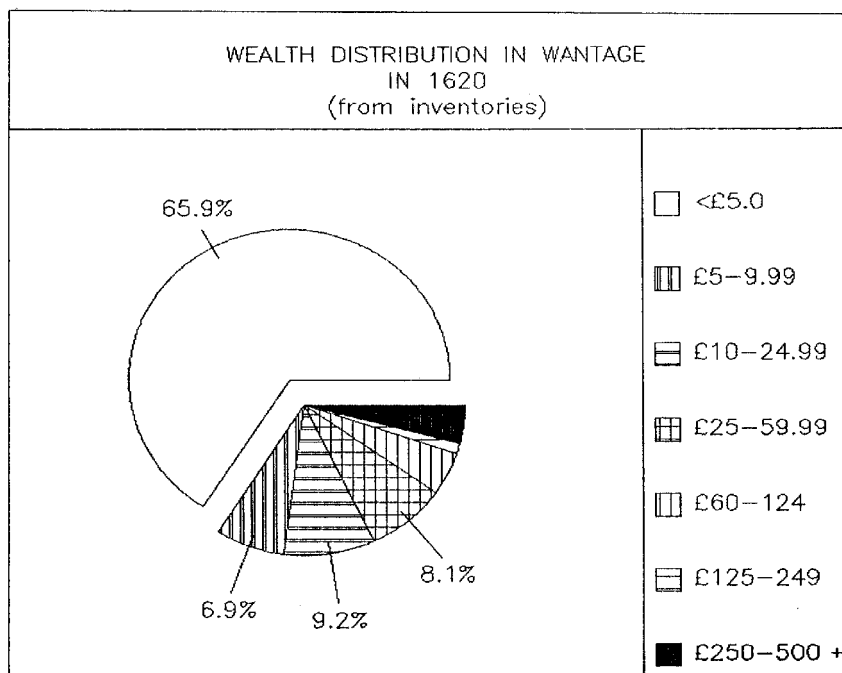
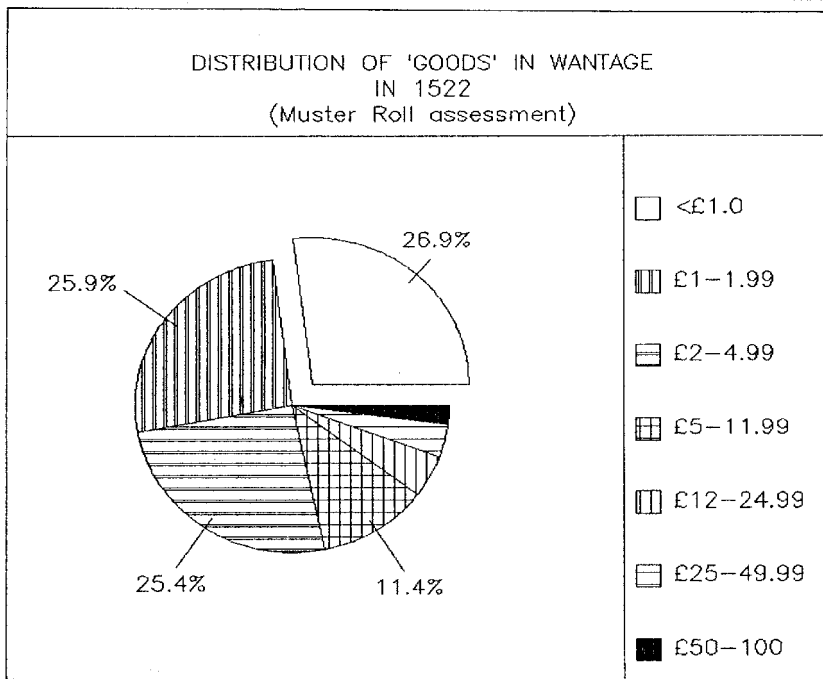
Table 1

## Shryuenh[a]m Hundr[ed]

Wachefeld	Li'	Abbott of Abington' cheef lord ther &	
valo[ur] of lond[es]		his land[es] is by yere	xxiiij li'
Stuard		S[ir] Thom[a]s Fetyplace knyght' Stuard ther	
	Li'	Maister haunes in lond ther	xliijs
	Li'	p[ri]or of Braddystok'	vjs viijd
	Li'	Abbott of Cicest[e]r	iijs iiijd
	Li'	Thom[a]s Mason	iiijs viijd
	Li'	Iohn' Fetyplace squier	xs
	Li'	the seid abbott of Cicest[e]r hath'	
		a tyth' ther by yer	vij li' vjs viijd
Church stok		It[e]m in the Church' box ther	iiij m[a]rk[es]
Valo[ur] of good[es]	Thom[a]s Rede householder of valo[ur]	lxij li'	& of hernes a Cote a Gorgiett
harnes			a salet & a par' of splynt[es]
	Will[ia]m Fissher	lxs	
	Iohn' Mondy	xs	
	Iohn Ienyns h[ouseholder]	lxs	
	Thom[a]s Ienyns	xls	
B	Thom[a]s Mason' h[ouseholder]	xj li'	t[enant] to thabbot of Abingdon'
	¶ S[u]m[ma] pag[inae]	Cxviiij li'	xvijs viijd

Sample page from the transcript of the 1522 Muster Roll for West Berkshire  
(from reference 8)





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