



Vale and Downland Museum – Local History Series

The 1522 Muster Role for West Berkshire (Part 5) -

Incomes in Tudor Berkshire: A Recapitulation

by Lis Garnish

A well reasoned counter argument is always useful in research, calling for a reappraisal of the evidence and possibly opening up new and profitable lines of thought. Having written an initial article in "Oxfordshire Local History" on the 1522 Muster Certificate for west Berkshire (1), and a follow up one suggesting that the figures for "goods" were income rather than capital (2), I was pleased to see Simon Kemp's article in reply (3). However, I finished reading the item with a sense of disappointment and confusion. Disappointment because he had produced very little in the way of extra evidence from the west Berkshire area, and confusion because he seemed to be countering propositions which I had not made. Kemp's article seems to contain two main lines of argument. Firstly, that the figures for "goods" given in the 1522 Muster Certificate were for "total wealth", not income, and secondly that the comparison I made with later probate inventories was unjustified. If he had confined himself to the second argument he might have had a valid point. The comparison was a speculative one in an attempt to set the figures in a wider context, although in the absence of other hard evidence I feel it was justifiable to try to draw some conclusions. However, his case for "goods" being capital, as opposed to income, does not seem to have been made.

Kemp's first criticism seems to be that two lists were required from the Muster Commissioners, that these were to be separate and that I have ignored this evidence (3). To support this he cites the case of Nycolas Radyshe and ascribes to me the suggestion that the figure of £20 for goods "was his yearly return from freehold land". This seems to arise from a misreading of my article because I made no such suggestion. Nycolas Radyshe had an income from freehold land of £2 8s 2d per annum, from property lying in Wantage, Priorshold and East Challow (4), and was probably a tenant of "The Priory", the "*parsonadg or mannor house*" of Priorshold Manor, which belonged to the Dean and Canons of Windsor (5). My suggestion was that Radyshe had additional income of £20 each year from other sources (4). The article made no mention of these sources but since Radyshe later purchased the lease of part of West Lockinge Manor, and in his will he disposed of "*cattell corne ... fower horses with the cart and harnes ... v score tegges ... vj kyne and vj bullocks*" and several quarters of barley amongst other bequests of money, it seems reasonable to suggest that his additional income came from the normal profits of farming (6).

Kemp mentions the terms laid down for the Commissioners in Essex, and suggests that they were very specific and required two lists. Whilst the surviving instructions are comprehensive there is evidence that they were open to various interpretations. The Essex Commissioners were required to find out "*who is Lord of every towne or hamlet ... and who bee Stewards. Item who be parsons of the same townes, and what the benefices be worth by yeere. Also who be owners of every parcell of land within any towne, hamlet, parish, or village ... with the yeerely value of every mans land within the same townes, hamlets,*

parishes and villages. And of every stock and stockes of Cattell, or other things that be occupied upon any ferme within the said townes ... and who be owners of them. Also what aliants or strangers dwell in any towne ... and where they were borne, and under whose dominion. Item, what occupation mystery, or substance they be of. Item, the value and substance of every person being of 16 yeeres and above ... as well spirituall as temporall. Also what pensions goeth out of any lands there to any religious or spirituall men.” (7).

In practice, not all this information was collected and there seems to have been confusion about the intended extent of the enquiry and the precise meaning of the words (8). Pound notes that in Babergh Hundred, Suffolk, whilst the clergy are recorded in the southern part of the hundred those in the northern section, “*including the larger settlements of Lavenham, Long Melford and Glemsford*”, are systematically omitted (9). Nor have I seen any suggestion that in any of the surviving returns were stocks of cattle recorded, unless these are the “stock of the Churche” recorded in some parishes but not in others. Again, whilst the returns for Rutland (10) and Babergh contain extensive information on occupations, it can be seen from the instructions above that this was actually only required for aliens. The compilers of the Berkshire returns seem to have ignored occupational information, even for aliens, except where it served to distinguish persons of the same name. Again, in the Berkshire Certificates some “*auncient demean*” land is recorded in the Faringdon area but not elsewhere, and whilst “*childrens stocks*” are frequently recorded in the northern parishes only one entry is found in the southern parishes. Hence, it can be seen that there were considerable disparities in the interpretation of the instructions. Whilst there are two monetary elements in the Berkshire list there were not two lists. The information was recorded consecutively and the two elements were not kept separate and were, indeed, considered sufficiently akin for their values to be totalled.

The strongest evidence, the appearance of the Certificate itself, has been ignored by Kemp. Since he accepts that the figures for lands are income per annum then how can he explain the totalling of these sums with the figures given for “goods”? (11). All the figures recorded in the Berkshire Certificate are totalled, lands, church stock and goods, not at the end of each section but for every page, page after page, hundred by hundred and book by book. At the end of each hundred is recorded not only “*The sum total for this hundred*” but “*hable men*”, “*harness*” and “*Alyens*”, figures which the Muster Certificate Commissioners were specifically requested to obtain. Nowhere is there any suggestion of separate totals for lands and for goods. Unless Kemp can suggest some aspect of Tudor accounting which would justify the totalling of income from land with capital from goods then we must conclude that all the sums are income.

Secondly, he suggests that I misinterpreted the contemporary evidence. He casts doubt on the probability of tanners being a wealthy group, questions whether the tanners in Wantage were representative and points out that yeomen and servants were not circumscribed fiscal groups (3). A recent study has been made of the tanning trade in Wantage by Alan Rosevear (12). This has demonstrated that the tanneries were probably larger and more important in the economy of the town than had been thought previously. If Kemp is saying that he has found no other wills for tanners in north Berkshire which can be matched to the Muster Certificates then it may only serve to emphasise the pre-eminence of the town in tanning even at this early point in time. However, in view of the importance of tanning in the economy of Abingdon, where about 15% of the wills for 1540 to 1640 examined were for people connected with the leather trade (13), I would be surprised if no comparable material survives.

Whether tanners, as a whole, could be regarded as wealthy is another question. Rosevear has studied nineteen wills for tanners in Wantage between 1500 and 1700 and, of these, ten were for members of the Aldworth family whilst another five were for people connected with them by marriage. For some there are inventories, whilst for others only the total of the bequests

can be considered. The bequests range between £85 15s 8d (John Aldworth, 1525) and £282 7s 8d (Richard Aldworth, 1582), whilst the inventories range between £5 15s 8d (Henry Goodman, 1614), £750 10s (Robert Aldworth, 1563), £324 15s 4d (Richard Aldworth, 1600) and £336 3s 4d (Richard Brooke, 1620) (12). Whilst there were poor tanners in Wantage (there is one other inventory of less than £20), it is clear that the town held a concentration of wealthy tanners and might be expected to have dominated the trade in the area. Taken in conjunction with the tanneries in Abingdon and Burford it is hardly surprising that there were very few opportunities for tanners in the villages of north Berkshire.

A “normal” range of values for tanners is demonstrated by the figures for 1522 for Babergh Hundred, an area dominated by the cloth trade. Here, two of the tanners were worth less than £1, four were worth between £1 and £5, three were worth between £5 and £25, two were worth between £25 and £50 and one was worth £66 13s 4d (14). In addition, four of the tanners had some income from lands. Hence, it can be seen that, whilst the figures for Wantage were biased towards the wealthier tanners, the Muster Certificate totals of £50 and £80 for John and Robert Aldworth were not exceptional. Hoskins points out that the leather trades were sufficiently wealthy to contribute between 11% and 23% of the ruling bodies in Coventry, Northampton, Leicester and Norwich (15), other areas where tanning was important.

Turning to the question of yeomen, no claim was made in my article that yeomen could only fall within the £3 to £4 range. Kemp misses the point that Latimer was making (16) - that in the days of his childhood a man with only £3 or £4 a year could call himself yeoman, support his family and educate his son sufficiently well for him to attain high office in later life. If Latimer’s words suggest any limit it is a downward one. A yeoman might be worth anything from £2 or £3 a year to several hundred pounds; his rank depended not so much on his wealth as on his neighbours’ perception of his status (17). Evidence from later probate material would suggest that a yeoman who was engaged in agriculture might have a holding anywhere from ten or fifteen acres to several hundred acres. Therefore we might expect to see a wide range of incomes for yeomen, and the men in Wantage who appear in the Muster Certificate and are positively identified from probate material as “yeomen” extend from Thomas Kepe with £3 in “goods” to Richard Clement with £18 (18).

The material for Babergh Hundred, where status or occupations are listed, ranges from Andrew Hobert, yeoman of Monks Eleigh, with £2 in goods, and William Norman, yeoman of Long Melford, with £3 6s 8d in goods, to William Goldinge senior, yeoman of Glemsford, Thomas Golding, yeoman of Cavendish and John Dike senior, yeoman of Long Melford, each with £100 in goods (19). The probate inventories from Wantage for the 1580s and 1590s, which are the earliest decades for which there are consistent runs of inventories, range from that of John Clement of Grove, 1586, with an inventory total of £28 7s 2d (20), to Steven Anger of Wanting Bryans, 1597, with a total of £352 1s (21). Whilst it is accepted that the comparison between the material from the Muster Certificates and later probate material is unsatisfactory, it seems reasonable to point out that incomes of £3 to £18 in 1522 are not inconsistent with capital of £28 to £352 in 1580-99. Robert Loder, farming at Harwell in the early 1600s, and one of the largest farmers in the area, expected to make a profit of two to three hundred pounds per annum (22), so incomes of £100 per annum for yeoman a century earlier are not unreasonable.

Similarly, Kemp points out that servants were not confined to assessments of £2 or less, but seems not to have read my initial article (1) in which I mentioned that there was a range of incomes for servants, though a much more limited one. In the Wantage section of the Muster Certificate forty one people are clearly designated as servants. Thirty five of these have goods (wages?) of £2 or less - two with 40s, one with 33s 4d, one with 26s 8d, fifteen with 20s, one with 18s, three with 16s, four with 13s 4d, five with 10s and three with nil. As was mentioned in the first article, four of the remaining servants worked for prosperous

householders with goods in excess of £20 - Richard Samson, worth 53s 4d, worked for John Aldworth, who was worth £26 13s 4d; John Leche, worth £3, worked for John Grove, worth £22; Richard Kete, worth £5, worked for William Frankelyn, worth £40 and William Hewes, worth £6 13s 4d, worked for Robert Walter, worth £60. In all these cases one might speculate that these were senior servants responsible for a great deal of the running of their masters' business.

More problematic are William More, worth 53s 4d, working for Thomas Selwudde, worth £3 16s 8d in lands and goods, and Peter Wayte, worth £6 13s 4d, working for William Barrat, worth £2. Thomas Selwudde may have been related to John Selwode, Mercer and Citizen of Salisbury, who died c.1518 leaving "*londes and tenementes ... in Wantage (&) elles where in Berkshire*" as well as well as nine other messuages and tenements in Salisbury, most of them in prime sites in the city centre (23). If Thomas Selwudde was receiving rents from properties in Salisbury these would not appear in this Certificate but they might account for his employment of a more highly paid servant. There is no comparable evidence to explain the discrepancy between William Barrat and his servant Peter Wayte but, bearing in mind that this Certificate covers only the western end of Berkshire, one cannot discount the possibility that he was also receiving income from elsewhere.

Kemp's precise point about George Clark of Deans Fee and Robert Christian of Rutland escapes me (3). If George Clark had goods (wages?) of 16s in 1522 and was paying on wages of 20s in 1525, and Robert Christian had goods (wages?) of £3 in 1522 and was working as a labourer on wages of £2 in 1525, this seems quite consistent. George Clark had improved his position a little whilst Robert Christian had ceased to be employed "by the year" and was working as a labourer "by the day". This would seem rather to be evidence of mobility of employment. My last article demonstrated that William Gydynges paid £1 per annum to each of his servants (2), and Kemp's evidence confirms a labourer paid £2 per annum in 1524. The executors of Thomas Wirdnam of Farnborough paid 53s 4d "to Richard Hatt his servant for wages and other Dewties" (24), Andrew Garrett, the bailiff of Wantage, received £4 "in yerely fee" in 1560 and 1563 (25) and sums of £6 and £6 13s 4d are regularly mentioned as "salary and wages" for a chantry priest (26), so wages of £5 or £6 for a senior servant would not seem excessive.

Thirdly, Kemp suggests that the other sources of evidence were misapplied, that wills do not give reliable or complete financial information, that debts are not covered and that the status of the testator is relevant (3). On the question of wills, I would claim no comparable financial status and specifically described them as "circumstantial evidence" (2), but I suggest that, where no inventories survive, wills are the only source to which one can turn. It would be much more satisfactory to see a study from an area where early inventories do survive, such as Newbury (27). However, whilst I would acknowledge that bequests must sometimes have been unrealistic, I would contend that most people were hard headed enough to know what they were worth, and that they would not burden their heirs with impossible tasks. I do not suggest that what they were "ultimately worth" can be assessed from the wills, simply that most people would limit their bequests to reasonable amounts that could be paid. Kemp quotes the example of Sir William Essex, one of the Commissioners of the Muster Certificate, who by over generous provisions in his will began a trail of debt for his family. Since the Essex family were "county gentry" they were members of a class from whom outward displays of wealth and open handedness were expected, and I can well believe that some overreached themselves and plunged their families into debt. On the other hand William Feteplace Esquire, another of the Commissioners, by will and deed established a chantry, school and almshouse in 1529, and made provision for a thousand poor persons to receive liveries of "*bred ale and flesshe*" on the day of his burial (28). The school and almshouses continued until 1732, when they were further endowed by Sir George Fettiplace and the rebuilt school continued to be used until 1913 (29). Nowhere have I seen any suggestion that the Fettiplace family were drawn into debt by these endowments and, I repeat

my point, most people were probably realistic about the provisions which could be made in their wills.

Some confusion is shown in Kemp's discussion of debts. Many wills do speak of "my debts paid" but with no indication in the inventory of the amount or nature of these debts. Of twenty nine wills from Wantage parish, proved between 1575 and 1595, twenty five refer in general terms to debts, most of them with a phrase such as "*paying Deliueringe performynge fulfillinge and Dyscharginge all my Dettas legacies & funerall Expences*" (30). Indeed, so regular is this phrase, or something like it, that one suspects that it was a standard formula to which one should not attach too much significance. All the twenty nine wills had inventories attached, and a further twenty one administration inventories survive for the same two decades. Of these fifty inventories only three mention debts, for £2 8s 9d, £2 15s and £4 17s 8d. Two further debts can be identified from wills, one for 2s 6d and the other for £3. This is hardly evidence for wide spread indebtedness.

Inventories certainly do contain lists of money owed, and in some cases these comprise a large proportion of the inventoried wealth. However, these are not debts - they are credits owing to the testators and as such are included with their goods and chattels. Thirteen of the fifty inventories and wills contain evidence of credits, ranging from 20s to £35 5s, and testators were justified in including these within their bequests, as with the "*iiij li' that my grand Mother owthe me*" bequeathed by Thomas Barr of Grove (31). If Kemp's point is that credits may not have been recoverable then evidence would be needed from Accounts of Administration documents. Only three of these can be found for Wantage parish between 1500 and 1640 and two contain credits in the inventory. Neither Administration Account suggests that the credits were not recovered but I would hesitate to draw conclusions from so small a sample.

Fourthly, Kemp criticises my use of the daily rates noted in the churchwardens' accounts to assess the annual income of tradesmen and cites the specific example of Bartholomew Yate, mason, who died in 1636 (3). I did not suggest that masons, plumbers and slaters were day labourers - they were paid "by the day" because that was how the churchwardens calculated what they owed them. I stated specifically that they were skilled local craftsmen, which would place them above the day labourer class (2). However, only a large building project, such as a cathedral or a country house, would have had masons, plumbers and slaters permanently "on the roll". Bartholomew Yate worked for many people in the area, the Churchwardens of Wantage and the Governors of the Town Lands of Wantage among them, and at the time of his death he was owed £4 for work at Letcombe church (32). From the Accounts of the Churchwardens of Wantage it would appear that his busiest two years were 1630-31 and 1631-2, during which time he seems to have worked for about twenty days each year for them (33). However, including other projects, he was probably fully employed for most of the year, as were the skilled craftsmen in 1522, but 120 days was suggested as a realistic minimum for calculating annual income, based on Hoskins (34). Rappaport discusses wages paid to skilled and semi-skilled construction craftsmen in London (35) and concludes that 8d and 5d a day respectively were average for the hundred years up to 1544. I suggested sums of 6d and 3d to 5d for workers in Wantage, based on the Churchwardens' Accounts, and this does not seem disproportionate.

The fifth complaint which Kemp makes is that inventories cannot be used to show annual income and that occupations cannot be inferred from the value of inventories, particularly as freehold land is omitted (3). I did not mention in my article that the possession of land, or even a copyhold, might lead to a will being made where the inventoried goods were worth less than £5 because it was the relationship between non-land income in 1522 and goods alone in 1620-29 which was being examined so I felt that the information was extraneous. Examples of wills being made where land was involved but the inventoried goods were worth less than £5 certainly can be quoted from Wantage parish, such as that

of John Anger, son of John Anger of The Crown (1595), who owned land in Grove and Letcombe Regis but whose inventory came to £1 16s 8d (36), or Johan Palmer, widow (1596), who seems to have had a small copyhold at Charlton and whose inventory came to £4 1s 8d (37).

No suggestion was made by me that the value of inventories can be used to show annual income, the assumption is Kemp's. I stated clearly that "*direct comparison is difficult as the figures from the Muster Roll are probably income and the totals from the inventories are capital*" (2). Justifiable criticism might be made of the attempt to make a comparison, of the boundaries chosen to define each section in the pie charts, or of the decade chosen, but it is specious to criticise a thesis not made in the article. To make a comparison between incomes in 1522 and goods in 1620-29 is perhaps impracticable, but since the contention is that the Muster Certificate figures are income from sources other than land and, as Kemp points out, the probate inventories list only capital goods not lands, it was felt that some relationship might be discerned. For a mason like Bartholomew Yate a great part of his income would be earned by his own physical skill and experience, items which could not be quantified in his inventory, except where reflected in the £4 owed to him by Letcombe church. The capital which he had invested in 3s worth of bricks and, possibly, the £4 in wood and faggots does not indicate his earning power, but the furnishings of his house and the total for his inventory might give us an indication of his standard of living. Since the "incomes" (goods) recorded in 1522 are also a reflection of a standard of living I felt it was worthwhile to try to compare them. The subdivisions chosen for the pie charts might have been different but since the ranges to be covered were from nil to £80 and from less than £5 to £500+ the units chosen seemed to offer the clearest information without using impossibly small fractions. It might have been better to use the inventory figures for the decade 1580-89, since these are closer in time to the Muster Certificate, but it was felt that a hundred year interval was more likely to reveal changes.

Nor did I suggest "*that people in certain broad occupational groups can be identified by the value of their inventories*" (3). There is no need to identify people in occupational groups by the value of their inventories as frequently their occupations are mentioned in the preamble. For those whose occupations are not specified the information can often be obtained from the Burial Register, from references in other wills, from the Churchwardens' Accounts, from the Accounts of the Governors of the Town Lands of Wantage or from internal evidence in the inventories, such as "*the loome with his furniture*" in the inventory of Richard Jackson, 1608 (38), or "*all the mearcerye ware*" in the inventory of John Westbrook-Willis, 1606 (39).

The figures which Kemp gives for Muster Certificate assessments and values for inventories for John Blagrove of West Bockhampton, Thomas Jennings of Watchfield and John Young of Ashbury are more helpful (3), and are the sort of statistics which I had hoped that other people would produce to test the hypothesis that the Muster Certificate figures were income. Unfortunately he does not indicate when the inventories were made - within a year of the Muster Certificate, within five years or ten years? Time and circumstances might alter a man's income and it would be helpful to know when these people died.

Kemp's reiteration of his criticism "*that certain trades and status groups can(not) be identified from a given range of inventory values*" leads me to conclude that he must mean that they do not conform to a given range of inventory values. With this I would concur, whilst pointing out that I did not argue otherwise. The range of values of a hundred inventories for Wantage parish for the groups mentioned in my second article are set out below. There is little profit in trying to argue about a point on which we are both agreed - that every occupational group will show a range of wealth, as was mentioned above in the cases of tanners, yeomen and servants. If, on the other hand, studies from other parishes have

produced evidence of a specific trade for a person named in the Muster Certificate then it **would** be profitable to relate this to the figure for “goods”. Do the Muster Certificate figures represent incomes between nil and £600 and do they relate realistically to identified trades (40)?

INVENTORY TOTALS, WANTAGE PARISH, 1575-1628										
Occupation	No.	Least			Greatest			Average *		
		£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d
Labourers	9	1	17	10	21	3	0	7	16	9
Tailors	10	1	18	8	94	7	10	12	10	7
Weavers	3	11	4	8	16	1	6	13	10	3
Glovers	4	4	18	2	45	12	0	14	18	4
Shoemakers	12	3	17	6	47	14	2	16	14	1
Carpenters	7	8	6	0	145	9	8	17	19	8
Husbandmen	28	6	13	6	276	3	0	52	13	5
Yeomen	19	13	1	4	385	14	8	109	15	0
Tanners	8	5	15	8	336	3	4	202	6	0

100

* *Average after excluding the greatest and least values shown*

Whether my hypothesis is correct or not, it is important to try to establish what the figures for “goods” represent. We cannot expect to gain a wider picture of society in 1522 unless we can put some flesh on the bones. Evidence from other parishes is needed to try to turn the statistics into realities. If it can be proved or disproved that incomes of up to £600 were current in west Berkshire in 1522 then something useful will have come out of the debate; if the figures are for income then perhaps our ideas on available wealth should be revised; if the figures are for capital then how do we explain the increase between 1522 and the end of the century? Only more detailed studies of other parishes can settle the matter.

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This article was first published in "Oxfordshire Local History", Vol. 3, No. 6, Oxfordshire Local History Association, (Spring 1991), pp228-239 and revised November 2000.

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Vale and Downland Museum Trust, 19 Church Street, Wantage, Oxfordshire, OX12 8BL
 Telephone: 01235 771447 e-mail: museum@wantage.com