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The Wool Trade and the Woolmen of Gloucestershire

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THE WOOL TRADE AND THE WOOLMEN OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE

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THE wool of Gloucestershire, and of the Cotswolds in particular, was of great extent and value in medieval times, and the evidence of the wealth acquired by the woolmen or merchants who carried on so profitable a trade, and the generous use which they made of that wealth, remains apparent to us today. It is therefore, perhaps, permissible for one who belongs by birth to that delightful district to offer a few notes on the subject to the Members of this Society, in whose area the Cotswolds are situate.

Besides playing a prominent part in the prosperity of the Cotswolds in medieval times, and indeed of Gloucestershire as a whole, wool was also of great national importance, especially in the days when taxes or subsidies were imposed by ruling monarchs, either with or without the concurrence of Parliament.

There is not much documentary evidence relating to trade and commerce in England until Norman times. There are certainly well-known references in Bede[1] of visits in the 7th century to Gaul and Rome for weavers and glass-makers, and for books, vestments, images and pictures, and also other indications that our Saxon ancestors were beginning to take some interest in matters of trade, but as regards our special subject references to wool or sheep are not numerous.

[1] Stevenson's edition, p. 607.

After the arrival of the Normans there was some advance in matters of trade generally, and one naturally thinks in the first place of that great record of the country with which Gloucester is associated—the Domesday Survey, ordered to be prepared by William the Conqueror and his gemot which met at Gloucester, when he spent Christmas 1085-6 there.

That valuable record has been so exhaustively examined by the Rev. C. S. Taylor, one of the most learned and honoured of my predecessors, in his *Analysis of the Domesday Survey of Gloucestershire* issued in 1889, that nothing can be gleaned from the actual Survey which is not summarized there, and for references to my subject in connexion with the Domesday Survey I gladly acknowledge indebtedness to Mr Taylor. So far as the Survey for Gloucestershire is concerned, it is a record of real property only, and no mention of live-stock, etc., is found in it. Very little help is obtained even as to the extent of the pasture land in our county. The total acreage of the county in its modern condition and use, and omitting the water area of the Severn, etc., is roughly 750,000, whereas in Domesday the total acreage is recorded as 550,000.[2] The material point to us is that this is divided into arable 469,000 acres, meadow 1,800 acres, and wood 80,000 acres. For the purpose of giving any light as to sheep farming these figures are negligible, especially when compared with the acreage of the county as returned in 1874—when arable was stated to be 341,000 acres and permanent pasture as 307,000 acres.

Mr Taylor says[3] 'Whether or not the Cotswold country was a sheep-farming district at the date of Domesday, the Survey passes by pastoral pursuits and pastoral sources of wealth almost without notice, and deals with the county as though the population were supported entirely by

[2] *Analysis*, p. 227.
[3] *Analysis*, p. 61.

agriculture ; of course the land under plough tillage would require manuring, and no doubt it was manured by turning such flocks and herds as the lord or tenants possessed on to it after the harvest was reaped, but so far as we can gather from the Survey, the plough and not the sheep was the mainstay of the support of the people on the hills as well as in the vale ; land was valued either for its worth under tillage, or for its capability for producing food for the plough-teams ; the plough was at work wherever the land was cleared of wood, and there was any possibility of growing a crop'.

As regards sheep Mr Taylor says[4] ' In only two instances does the Survey intimate the existence of sheep in Gloucestershire ; the Queen was entitled to the fleece of the sheep on the Royal Manor of Cirencester, no doubt an analogous payment to the mark of gold which she was entitled to receive, as at Bristol, from Royal manors whose annual value exceeded one hundred pounds ; and at Kempsford the sheepfold produced one hundred and twenty pounds (pensas) of cheese. The sheep does not occur in any of the rents in kind, cows and pigs and honey and hens occur, but the sheep is not mentioned, except in the two cases noticed'.

It seems, though, that although the Survey of our county does not record live-stock systematically, some information of the kind was collected but not included in the final record, possibly as being considered matter of but passing importance. But as in some other counties, *viz.* Devon, the number of cattle on each estate is given, we can readily agree that it is a matter of regret that the figures for Gloucestershire are not stated ' for they would have thrown a great deal of light on the vexed question of the date of the introduction of the special cultivation of wool on the hills'.

A century after Domesday, in 1193, there is evidence

[4] *Analysis*, p. 69.

that wool was becoming a prominent commodity of value.[5] When Richard I on returning from a crusade was taken prisoner by the Duke of Austria, the ransom demanded was found by borrowing one year's wool from abbeys of the Cistercian Order, and of the religious houses of the Order of Sempringham. It seems that wool soon became in frequent use as a ready means of raising money for the ruling monarchs of the time; this took the form in the first place of a licence by the king for export or import. As early as 1198 the Chamberlain of London rendered an account of fines on merchants for exporting wool without leave of Richard I—one instance being a fine of £20 from William of Bologne for 45 sacks of wool which were taken at Hull. Mr Hubert Hall says[6] 'It would seem as though the first traces of the system of collecting a certain or uncertain toll from commodities of the land, or from foreign imports, were connected with the office of chamberlain of the king's household, or chamberlain of the cities of London and Sandwich . . . The crown had quickly made the discovery that a permanent revenue was more easily raised from personal property than from real estate, and of the latter in the shape of a toll prepaid in hard cash, rather than of a more or less vexatious tithe in kind. Naturally the produce formally selected as the subject of this organized taxation was that which chiefly represented the superfluous wealth of the country, exported to foreign countries in payment of such necessaries or luxuries as were required for home consumption. From very early times this staple export was recognised as consisting of wool, wool-fels [undressed skins], and leather. Wool, then, and hides were probably the chief source of Customs revenue to the crown at the time when it was also in receipt of frequent fines for license to export less tangible

[5] John Smith, *Chronicon Rusticum-Commerciale, or Memoirs of Wool*, 1747, p. 12.

[6] *Antiquities of the Exchequer*, 1891, pp. 200–201.

articles of commerce'. It is mainly from the records that remain as to these taxes or imports that we can glean information as to the Trade.[7]

By the end of the 13th century, when England and Flanders were on unfriendly terms, all commerce was prohibited, but in 1275 certain Florentine merchants were permitted to carry over to Flanders 1068 sacks of wool, paying therefor to the king 10 shillings per sack.

In 1291 Edward I ordered that all wool which should be sold unto strangers should be brought into Sandwich, obviously for collection of such charges as were then imposed. The first definite customs revenue was a payment of half a mark to the king for every sack of wool carried out of the port of Lynn, and collectors were appointed and the sheriffs of the various counties commanded that all merchants in their several bailiwicks should carry merchandize to Lynn. In like manner, collectors (customers as they were called) were appointed for the several towns or ports of Newcastle on Tyne, Kingston upon Hull, Boston, Yarmouth, Ipswich, Southampton, Bristol and London.

Then Edward II imposed on every sack of wool carried out of the port of Bristol a certain duty of half a mark,

[7] Dealings in wool in Bristol must have taken place as early as 1188. By charter of John, Count of Moreton, of this date, there was a grant of liberties to the burgesses, and no strange merchant was to buy within the town of any strange man hides or corn or wool except of the burgesses. Henry III in 1255 granted to his worthy men of Bristol in aid of enclosing the town for its security and defence, the right to place duties on merchandise coming into Bristol, this including one halfpenny for every weigh of wool saleable. For comparison of value the duty on 5 sheep brought in for sale was to be one halfpenny, and on a horse-load of cloths one farthing. In this way duties assisted local works, and this continued for another century, Edward II by charter giving the right to levy duties to assist in paving the town. Later on the duties were granted and applied in repairing and amending the wall or the quay of the town. By this time not only wool but manufactured articles 'cloth, canvas, cloth of silk with gold', etc., were subject to duty, showing that the clothing trade was becoming established.

and if merchants defrauded the king of his customs they forfeited their goods as so uncustomed. Thus, in the 13th century, duties on exports were practically limited to this half mark (6*s* 8*d*) upon every sack of wool, and all other exports were insignificant.[8] What is of importance is that whereas previous to 1297 these imposts had been made by the crown, they were after prolonged contests subject to parliamentary sanction.

When we get to the 14th century, and to the long reign of Edward III (1327–1377), who has been well described as the father of English Commerce, the evidence as to the increasing value of wool, and the consequent increase of sheep-farming is more extensive and conclusive. Indeed the 14th century saw a revolution in the quiet annals of the countryside, and in agricultural pursuits. The usual manor contained arable land, pasture land, and common land, or land worked for the lord's own benefit, and land which the free and unfree tenants of the manor were allowed to till for themselves. Most manors were cultivated by unfree labour, and the lord's estate was rich not merely if the acreage was great, but if it was well stocked with men. At this time the work of the manor went on almost entirely without interchange of money, payments were made in kind or in labour. But as money became somewhat more plentiful there began the practice of commutation of service, and it is said that in Henry I's day the Exchequer took much of its payments in kind, but in Henry II's time money was usually paid, though probably the change would not have been so great in rural districts. This gradually led to a considerable number of labourers being available for hiring. But the Great Plague of 1349 did more than anything else possibly to effect the sweeping change which the middle of that century saw. This appalling pestilence destroyed about one half of the population ; agriculture was paralysed, and scarcity of food

[8] Hall, *op. cit.*, 202.

followed. A rise in prices was inevitable, and in consequence a rise of wages, which placed landowners in a difficult position. Parliament in alarm provided that labourers were not to ask or take higher wages. Landowners began to let land at a rent, leaving it to these tenants—really the forerunners of the farmers of today—to find and pay the labourer. Henceforward there came into existence the triple division of landlord, farmer and labourer, whereas before there had only been two—the landowner and the labourer. The labourers, in the face of the hard laws passed by Parliament, soon manifested a strong desire for change and seeing other parts of the country. In their own village nothing was to be got but the same wages as before the plague, whereas in some other parts they might, possibly, get the higher wages which were offered by some in defiance of the Statute of Labourers. Extreme measures were taken to prevent this, and to punish labourers who went out of their own districts, but the exodus continued, and those who remained became mutinous, and their discontent culminated in the peasant revolt of 1381.[9] After this had been quelled with an iron hand, the position remained much the same, —labour was more expensive, and the problem was how less labour could be ensured. Arable farming had before monopolized most of the labour. At this same time woollen manufactures were rapidly extending, and there was great demand for wool abroad. Sheep farming therefore seemed to the landowners a profitable solution, requiring much less labour and consequent expense. Considerable quantities of arable land were therefore converted into pasture, and land which was unenclosed, including much common land, where the lord and the labourer had pastured their cattle, was surrounded with hedges. Arable land had been mostly open fields, held by villagers in small strips, and the lords' demesne lands were mixed up

[9] *Medieval England*, 1924, pp. 332–3.

with this also. Many owners got rid of these separate holdings and converted what they themselves retained into pasture for sheep. Such arable land as remained was let to the new type of tenants before referred to.

The results of this great change in rural England was perhaps that the better methods of cropping in enclosed fields enabled sufficient corn for a time at least to be raised to provide for home needs, but it meant that henceforth sheep farming and not corn growing became of primary importance as far as agriculture was concerned. Those who could not find employment on the land went to the towns, others eked out a subsistence by occasional employment on the land and by working at the loom and setting their women to spin. The wool of the sheep became the mainstay of the country. When arable land was abandoned by the landowners and let off, they generally retained the pasture for sheep farming. Merton College did this on its Northumberland estates long after the cultivation of the soil was left in other hands. New College also did so with their property. It is said that the produce of wool increased so much that it was stored in the churches.

Thorold Rogers says 'the dearest years for wool are those of 1277, 1320, 1375 and 1377, in each of which the price exceeded 3*s* the clove'—invariably 7lbs., though in some districts it might vary a little, or not more than 5*d* the pound in money of that time. 'Its lowest price was in the year following the Great Plague, when it fell to 1*s*, or a little more than 1¾*d* pound'.[10] When it is remembered that the price of a sheep in the 13th century was 1*s* 8*d* and that a fleece of wool generally weighed about 9 or 10 lbs., the value of the latter to the sheep farmer was considerable. Besides the wool produced by landowners and their tenants a not inconsiderable amount was also available from the monastic establishments, and especially

[10] *History of Agriculture and Prices*, I (1876), 384.

those of the Cistercian Order. We have already referred to the loan from these establishments of a year's wool to provide ransom for Richard I in 1193; merchants from Italy were at this time and in the following century engaged in contracting with religious houses in England for yearly supplies of wool.[11]

We have seen that the value of this commodity for taxation revenue soon became apparent, and that this was taken full advantage of. The manufacture of cloth also, which had up to this time been mainly outside England, gradually found a footing here.

As Thomas Fuller quaintly puts it: 'The King and State began now to grow sensible of the great gain [t]he Netherlands got by our *English* Wool, in memory whereof the *Duke* of *Burgundy* not long after instituted the order of the *Golden Fleece*, wherein indeed the *Fleece* was ours, the *Golden* theirs, so vast their Emolument by the Trade of Clothing. Our king therefore resolved, if possible to reduce the Trade to his own Country, who as yet were ignorant of that Art, as knowing no more what to do with their Wool, then the sheep that weare it'.[12] The king encouraged Flemish workmen to settle in England, and placed them in various districts, including Gloucestershire, and slowly but surely the clothing manufacture became established and successfully carried on. With the growth of the production of wool and its export, further arrangements were made for the purpose of regulating and ensuring the payment of the duty on export.

It was in the first place ordered by Edward II that wool should only be exported from England to Antwerp. A few years later (1320) several places in England are named as those from which wool might be exported. Then for reasons which are not very clear export was to be at St. Omer, shortly afterwards again altered to Bruges.

[11] *Medieval England*, p. 580.

[12] *Church-History of Britain*, 1655, book III, pp. 110–11.

Curiously, when Edward III came to the throne in 1327 all these provisions were cancelled, and 'the Staples beyond the Sea and on this side ordained by Kings in times past, and the pains thereupon provided shall cease, and that all merchant-strangers and privy may go and come with their merchandises into England, after the tenor of the Great Charter'.[13] This was in connexion with the policy which led the king to secure Flemish workmen by the promise of privileges, and which led as before stated to the foundation of the woollen manufacture in England, for cloth woven here previously was not only small in quantity but poor in quality. Soon after this time (1341) it is recorded that there were ten wool merchants in Cirencester,[14] and that raw wool and cloth were largely marketted at Winchcombe, Cirencester and other country fairs.[15] The policy of Edward III was soon to change again. In 1347 he seized Calais, which remained in English hands until 1558. All the French inhabitants were banished, and the place was peopled exclusively with English. The result was, as so tersely put by Sir Edward Coke, that Calais 'was governed by Englishmen and by English laws, some particular customs excepted'. The importance of the place from the point of view of trade was that it was obviously a good distributing centre for exports to the Continent, and it was at once fixed upon as the port to which all exports from England should go. Then came the Act of 1353 (27 Edward III, stat. 2) commonly called 'A Statute of the Staple', which after reciting that on account of the notorious damage which had come to the realm of England because the Staple was holden out of

[13] 2 Edward III, ch. 9.

[14] E. A. Fuller, *Trans. B.G.A.S.* IX, 320.

[15] Defoe in his *Tour through Britain* speaks of the great trade in wool in Cirencester (vol. II, p. 268), and of the ancient fairs being the centre of commerce to all the Cotswold district, 20,000 sheep being generally sold at one fair—Stow-on-the-Wold (p. 261). He says the Cotswold sheep formed the main wealth of the hill district, so eminent for the best of sheep and the finest wool in the kingdom.

the said realm, and also for the great profit which should come to the said realm if the Staple were holden within the same, went on to provide—'First that the staple of wools, leather, woollfels and lead, growing or coming forth within our said realm and lands, shall be perpetually holden at the places underwritten, that is to say, for England at Newcastle upon Tine, York, Lincoln, Norwich, Westminster, Canterbury, Chichester, Winchester, Exeter and Bristow . . . and not elsewhere ; and that all the said woolls, as well old as new, woollfels, leather and lead, which shall be carried out of the said realm and lands, shall be first brought to the said Staples, and there the said wooll and lead betwixt merchant and merchant, or merchant and others, shall be lawfully weighed by the standard ; and that every sack and sarpler of the same woolls so weighed be sealed under the seal of the Mayor of the Staple'. This Act further provided that any English might buy and sell wool at the Staple, but only foreign merchants be allowed to take it out of the realm. At the towns named there were to be elected a mayor of the Staple and two constables, in the same manner as at Calais, their duty being to see that the laws and customs of the Staple were maintained. The mayor of the Staple was not necessarily the mayor of the town. He was to be elected annually by the commonalty of the merchants who traded in the town, and his duty was to keep the peace, and arrest offenders in the Staple for debt, trespasses and other contracts, and to inflict punishment.[16]

[16] The regulations of the Staple were very stringent as to the weighing of wool and by special weights—7 lbs. (the clove) and 14 lbs. (the stone). These were finely made and marked, but examples of the early ones are not known, as when a new set of standard weights was needed it was usual to call in the old and melt them down for the new. The three periods of reform of weights were the reigns of Henry VII, Elizabeth, and the Georges. The 1495 statute of Henry VII provided that the cost should come from the king's purse and that the weights should be of brass. There were some 43 towns to which each new weight

[*Continued on p.* 76

In the case of inland Staple towns, after weighing and the payment of duty, the wools, after sealing up by the mayor of the Staple, were to be sent to specified ports for export, and in the case of the others—Newcastle on Tyne, Chichester, Exeter and Bristol—it was enacted that the wools 'be but once weighed by the Standard betwixt merchant and merchant, or merchant and other, in presence of our Customers there—and an indenture shall be made betwixt the Mayor of the Staple being in the Port of the Sea, and our Customers there, of all the woolls and lead so weighed . . . which shall come to the said Staples to pass there. And the same woolls . . . customed and cocketed, and the customs thereof duly paid to our said Customers in all the said Ports, that is to say, of Denizens . . . half a mark of a sack of wooll . . . of aliens ten shillings . . . then the said merchandises shall be carried by merchants strangers, which have bought the same, and not by Englishmen, Welshmen, nor Irishmen to the Parts beyond the Sea'. Although after this date and up to 1423 changes came—the Staple at Calais being disestablished, and then after a short interval re-established

had to be sent, and local M.P's were responsible for carrying them, receiving for the duty and all expenses 2*s* per day. Testing was done by the mayor or chief officer at least twice a year, a special mark or seal being used to certify correctness, and the letter H crowned also. There are 2 or 3 weights of this period (Henry VII) known, one being in the University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge, to which I am indebted for the illustration. The Royal Arms seem to have been generally used on these weights, which were handsome—a tribute possibly to the value of wool to the Royal and National Exchequer. The hole at top was for a leather strap, by means of which it could be carried on horseback to farms, etc., by the Tronator or Officer whose duty it was to weigh wool and receive the duty. No bronze wool weights prior to this date are known, and none after George III. There are in the Art Gallery, Bristol, 5 wool weights—one William and Mary (1689–1694), one William (1694–1702), one Queen Anne (1702–1714) and two Georgian. The local verification mark C.B. with super-imposed crown appears on these.

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WOOL-WEIGHTS, *temp.* HENRY VII

in the University Museum of Archaeology and of Ethnology, Cambridge

Left: length, 13.5 cm.; width, at top, 10.4 cm. Weight, 6 lb. $15\frac{1}{8}$ oz.
Right: length, 14 cm.; width, at top, 10.5 cm. Weight, 6 lb. $15\frac{1}{4}$ oz.

By courtesy of the Museum

more than once—from 1423 it remained without interruption the Staple town to which alone wool could be exported until it ceased to belong to England (1558); but it is important to note that during this latter period of 135 years the restriction of exporting by foreign merchants was removed, and exporting was by English merchants alone.

The statute of the Staple, passed in 27 Edward III, provides (ss. 21 to 27) for the appointment, besides the mayor and 2 constables, of correctors to make and record bargains, two merchant aliens to be also chosen to sit as associates in judgment with the mayor and constables, and six mediators in questions between buyers and sellers. All other town-franchises were to give way to those of the Staple, fairs in English towns being excepted. It was practically only the royal authority and royal licences granted to individuals for special trading which overruled the administration of the Staple. The custom duty was paid in the first place by the Staple and repaid by individual merchants. The ordinances contain stringent regulations as to packing wool, weighing and non-mixing of old and new wool.

At the Staple at Calais royal officers were appointed to check adherence to the regulations, and to inspect wool brought there, and this served as a check upon the report of the customs officers in England. If an officer neglected his duty the punishment was severe; if a merchant did wrong his wool was forfeit to the king. There was to be free intercourse by sea and land, and freedom from piracy or interference in trading, the English to have the right to sue in Flemish courts, and the Flemish creditors to sue in English courts. Yet it seems that wool was sometimes misdescribed or adulterated, and complaint was made on the one hand that the English bought by a big pound weight, and sold by a small pound, and on the other hand that wool which had not paid the subsidy, nor passed through the Staple or the merchants of the Staple, found its way into Flanders.

It would seem then that as regards the wool trade the procedure would be that the wool merchants or woolmen would collect in the villages all that could be spared of the chief commodities—wool being of this class—and convey them to the Staple towns where the customs would be collected with ease, and where export could be arranged. So far as foreign merchants were concerned they would know where to obtain goods for export, and to which towns in return they might import. It was only after considerable effort on the part of Parliament that this established and recognized method was secured. As the nearest Staple town to the Cotswolds was Bristol it might have been assumed that wool from the district would have found its way to Bristol for export. In so far as the official records of the Staple of Bristol are concerned it is unfortunate that none of these for the 14th or 15th centuries exist. The earliest which have been found and are now in the archives department of the Corporation, commence with a court book and two or three books relating to actions in the 16th and 17th centuries. There is in the *Little Red Book of Bristol* an ordinance of the 14th century which deals with the taking out of the town wool soaked in oil for spinning and combing, and warns against a practice which had grown up of taking the wool dry and then oiling outside the city and bringing it back.[17] The Little Red Book also contains a memorandum (1387) as to the weights of the Staple court.[18]

The only other reference is to the death during his year of office (1436) of John Milton late mayor of the town of Bristol, and of the Staple of Bristol,[19] *viz.*, on the day of the feast of the purification of the Virgin Mary (2 February) ' after whose death the reverend and discreet men Thomas Fische and William Canynges, constables, and the Commonalty of Merchants, both native and foreign, of the

[17] Ed. by Francis C. Bickley, 1900, II, 29.
[18] II, 236. [19] I, 178.

aforesaid Staple being summoned and gathered together in the Council House on Friday the morrow of the aforesaid feast . . . of their common consent elected from among themselves the honest and discreet man Nicholas Devenysshe to be mayor of the Staple [of Bristol] for the remainder of the aforesaid year, to perform and order what belongs to that office'. So far as can be gathered the mayor of Bristol was always elected the mayor of the Staple, and this was so in the case of Devenysshe who was also appointed to be mayor of Bristol on the death of John Milton.

The exporters of wool encountered considerable danger in the sea voyage, especially during the time when England was not on good terms with Continental countries. The most interesting Cely papers[20] give instances of ships laden with wool for Calais being chased, sometimes by French ships, sometimes by others, with varying results, though the wool ships seem frequently to escape.

On the Patent Roll under date 11 September 1345[21] is an entry relating to a valuable cargo which came to disaster, and being laden with 'wools, wool-fells and other merchandise to the value of 2000 marks, to make profit thereof in Flanders, certain pirates and malefactors of France, during the truce entered into in Brittany between the king and his adversaries of France, boarded the ship at sea on its way to Flanders, and brought it with its cargo to Leore in France and had their will of it'. After the merchants had sued for recovery of their goods to the Admiral of France, who 'did not care to accept their proof or make them any restitution, but defaulted entirely in doing justice', the king charged the sheriffs of London to make inquisition unto the matter. It being proved that in the stolen cargo was wool belonging to the following English merchants the king 'for the recovery

[20] *The Cely Papers*, Camden Society, Series 3, I.
[21] Calendar, 1343-45, 19 Edward III, p. 585.

of the goods aforesaid and the satisfaction of damages sustained by the merchants, commands all mayors, sheriffs, bailiffs, ministers and others to cause all goods of the said malefactors and other men and merchants of France . . . found within their bailiwicks, and all debts found by inquisitions and legal informations to be clearly due to them in England, to be arrested and kept in safe custody until further order, and to certify him of the bodies and goods arrested and of the value of the goods '.

The wool of Cotswold found on this requisition to have been in the cargo, besides other wool, was as follows :

John Polkyn ..	5 sarplars of wool, 2 sarplars of wool-fells of Coteswold, price of £104
Roger de Wodeby ..	3 sarplars of wool-fells and 1 pocket of wool of Coteswold, and 1 sarplar of feathers (plume) of the price of £66 14*s* 8*d*
Ralph de Halsted ..	4 sarplars, 1 pocket of wool and 1 pocket of wool-fells of Coteswold, of the price of £70
Thomas le Brewer ..	4 sarplars, 1 pocket of wool of Coteswold, of the price of £67
Richard Bacoun ..	2 sarplars of wool of Coteswold of the price of £28
Thomas atte Vyne	a pocket of wool of Coteswold, of the price of £4

On the same Roll under date 6 February 1355[22] there is a record of a commission to the mayor and constable of the Staple of Bristol, and the mayor, bailiffs and commonalty of the town of Bristol, to enquire into a complaint by Nicholas Negrebon, merchant of Venice—that whilst with his goods and merchandise under the King's safe

[22] Calendar, 1354–58, 29 Edward III, p. 225.

conduct and protection he came to the Staple of Bristol to trade, one Henry Cachepol of Hereford and others of those parts conspired to defraud him of his goods, and made divers plaints that Nicholas was bound to Henry in a sum for wool bought from him.

The Statute of the Staple brought the merchants under the control of Parliament, and provided a means of collecting the customs easily and an opportunity of ensuring the good quality of the exports.

At the time of the passing of this statute, or rather in respect of the following year—1354—the quantity of wool exported upon which the duty was paid was 130,651 sacks—the duty amounting to £81,624.[23]

The quantity of wool on which duty was paid seems to have soon increased greatly, because a year or two later, notwithstanding giving the king a special duty of 50s for every sack of wool sold in the kingdom, because of his urgent need for money to recover Berwick on Tweed which had been taken by the Scots by surprise, and to assist in the war with France, it is said that this duty was paid on about 350,000 sacks per year.

Thorold Rogers[24] gives a table showing the amount of the wool on which tax was paid in 1341—12 years before the passing of the new Statute of the Staple. This shows to some extent the sheep farming of the time.

The total for 29 counties was 20,376 sacks, or an average of 1 to 1,570 acres.

For the County of

Gloucester there were	591 sacks or	1 to 1,365 acres
Oxford	614 ,,	1 ,, 760 ,,
Wilts.	845 ,,	1 ,, 1,020 ,,
Somerset	601 ,,	1 ,, 1,570 ,,

The table shows that sheep farming and wool production

[23] Smith, *Memoirs of Wool.*
[24] *History of Agriculture*, I, 304.

was more extensive in Gloucestershire than in Somerset, or in the average of the country, but was not equal to the produce (or rather exports) of Oxfordshire or Wilts, each of which averaged more than Gloucestershire. The highest average was Norfolk, *viz.*, one sack for 610 acres, Oxford coming next with one sack for 760 acres.

At this period the selling value of the Cotswold wool was higher than that of Norfolk. The figures a century later (1454) may perhaps be quoted here—Herefordshire was exceptionally high, *viz.* 260*s* a sack, and Leominster district 185*s* 4*d*. Next in order was Cotswold wool, 166*s* 8*d* a sack. The lowest prices were in Sussex 50*s*, Kent 60*s*, and Dorset 66*s* 8*d*. The weight of a sack of wool was 364 lbs.

It is not easy to get accurate information from contemporary records of the districts of Gloucestershire and the actual producers or dealers in wool in the 14th century and the early part of the 15th century. Direct reference in the centres generally accepted as being mainly concerned in the business—*viz.*—Cirencester, Northleach, Fairford, Chipping Campden, Tetbury, and Winchcombe seems unobtainable. Even in Burford, which, though outside our county is a typical Cotswold area, and where local records seem more ample than elsewhere, the author of the *Burford Records* says ' The truth is . . . that the more magnificent aspect of the Cotswold trade, the wholesale dealing of the woolmen, is seen but rarely in the Burford records. It appears occasionally, as in the licence granted in 1273 to Lambert le Fraunceis to export 20 sacks of wool, and in the Chancery cases arising out of the deals in which John Pynnok and Thomas Stanton were concerned at the end of the 15th century. But they are usually small affairs ; Pynnok's was a matter of £92, Stanton's of £68 . . . It is, of course, possible—and indeed likely, in view of the adornment of the Church—that some of the richer citizens of the 15th century, of whose occupations we have no record, were more or less

regular woolmen. But Burford has no one to reckon among the great Staplers'.[25]

In the Pipe rolls of 12 Edward III (1339)[26] there is an interesting account of the abbot of Cirencester, described as Collector of Wool of the king, granted to certain prelates of religion and others of the clergy of the Archdeaconry of Gloucester, by Richard Benet, attorney of the said abbot, in pursuance of the King's writ of 18 June, wherein the king had ordered the abbot to have the wool carried to London to be delivered to the collectors of the king's customs there, and that the cost of same should be allowed by the king to the abbot. The wool, viz.: 18 sacks and 32 cloves, was to be packed in 14 sarplars, and conveyed from the houses where they were packed at Cirencester to the carts and loading same, the cost of the sarplars and packing and the wage of 'one horseman going for safe custody of the said wool from Cirencester to London, and staying there for delivery of the same and thence returning' and other expenses attending the delivery, a total of 107*s* 3½*d* 'which is allowed to the same Abbot in his account of tithes by the Exchequer'.

Following this is an account of Thomas de Berkele of Cubberle, sheriff of Gloucester by his attorney, Richard de Bromshulst for wool collected as by the king's writ, in the same county and taken to London *viz.* 325 sarplars of wool containing 414 sacks 18 stone from Gloucester to London, 90 leagues, for each sack 4*s*. Also for carriage of 116 sarplars of wools containing 109 sacks by carts from the packing house to the Severn, and thence by water —in a boat to Bristol. Total expenses allowed the sheriff for the whole £148 2*s* 4*d*.

The Exchequer accounts of the collectors of customs of Bristol afford little help in regard to wool exported in

[25] R. H. Gretton, *Burford Records*, 1920, pp. 165–6.
[26] P.R.O., E. 372–183 12 Edw. III.

the 14th and 15th centuries. These for several years have been examined in the Record Office. One of the earliest (5 Edward III, 1332) gives ' a View of the account of Roger Turtle and Hugh de Langebrige, Collectors of Old Customs of wool, hides and woolen fells in the ports of Bristol and Cheppestowe (Chepstow) loading and going thence from the feast of St. Michael, the 5th year of Edward III to Christmas next following '—but all the entries refer to hides and wine. Roger Turtle was mayor of Bristol in 1326, 1327, 1331, 1332, 1334, 1336, 1340 and 1341. Hugh de Langebrige was mayor in 1328 and 1335.

The account for 1341–2 (14 & 15 Edward III) gives a long list of names of ships and of merchants exporting merchandise—the account being ' Particulars of account of Thomas Beaupayn and William Cannyngges, Collectors of Customs and subsidies of wool in said port by writ dated 30 Nov. 14 Edw. III for issues of same from 30 Novr. to Michaelmas following '. The ships mentioned are the Margaret of Bristol, the Mighel (Michel) of Bristol, the Christopher of Bristol, the Gabriel of Waterford, the Cog John of Bristol, but all these contained ' cloths ' only and amongst the names of the native or Bristol merchant shippers may be mentioned John Ailleward (23 cloths), John Drake (12 cloths), Elyas Spelley (2 cloths), Thomas Colston (2 cloths) and Walter Martyn (27 cloths). But for our purpose the material thing is that at the end of the list is a note indicating that between Michaelmas 1341 and Michaelmas 1342 no wool passed through the port—' Of any other custom or subsidy of wools, woollen fells or hides in the same port not accounted for, that no wool, woollen fells or hide was taken thence from Michaelmas 14 E 3 to 30 November following as they say on oath, nor from 30 November to Michaelmas following '.

William Canynges was bailiff in 1369–1370 and mayor 1372, 1375, 1381, 1385 and 1389. Elias Spelley was seneschal in 1356 and mayor 1370, 1378 and 1382. Thomas Colston was seneschal 1345.

The accounts for 1395–6 (18–19 Richd. II) and also for 1399 (1 Henry IV) and 1424 (2–3 Henry VI) contain payments for customs in cloths only, with a note—the latter stating that 'no wool, hides or woollen fells were taken away from the port during the said period'.

As it is clear that the export of wool, including Gloucestershire wool, was not inconsiderable between 1340 and the end of the 15th century it would seem that other ports or Staples were used. This is perhaps confirmed by the Cely papers, which speak repeatedly of journeys from London to Gloucestershire—Northleach and Chipping Campden mainly—and to the use of pack horses to convey the wool to London where the Cely's warehouse was situate in Mark lane. In some cases also boats or barges on the Thames from Oxford were used. Further, the production of wool undoubtedly increased considerably. The temptation to landlords to abandon arable has been referred to, and it continued strong for some time. An instance may be recorded just over the Gloucestershire side of the Cotswold area, *viz.*, Churchill near Chipping Norton, where the enclosure of 300 acres for pasture increased the annual letting value from £15 to £41.[27] At a later period (1535)[28] an Act was passed to restrict sheep farming, the preamble stating that the rise in the price of wool had been prodigious and that husbandry had been abandoned and general dearth was the consequence; that sheep which had sold for 2*s* 4*d* or 3*s* were now charged 5*s* 4*d* and 6*s*; that a stone of wool which used to cost 1*s* 6*d* to 1*s* 8*d* was in some districts as much as 4*s* 8*d*, and 5*s*. The same preamble stated that some persons kept 24,000 sheep, others 20,000, 10,000, 6,000 or 5,000, and the statute went on to enact that no sheep master should have more than 2,000, and that a fine of 3*s* 4*d* should be recoverable for every head of sheep above that

[27] *V. C. H. Oxfordshire*, 1907, II, 189.
[28] 25 Henry VIII, cap. 13.

number, to be sued for by any one—one half of the penalty going to the king.

According to the Victoria County History, Gloucestershire gave annually to Edward III 30,000 sacks of Cotswold wool, and that in the 13th century 6,000 sheep were kept at Beverstone. It should be stated though that Smyth, who records so fully the story of the Berkeleys makes no reference to this.

There is a document in the Domestic State Papers of James I entitled *Reasons to prove the convenience of buying and selling of wool*[29] which points out that there were three classes of persons engaged in keeping sheep—(1) those who ' having both grounds and stocke of their own and are beforehand in welth. The number of theis is small ' : (2) ' those that doe rent the King's noblemen's and gents' grounds and deale as largely as either their stocke or creditt will afford. Theis are many and breed great store of wooll ' : (3) and ' the husbandman in all the woolle countries that have small livings, whereof every one usually hath some woole though not much. Theis are many in number and have great store of woolle though in smalle parcells '.

Then besides these, so quaintly described, there were, until the Dissolution, large numbers of sheep kept by the monastic houses. Proof of this is seen in the records of the loans requested from these establishments by the medieval monarchs, and afterwards repaid or allowed for in future liability for customs on exports.

Thus when in 1345–6 Edward III asked for a loan to enable him ' to pass the sea shortly, with as much force as possible for the necessary defence of our Realm and to stay the malice of our adversary of France who tries as much as he can to subdue us, and to damage and destroy

[29] Vol. LXXX, 1615.

this our Realm ' the amounts required from the monastic houses in Gloucestershire were as follows:

The Abbot of Gloucester, 200 marks.
The Abbot of St. Austin of Bristuyt (Bristol), 100 marks.
The Abbot of Cirencester, 100 marks.
The Abbot of Tewkesbury, 100 marks.
The Abbot of Hayles, 100 marks.
The Abbot of Winchcombe, 100 marks.

This demand was accompanied by the king's statement that ' upon the delivery of the said money we will give you such Surety for your payment as will suffice you, and we will be ever the most beholden and the most gracious in such things as you will have to do before us in time to come '[30].

In connexion with this reference to borrowing by the kings, the latter were not slow to recognize the growing wealth of the Staplers at Calais, and to call upon them also to lend. Two instances may be given: Henry VI in 1454 obtained the consent of Parliament that the mayor, constable and fellowship of the Staple at Calais should be paid 10,000 marks of the subsidy of wool taken there in repayment of money lent to pay soldiers' wages. Further Edward IV admitted that £32,681 was due to the merchants of the Staple at Calais and agreed that a share of the subsidy of wool be paid them yearly until settled. And in 1467–8, Edward IV when agreeing to pay £10,000 to Charles, Duke of Burgundy, on his marriage to Margaret, the king's sister, borrowed that amount ' from the Maire and Felyship of Merchauntes of the Staple at Calais, to be repaid out of the subsidy of wool '.

The merchants of the Staple in England who collected the wool from the producers, or obtained it at the country fairs where in earlier times it formed a large share of the

[30] *Rotuli Parliamentarum*, II, 453.

merchandise on sale, and who took it to the Staple towns for export, were amassing much wealth in the process. These were the wool merchants or woolmen, and in the Cely papers we get in the shape of correspondence between the merchants and the wool producers, and the merchants of the Staple at Calais, and the agents in Calais of the merchants in England, a most fascinating account of their methods. This is the only publication which gives an insight into the business of a staple merchant of wool in the 15th century.

But besides dealing with the export to Calais these merchants were able to dispose of some of their purchases, as indeed the producers could also do, to the manufacturing clothiers whose business had increased considerably since the introduction of the Flemish weavers by Edward III. An interesting account of this woollen industry of our county will be found in the paper by Sir William H. Marling in the *Transactions* of the Society[31].

We have notable instances of merchants of the county who made great riches in dealing with manufactured articles of clothing. I need only mention the names of Richard Whittington, who died in 1423, Sir Baptist Hicks (later Viscount Campden) who died in 1627, and William Canynges of Bristol as well-known examples in this connexion.[32]

[31] XXXVI, p. 315.

[32] After the 16th century the wool trade seems to have declined, or was at any rate carried on in a different way. Apparently with the object of improving the wool trade an Act was passed in 1678 (Charles II) decreeing that all dead bodies should be buried in woollen shrouds, and this remained on the statute book, if not enforced, for 120 years, and was not fully repealed until 1825. The register of burials in woollen at Temple church, Bristol, from 1678 to 1713, is still preserved. It contains over 1,500 cases so buried, but in the later years the numbers were very small—*viz.* 1706 only 2, in 1707 only 4, 1708 only 3 and 1709, 2. The latest entry of a certificate as to burying in wool was 24 July 1713 and then follows this entry

'Memorand July 26 1713.

Mr William Long, Churchwarden sent me word this day by the

[*Continued on p.* 89

But to revert to the woolmen of Gloucestershire, these are fairly numerous, and sufficient to justify the fable that ' riches follow the Staple '.

We call to mind at once the earliest, perhaps, in point of date and ' the flower of the wool-merchants of all England ',—William Grevel or Greville of Chipping Campden, who died in 1401. To him and to Baptist Hicks we owe much of what, in architecture, remains so beautiful today in that most delightful old-world town—the church, the almshouses, the market house and Grevel's own house. Like Baptist Hicks Grevel became the founder of one of the noble families of later times. He owned the manor of Milcote in Warwickshire, and the family settled there and increased their stability and possessions by marrying heiress after heiress, one of whom, Elizabeth Willoughby, being the greatest heiress then in England; a grandson, Fulke Greville, becoming a K.C.B. and later Baron Brooke and owner of Warwick Castle.

But it may be right to give pride of place to this capital of the Cotswold—Cirencester—in regard to the wool trade, so extensive a trade being done here right up to late in the 18th century. Rudder[33] states that ' the wool market was held at the Boothall, where were large rooms to stow the wool, of which within memory, vast quantities out of Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire, were brought weekly ; and the principal street was so thronged with wool-waggons about forty years ago, that it was difficult for other carriages to pass. The

> Clarke yt Mr Hort ye Mayor of ye City refused to receive the acct. of those who have had no Certificate of ye being buried in Woollen only, and only snubbed him for his forwardness, telling him the Act was out. Wherefore I thought it no longer adviseable to continue this method.
>
> Wm. Cary—Vicar '.

Yet Latimer in his *Annals of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 302, says Mr Christopher Willoughby, a merchant, was fined £5 for evading the Act, March 1753.

[33] *History of Cirencester*, 3rd edition, 1814, p. 149.

market for wool was on Friday; but the wool-dealers travelling the country, and buying that commodity at the farmhouses, soon reduced the market for it to a mere nullity, and there has been none sold here for many years'.

As in several important churches in the county, so there are in Cirencester church numerous fine brasses to wool merchants and others, indeed old Thomas Fuller says these brasses were paid for in Cotswold wool. The brasses are most interesting as they invariably exhibit the symbols of the trade, *viz.*: the sheep and the woolpack. The earliest in Cirencester is about 1470, and seems to have been erected by Sir William Nottingham, a baron of the Exchequer, to the memory of his father and mother—William Notyngham, a clothier (died 1427) and his wife Cristina (1434). Another brass is to Reginald Spicer (1442) and his four wives—Margaret, Johanna, Margaret and Joan. He is described as a merchant of the town.

Then there is a fine brass, with double canopies, representing Robert Page or Pagge (1440) and his wife Margaret, with six sons and eight daughters. Pagge was a wool merchant, and in the marginal inscription in verse it is said he was of good report, beloved of all, a peaceful man of trade, who sought the beauty of God's house. His will expressed his desire to be buried in 'the new chapel of Holy Trinity in the parish church of Cirencester' and he gave ornaments to the high altar, and to the fabric and to 'every light' in the said church.

Another wool merchant or clothier of the town, Henry Garstang or Gayrstang (1464), by his will desired to be buried near the altar of St. Edmund the Confessor in Cirencester church and that a thousand masses should be said for his soul. He also gave bequests to each light of the church, 'a pall, gold and red, to serve the burials there', a primer for the Chapel of St. Edmund, and also 'all my timber lying in a meadow next the Fosse to the use of Cirencester Church'.

The names of the Chedworths, Avenings and Gorges and of Philip Marner of Cirencester belong to this period and this trade.

Here also John Tame may be mentioned because his business headquarters were at Cirencester, and he had during the earlier part of his life a residence there at the west end of the church, though I like to think of him as John Tame of Fairford. The late Henry F. Holt,[34] and the late Rev. J. G. Joyce[35] have published all that can be ascertained about John Tame, who came out of the house of Stowell at Chedworth. The Tames of Stowell were wool merchants and cloth dealers, and one John Tame of the early part of the 15th century had two sons Richard and John who he introduced to the Cirencester business, though later Richard went to Calais or the Netherlands to conduct the foreign branch of the trade, John remaining in Cirencester and building up the business which brought to him and his son Edmund great wealth. About the year 1480, when John Tame would be about 50 years old, he turned his attention to Fairford. Here and in the neighbourhood he secured large tracts of land and covered them with vast flocks of sheep for the sake of the wool, leading Leland to say some 50 years later that ' Fairford never flourished afore the cumming of the Tames into it '. John Tame in due course left to his son Edmund (later Sir Edmund Tame) the conduct of the business at Cirencester—and took up his residence at Fairford where he remained until his death in 1500, leaving a great estate, comprising lands in Gloucestershire, Kent, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire, those in Gloucestershire including (among others) Harnhill, Nympsfield, Notgrove, Rendcombe, Tetbury and Fairford. In the latter place a new residence was in process of erection at the time of his death, and Edmund Tame completed

[34] ' Tames of Fairford ', *Journ. Brit. Arch. Assoc.*, 1871, XXVII.
[35] *Fairford Windows*, 1872, pp. 15–40.

this. He maintained to the full the dignity of the family name and married Agnes Greville, a daughter of Sir Edward Greville (the Campden branch of the Brooke or Warwick family). Edmund Tame added the manors of Dowdeswell, Barnsley and Eastleach Turville to the family estates. The beautiful church of Fairford is entirely due to these rich wool merchants, and is of special interest apart from the glorious stained glass windows, inasmuch as it remains today as the Tames built it, practically without structural alteration. John Tame also gave bequests to the churches of Lechlade, Hatherop, Quenington, Eastleach, Maiseyhampton, Kempsford, and Somerford Keynes, as well as to the cathedral church of Worcester, to which diocese Gloucestershire then belonged. It may be assumed that he had interest in the shape of land in these places. Sir Edmund Tame went later to Rendcombe where he died. The church there, also built by the Tames, is in many respects similar to Fairford church. It is clear that the Tames conducted sheep farming on their own estates, or on some of them. John Tame in his will gave numerous bequests to servants, amongst these are 4 described as his head shepherds at various places. Sir Edmund Tame, who died in 1534, left to his wife all his 'stuffe of householde with corne and cattall being within the parishe of Faireforde at the tyme of my decease, and also fyve hundred sheepe in their woole' and also for her life all his lands in Fairford, Winstone, Bibury, Upton and Tetbury. He also gave bequests to the churches of Shipton Solars, Coln Dennis, Chedworth, Maiseyhampton, Quenington, Coln, Lechlade and Southrop, some of which places are not mentioned in John Tame's will, and it may therefore be assumed that Edmund had himself acquired property there. There is a further reference in Sir Edmund Tame's will to sheep as he gives to his son Edmund his 'ferme at Woodmanscote, and flocke of sheep then going there'. The latter died in 1544, ten years after his father, leaving a widow—a

daughter of Sir William Denys, a well-known Gloucestershire name—and the great estates of this Sir Edmund and of his mother went partly to this young widow and to his three sisters. The widow married again twice—first to Walter Buckler, and secondly to Roger Lygon, an ancestor of Earl Beauchamp.

Besides the flower of the wool merchants of Gloucestershire before referred to, William Greville, other members of the family were in the trade for some time after his death. In the Patent Rolls 19 Richard II a John Grevel and William Grevel described as wool merchants, both received pardons in 1395 'for all unjust and excessive weighings and purchases of wool, contrary to statute'.[36]

Another notable woolman of Campden is commemorated by a brass in the church, *viz.* William Welley. This family seem second only in importance to the Grevilles, and the extent of Wm. Welley's dealings in wool may be judged from the fact that in 1440 he obtained letters of marque and reprisals from the king in consequence of inability to recover £1,180 for wool bought of him by the Albertine Company of Florence. The Welley family left several bequests for the church and they were connected with the parish for two or three centuries.[37]

Then the Bradways were also engaged in the wool trade in the 15th century, one William Bradway who died in 1488 being with Greville and Welley contributors to the erection of the church, and indeed to Bradway is ascribed by some the valuable ancient embroidery which it possesses.

The name of Fortey of Northleach is closely associated with the fine church of that place, and there are excellent brasses of woolmen also here. The earliest is to an unknown woolman and his wife—about 1400, but as the figure of the man stands on a woolpack it is obviously to

[36] Calendar, 1391–96, p. 627.

[37] P. C. Rushen, *History of Chipping Campden*, 1911, p. 22.

a wool merchant. There are the two Forteys, Thomas and John. The brass of Thomas Fortey is interesting as it records William Scors a tailor, both having married a woman named Alice. The brass shows Thomas Fortey (died 1447) standing on a woolpack and under William Scors is a pair of scissors ; the wife Alice and two groups of children also appear—(1) two daughters and (2) two sons and four daughters. Fortey is credited with the repair of churches and roads.

John Fortey is memorialized by a large brass, a single figure standing with his right foot on the back of a sheep, and his left foot on a woolpack. To him is ascribed by Atkyns the building of the body of the church, whilst Rudder says ' that the roof of the nave was considerably raised at the expense of John Fortey, a wealthy clothier '. In his will Fortey desires ' to be buried in the church of St. Peter, Northleach, in the new middle aisle of the same church ' and he left £300 ' to finish and complete the work of the said new aisle by me now begun '. Besides bequests to Worcester cathedral he gave to 120 churches round Northleach ' to each church 6*s* 8*d*, the parishioners of the same to pray for my soul, and to the four orders of Friars in Gloucester town, etc., etc.

Other woolmen of that great centre of the wool trade are John Taylour (about 1490) and Thomas Bushe, ' woolman and merchant of the Staple of Calais ' (1525). Bushe's is a fine brass, and by his will he gave bequests to the high altar ' for my tithes forgotten ' and to the lights within the church, and repair of the bells. Also bequests to the churches of Eastington, Tormarton, Enworth, Chedworth, Little Rissington, Sherborne, Blunsdon, Whittington. He speaks of his lands and cattle at St. George Ogbourne, Lamport, Fylkins, Kelmscott, Blunsdon, Taynton, Upton, and the rest of his lands in counties Oxford, Wilts, Gloucester and Berks, and finally gives £6 a year ' to an honest priest to pray for me and my friends in the Church of St. Peter, Northleach '. Bushe's brass is an exceptionally

interesting one, as besides sheep and woolpack it contains the arms of the merchants of the Staple of Calais and a rural scene with trees and some sheep.

William Midwinter of Northleach is also constantly referred to in the Cely papers as supplying the Celys with wool, and his will (1501) is of interest also as indicating the wealth of the sheep farmers as well as of the wool merchants. He desired ' to be buried in the parish church of Northleach at the chancel door under the blessed crucifix of our Lord' and he gave £10 for the making of the rood loft of the church and a further bequest for the high altar for tithes forgotten ; also bequests to the churches of Tormarton, Naunton, Broad or Great Rissington, Chedworth, Eastington, Hampnett, Turkdean, Notgrove, Nether (or Lower) Guiting, Temple Guiting, Coln Dennis, Coln Rogers, Winston, Withington, Dowdeswell, Bishop's Cleeve, Halling, Hasleton, Compton Abdale, Shipton Oliffe, and Sherborne. This all seems to indicate that Midwinter was a man of substance and possibly a recognized merchant as well as Sheep farmer.

At Lechlade there are two fine brasses, one to John Twinyhoe (1510) and one assumed to be to John Townsend, a woolman (1458)—feet standing on a woolpack. By his will he left £120 to Lechlade church, £200 to the then vicar ' to sing for me all his life if he will and to others after him '. Also bequests to the churches of Southrop, Kelmscott, Buscot, Inglesham, Langcote (? Langford) Steventon and Highworth.

Aubrey in his MS. collection in the Bodleian Library gives the name of another woolman—Gray of Gloucester—who, he says came from the family of Gray of the castle and town of Ruthin. Aubrey says he most bountifully feasted King Henry I who had in his company at the time his brother Robert—but as prisoner, and the latter fell in love with fair Margaret with her white hands. He says also that Gray died ' wondrous wealthy ' and gave land to the monastery wherein Margaret was taken.

One final reference to a woolman may be permitted, who although he belonged to Witney in Oxfordshire, dealt largely in the wool of the Cotswolds. Richard Wenman was a merchant of the Staple of Calais and is so described in his will (1533). There are generous bequests to Witney church and Lincoln cathedral, and references to farms and sheep in various places. A descendant married a daughter and co-heir of Lord Williams, by whom he came into possession of Thame park, and in due time became Lord Wenman.

It seems therefore unquestionable that the wool trade of the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries was of very considerable extent and contributed largely to the prosperity of the country. This is perhaps not the place for more than a passing reference to traditions of medieval times, though the testimony of tradition is not without some value. The well-known antiquary of the 17th century, John Aubrey, in speaking of the tradition that Salisbury cathedral was built upon woolpacks said ' doubtless there is something in it which is now forgot '. He goes on to refer to the tower at Rouen called the Butter Tower, because the cost of erection was covered by a toll upon all the butter bought in Rouen ; again, he instanced the case of the building of St. Paul's cathedral, which was chiefly defrayed by a coal duty of 1*s* 6*d* per chaldron on sea-borne coal, of which four-fifths went to the building, and suggests therefore as the authority for the tradition that Salisbury cathedral was built on woolpacks that an impost might have been put on Wiltshire wool sent in woolpacks to Flanders, and applied to the cost of its building. Aubrey also calls attention to the tradition that London bridge was built upon woolpacks.

Further, John Smith, the author of the standard work on wool, indulges in a conjecture as to the origin of the woolsack in the House of Lords, and feels justified in attributing its adoption to a desire to perpetuate remembrance of the noble stand made against the early taxes on

wool imposed by medieval monarchs, and of the indefeasible right then secured that the subject should not be saddled with any tax or impost by other authority than that of Parliament.

But here in Gloucestershire, and in this beautiful Cotswold area, we have no need to fall back on tradition or conjecture. We have with us today splendid evidence of the successful business qualities and wealth of the woolmen. The noble perpendicular churches in this comparatively small area which we owe to these men of four or five centuries ago, stand as a witness of their public spirit, their piety and their generosity, and whilst these architectural treasures continue to be a joy to all who visit them and to those who worship in them, they should inspire us with the determination to maintain them for the benefit and delight of many future generations.