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**Gloucestershire Peace Rolls: The Economic and Social  
Material on the Peace Rolls**

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punishment of crime or the effectiveness of the work of the justices of the peace in Gloucestershire, or in the rest of England for that matter, depended solely on the king's bench.<sup>162</sup>

## VII ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL MATERIAL ON THE PEACE ROLLS

For two quite different reasons the Gloucestershire peace rolls throw little light on economic and social conditions in the county in the second half of the fourteenth century. One reason, the fact that on all the rolls there are only four indictments for economic offences, has already been stressed.<sup>163</sup> The other lies in the failure of the clerks who drew up the rolls, whether through haste or carelessness, to record designations of status or occupation either for jurors or for most of the people involved in the cases. While such designations were not required in indictments until the reign of Henry v still they were commonly used in the fourteenth century.<sup>164</sup> It is difficult to account for this omission, because since a number of years elapsed between the different rolls the same clerk can hardly have compiled them all. One plausible explanation is that in each case the roll was hurriedly prepared for the king's bench and the designations were left out to save time.<sup>165</sup> Aside from titles and such descriptive phrases as chaplain, servant, or those identifying a man with a particular position like woodward of Bishop's Wood, or hayward of Aust, the only occupations which appear on the rolls are baker, barber, blanket maker, butcher, touker or fuller, mason, miner, porter, smith, tailor, weaver and wire-drawer.<sup>166</sup> Interestingly enough practically none of these designations are agricultural.

Although numerous occupational surnames occur, at

<sup>162</sup> See also Putnam, *Proceedings*, pp. cxxvii-cxxviii.

<sup>163</sup> *supra* p. 47.

<sup>164</sup> 1 Henry V, c. 5; Marowe, in Putnam, *Early Treatises on the Practice of the Justices of the Peace*, pp. 384 ff.

<sup>165</sup> *supra* pp. 13-14.

<sup>166</sup> Roll I, no. 4; Roll II, no. 19; Roll I, no. 32; Roll II, no. 52; Roll III, no. 124; Roll II, no. 48; Roll IV, nos. 25, 27; Roll I, no. 49; Roll I, no. 67; Roll III, no. 28; no. 123; Roll IV, no. 11;

this date it is not possible to conclude that a name necessarily indicated the present occupation of its bearer. Among them too the non-agricultural occupations are far more numerous than the agricultural. While these facts indicate that industry was by this time fairly well developed in Gloucestershire, still the occupational designations are too few to prove that agriculture was no longer practiced by a large part of the population. The evidence to be obtained from the articles stolen is much the same. Thefts of fairly large amounts of cloth and iron bear witness to the manufacture of these articles.<sup>167</sup> On the other hand, thefts of animals, particularly oxen, and of agricultural implements, like a ploughshare, indicate agricultural pursuits.<sup>168</sup> Thus the picture already drawn of Gloucestershire as a county whose population engaged in both industry and farming is sustained by such evidence as is afforded by the peace rolls.<sup>169</sup>

The failure of the clerks to record occupational designations makes it impossible to tell much about the status of offenders, jurors, or others mentioned on the rolls. Save for violators of the statute on salmon who were members of the nobility or heads of religious houses, and for members of the clergy, it is probable that most of the urban population, like those given occupational designations, belonged to the artisan class and most of the rural population to the class of free tenants.<sup>170</sup> The mention in 1382 of villeins of the abbot of Gloucester shows that villeinage still existed on some estates in the county.<sup>171</sup> With these few exceptions the people found on these rolls probably represent the rank and file of the middle-class population of Gloucestershire.

Roll III, no. 88; Roll IV, no. 10; Roll III, nos. 95, 96. I have been unable to find the meaning of *senegare*; Roll II, no. 51.

<sup>167</sup> Roll I, nos. 18-20, 22, 32, 40, 49; Roll II, nos. 1, 15, 44, 51; Roll III, nos. 2, 22, 38, 78, 92, 94, 136, 158; Roll III, nos. 25, 145, 156; Roll IV, no. 13.

<sup>168</sup> For example, Roll II, no. 34; Roll III, nos. 11, 23, 24, 81; Roll I, no. 60; Roll III, nos. 16, 108.

<sup>169</sup> *supra* p. 10.

<sup>170</sup> Roll IV, nos. 1-8, 29-32; for example, Roll III, nos. 58, 59, 61, 136.

<sup>171</sup> Roll III, no. 119. See also Roll II, no. 52, n. 260, p. 99.