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By J.R. HOLMAN

THE BINDING OF APPRENTICES has long been studied by economic and social historians, although these studies tend to have been concentrated more on the system in its heyday in the 16th and early 17th centuries than on the later 17th and 18th centuries when the system is considered to have been in decline. Furthermore, the earlier studies were concerned almost entirely with the organisation of the system, many being little more than synopses of the regulations governing the binding of apprentices, or the length of apprenticeship, whereas the more recent studies have taken a more statistical approach — analysing the number of boys bound apprentice, what trades they entered, and where they came from.¹ This article examines such questions based on an analysis of the Bristol apprentice registers for the period 1675-1726. Because of the large numbers enrolled each year, frequently exceeding 250, it has been necessary to take a sample of two years in each decade, viz 1675-6, 1685-6 . . . 1725-6 (old style years being used). These years yielded a total sample of 3,062. (For comparison, about 1,500 boys were apprenticed each year in London in the 1690s and about 80 each year in Norwich in the 1710s and 1720s).

The first subject examined was the proportion of apprentices who were the sons of Bristolians, and what proportion came to the city from outside to undergo industrial training. For the period as a whole, 47 per cent of apprentices were drawn from the city, the other 53 per cent came from outside. These figures varied somewhat from decade to decade as set out below:

Table 1
Percentage of Apprentices drawn from:

<i>Years</i>	<i>Bristol</i>	<i>Outside Bristol</i>
1675-6	41	59
1685-6	51	49
1695-6	50	50
1705-6	43	57
1715-16	46	54
1725-6	51	49

The majority of outsiders emanated, as might be expected, from areas within fairly easy reach of the city, areas with which the city had long-established trading connections. In 1675-6 no fewer than 63 per cent of the outsiders came from the two neighbouring counties of Gloucestershire and Somerset, rising to 70 per cent in 1685-6, thereafter 64 per cent in 1695-6, 68 per cent in 1705-6, 62 per cent in 1715-16 and 61 per cent in 1725-6. No other counties supplied more than 10 per cent

1. Compare for example O.J. Dunlop's *English Apprenticeship and Child Labour: A History* (1912), as the classic exposition of the old narrative type of study, with the introduction to A.L. Merson, ed., *A Calendar of Southampton Apprenticeship Registers, 1609-1740* (Southampton Records Series, XII, 1968), an excellent example of the new analytical approach.

of the total number of non-Bristolian apprentices, although Wiltshire and Monmouth always contributed at least five per cent of the total. Most of the boys from Wales came from the southern and midland counties, principally Glamorgan and Monmouth, there being no representatives of the four northern counties of Anglesey, Denbigh, Flint or Merioneth. Overall Wales supplied some 10 per cent of all non-Bristolian apprentices, less than a seventh of the number of the two adjoining counties of Gloucestershire and Somerset.

For purposes of analysis, apprentices have been allocated to one of 11 regional groups: local (Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Somerset, Wiltshire), the South West (Cornwall, Devon, Dorset), the Home Counties/South East (Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Essex, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, London, Middlesex, Oxfordshire, Surrey, Sussex), East Anglia (Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Norfolk, Suffolk), the East Midlands (Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Rutland), the West Midlands (Cheshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire), the North (Cumberland, Durham, Lancashire, Northumberland, Westmorland, Yorkshire), Wales, Scotland, Ireland and overseas. By far the greatest number came from the local area — some 76 per cent of all non-Bristolians. Wales came second with 10 per cent, followed by the West Midlands — 5 per cent, the South West — 4 per cent, and the Home Counties — 3 per cent. The North, the East Midlands, Scotland, Ireland and overseas each contributed less than one per cent of the total. The only area entirely unrepresented was East Anglia, although this is not really surprising since there were few economic links between Bristol and that isolated rural area. Table 2 gives a detailed decadal breakdown of the numbers of apprentices for each region, and Table 3 a more detailed breakdown for the local area.

Table 2 Sources of non-Bristolian apprentices

<i>Region</i>	<i>1675-6</i>	<i>1685-6</i>	<i>1695-6</i>	<i>1705-6</i>	<i>1715-16</i>	<i>1725-6</i>	<i>Total</i>
Local	269	145	170	267	219	166	1,236
South West	15	57	6	5	16	9	58
Home Counties	9	5	9	7	12	14	56
East Anglia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
East Midlands	1	-	-	3	2	1	7
West Midlands	18	3	12	20	18	13	84
North	4	-	4	3	4	-	15
Scotland	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Wales	37	22	24	37	25	24	169
Ireland	4	3	2	-	1	2	12
Overseas	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
All Regions	358	185	227	343	297	229	1,639

Table 3 Sources of 'local' apprentices

<i>County</i>	<i>1675-6</i>	<i>1685-6</i>	<i>1695-6</i>	<i>1705-6</i>	<i>1715-16</i>	<i>1725-6</i>
Gloucestershire	113	62	67	111	103	64
Herefordshire	11	2	3	7	14	9
Somerset	113	68	78	121	82	74
Wiltshire	32	13	22	28	20	19
Total	269	145	170	267	219	166

It is of interest to compare the attraction of Bristol as a place for apprenticeship with that of London and Norwich, its closest rivals in population and economic importance. In 1690 only 29 per cent of those bound apprentice in the City of London came from the city and Middlesex.² Of

2. D.V. Glass, 'Socio-economic status and occupations in the city of London at the end of the seventeenth century', in A.E.J. Hollander & W. Kellaway, ed., *Studies in London History presented to Philip Edmund Jones* (1969), 387.

those bound apprentice in Norwich between 1710 and 1731 some 43 per cent were the sons of Norwich citizens (a further 22 per cent came from the rest of Norfolk).³ These figures reflect the relative economic significance of the three cities, London (population in 1700 — 575,000) attracting over 70 per cent of its apprentices from outside, Norwich the second city (population 30,000) attracting 57 per cent from outside, and Bristol the third city (population 20,000) attracting some 47 per cent from outside. The higher rate of indigenous apprentices in Bristol may in part be due to the greater control exercised over the system by the companies and the city council. The Norwich authorities at this time were rapidly losing control of the regulations governing admission.⁴ On comparison with the smaller towns, for example Sheffield, we find that perhaps as few as 15 per cent of apprentices came from outside the town.⁵

Of the local boys, the most common paternal occupations were those of farmer or textile worker, these two groups supplying 60 per cent (38 and 22 respectively) of all apprentices. These were followed by the food and drink trades (9 per cent), the gentry (7 per cent), the building and transport trades (each 6 per cent) and the professions (4 per cent). Surprisingly only four sons of merchants were traced (0.3 per cent). Further afield, of the boys who came from the South West, the largest number — 25 per cent — were the sons of gentlemen or esquires, 20 per cent the sons of farmers, 13 per cent the sons of textile workers and 7 per cent each the sons of fathers engaged in seafaring and the professions. Of the boys emanating from Wales, 30 per cent came from a rural background, 25 per cent were the sons of gentry, 16 per cent the sons of textile-workers and five per cent the sons of fathers employed in the professions. A further 55 boys came from London and the Home Counties, the largest number — 19 per cent were the sons of gentry, 17 per cent the sons of farmers, 11 per cent each the sons of those engaged in the port and mercantile trades and 9 per cent each the sons of workers in the food and drink and textile trades. The fathers of the boys from the West Midlands were engaged in a wide variety of occupations, principally the gentry (20 per cent), farmers (15 per cent) and textile workers (13 per cent). Somewhat surprisingly only 8 per cent of the boys had fathers engaged in metal-working.

The most popular trades into which non-Bristolian boys were bound varied somewhat over time. Twenty-six per cent of all non-Bristolian apprentices entered the textile trades in 1675-6, followed by 18 per cent in the port trades, 16 per cent in the food trades and 11 per cent in the building trades. Ten years later the port trades had replaced the textile industry as the most sought after occupation, taking 23 per cent; textiles took 21 per cent, the food and drink trades 20 per cent and the metal-working trades 8 per cent. For the next two decades the port trades proved the most popular taking 26 per cent in 1695-6 and 24 per cent in 1705-6, this popularity being lost to the food and drink trade in 1715-16 (23 per cent) and 1725-6 (24 per cent). The popularity of the port trades had clearly and dramatically declined, taking only 15 per cent of boys in 1715-16 and 8 per cent in 1725-6. Of the local boys apprenticed in the city, the vast majority (60 per cent) went into the three occupational groups — food and drink, textiles, clothing and leather, and port and shipping, which took 234, 259 and 222 boys respectively during the sample years in question. The building trade took a further 167 boys, the metal trades 69 and the professions 56. Fifty-two boys entered miscellaneous industrial trades, 45 went into the transport industries (nearly all in the 18th-century sample years) and 42 became apprentices to entrepreneurs and retailers. The tobacco and luxury trades, took a mere 24 and 10 boys respectively. For apprentices coming from outside the local catchment area, the port trades proved the most popular, taking 24, 24 and 21 per cent respectively of the new entrants from the South-West,

3. P. Corfield, 'A Provincial Capital in the late seventeenth century — the case of Norwich' in P. Clark & P. Slack, ed., *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700* (1972), 272.

4. Corfield, *op. cit.*, 273-4.

5. E.J. Buckatzsch, 'Places of origin of a group of immigrants into Sheffield 1624-1799' *Economic History Review* 2nd Ser., II (1949-50), 303-6.

Wales and the West Midlands. The most popular for the apprentices from the Home Counties was the textile group which took 22 per cent of all apprentices from that region. Table 4 below gives a breakdown by region of the trades entered as a percentage of the total number of apprentices from each region.

Table 4 Trades entered by apprentices by regions (Percentages)

<i>Trades</i>	<i>Local</i>	<i>South West</i>	<i>Wales</i>	<i>Home Counties</i>	<i>West Midlands</i>
Food & Drink	19.6	16.3	19.6	12.7	16.8
Textiles	21.7	9.1	14.3	21.8	7.2
Building	14.0	5.5	8.9	5.5	10.8
Port	18.6	21.8	23.8	18.2	20.3
Metals	5.8	9.1	4.2	1.8	8.5
Tobacco	2.0	1.8	1.7	-	1.2
Transport	3.8	-	7.7	1.8	2.3
Professions	4.6	7.3	5.3	10.9	8.5
Luxury	0.8	1.8	1.7	-	2.3
Entrepreneurs	3.5	10.9	4.7	14.5	7.2
Miscellaneous	4.3	9.1	4.7	5.5	11.2
Others & unspecified	1.3	7.3	3.4	7.3	3.7
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Both the food and drink and the port and shipping groups show a consistently high number of recruits from all regions. The South West and West Midlands sent relatively few boys to be apprenticed into the textile trades; both regions had already well-established textile industries based respectively on Exeter (serge-making) and Coventry (manufacture of tammies). Conversely the numbers of those entering the metal trades were high for both these regions, both areas being traditionally associated with metal working. Most of the recruits to the tobacco trade came, not surprisingly, from the local area, since, outside London, Bristol was the main tobacco centre. Recruitment to the transport trades was highest amongst those boys coming from Wales, no reason for this is clear, perhaps it reflects the close trading links between the city and south Wales. Yet despite similar economic links with the counties of the south-west no boys from this area were apprenticed into this group. By far the greatest number of outsiders entering the professions and the entrepreneurial trades came from the Home Counties, with the West Midlands in second place. The high number from the Home Counties may be explained in that those who could not find or afford apprenticeship in this group in London came to Bristol as a second choice. Surprisingly the number coming from the local area was the lowest of all.

All the apprentices so far referred to have been boys, although it was not totally unknown for girls to be bound apprentice to learn the trade of 'servant maid'. However, it was more common for Bristol girls to be so bound than girls from outside the city, only three examples being found in the sample years used — a girl from Wales and two from Somerset, all in 1675-6.

Of particular interest in the apprentice registers are the details given of the premiums paid by fathers to masters for taking their sons apprentice. The paying of such premiums had become standard practice in London early in the 17th century, and seems to have become common practice in Bristol by 1710 when following the Stamp Duty act of 1709⁶ the details are given in the registers. This act laid down that on and from 1 May 1710 six pence duty was to be levied for every pound of premiums of up to £50 and one shilling for premiums of £50 and above 'in relation to every clerk apprentice or servant which shall be . . . put or placed to or with any master or mistress to learn any profession trade or employment . . .' The Bristol authorities were very

6. 1709 8 Anne c. 5 An act for laying certain duties upon candles and certain rates upon monies to be given with clerks and apprentices towards raising Her Majesties supply for the year One Thousand Seven Hundred and Ten. *Statutes of the Realm*.

efficient in the introduction of the recording of premiums, the first entry appearing in the rough enrolment book on 4 May 1710, and the information is given in the main apprentice registers from December 1710 onwards.⁷ In 1715-16 a premium is recorded for 65 per cent of the non-Bristol boys bound (compared with 58 per cent of city boys), the amount varying from 19 shillings to £250 (city boys £1 to £215). The average non-city premium was £33 17s. 2d. compared with £24 11s. 5d. for city boys, a differential of 37 per cent. A decade later the average premium for city boys had risen by 38 per cent to £37 14s. 2d. that for non-Bristol boys by less than two per cent to £38 4s. 4d. As a result the differential had narrowed to only two per cent. The highest premiums for non-city boys were charged for entry to the mercantile and textile entrepreneurial trades and to the professions, the lowest premiums being levied on those bound to masters in the clothing, transport and textile manufacturing trades. During the decade the cost of entry rose in some trades and fell in others. The most dramatic increases were in the tobacco, transport, luxury and metal-working trades. Premiums fell most noticeably in the textile manufacturing, port and shipping and leather-making trades. It might be expected that the charging of premiums could have excluded many boys from becoming apprentices. For city boys whose fathers were unable to afford the premiums, there were considerable numbers of charitable organizations to which they could turn for financial assistance, details of such sponsorships being recorded in the apprentice registers. In addition other boys were helped by funds from parish poor law officers. However the registers do not record much similar information for non-Bristol boys. It would seem, from this paucity of information, that relatively few boys were sponsored by poor law authorities outside Bristol and even fewer by private charitable organizations. In the sample years 1695-6 five cases are recorded of boys from outside the city being bound by poor law authorities; ten years later only two such bindings were recorded; none were recorded in 1715-16 and only two again in 1725-6. Those bound in 1695-6 came from the parishes of Almondsbury, Clifton, Congresbury and Mangotsfield.⁸ Both those bound in 1705-6 were bound by the poor law officers of the parish of St Cuthbert in the city of Wells,⁹ those in 1725-6 by the parish of SS Peter & Paul in Bath and by the city of Bath (*i.e.* the town council).¹⁰ Regarding bindings by private charitable bodies outside the city, only one example has been traced, the binding of one Thomas Gillicome by the charity of Mr Barcome of Wells in August 1716.¹¹ One of the main reasons for binding a non-city boy to a Bristol master was the death of the boy's father. It has been found that between a quarter and a third of all children in the late 17th century had lost one or both parents.¹² The proportion of fatherless boys from outside Bristol bound apprentice varied somewhat over the period from 19 per cent in 1675-6 to 34 per cent in 1705-6. Most of these boys came from the local catchment area, principally Somerset, although there were a few from further afield, for example a fatherless boy from Ireland was bound in both 1675-6 and 1685-6, as were a few London boys in 1695-6, 1705-6, 1715-16 and 1725-6. Only three fatherless boys from the north of England are recorded, (two from Lancashire in 1705-6 and 1715-16 and one from Yorkshire in 1705-6).

Historians seem to have assumed that having completed the seven years' apprenticeship the usual practice was to become a freeman or burgess of the town or city and to set up on one's own,

7. Bristol Record Office (hereafter B.R.O.), Rough Apprentice Book, 1709-19 (04356[9]), fo. 9, and Apprentice Register, 1699-1711 (04353[3]), fo. 272.

8. B.R.O., Apprentice Register, 1684-99 (04353[2]), fos. 220, 225, 233, 243v & 246.

9. B.R.O., Apprentice Register, 1699-1711 (04353[3]), fos. 151, 160v.

10. B.R.O., Apprentice Register, 1724-40 (04353[5]), fos. 49, 59v.

11. B.R.O., Apprentice Register, 1712-23 (04353[4]), fo. 119.

12. P. Laslett, 'Parental Deprivation in the Past: a note on the history of orphans in England' *Local Population Studies*, No. 13 (Autumn 1974), 11-18. J.R. Holman, 'Orphans in pre-industrial towns — the case of Bristol in the late seventeenth century' *Local Population Studies* No. 15 (Autumn 1975), 40-44.

initially as a journeyman working for a master, and later as a master in one's own right able to take apprentices. To test this assumption the progress of those boys bound apprentice in each of the sample years was traced to see if indeed they did become freemen of the city. Reference was made to the burgess books for a period of ten years from the end of the seven-year apprenticeship period, *i.e.* for those bound in 1675-6, search was made in the burgess records for the years 1682-93. It was thought that it was unlikely that many of those who had not taken up the freedom within ten years of the completion of their apprenticeship would do so after that time. The results of this search are tabulated below:

Table 5 Percentage of boys bound apprentice in sample years 1675-6 to 1725-6 later becoming freemen of the city

<i>Years</i>	<i>Bristol boys</i>	<i>Non-Bristol boys</i>
1675-6	34	28
1675-6	26	31
1685-6	42	39
1705-6	53	45
1715-16	46	46
1725-6	48	45

These figures show that in the earlier years Bristol boys were more likely to take up the freedom than those who came into the city from the countryside. After 1705-6, however, the situation seems to have changed and by the end of the period the percentages for native and non-city apprentices were similar. One can assume that a person taking out the freedom of the city intended to remain in Bristol to practise his trade. The figures suggest that in the late 17th century only about a third of those apprenticed stayed in the city once they finished their apprenticeship (both city and non-Bristol boys). By the 18th century it would seem that about half of those trained remained to practise their craft, and so become part of the permanent population of the city. This may seem low, and may indeed underestimate the numbers who remained in the city. It must be remembered that apprentices were more likely to become freemen if their trade were regulated by a company since in many trades it was necessary for one to be a freeman of the city before one could become a freeman of the company, which brought with it the eventual entitlement of taking apprentices oneself. Freedom of a trade company seems to have had greater economic value than the freedom of the city. Whereas the cost of becoming a freeman of the city was usually 4s. 6d., the cost of becoming a freeman of a company could be as high as three guineas.¹³ Evidence to support this can be found in the fact that the lowest number of apprentices becoming freemen is to be found in the port and shipping and luxury goods trades which were not company organized. Thus a significant number of men may have remained in the city but did not become freemen. The figures given in Table 6 must, therefore, be treated as the minimum numbers likely to have settled in the city once they had served their time.

However it would be wrong to suggest that apprenticeship was the only reason for migration to the city. Perhaps the other most important reasons were marriage and to find casual employment. Unfortunately the city parish registers rarely give the place of origin of brides or grooms from outside the city, although this information is available from marriage licence bonds. In the 1670s some 120 men came to the city to marry Bristol girls by licence (compared with 71 country brides who found husbands in the city). In the 1700s the figures had increased to 145 and 99 respectively, and there was a further increase by the 1720s when the relevant figures were 310 and 156. However, the population of the city had not increased proportionally, rising from about 19,000 in 1670 to about 21,000 by 1720. How many migrated for the purpose of finding casual

13. B.R.O., Bakers Company Minute Book (08155[1]), 480 (dated Jan 1696/7).

work is not known, although there is evidence to suggest that outsiders were accepted into the city in certain trades where there were shortages of labour. Evidence of this is found in some 76 bonds dated between March 1694/5 and June 1698 of 'foreigners' allowed to practise the trade of merchant tailor as journeymen.¹⁴ Hitherto the Company of Merchant Tailors had rigorously defended the privilege that only members of the company should trade in the city, but regulations of strangers by bond suggests that the company had either come to accept the inevitability of strangers working in the city or that there was a shortage of skilled labour. The fact that no bonds were issued after June 1698 suggests that the company might have allowed the influx for a limited period only, returning to its customary restriction on entry once the need for additional labour had been satisfied. The sharp decline in the numbers of apprentices bound to tailors and of tailors admitted as freemen in the 1690s lends credence to the theory that there was a shortage of skilled labour. Most of these journeymen tailors came from Wales (21 per cent), Somerset (18 per cent), Gloucestershire and Wiltshire (11 per cent each) and Devon (8 per cent). The predominance of the neighbouring counties (60 per cent of the total), is not surprising, and confirms the conclusion drawn above that the bulk of migrants to the city travelled relatively short distances and from areas having close trading connections with the city. However, the late 1690s were years of economic dislocation and hence there were a few who migrated from further afield — from Dublin, Londonderry and Waterford in Ireland, Lancashire, Yorkshire and Northumberland.

It has been the aim of this article to examine the importance of apprenticeship as a 'pull factor' in attracting people into Bristol. Whilst clearly only one of several such factors, it does seem to have been of importance, particularly since such large numbers remained in the city after the completion of their apprenticeship. Whilst the bulk of migration was from a local catchment area, there were appreciable numbers of migrants from most areas of England (with the sole exception of East Anglia), as well as from Wales and occasionally Ireland. The majority entered what might be termed the staple occupational groups — food and drink, textiles, port and shipping and, to a lesser extent, building, all trades upon which the economic life of the city was heavily dependent. Over half of the outsiders became freemen of the city upon the completion of their training and so presumably stayed in the city. Unlike London, Bristol does not seem in this period to have been a dumping ground for poor children from nearby villages who were bound apprentice in the city by the poor law authorities.¹⁵ Nor indeed were all that many children of poor Bristolians bound, the company and city authorities seemingly holding the apprenticeship system in high esteem rather than regarding it as a source of cheap labour.¹⁶ However, there does not seem as Defoe suggested to have been any deliberate policy on the part of the city authorities to restrict the numbers of outsiders becoming apprentices in the city, so as to control, ultimately, the number of freemen and hence voting at elections.¹⁷ The relative ease with which non-Bristolians seem to have been allowed to undergo apprenticeship in the city and the significant percentage of them who took out freedom of the city, and presumably remained in the city to practise their trade, is clearly contrary to this belief. There can be little doubt that had it not been for a considerable influx of population into the city, Bristol, like London, could not have grown by natural increase alone. London in the late 17th and early 18th centuries needed a net annual immigration of 8,000 people to maintain its population.¹⁸ In Bristol in the 1700s the average annual number of

14. B.R.O., Tailors Company records (19841[1]), and Avon County Library, Jefferies mss. (B. 1950), 122-3.

15. This seems to have been the case in London, see M.D. George, *London Life in the Eighteenth Century* (Penguin edition, Harmondsworth, 1966), 224-5.

16. Again this is in contrast to the situation in London, see George, *op. cit.*, 224.

17. D. Defoe, *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, ed., G.D.H. Cole (1928), II, 435, and *A Review of the State of the British Nation*, Vol. V, No. 145 (1 March 1708/9).

18. E.A. Wrigley, 'A Simple Model of London's importance in changing English society and economy 1650-1750', *Past & Present* No. 37 (Jul. 1967), 46.

christenings only just exceeded the average annual number of burials (774 against 731), so that an annual migration of about 200 boys for the purpose of undergoing apprenticeship was numerically more significant than the natural increase in population of about 40 people. This remains true even when one takes into account that only about half of those apprenticed seem to have remained in the city after the completion of their training. In addition about 250 men and women came to the city each year to marry Bristol spouses. As a result of this immigration the population of Bristol was able in the early 18th century to grow at the rate of about $2\frac{1}{4}$ per cent each year as compared with $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent in London.

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