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From the Font to the Grave in Early Modern Dyrham

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In the England of Thomas Cromwell, when asked what news there was from London, prudent men kept their mouths shut. Lewis Herbert of Abergavenny was not prudent. One Tuesday evening in the middle of September 1538, having reached Pucklechurch in south Gloucestershire on his way home from London, he sat down to supper at the George Inn, where he was joined by two or three locals. Inevitably they asked of the news from London. Herbert reported rumours that the currency was about to be devalued and gambling banned and, most alarming of all, that ‘hereafter when a man shall be buried his name shall be put in a book, and when a child shall be christened his name shall be put in a book, and when a man shall be married his name shall be put in a book’; everyone agreed that the purpose must be taxation; indeed, the innkeeper at Abingdon, who had been his host on Sunday, reckoned ‘that they should pay tribute for child christening, for burying and for wedding’. Wild rumours had been rife since the king’s break with Rome, and his minister, Thomas Cromwell, had warned county authorities to be vigilant. Unfortunately for Lewis Herbert, the local landowner, Sir Walter Denys, whose houses at Dyrham and Siston were both within three miles of Pucklechurch, happened to be the sheriff of Gloucestershire. It was not long before news reached him that a Welshman staying at the George was telling people that ‘there should be no pig, goose or capon eaten but there should be tribute paid unto the king therefor’. Herbert was brought before him and packed off to Gloucester gaol to await Cromwell’s pleasure.¹ The source of these rumours was Cromwell’s Injunction of 5 September 1538, decreeing that every parish should keep a register of all baptisms, marriages and burials. Officially its purpose was to control illicit marriages and reduce the number of disputed inheritances, but, as in 1991 when some people thought that a census was connected with the Community Charge, so in 1538 the government’s declared intentions were widely discounted.²

Nevertheless, its order was obeyed, and the register compiled for Dyrham, one of the south Gloucestershire parishes dominated by Sir Walter Denys, survives from 1568.³ It was uncommonly precise: from the middle of 1576 it recorded the names of mothers as well as fathers of those baptized, and it frequently distinguished between parishioners of the same name. Its entries were erratic only during the Civil War and Interregnum. In addition, over 150 parishioners’ wills have survived from the period 1530–1750.⁴ Moreover, many of the families, whose pedigrees can be reconstructed, can be studied in the context of their landholding, since parish and manor were coterminous and the extant manorial records are abundant. The manor was in the continuous ownership until 1974 of the Wynters, to whom Denys sold it in 1571, and their descendants, the Blathways,⁵ while the largest (and after 1580 the only) free tenement, the 600-acre sub-manor of Hinton, was owned by Bristol Corporation from 1541 to 1921.⁶ The sources invite an examination of the inhabitants of Dyrham and Hinton as they progressed from the font to the grave.

The parish contained some 3,000 acres on the extreme south-western slope of the Cotswolds. Its boundaries were the same as those of the estate granted by King Edgar to Pershore Abbey in 972. When George Wynter became the resident squire in 1571, he found himself lord of two distinct settlements. Dyrham village had an ordered layout in two parallel streets, running west

from the church and big house, perhaps evidence of planning by an 11th- or 12th-century lord of the manor. By contrast Hinton, half a mile to the north and with a population divided between tenants of Bristol Corporation and of the squire, was a random collection of houses, grouped around a chapel (deconsecrated by 1567) and centrally placed between the Upper and Lower Fields. In the mid 16th century those fields contained about 700 acres of arable. They had once been much larger, but their decline was to continue as piecemeal enclosure, mostly for pasture, nibbled away at their edges. The squire's demesne lay in the south of the parish, mostly pasture, woodland and parkland. During the 17th century the park was moved to its present site, east of the manor house, and the demesne was divided among dairy farms let out at rack rents.

Cheese and corn were the main concern of the customary tenantry.⁷ The social structure in 1571 resembled a lozenge rather than a pyramid. At the bottom were five cottagers, and above them six tenants with less than 15 acres each, another six each with 15–30 acres, and ten with holdings approximating to a yardland (c. 40–50 acres); five tenants held 60–75 acres each, eight 80–120 acres each, and the farmer of Bristol Corporation's demesne 190 acres centred on Healey Court in Hinton. Almost all the tenants were resident. When William Blathwayt took over in 1688, however, over half of the tenant-land was in the hands of absentees. By the mid 18th century most holdings had been incorporated in farms of over 150 acres and the community was changing from one of peasant cultivators to one of farmers and labourers. This paper will not attempt to look beyond that point.

The Population

In the country at large the population grew steadily from about two million in the mid 15th century to above three million in the mid 1550s.⁸ In 1551, near the height of the rise, the number of communicants in Dyrham was estimated at 180.⁹ Assuming that ten years was then the age of communion and that 25% of the population was under that age, this figure indicates a population of some 240.¹⁰ Six years later a nationwide influenza epidemic struck in the aftermath of a series of bad harvests, and it has been estimated that the population fell by some 20%.¹¹ Dyrham did not escape: a diocesan survey of 1563 put the number of households in the parish at 38.¹² The fall in population was severe. If a multiplier of 4.5 is used to translate households into men, women and children, a population figure of 171 is obtained; if 5 is used, the figure is 190.¹³ Thus between 1551 and 1563 Dyrham's population fell by between 20% and 30%.

Nationally the population began to recover after 1559. The Dyrham register recorded many more baptisms than burials until 1588, when a major disaster struck: between January and September of that year twenty-three people were buried, as many as in the previous five years put together. Bad harvests in 1585 and 1586 had produced widespread famine, and in 1587 'a strange sickness named the burning ague' had been noticed all over England.¹⁴ What exactly killed young and old in the parish in 1588 is not known. It struck Hinton and Dyrham in equal force, taking off yeomen as well as labourers; four married couples died, in each case the wife succumbing before the husband. Whatever disease it was, it acted swiftly: the wills of six of the victims have survived, all made within eleven days of the testators' deaths and one on the same day as his burial. Burials exceeded baptisms in the early 1590s, reaching another peak in 1592, when sixteen people were buried, ten of them between January and the third week of March. Mortality was widespread in that year. It may have been linked to the failed harvest of 1590, and, since it struck most in the winter, it may have been influenza. Deaths remained high throughout the decade, and in the summer of 1597 there were 11 burials in Dyrham, which might indicate plague.

How successfully the population of Dyrham and Hinton had recovered from the catastrophe of the late 1550s can be judged from the evidence of another diocesan survey in 1603. It

credited the parish with 180 communicants and there were also two men who refused communion.¹⁵ The age of communion had changed since 1551 and it now seems to have been sixteen. Rather than use a national multiplier to estimate those too young to have been included, we can now use the parish register and wills to reconstruct the population in 1603. An addition of all those whose presence can be proved both before and after that year amounts to 262, with 79 children, accounting for 30% of the total.¹⁶ Thus during Elizabeth's reign the population had recovered from the losses incurred during her predecessor's time and had risen by some 40% to c. 260, rather higher than in 1551.

It must be emphasized that these figures are only approximate. They are useful to indicate trends and to give an overall impression, but, even with the register to help, there are pitfalls. Not everyone baptized in Dyrham lived in the parish, and not everyone buried in its churchyard had been a permanent resident. Women marrying outsiders liked to return for the baptism of their first child, just as parishioners who had migrated sometimes wished to be returned for burial. On the other hand, some parish residents were never mentioned in the register. But for a muster roll of 1608 nothing would be known of the presence of John Ducke (labourer), Jenkin Evans (servant), Richard Pymme (glover), Christopher George (miller) or Richard Cornish (servant).¹⁷

The roll purports to list all males aged between twenty and sixty able to bear arms, or, if physically unfit, able to provide them. The compiler of the MS. warned that 'many made default and appeared not',¹⁸ but with the additional evidence of the register and wills it appears that the 59 males listed were part of a population of between 240 and 250. Hinton accounted for 44% of the total. There were exactly 50 households, with an average 4.8 persons. A survey of Gloucestershire parishes undertaken in 1650 also gave Dyrham 50 families, but it was estimating the population to the nearest ten.¹⁹ Such a guide is very rough, but it suggests that the parish was maintaining its numbers, a conclusion supported by an addition of the heads and households chargeable and not chargeable to the Hearth Tax in 1664, which gives a total of 54.²⁰ The Compton ecclesiastical census of 1676 found 175 communicants at Dyrham, no papists and no non-conformists.²¹ Assuming that between 30% and 35% of the population were too young to be included, it seems that the population was much the same as it had been at the start of the century. In 1711 Dyrham's population was put at about 270,²² so it appears to have remained fairly static throughout the 17th century.

Throughout the period for which parish records are available there was only one decade, the 1590s, in which burials at Dyrham exceeded baptisms. Apart from the 1630s, when the death rate came within a couple of points of the birth rate, births maintained a healthy surplus over deaths until the 1680s, when deaths drew level, and the 1690s, when the death rate stood at 21.5 per 1,000 and the birth rate had slumped to 14.4 per 1,000. Not surprisingly, in 1735 the population of Dyrham was estimated closer to 200 than 250.²³ But the decline was not to last. Indeed the parish was on the eve of a sharp increase: baptisms in the 1730s were nearly double the number of burials, and so they were again in the 1750s and 1760s, reaching a peak in the 1790s, when the birth rate was 31 per 1,000 and the death rate 15 per 1,000. In 1801 the population numbered 437,²⁴ living in a very different world from that of the yeomen and husbandmen of Tudor and Stuart Dyrham.

Childhood

Edith Taylor was baptized on 29 December 1578, the first child of Anthony and Alice Taylor, whose customary tenement of nearly 100 acres was based in Hinton. In early modern England the first weeks and months of life were the most dangerous. Edith survived them, but her brother, Christopher, baptized on 1 April 1582, was buried five days later. Such tragedies were

not unusual. About 10% of infants baptized in Dyrham between 1570 and 1749 failed to survive their first year. In some years infant mortality rose sharply. In 1585 three babies out of eleven baptized that year were buried the same day, and two others died before a month was out. Some families were luckier than others: of the nine children born between 1606 and 1631 to Edith's cousin, Amy, and her weaver husband, Thomas Crew, only one failed to survive infancy, and all ten children born to the Dyrham carpenter Edward Gale and his wife Alice between 1582 and 1604 survived, whereas the Taylors' prosperous neighbours in Hinton, Edmund and Joan Best, lost three successive daughters at two days, one day and five weeks between 1604 and 1608; early the next century the rector, Mervyn Perry, and his wife Elizabeth lost five of their children (born 1701–1719) under the age of twelve months.

The next four years of life were about half as dangerous, and the next five about half again. In the fifty years following the start of the surviving register in 1568, 15.7% of all those baptized died before they were ten years old. That rate was no higher than it was in other parts of the kingdom. The increase in child and infant mortality at Dyrham in the early 18th century was similarly unexceptional. There the death rate among children under the age of ten averaged 21.5% in the 1710s and 20.3% in the 1720s.

Once into their teens the young people of Dyrham and Hinton could reasonably expect to live into their fifties, and some lived much longer. Edith Taylor was to die within a month of her eightieth birthday. In fact, for those who lived through childhood, the chances of reaching and exceeding the biblical span were probably higher than were the risks for the newly born of dying before the age of ten.²⁵

Life, however, was always dangerous. Fatalities were caused by falls under wagons, into aqueducts, off horses, and occasionally, as in neighbouring Dodington in 1591 and Marshfield in 1635, people might perish in the snow.²⁶ Looming over the entire population were threats of epidemic and plague. Kinberry Moon of Dyrham lost her husband, her only son and her brother-in-law between February and June 1619; the Hinton smith, William Wise, buried a son aged seventeen, a daughter aged twelve, and finally his wife in a period of seven weeks in late 1636. William Moreman, aged 34, his wife and daughter, all died within a week of each other in Hinton in the autumn of 1695. Over half the households in the parish had suffered bereavement in 1588. The Llewellyn family, once prominent in the life of the local community, was effectively wiped out, losing six members, including Helen Ewar (or Yore), née Llewellyn. Helen's husband also died, leaving three children under six years of age. It was presumably to look after them and their tenement that John and Isabel Ewar came from Tetbury to Dyrham, but Isabel succumbed at the end of June and John three weeks later. Edith Taylor lost her paternal grandparents in the same mortality, and, when plague struck in the summer of 1597, she buried her mother and her eleven-year-old sister on successive days.

Edith had passed her 19th birthday when her mother died and was nearly forty when she lost her father, so she never knew orphanhood. Her youngest brother, however, was only nine and her sister eleven at their mother's death. The loss of a parent during childhood was much more common in the early modern world than in the late 20th century. Between 1568 and 1721 (the span of the earliest register) nearly 45% of Dyrham children, who did not predecease both parents during childhood, lost one parent before reaching the age of fourteen and a further 3% lost both. Edith Taylor not only escaped orphanhood but for the first nine years of her childhood had enjoyed the attention of three grandparents, and, although she lost both paternal grandparents in 1588, her maternal grandmother, Widow Moreman, a near neighbour in Hinton, survived another two years: Edith was quite unusually fortunate in this respect. Given the death rate and the high age at marriage in early modern England, only a minority of adults could expect to see their grandchildren. In March 1588, when Edith's father succeeded to the

family tenement, there were nearly fifty youngsters who had been born in Hinton since 1570; none except Edith had known more than one grandparent, and twenty-three had known none at all.

It was a youthful world. A census of the Middlesex village of Ealing in 1599 revealed that nearly half the population was below the age of twenty and only 7% over sixty.²⁷ Nothing like this record survives for Dyrham, but the muster list of 1608 does offer a cross-section of the population at one particular moment. Using the parish register to reconstruct the families of the men listed, it appears that some 42% of the population of Dyrham and Hinton in 1608 were below the age of twenty, three quarters of whom were under fourteen, and perhaps 6% over sixty. These are not so very different from national figures for the end of the 17th century, when it has been calculated that some 40% of the population of England was aged under twenty and more than 20% under nine; the estimate for those over sixty is 9%.²⁸

It is unlikely that Edith Taylor received any formal schooling. Nothing like the proliferation of village schools that has been uncovered in Cambridgeshire at this time can be traced in south Gloucestershire, but the business community in Bristol required educated recruits, and schools to provide them can be found in the city from the early 15th century onwards. In the 1630s technical skills, if not scholarship, could be acquired from establishments in Bristol offering instruction in penmanship and arithmetic, and in 1635 the boys could 'learn to write a good hand' at Upton Cheney, within six miles of Dyrham.²⁹ Some twenty years later a school opened still closer, in the neighbouring parish of Westerleigh.³⁰ A school was established in Dyrham not long after 1668, when William Langton, the rector, left £400 for the education of poor children of the parish; a schoolmaster had been appointed by 1674, and from 1677 infants were receiving some form of instruction from a widow, Goody Anstee.³¹ In 1711 William Blathwayt told a neighbouring squire that 'a charity school has been long since settled at Dyrham and I shall be ready always to promote so good a work'; he was dismissive of the value of 'Latin and scholarship' but enthusiastic about 'the honest education of youth . . . writing, reading, arithmetic and good manners'.³²

This, however, was after Edith Taylor's time. Of the sixteen surviving wills drawn up before Langton's bequest by parishioners leaving issue under the age of fourteen, five dealt with their 'education'. That word, however, did not necessarily carry its later, specific meaning; it could still mean simply 'bringing up'. Thus, when in 1618 William Camborne of Dyrham did 'commit the education' of his three-year-old daughter to his elder brother, it is unlikely that he had schooling in mind. He was simply being more concise than, for example, Christopher Moreman, who in 1609 charged his brother to 'have a care of the disposing, ordering and bringing up of my children'.³³

Some learning, however, could probably be picked up on an irregular basis. The signatures of eighteen yeomen and husbandmen of Dyrham and Hinton, including Edith's brother Thomas,³⁴ have survived on wills, leases and parish documents between the mid 16th and mid 17th centuries. It is likely that instruction in reading and writing was to be had from the rector or his curates, for they certainly made themselves available to write parishioners' wills.³⁵ Of the laity, Dennis Weare of Hinton (d. 1597) drew up a will for at least one of his fellow parishioners,³⁶ Joseph Smallcombe of Dyrham wrote two wills in 1639 and 1640, including that of the dying rector, John Hall,³⁷ and Richard Bradford, who succeeded to the Taylor holding, wrote two wills for Hinton neighbours in 1647.³⁸ Literacy was a saleable commodity, and it is probable that Weare, Smallcombe and Bradford found it profitable, not only to act as scribes, but also to pass on their skill. A yeoman of Henbury, who died in 1574, was owed over 30s. for teaching children to read and write.³⁹

Richard Bradford was described as a gentleman and Joseph Smallcombe as a yeoman; Dennis

Weare was the younger son of a yeoman who, as Bristol Corporations's bailiff in Hinton, was certainly literate, and Dennis's uncle Walter had attended the university at Oxford in the 1530s. Walter's father, William Weare of Healey Court, expected him to go into the Church, leaving him an annuity in 1539 payable until he 'may dispend by year 20 marks [£13 6s. 8d.] by benefice or other wise'; he also bequeathed Walter £2 'to buy him a gown at his next proceeding'. Walter's next proceeding was a change in direction; perhaps considering the immediate post-Reformation Church an overcrowded profession, he moved to medicine, taking his B.Med. and being admitted to practice in 1543.⁴⁰ Robert Mursley (1571–1624), whose yeoman ancestors had held 100 acres in Dyrham since the mid 14th century, gravitated to the law and to Bristol where he died leaving a small library.⁴¹

Prosperity and literacy went together. To be sure, the prosperous were not all literate, but, as in several Cambridgeshire parishes, the literate were all relatively prosperous.⁴² Literate fathers would certainly try to pass on their ability: Christopher Mills (d. 1600) succeeded in teaching his elder son and namesake to write, but not his brother, Richard, while both Dennis Weare's sons could write, but not his daughter.⁴³ With the exception of the squire's wife, there is no evidence that any woman living in Dyrham or Hinton could write until the early 18th century; when Edith Willis, as Edith Taylor had become, lay on her death-bed in 1657, she put not her signature but her mark to her will.⁴⁴ However, although we cannot imagine her sitting at the feet of the rector, a curate, a neighbour, or her father to acquire the skill of writing, she may have been taught to read. Village girls in Essex could display their reading ability in 1534, and at Orwell in Cambridgeshire, while writing was specifically excluded from their curriculum, girls were given instruction in reading. By 1648 at Weston near Bath it was expected that girls could 'be kept at school to learn to read and to sew'.⁴⁵ Women were assumed never to need to write or cast accounts, but they might need to read a lease, a bond or indeed their own wills before putting their marks to them.

Later in the 17th century a more formal education became available for local girls, not only at the charity school in Dyrham. A Westerleigh girl, who died in 1670 at the age of five, had already been put to school, where 'she took to learn her book very well for one of her years'. Her experience may have been exceptional, since her father was a schoolmaster, but it was not his school that she attended and her sister was sent to school in Bristol.⁴⁶

Adolescence

'Education' was followed by 'service', which effectively marked the end of childhood. An Italian visiting England at the end of the 15th century affected shock at how 'every one, however rich he may be, sends away his children into the houses of others, whilst he, in return, receives those of strangers into his own'.⁴⁷ In the case of village boys this meant service in husbandry or apprenticeship to a craft or trade, usually from the age of fourteen. Apprenticeship was for a minimum of seven years, but full entry to an urban guild was delayed until the age of twenty-four. John Rowbottom, a younger son baptized at Dyrham in 1575, was not expected by his father to complete his apprenticeship before the age of twenty-six.⁴⁸ For younger sons, who did not expect to inherit a holding, apprenticeship was a well-worn path. Bristol was a magnet, and many Dyrham and Hinton boys went to be bound apprentice to barbers, innkeepers, tailors, shoemakers, trunkmakers, tilers, masons, tanners and whittawers in the city.⁴⁹ But, although doubtless the most popular, it was not the only destination: craftsmen and merchants in Bath, Keynsham and Twerton in north Somerset, in Chippenham, Westwood and Atworth in north-west Wiltshire, and in Marshfield, Chipping Sodbury, Westerleigh, Siston, Upton Cheyney and Tormarton in south Gloucestershire all took Dyrham youths in the later 17th and early 18th centuries.⁵⁰

Some bequests were payable when the beneficiary 'is out of his prentiswecke',⁵¹ but many more were intended to help set up such an apprenticeship. Joan Pierce of Hinton, who had no land to pass on, left £10 in 1613 in trust for her only son 'for placing of him apprentice to some trade or occupation', and John Rogers of Dyrham, whose copyhold fell in on his death in 1614, left his goods and chattels to be divided amongst his three children at the age of twenty; unless apprenticeships could be found for them, in which case their portion should go towards the placement.⁵² It cost money both to enter an apprenticeship and to break one: Richard Sumniers failed to agree with his master in Keynsham and was bought out by his uncle after four years in 1733.⁵³

An alternative to apprenticeship was engagement as a farm servant hired on a yearly basis. It is unlikely that boys started such service before they had developed the strength to be fully useful in the fields, but they were certainly expected to be capable of farm work by the age of fourteen. It has been estimated that over a third of hired agricultural labourers in the 17th and 18th centuries were servants in husbandry.⁵⁴ The system in effect removed a large proportion of the indigenous teenage population of a village and partly replaced it with a succession of new faces from outside. Occasionally youths found a place within their own parish. John Tylie, servant to John Smith in 1522 and 1524, was presumably a member of the family of husbandmen bearing that name in Dyrham between 1441 and 1590.⁵⁵ Henry Weare, a younger son of the will-writing Dennis Weare of Hinton, got a place in his home village in the service of Widow Hendy, who owed him 28s. in 1601 (when he was twenty-one) and left him a steer 'as well in respect of the said debt as in regard of his honest service'.⁵⁶ Generally, however, it seems that teenage boys left the parish, not necessarily going far but moving often and most not returning, and that many servants who moved in also moved on. When he fell sick in 1610, Edward Moon of Dyrham did not know whether his son John (aged between ten and seventeen) was alive or dead.⁵⁷ In 1608, nine out of twenty bachelors aged between eighteen and thirty years were absent from the parish muster. But a couple of new young faces were present: Jenkin Evans and Richard Cornish, both servants. Neither remained in the parish, just as Richard Jacob and Richard Loxstone, who appeared as servants to Dyrham yeomen in 1522 and 1524, had also moved on.⁵⁸

Girls were by no means excluded from this system. They figure prominently in the apprenticeship records of Bristol. It should be remembered that the trade or craft of the master to whom they were bound was not necessarily that which they were to follow. For example, the girl apprenticed in 1557 to a blacksmith cannot have been expected to hammer metal on an anvil. She presumably was to be instructed by the smith's wife 'in the art of sempstress and housewife', as was frequently explicitly stipulated.⁵⁹ By far the most common form of female service was domestic. That was possibly what John Mitford of Hinton had in mind in 1594, when he left his nine-month old daughter a small legacy 'to be kept in the custody of his wife towards the education of his child till she be of years to enter into service'.⁶⁰ The destination of such children was not necessarily outside the parish: daughters of Dyrham husbandmen were working as servants in the households of William Weare of Healey Court in 1539, of John Cope of Hinton in 1549, and in that of Widow Hendy of Hinton in 1601.⁶¹ Service in the household of a relative was probably quite usual; Widow Merrick made her 'servant and kinswoman', Mary Silverthorn, her residuary legatee in 1705 and left her a half share in a tenement in Dyrham.⁶² Alice Bowman, born c. 1605, began her career as servant to her widowed grandmother, Joan Mabbot, who at her death in 1628 made Alice her executrix and residuary legatee 'in consideration of her painful service and attendance upon me'.⁶³ Alice seems to have found her vocation, for she was also to be found at the death-bed of a distant cousin in the same year, and forty years later the rector, William Langton, left £50 and an annuity of £15 to his 'honest and faithful servant, Alice Bowman, for her pains and care of me these many years in my sickly condition'.⁶⁴

Marriage

Alice Bowman was not buried in the parish and disappears from its records, but, unless she married in her old age, she died a spinster. At least eleven women over the age of thirty-five died unmarried in Dyrham during the 17th century. One of them was described by the rector as a prostitute,⁶⁵ another, Lucretia Camborne, had given birth to a daughter in 1621 and lived for another fifty-one years with that daughter, who followed her to the grave, also a spinster, in 1672. Two of the spinsters came from pauper families, but Ann Mills, who died single and aged *c.* 40 in 1614, was certainly not poor. She came from a yeoman family prominent in both Dyrham and Doynton, but as early as 1600 her father seems to have assumed that she would not marry.⁶⁶

Of the males baptized in Dyrham during the 17th century, seventeen died as bachelors over the age of thirty-five. Three were paupers and another four younger sons. Thomas Weare, born 1637, was both prosperous and an elder son, but he never married and shared Healey Court with his bachelor brother William, born 1638. They died within four months of each other in 1697. Whatever the reasons for remaining single, bachelors were regarded as being on the periphery of parish society. Thomas and William Weare, as the most senior members of the leading Hinton family and indeed regarded as minor gentry, were still called upon to act as trustees and overseers of villagers' wills, but their neighbour John Crew (1651–1725), another bachelor, played very little part in community affairs, even though he was of yeoman status and the head of a family that had been in Hinton since at least the 1520s. The only surviving will naming Crew as an overseer was probably that of his lodger.⁶⁷ Only twice, in 1714 and 1715, did he do a stint as churchwarden.⁶⁸

John Crew stood on the sidelines of the community because he failed to set up his own household. 'Marriage', Laslett has insisted, 'was the entry to full membership in the enfolding countryside'.⁶⁹ How much free choice did those contemplating marriage have in the matter? An attempt under Edward VI to make parental consent to marriage a legal necessity was abandoned under his successors.⁷⁰ In Dyrham it is likely that arranged marriages were known in the gentry families of Denys and Wynter, but at a lower level of society there can have been little to inhibit freedom of choice in the selection of a spouse.⁷¹ Disinheritance from the family tenement was not an option available to most parents, who had settled the descent of their holdings by entering children's names in copies and lives in leases long before thoughts of marriage loomed. Even Dennis Weare, who waited till he was on his death-bed in 1597 before entering his sons' names in his copy, did so unconditionally, although both were unmarried.⁷² Many suitors, anyway, had lost one or both parents or were away from home when they selected their partners.

Nevertheless, parental goodwill was obviously desirable and could be useful, bringing, as it might, some contribution to the establishment of the new household. For daughters, who did not have the same opportunities as their brothers to earn a nest egg, the absence of a marriage portion could be crucial to their marital chances. The attempts of a few parents to exert their influence beyond the grave undoubtedly reveal principles acted upon during life. In 1694 Walter Tyler, a Dyrham yeoman, left portions to five daughters, aged between fifteen and thirty, payable if they married with the consent of their mother; Widow Burton of Upper Lodge left money in 1677 in trust for her eight-year old granddaughter, payable, should she marry before she was twenty-one, only if she did so 'with the consent of her parents and the good liking of my overseers in trust'. The main criterion for such approval among the aspiring yeoman class was that daughters should not marry beneath them. Walter Pierce of Hinton made his nineteen-year old daughter's portion in 1616 dependent on the proviso that she did not marry

'to her disparagement nor without the consent of my overseers'. The strictest limitation on free choice was imposed in 1627 by John Willis of Dyrham, whose four daughters, aged between nine and twenty-six, were not to receive their portions if they made a match 'to their discredit or disparagement' or without the good will and consent not only of their mother but also of the squire, Sir George Wynter, and his wife.⁷³

The mother was in fact Edith Taylor, who had married John Willis in Dyrham church on 13 May 1596. John Willis represented a reasonably good catch. He was the eldest son of one of the leading families in Dyrham; its holding, centred on the site of Wynter House (long known as Dyrham Cottage), comprised 90 acres. The Taylor holding, based on the site of Hinton Farm, was 98 acres.⁷⁴ The families were of equal status. Edith's father and paternal grandfather were both described as husbandmen, and each had been a leading parishioner; in subsidy lists they were regularly assessed at £4, but the property of their ancestor, Thomas Taylor, had been valued at £9 in 1522.⁷⁵ John's father, Walter Willis, died a husbandman, but had been called a yeoman in 1577; his taxable rating in 1598 was £4 but, as with the Taylors, the Willises' rating had been higher, fluctuating between £5 and £8 between 1522 and 1590.⁷⁶ Both families may have been in gentle decline, which perhaps contributed to the sensitivity about disparagement displayed in John's will. Nevertheless, both families remained in the higher ranks of Dyrham and Hinton society, and the match made in 1596 confirmed that position.

Among John Willis's companions-in-arms, when he set out to muster in 1608, were his three brothers, one of whom was a brother-in-law of George Weare of Healey Court. Weare was similarly related to three men surnamed Hemming, who in turn were brothers-in-law to three members of the Moreman family. The Moremans were also related by marriage to members of the Crew and Pierce families in the muster, as well as being Edith Willis's first cousins. Back at home her father's first cousin, Thomas Brain, lived next door to her father-in-law. In fact of the 59 individuals named in the 1608 list (excluding the squire and the rector), 27 shared surnames with at least one other in the muster and 39 were related either by blood or by marriage to at least one other. Over half a century later, in 1664, an apparently complete hearth tax return for Dyrham and Hinton lists 52 people (again excluding the squire and the rector), of whom 70% were embraced by kinship ties of varying degrees of complexity.

A parish the size of Dyrham, however, could not supply both partners for all, or indeed most, of its marriages. In 68 (38.6%) of the 176 known marriages at Dyrham between 1568 and 1749, both partners were parishioners. Of the other marriages, 59 were to persons living within five miles of the parish, notably in Marshfield, Pucklechurch, Doynton and Westerleigh, and a further 29 to persons resident within ten miles.⁷⁷ The marriages do not suggest inbreeding within the parish, but there were occasional (perfectly legal) matches between step-kinfolk; in 1662 Mary Aust married a cousin of her father's first wife, and *c.* 1674 William Loxstone married his step-father's daughter.⁷⁸ In 1640 the rector's daughter, Elizabeth Hall, married her sister's nephew, a union which would not have been legal 101 years earlier. Closest of all to the limits of consanguinity was the marriage of Edith Taylor's father, who, two years almost to the day after her wedding, took for his second wife her sister-in-law, Joan Willis.⁷⁹

The circle of a villager's acquaintance was largely determined by family and business connexions and by the contacts made when in service or apprenticeship. Alice Davis went to Bristol as an apprentice in her early teens and married a man of that city in 1592. Her father had financial dealings with John Blanchard of Marshfield and her brother Walter married Blanchard's daughter in 1589.⁸⁰ The daughter of a Dyrham broadweaver (Thomas Rowbottom) married a Pucklechurch tailor in 1604.⁸¹ In 1622 Agnes Crew of Hinton took a husband from Alderton on the border of north-west Wiltshire and went to live there. Forty-four years later her niece, Elizabeth Crew, married a butcher from the neighbouring village of Luckington.⁸²

Edith Taylor had not needed to visit aunts to find her bridegroom. Indeed, she had hardly entered the marriage market when she was wed. At seventeen and a half she was young to marry; her second cousin, Edith Moreman, was to marry in 1624 at the age of fifteen and a half, and Mary Davis was only just sixteen when she took a Marshfield man as husband in 1617, but these girls were exceptional. It is perhaps significant that they were daughters of substantial members of the Dyrham and Hinton tenantry, presumably equipped with attractive marriage portions. As elsewhere in Tudor and Stuart England, the people of Dyrham tended to marry later in life than they do today. Edith's spouse was probably nearly thirty on his wedding day,⁸³ the mean age for male parishioners marrying between 1590 and 1639 was 28 rising to 30 between 1640 and 1689. More importantly, since it affected fertility rates, the mean age for women rose from 27 to 28 in the same period. From the end of the 17th century this age fell: between 1690 and 1739 the most common age for women to marry was between 21 and 23, and as many married below the age of 24 as above it.⁸⁴ The age for men also dropped, to a mean of 26, but it was only at the end of the 18th century that more men married at 24 than at 26 or 27.

It is not known what marriage portion the young Edith brought to John Willis in 1596, nor what contractual obligations were entered into by the groom. On his wedding day *c.* 1566 John's father, Walter, had paid his younger brother £10 in compensation and received half of their father's goods and household stuff 'to his marriage'.⁸⁵ The sort of commitment that a young man of yeoman stock might make in the early 17th century is illustrated by the agreement of Anthony Davis's son-in-law on his wedding day in 1604 'in the lodge in the park at Dyrham' to provide for his new wife goods worth £100 or a living worth £10 a year in the event of his death.⁸⁶ With four unmarried daughters to provide for in 1627, John Willis left £30 to the eldest and £20 to each of her sisters, a dispensation which may have represented three years' income.⁸⁷ The bequests were payable a year after marriage and would have had to be raised by sales of produce or livestock. Payment by instalment was common: Dennis Weare in 1596 arranged to pay his daughter's portion of £30 over three years, and at his death in 1619 Thomas Hemming was owed £40 by Henry Weare of Healey Court, 'being part of that portion which I was to have with my wife,' whom he had married two years previously.⁸⁸ Brides brought with them not only cash but also goods. The portion settled on his only daughter in 1573 by William Cope, a substantial husbandman in Hinton, comprised £20, three platters, three porringers, his best candlestick and pan and a flock mattress with a pair of sheets, blankets, bolster and coverlet.⁸⁹ Walter Willis bequeathed some of the goods brought to him by his second wife back to her in 1608; of what 'she brought with her' she was to have a caldron, a skillet, a pewter pot, a stone cup and a drinking bowl, a barrel, a flock mattress, two coverlets, a pair of blankets, two bolsters and two coffers; she was not to get back a smaller caldron, a second skillet, nor an unspecified number of barrels.⁹⁰ Marriage portions were, of course, limited to the more prosperous sections of the community. For the poor there would have been no portion at all. Neighbours might have helped set up a new household with their contributions at 'bride-ales',⁹¹ but those without settlements were dependent principally on what they themselves could earn.

The need to gather the means of support was obviously instrumental in delaying the age of marriage for most people until they were in their late twenties, for by marriage many were making a commitment to establish an independent, nuclear family. For example, although he had already taken over the family holding when his father died in 1645, John Crew was still a bachelor, aged 53, but by the end of the next year he had married.⁹² The motives for such delayed matches, however, are not necessarily obvious. Henry Moreman was 28 when his father died in 1598 and it was not until 1604 that he married.

More often heirs married and brought up families in the parish within their father's lifetime, and it is clear that, despite the warnings of contemporary moralists, they sometimes shared the

parental home.⁹³ Edith Taylor, in fact, married into one of the few families which has left evidence of a retirement contract. When Thomas Willis, her husband's grandfather, drew up his will in 1574, he was 'whole in body' and he and his wife had decided to retire. Their son, Walter, possibly already shared the house with his pregnant wife and three children, for Thomas thanked him for 'guiding our livings and household'. He was now to supply his parents, at his own expense, with 'competent meat, drink, lodging and also seemly and decent apparel . . . and such attendance as we shall have need of and some money in my purse such as I . . . shall call for'; his mother, in addition, was to have an annuity of twenty shillings 'to put in her purse and bestow at her will'. In return, Walter was 'to take the commodity and profit' from his father's holding. Walter's relationship with his parents had clearly been a good one, but, faced with the prospect of dependence, the older man offered a prayer that his son 'will so mollify and illuminate his heart towards us in this our weak time that he will still continue in his former meekness and so to see this gladly performed without cavillation or grudging'.⁹⁴

There are indications of similar retirement arrangements in other families. The successors of all three parishioners listed in 1608 as 'unable in body' married before their fathers' deaths. Of them, Thomas Hemming served during his father's lifetime as a sidesman and churchwarden, offices limited at this period to holders of customary tenements; so did Thomas Mursley, who was described as a yeoman in the muster list, a status he could only have attained on succession to a major holding.⁹⁵ The three invalids of 1608 were only listed because they were subsidy men.⁹⁶ Thomas Willis (*alias* Lawrence, d. 1614), who fell below the taxation threshold, was not listed, but his elder son Christopher, who had been married since 1606, did muster and was described as a husbandman. Presumably he, with his wife and two infants, shared his parents' house in Hinton. Also untaxed and unlisted in 1608 was Thomas Brain (d. 1620), whose only surviving child, Margaret, married two years later, bringing her husband, Joseph Smallcombe, from Twerton (Somerset) to live in Dyrham, almost certainly in her father's cottage.⁹⁷ Sometimes these arrangements must have involved a degree of domestic inconvenience, but the Mursleys and Willis had relatively large houses, and there was undoubtedly ample room at Healey Court in the 1630s for George Weare (d. 1647) to accommodate the family of his son Henry (born in 1609 and married by 1637).⁹⁸ George's will was drawn up in 1638, and a carving on a fireplace in his house, setting 1638 between the initials GW and HW, is evidence presumably of joint occupation and perhaps of George's retirement; Henry, not his father, was assessed for tax in 1643.⁹⁹

Three-generation households were not, of course, inevitable when the heirs to tenements married during their fathers' lifetime. Edith Taylor's brother, Christopher, married 11 years before their father's death in 1617, but lived on his wife's holding at Weston near Bath.¹⁰⁰ John Camborne's elder son raised his family at Upper Lodge and rented 160 acres of manorial demesne before succeeding to the family copyhold in 1618 or 1619. In 1622 another part of the demesne, centred on Lower Lodge, was held under lease by Richard Hemming, who had recently married and whose family tenement was in the hands of his widowed mother.¹⁰¹ As for younger sons, few sought to raise a family within the parish. Of the nine or ten who did between 1568 and the Civil War, four married local heiresses and thereby established themselves in customary holdings of their own.¹⁰² The supply of customary land within the parish was necessarily limited and the alternatives were expensive. Demesne farms were set at commercial levels and represented a daunting undertaking to the newly married. Holdings that had fallen in hand and tenements which had passed to absentees, both usually let for short terms at rack rents, offered equally costly livings for landless married men.

It is not known where John and Edith Willis set up house in 1596. After five years of widowhood and two months before his son's wedding, Walter Willis had married a young

widow from a neighbouring cottage. He was probably about 55 years old and, with at least two servants, quite capable of managing his tenement. His will, dated 1610, contained no evidence that John had taken it over before his death. Walter continued to be taxed and was churchwarden in 1599, while John did not become churchwarden until 1610, the year of his father's death.¹⁰³ Until his succession he would have been dependent on such land as became available for rack-renting and subletting.

It was over two and a half years before John and Edith Willis brought their first child to the font. In view of her youth, perhaps Edith had miscarried earlier, for, in an age without effective methods of contraception, marriage was quickly followed by pregnancy. At least 60% of the 103 couples marrying and remaining in Dyrham between 1568 and 1721 had a child within the first year of marriage. Indeed, until the mid 1620s 42% of all first baptisms were celebrated within eight months of the wedding, a rate considerably higher than that observed in the conservative villages of the Wiltshire chalklands over a similar period.¹⁰⁴

In the popular mind marriage began with the contract by which the couple came together. The procedure is described clearly in a diocesan record concerning a couple from Badgeworth near Gloucester. In late September 1548 Robert Kirby called at the house of Thomas Toms, who invited him to sit at the table with three neighbours and asked him whether or not he could find it in his heart to marry his daughter Margaret. One of the neighbours, Richard Watts, repeated the question and Kirby answered affirmatively; the question was put to Margaret and she answered likewise. 'Afterwards they rose all from the table, and the said Watts did contract the said Kirby and Margaret, the said Kirby taking Margaret by the hand, saying "I, Robert, take thee, Margaret, to my wedded wife, for better for worse, and thereto I plight thee my troth"'. Margaret similarly took Robert's hand and repeated the formula, after which they kissed each other and departed.¹⁰⁵ The religious ceremony took place later.

For centuries marriages in the English countryside were entered into only on the basis of a thorough probation, and as late as the mid 19th century it remained the custom of the Isle of Portland in Dorset 'that they never marry until the woman is pregnant'.¹⁰⁶ Naturally the Church authorities sought to make the religious ceremony the essence of marriage. Dyrham's rector was clearly suspicious in 1619, when he recorded the burial of twin sisters, 'daughters of a certain Ann Fivefoot and (as she asserts) Michael Nowell, her husband.' In the mid 1620s ecclesiastical courts started to prosecute couples for the offence of pre-marital fornication,¹⁰⁷ and after 1618 evidence of such intercourse is rare in the Dyrham register until the 1730s. The acceptance of ante-nuptial pregnancy was already losing ground in Tudor England, and most Dyrham parishioners who consummated a betrothal rather than a marriage came from the lower levels of local society. Some families seem to have been particularly old-fashioned. William Wise became a father in 1608, seven months after becoming a husband, while both his sisters, Joan Dolling in 1602 and Agnes Hedges in 1616, gave birth within a month of marriage, Agnes being distinguished in the register as a 'late married wife'. In 1573 Catherine Camborne of Hinton married Christopher Teast two months before the baptism of their child, and in 1586, as a widow, married Philip Smith a little over six months before the birth of a son.

Premarital sex carried the obvious risk for the woman that she might find herself with a child but without a husband. The age at which women gave birth to a first illegitimate child was much the same as that at which they might have expected to marry. Moreover, in Dyrham as elsewhere the illegitimacy rate followed a similar pattern to that for bridal pregnancy, falling to nothing in the 1630s and resurging in the 1730s.¹⁰⁸ The collapse of marriage plans in their crucial first nine months seems to have been an important factor contributing to the level of illegitimacy in Tudor and early Stuart England.

Dyrham records include no details of courtship, but the diocesan archives contain a revealing

account of the anxious progress towards matrimony of a couple in the neighbouring parish of Abson. In 1550 Margaret Fydler arrived as a servant in the house of her godfather, William Harding. By Christmas 1551 William Hill, also of Abson, was giving her tokens of affection and on 3 January 1552 they began to sleep together. More gifts followed and sexual relations continued on a fairly regular basis until 13 March, but before the end of Lent Hill's ardour had cooled. Margaret's 'friends' had assured him that she would 'be made worth twenty nobles' (£6 13s. 4d.), but he evidently doubted their word and one day, overtaking Margaret on the road to Bristol, 'he would not scanty know her'. 'The time hath been,' she called after him, 'Ye would have spoken with me.' By the end of May she was clearly with child and Harding let it be known that Hill was the father. Hill went to Harding's house on 30 May to speak with Margaret. After a tense exchange of civilities Hill, who did not deny paternity, asked exactly when he could expect the twenty nobles; she said once the banns were published. He said he wanted the money earlier and, as she was inflexible, he asked her to bring out her master. After half an hour's negotiation Harding agreed to stand surety for the twenty nobles, which would be paid on the wedding day, and Hill promised to announce in church on Sunday his intention to marry Margaret and protested that there was no need for any witnesses before then. On the Sunday, however, Hill made no public promise and the following Tuesday a neighbour visited him at the quarry where he worked to tell him that he should marry Margaret, as he had made her pregnant. Evidently Hill's mother also felt that things had gone too far and thought that he would have to 'forsake the country' if he failed to marry. Even so, it required pressure from the church court to bring William Hill to the altar with Margaret Fydler. In the event their marriage seems to have prospered; she produced at least five children and was expecting another when he died in 1567.¹⁰⁹

Margaret Fydler was fortunate, but it had been a close run thing. Of the fifteen women named as mothers of illegitimate children in the Dyrham register between 1568 and 1622, four were born in the parish and never again brought a child to the font. Two came from the resident poor,¹¹⁰ but Catherine Weare was the youngest daughter (aged 24) of the leading family of Hinton, and the father of her son in 1604 (John Wickham) was a member of an established family of Pucklechurch tanners, with whom the Weares may readily have contemplated an alliance. Lucretia Camborne, the daughter of a middling Dyrham husbandman, was forty years old when she gave birth to an illegitimate daughter in 1621; the father was Richard Wilkins, 'that did dwell with Mr. Wynter'. Neither mother nor daughter married, and they died within five months of each other in 1672. It is conceivable that both had been given a refuge in the big house by a squire sensible of the predicament in which his associate had left them, for the daughter, who was known as Mary Camborne *alias* Wilkins, made a will containing token bequests to Mr. and Mrs. Wynter and each of their four children.¹¹¹ Someone else who had presumably been deprived of legitimacy by his parents' abandonment of their marriage plans was John Pierce *alias* Payne. His mother in 1613 lay on her death-bed 'in the kitchen loft' of Healey Court, where she had found a home with her uncle, Henry Weare; she is known only from her burial and from her will, which exceptionally and significantly omits any description of her status.¹¹² Similar misfortune may have overtaken Margaret Smith, who was a servant in the squire's household in June 1620, when her daughter by Richard Hemming was baptized and given the name of Richard's mother; but the thirty-four-year old Hemming had transferred his affections and found a different bride by the end of the year.¹¹³

Eight of the mothers of illegitimate children appear in Dyrham records only at the baptism of their child. The presence of at least some was certainly the result of a system that harried pregnant women from parish to parish, as authorities sought to escape liability for a destitute mother and child. In 1616 Agnes Haskins, who had been living in Old Sodbury, was made

pregnant by one Christopher Kerle, who 'purposely brought her within the precincts of this parish in the dead time of the night and at the very point or instant time of her delivery'. Jane King's daughter was baptized on 15 May 1615; both mother and father had been servants in the same house in Hilmarton (Wilts), some sixteen miles east of Dyrham. They set out for Bristol, but Jane's time was too near; when they reached Dyrham on 8 May 'she did secretly creep into an outhouse of John Fry's lodge and then was delivered of the child at Fry's house'. The father continued on his way and by 15 May had found a place with a prominent Bristol merchant; whether or not he was reunited with Jane and their daughter is not known, but they were not heard of in Dyrham again.

Four of the fifteen single mothers were stigmatized by the rector as prostitutes (*meretriculae* or *meretrices*) and, since he did not (unlike the vicar of Marshfield)¹¹⁴ use the term indiscriminately, perhaps it should be taken literally. Juliana Reeve gave birth twice, in 1590 and 1601, but avoided the stigma possibly because she was a member of an established family. Anne Spencer *alias* Smith did not. She was one of the poor of the parish, dismissed by the archdeacon's court in 1569 on account of her poverty and listed as a pauper in a will of 1598. The fact that she had an alternative surname may indicate her own illegitimacy. Of her five known children, three were by members of the squire's household, including in 1572 Owen, 'Mr Wynter's man', and in 1578 and 1582 Gylman Ivy, 'the Aethiope'. The latter, who had probably been brought back by the squire's son after a voyage to the African coast, was baptized at Dyrham in 1575 at the age of 30, but he vanishes from the parish records after June 1583, when his son, Richard, was buried. Anne Spencer also left the parish and in September 1584 she was a vagrant five miles away at Swainswick (Somerset), where she gave birth to another child. She returned, or rather, perhaps, was returned to Dyrham by the following November, when that child was buried.¹¹⁵ The rest of her life was presumably spent in the parish, ending on the last day of 1602, when she fell into an aqueduct. It is perhaps surprising that so little evidence exists for rural prostitution, and in the case of Dyrham the big house, by comparison with the village, seems to have taken a disproportionate advantage of such services as were available. Or perhaps villagers were less cavalier in their precautions against conception.¹¹⁶

Whether or not such matters had ever been of concern to John Willis before his wedding, close to his thirtieth birthday, is quite unknowable. In 1599, as already noted, his wife produced a daughter; another daughter followed two years later, then another two years after that; a similar interval lapsed before the appearance in 1605 of a boy, named after the squire's eldest son, George. Edith bore five more children, at intervals of 18 months or more. Only the last child, born when Edith was nearly forty-four, failed to survive infancy.

Edith's child-bearing pattern was typical. In the country at large the most usual interval between births was two or three years. During the span of Dyrham's first register, 1568–1721, such an interval was more than twice as common as one less than 24 months. In a third of the cases where the interval was shorter, the new baby replaced one that had died in infancy. For example, Anne, wife of Christopher Cope of Hinton, had her first child baptized in March 1574, her second in June 1576, her third in November 1578 and so on, until her seventh was baptized in August 1588; but this baby died within the month and the next Cope offspring was presented in September of the following year; three more children followed, at the more accustomed intervals of 36, 27 and 36 months.

The explanation of this cycle lies in the practice of breast-feeding, which commonly lasted into a child's second year. The vastly improved standard of nutrition in the modern English diet has modified the contraceptive effects of prolonged lactation. In the 16th and 17th centuries lengthy lactation dramatically reduced a mother's fertility,¹¹⁷ and to avoid that circumstance those who could employed wetnurses. The only family in Dyrham to come within this category

was the squire's, and John Wynter's wife, Mary, was able to present him with eleven children in fourteen years (1593–1607). All but two of them survived infancy.¹¹⁸ Those few humbler parishioners who bore children at intervals below two years were not so successful: Joan, wife of the cordwainer John Robbins, managed to give birth four times, each one during the infancy of a previous child, but her offspring were sickly, three dying before their fifth birthday.

Mary Wynter's eleven children were a typical brood for the gentry. Edith Willis's total of ten was considerably above the average for ordinary parishioners, and can partly be explained by her youth at marriage. Most of her contemporaries would have reduced their breeding span by delaying marriage until their late twenties. Between 1568 and 1689 the average number of children born in each first marriage in the parish was 4.1.¹¹⁹ With the lowering of the female age at marriage in the last decade of the 17th century¹²⁰ the average number of children per marriage increased markedly, to 5.9 between 1690 and 1739; the average throughout the 18th century was 5.6.

Few childless couples emerge from the records for this period – in fact only three between 1568 and 1689. As efficient contraception was unavailable, an important curb on the size of families, apart from sterility, lactation and late marriage, was the early death of one of the partners. Childbirth was dangerous in early modern England. In 1598 Elizabeth Rowbottom died 'ex puerperio' and in 1608 Honor Winkworth died 'in labour of her child'. Edith Neal died 'post puerperium' in 1628. Juliana Aust 'in travail of child' in 1630; and Margaret Jocham 'in few days after her delivery of her child departed this life' in 1653. In fact 25% of all marriages between 1568 and 1689 were ended by the death of the wife while she was capable of bearing children, and often the death was patently connected with childbirth.

In an age when people were largely helpless against disease, childbirth was by no means the only cause of death. Indeed 20% of all marriages during this period were ended prematurely by the death of the husband. The number of orphans in Tudor and Stuart Dyrham has already been noticed. Late entry to marriage meant that many parishioners saw only their eldest children into adulthood. Indeed, some 38% of marriages celebrated in Dyrham church between 1568 and 1749 were ended by the death of a partner before any children had passed the age of sixteen.

The mean duration of marriages between 1568 and 1749 was twenty-two years, but a sizeable proportion (22%) lasted more than forty years, and a third of those more than fifty years. It must be emphasized that bride and groom anticipated a lifelong commitment. Legal divorce was, in effect, available only to the very rich. Desertion was the only escape from an unsatisfactory union. Some such possibility was evidently in the mind of the rector when, in 1600, he baptized the son of William Neal of Tolldown and of Margery, his wife 'as is thought, for it is not yet certain whether her prior husband be dead or not'. In 1742 Elizabeth Stock accused the overseers of the poor of negligence in refusing her the relief she needed because 'her husband hath left her family'. Occasionally there is notice of the burial of only one partner in a marriage. It is of course possible that the other had left the parish; but it is equally, if not more, likely that the survivor left when widowed.¹²¹

Edith Willis's marriage ended dramatically. At the end of January 1630 John Willis hanged himself. Strictly speaking, his corpse 'should in ground unsanctified have lodged'.¹²² That he was buried in the churchyard is testimony to his standing in the community and probably even more to his friendship with the squire, whose influence may have been needed to overcome the objection of the rector. John Hall did not himself officiate but allowed his curate to perform the obsequies. For understanding John Willis's action the date of his will might be significant: most testators drew up their wills within weeks or even days of their deaths, but John made his on 4 December 1627, over two years before his death, describing himself as 'sick in body'. Perhaps a long illness proved insufferable.

His marriage to Edith had lasted nearly thirty-four years. The nature of marriage in early modern England has been the subject of recent controversy between those who see it as all but devoid of romantic content and those who emphasize the evidence of affectionate attachment. Very little evidence one way or the other is to be found in the records of Dyrham and Hinton. It is, however, possible to eavesdrop at the death-bed in December 1630 of Richard Dauntsey in his house in Dyrham. Present were his wife Mary and brother-in-law Thomas Palmer. Richard asked Mary to give his brother some clothes and also £10 either immediately or at her own death, but she said that she would be unwilling to part with anything during her lifetime and so 'adventure the want thereof'. He then asked her to give his brother-in-law, Palmer, his best grey hose, his stuff doublet, his sword and dagger, his pair of boots and his best grey hat, and her own brother, Richard Marvin, his pistol. At that Mary asked her husband why he gave Palmer so much and Marvin so little.¹²³ The conversation suggests that a somewhat unsympathetic materialism was uppermost in Mary Dauntsey's mind as she watched her husband die.

In her husband's will Edith Willis was described as 'my welbeloved wife' and their children were committed to her 'loving consideration, motherly care and regard'. Such endearments, however, were formalities, included or excluded, one suspects, at the whim of the scrivener. They are found, in fact, in only thirty of the eighty-three surviving wills of parishioners who left widows between 1539 and 1765. Half of that number date from the years 1583-1627, when wives were regularly 'welbeloved', 'loving' or 'beloved', and no more significance should be attached to these terms than that they may reflect the style of the then rector, John Hall. But below the surface of this formality there may sometimes have lain the deep feeling revealed by a Bristol innkeeper in 1643, when he spoke of 'my well beloved wife Joan, who hath been careful in the helping of me to get that estate which I have and hath been tender over me and loving to me in my sickness and before I was sick'.¹²⁴

This dying man's recognition of his wife's contribution to his success is evidence of the crucial role played by women in the management of affairs. When a partnership was broken by the death of a wife, the man usually remarried within twelve months. There were exceptions. William Blathwayt, widowed in 1691 after five years of marriage, stayed a widower for his remaining twenty-six years. But husbandmen and yeomen, sometimes with young families to rear and always with a holding to run, found new wives quickly. There were thirty-four such marriages in the parish between 1568 and 1749, one man being married three times and another four;¹²⁵ in fifteen cases the period of widowhood was one year or less. In Edith Willis's family her father remarried in 1598, ten months after the death of his first wife, selecting his daughter's 25-year old sister-in-law for his bride and Edith's father-in-law remarried in 1596 after a five-year interval. His choice fell on his neighbour, Anne Brain, who had been nursing a sick husband; three months after that husband's death the widowed neighbours married.¹²⁶ Instances of bereaved women remarrying are unusual, but Anne Brain was a special case in that her first husband had, like her second, been a widower. Prior claims kept her name out of his copy, and the residue of his modest estate, which she was bequeathed, would have been very small. She needed security, and Walter Willis had evidently been waiting to provide it. She had no claim on his holding either, but, unlike her first husband, he was in a position to cushion her second widowhood, appointing that on his death his cattle be sold to provide her with a lump sum of £20.¹²⁷ It may have been felt that the funeral-baked meats were not quite cold when the marriage table was furnished for Joan Crew, who two months after burying a husband in May 1603 married Thomas Lyons, a weaver from Bath. Her late husband, also a weaver, had not previously married and she had a right to his cottage in Hinton. Thomas Lyons left Bath to join her.

Widowhood

Most women once bereaved remained widows for the rest of their lives. That state could last a long time: sixty-six years for Rachel Hathway (widowed after three years of marriage in 1672) and fifty-three years for both Elizabeth Crew (d. 1715) and Elizabeth Warren (widowed after two years in 1635). The poor widow in receipt of alms was a familiar figure in the community, regularly remembered in the wills of those more fortunate widows who controlled substantial holdings. Such women, among whom Edith Willis should be numbered, must have remained unmarried by choice.

Edith was in her fifty-second year when her husband killed himself. She had twenty-seven years of life ahead of her and she spent them in the marital home, her name having been entered in the copy of the court roll that constituted the family's right to the holding. Free bench, the custom whereby a widow automatically enjoyed a life interest in her husband's tenement, was not available at Dyrham or Hinton.¹²⁸ Should her name not be in the copy or her life in the lease, then a widow's future might be bleak. Second wives were particularly vulnerable, since the descent of their husbands' tenements had often been determined before their arrival or the funds for revising copies or leases had been spent on their predecessors. Thus Isabel, second wife of John Mills (d. 1579), was one of the poor of the parish in 1598, although her late husband had possessed a copyhold in Dyrham and a leasehold in Doynton.¹²⁹ Thomas Camborne of Hinton failed to insert any more names in his copy after his first wife's death in childbed in 1675; his second wife, who survived him in 1698, was in receipt of dole from the poor box in 1709.¹³⁰ Widow Hendy was sufficiently concerned about the future of her cousin, Mary Powle, who had become John Burford's second wife in 1593, that she bequeathed £5 to be converted by Burford 'towards the purchasing or buying of some living, lease or copyhold, wherein the said Mary shall have assured unto her an estate for term of her life'. In fact, Burford put the money towards the cost of entering Mary's name in his own Hinton copy in 1608.¹³¹

Alternatively, special provision might be made for the widowhood of second wives. In 1648 Thomas Camborne's grandfather had left his second wife livestock and grain worth about £30; as already noted, John Willis was enjoined by his father's will to sell cattle worth £20 to provide a lump sum for his stepmother in 1610; in 1664 William Weare arranged for his second wife to have an annuity of £8 for forty years, should she survive him so long.¹³²

In the senior branch of the Weare family, that which leased Healey Court from Bristol Corporation, even first wives might not have their lives put in the lease, but provision was made for their future. In 1539 William Weare arranged for his wife to have an annuity of £8 and eight bushels of wheat, to be paid quarterly by Thomas, his son and heir, and also bequeathed her 40 sheep and 10 cattle, to be maintained by Thomas for her benefit but at his charge. Her lodgings were to be 'the parlour beneath and the little chamber above', furnished with no fewer than five beds, and Thomas was to provide her with food and drink, including 'one fat ox against Cristmas next coming', firewood and laundry, 'and all other things for her keeping necessary during her life time'.¹³³ Thomas, in his turn, drew up a contract with his own heir, whereby the latter covenanted to pay his mother a sum of money each year.¹³⁴

Landholding widows made various arrangements with those members of a younger generation who worked their copyholds or leaseholds. Widow Mabbot, for example, passed on responsibility for the chief rent (16s.) from her holding in Hinton to her son-in-law and daughter Walter and Margaret Pierce. Walter died in 1620 and Margaret owed her mother £4 in 1625 as rent 'for the living or tenement which the said Margaret holdeth under her mother'.¹³⁵ A clear demarcation existed on the Mursley tenement in 1572 between the crops of

Robert Mursley and those of his widowed mother, who bequeathed a younger son 'all my part of the wheat and barley that is betwixt Robert Morseley and me'.¹³⁶ Some widows evidently retired. Sarah Neal of Westons in Hinton was widowed in 1655, when her eldest son was seventeen; she was answerable for taxes as late as 1664, but when she died in 1666 it was reported that she had 'lived sometime at Tytherington and there died'.¹³⁷ Joan Cope, widowed in 1573, gave up her responsibilities for the family tenement in Hinton between 1582 and 1590, when she was replaced in the subsidy lists by her son, Christopher. At her death-bed in 1594 the rector asked what 'her will was to bestow upon her son Christopher Cope and his children who had been a dutiful and tendable child unto her. She . . . did answer that she had nothing to bestow but the bedding whereon she then did lie, and a press and that they should have it all amongst them'. The rector repeated his question and all the old lady could add was a kerchief and some linen.¹³⁸ Edith Willis herself remained answerable for the taxes due on the Willis holding, although her eldest son, George (born 1605) probably took over its management long before her death, since he was appointed churchwarden in 1637, had married by 1641 and was described as a yeoman in 1647.¹³⁹

Widows with land did not live alone. Both Widow Hendy in 1598 and Widow Mabbot in 1625 had adult spinster granddaughters living with them and they made them their residuary legatees; Widow Mabbot specifically recalled her grandchild's 'painful service and attendance'.¹⁴⁰ Widow Hemming's youngest son, John, a bachelor aged thirty-seven, lived with his mother during her last years and, when she died in 1629, was left a 'bedstead that usually he lyeth on'.¹⁴¹ Widow Camery, about eighty years old when she drew up her will in 1748, had installed a tenant and his young family to share her house in Dyrham during her long widowhood.¹⁴²

As was customary, John Willis made his wife his residuary legatee and executrix. Although she was to have the advice of the squire, Sir George Wynter, and of two of her brothers-in-law, Edith was to bear the responsibility of raising the portions, worth £90 in total, settled upon her four unmarried daughters, the youngest of whom was twelve. Some husbands, like William Neal of Hinton in 1655, even left the size of such portions to their widows' discretion.¹⁴³ At all levels of village society widows were made custodians of bequests to under-age or unmarried children. Coming of age was usually reached on the twenty-first birthday, although two testators (in 1631 and 1717) stipulated the twenty-second and one in 1614 settled on the twentieth.¹⁴⁴ Thomas Camborne was old-fashioned when in 1560 he discharged his widow's responsibility for their daughters at the age of fourteen and for their son at the age of nine.¹⁴⁵

When Edith Willis came to draw up her own will in 1657, she left bequests totalling £67 15s. to her children and grandchildren; as was common with widows, she divided her clothing and linen amongst her daughters. She made her son George her executor and residuary legatee and appointed a neighbouring yeoman and a son-in-law as overseers. In their presence on 11 August 1657 she made her mark and appended her seal. By 27 November she had joined her husband in the churchyard at Dyrham.¹⁴⁶

Burial

Edith's will simply requested that her body be returned 'to the earth from whence it was taken'. This was the standard formula used by Dyrham testators from the middle of the 17th century to the beginning of the 18th, whereafter it became rare to refer to the corpse at all. Funerals during the Commonwealth do not seem to have differed much from those conducted since the outset of the Reformation.¹⁴⁷ Compared with pre-Reformation rites funerals were short and simple affairs. When a soul faced a journey through Purgatory there was much that could be

done to ease its passage, but such intercession had no place in Reformation thinking. The funeral service became functional, centred on the actual interment of the body.¹⁴⁸ Occasionally parishioners asked for a specific burial-place. Edmund Rowbottom in 1578 wished to be buried on the south side of the churchyard near his father's tomb. The rectors of Dyrham were usually buried in the chancel, and more prosperous parishioners might hope to be laid to rest elsewhere in the church.¹⁴⁹ By the mid 17th century requests for burial 'in the church or churchyard if it may be conveniently' had dropped out of the testamentary formula, but a visit to the church shows that burials within its walls continued throughout the Commonwealth and thereafter.

From 1630 onwards it was usual for testators to leave funerary arrangements to the discretion of their executors, but some stipulated the level of expenditure. Isaac Taylor set aside £50 in 1691 for his funeral, and in 1705 Widow Merrick allocated £30, which was to include the cost of a sermon. Thomas and William Weare bequeathed £1 and £2 respectively for funeral sermons in 1697.¹⁵⁰ No details have survived of the obsequies of lesser Dyrham mortals, but in neighbouring Doynton in 1714 a butcher's widow managed to bury her husband for 17s., spending 8s. for a coffin, 3s. for clerk's fees and 6s. on a shroud, which compares with a value of 30s. put on Widow Merrick's 'funeral cloth' in 1706.¹⁵¹

One feature of medieval funerals that survived the Reformation was a dole to the poor. On the day of Sir William Denys's funeral in 1533 one penny was to be given to each of 240 poor men and women in Worcester, twenty-four $\frac{1}{2}d.$ -loaves were to be distributed amongst the prisoners in Newgate, Bristol, and 3s. 4d. in bread among poor prisoners in Gloucester castle; no provision for the poor of Dyrham was contained in the surviving portion of his will.¹⁵² Sir William's eventual successor, George Wynter, ignored the poor altogether when he drew up his will in 1581, and so indeed did many parishioners, but a little over a third of all wills surviving from the 16th and 17th centuries provided for the poor. Sums allocated for their relief in the last quarter of the 16th century and the first quarter of the 17th varied from 1s. 6d., bequeathed in 1609 by a husbandman leaving a young-family behind him, to £2 allocated by the rector in 1577 and £3 by the squire, John Wynter, in 1617; most doles were between 3s. 4d. and 6s. 8d. Continuing inflation was reflected in an overall increase from the second quarter of the 17th century, when gifts of £1 were usual. The last Wynter squire left £20 to the poor in 1688, and, not to be outdone, William Weare of Healey Court left £20 plus £6 in bread in 1697.¹⁵³

Edith Willis herself left £1 'to such of the poor as hath most need'. Earlier two other testators had specified the names of those poor men and women to whom they wished to give 6d. apiece,¹⁵⁴ but generally the recipients were selected by the rector in conjunction with the churchwardens and, after 1601, the overseers of the poor. In the case of Widow Willis and a few others the responsibility lay solely with their executors. Few doles were indiscriminate, but it is likely that all gave the poor of the parish a motive to attend the funerals of the donors, whether or not the dole was to be distributed immediately at the church door, as with the rector William Langton's £5 in 1668, or after twelve months, as was the case with Edith Willis's £1 in 1657. There was always a chance that largesse might be offered at the home of the departed, a custom despised by a Somerset gentleman in 1744, who 'would not have any money distributed among the rabble that may flock about my house on the day of my funeral'.¹⁵⁵ The last recorded bequest to the poor of Dyrham and Hinton was one of £1 in bread, made by Widow North in 1765;¹⁵⁶ she was then seventy-seven and her legacy may already have appeared quaint; by the time she died in 1776 it would have seemed distinctly old-fashioned. The population was nearly twice the size it had been for much of the period under investigation, and the parish had entered a new phase in its history.

Notes & References

Unless otherwise stated, the source for baptisms, marriages and burials is the Dyrham parish register under the appropriate year: Bristol Record Office, P/Dy/R/1(a). 'Wills' and 'Invent.' refer to the collections of wills and inventories in the Gloucester diocesan records (G.D.R.) at the Gloucestershire Record Office. I am happy to have an opportunity of recording my thanks to the staff of both offices for their unflinching courtesy and assistance.

1. P[ublic] R[ecord] O[ffice], SP 1/136, pp. 226, 228; *Letter and Papers Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII* 13(2), 413.
2. Tate, W.E., *The Parish Chest* (Cambridge, 1951), 44; Elton, G.R., *Policy and Police* (Cambridge, 1972), 68, 80, 259–60, 330.
3. Bristol. R.O., P/Dy/R/1(a).
4. Those proved before 1541 are in the Herefordshire and Worcestershire R.O. at Worcester; those proved after 1541 are in the Glos. R.O. or, in the case of some prosperous testators and of all dying 1655–60, in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury records at the P.R.O.
5. The Blathwayt Muniments are Glos. R.O., D 1799; D 2659.
6. The city chamberlain's records concerning Hinton are largely contained in the Audit Books from 1544, the Bargain Books 1604–20, 1634–46, and the Gloucestershire Bargain Book 1653–1752 at the Bristol R.O.
7. Cf. Glos. R.O., D 1799/C 167, Th. Edwards to Wm. Blathwayt, 2 May 1692; 'cheese and corn have of late gone off very well with us, so there is no cause of complaint for tenants this year'.
8. Hatcher, J., *Plague, Population and the English Economy, 1348–1530* (1977), 69; Wrigley, E.A. & Schofield, R.S., *Population History of England, 1541–1871* (Cambridge, 1989), 575.
9. Gairdner, J., 'Bishop Hooper's Visitation of Gloucestershire, 1551,' *Eng. Hist. Rev.* 19 (1904), 117.
10. The assumption follows Wrigley & Schofield, *Population Hist. of Eng.* 565.
11. Palliser, D.M., *The Age of Elizabeth* (1983), 36.
12. Bodleian MS. Rawlinson C.790, f. 14v.
13. Laslett used 4.75: P. Laslett & R. Wall (eds.), *Household and Family in Past Time* (Cambridge, 1972), 132–4.
14. Slack, P., *Impact of Plague in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 1985), 74.
15. 'Survey of the Diocese of Gloucester, 1603', in *Ecclesiastical Miscellany*, ed. D. Walker and others (BGAS Rec. Section 11, 1976), 88.
16. i.e. 5% fewer than the notional figure used by Wrigley & Schofield, *Population Hist. of Eng.* 569.
17. Smith, J., *Men and Armour for Gloucestershire in 1608* (reprinted edn., Gloucester, 1980), 196–7.
18. Tawney, A.J. & R.H., 'An Occupational Census of the Seventeenth Century', *Econ. Hist. Rev.* 5 (1934–5), 26 & n., 30.
19. Erlington, C.R., 'Survey of Church Livings in Gloucestershire, 1650', *TBGAS* 83 (1964), 96.
20. P.R.O., E 179/247/16, file no. 27.
21. *Compton Census of 1676*, ed. A. Whiteman (British Academy, 1986), 536; also Perceval, A., 'Gloucestershire Village Populations', *Local Population Studies* 8, supplement.
22. Atkyns, R., *Ancient and Present State of Glostershire* (1712), 415.
23. Jones, A.E., 'Protestant Dissent in Gloucestershire', *TBGAS* 101 (1983), 140.
24. The census totals 1801–1901 are set out in *Victoria County History of Gloucestershire* 2 (1907), 180.
25. Of those baptized in Dyrham between 1570 and 1749 and known to have survived into their teens, the percentage that can be traced into their 70s and beyond is at least 9.6 for 1570–99, 16.2 for 1600–29, 16.7 for 1630–59, 14.1 for 1660–89, 24.7 for 1690–1719, and 25 for 1720–49.
26. Bristol R.O., P/D/R/1(a), f. 3v; *Parish Registers of Marshfield*, ed. F.A. Crisp (privately printed, 1893), 89. The Dyrham accidents are found in the registers under 1589 (Wm. Burford), 1602 (Anne Spencer), 1781 (Peter Vines), 1804 (John Anstee).
27. Allison, K.J., 'An Elizabethan Village "Census"', *Bulletin Inst. Hist. Research* 36 (1963), 91–103.
28. Wrigley & Schofield, *Population Hist.* 218; cf. P. Laslett, *The World We Have Lost* (1983 edn.), 119.

29. Vanes, J., *Education and Apprenticeship in Sixteenth Century Bristol* (Historical Association, Bristol Branch, 1982), 5, 18; Porter, S., 'The Biography of a Parliamentary Soldier', *TBGAS* 108 (1990), 132. For Cambridgeshire see M. Spufford, 'The Schooling of the Peasantry in Cambridgeshire, 1575-1700', in *Land, Church and People*, ed. J. Thirsk (Reading, 1970), 122-47; Spufford, *Contrasting Communities* (Cambridge, 1974), 183-6.
30. Bodleian MS. Top. Oxon. f.31, pp. xxx, xxxiii.
31. Wills 1668/247; Glos. R.O., D 1034, disbursements for 1674 and 1677.
32. Bristol. R.O., 09701(5), Wm. Blathwayt to Rich. Haynes 15 Dec. 1711.
33. Wills 1618/228; 1609/15.
34. *Ibid.* 1630/80.
35. *Ibid.* 1560/163; the curate, Richard Michell, on the evidence of handwriting, wrote *ibid.* 1624/26; John Hall, the rector, wrote at least 16 wills. The curate of Westerleigh ran a school in 1628: *TBGAS* 108, 132.
36. Wills 1595/109; cf. Weare's signature in *ibid.* 1583/18.
37. *Ibid.* 1639/114; 1639/116.
38. *Ibid.* 1648/55; 1648/100.
39. *Bristol Wills 1546-1593*, ed. P. McGrath & M.E. Williams (Bristol, 1975), 17.
40. *Alumni Oxonienses 1500-1714* 4, 1587; P.R.O., PROB 11/28, f. 15. For the close connexion between the clergy and medicine, M. Pelling, 'Medical practice in early modern England: trade or profession?', in *Professions in Early Modern England*, ed. W. Prest (1987), 109, 114.
41. P.R.O., PROB 11/144, f. 249; cf. Glos. R.O., D 1799/L 4; Bristol. R.O., AC/S7/1, 6, 10, 11.
42. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, 195.
43. Somerset R.O., DD/GL/91, 6 March 9 James I. For the signatures of Andrew and Anthony Weare, Dyrham Register, ff. 12v., 14v., 18; Wills 1629/80 also has the mark of their sister, Mary Harford.
44. Wills 1630/80; P.R.O., PROB 11/270, f. 215v.
45. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, 206; Spufford, 'Schooling of Peasantry in Cambridgeshire', 140 n.; Emmison, F.G., *Elizabethan Life: Home, Work & Land* (Chelmsford, 1976), 122-3; *Quarter Sessions for the County of Somerset*, iii (Somerset Rec. Soc. 28, 1912), 55.
46. Bodleian MS. Top. Oxon. f.31, pp. xxx, xxxiii, 148.
47. *A Relation . . . of the Isle of England, about 1500*, trans. C.A. Sneyd (Camden Soc., old ser., 1847), 24-5.
48. Wills 1598/114.
49. *Calendar of the Bristol Apprentice Book 1532-42*, ed. D. Hollis (Bristol Rec. Soc. 14, 1949), pp. 29, 73; 1542-52, ed. E. Ralph & N.M. Hardwick (Bristol Rec. Soc. 33, 1980), 132; Bristol. R.O., Apprentice Reg. 1566-92, f. 68v.; Apprentice Reg., 4 Nov. 1626; Burgess Book, 21 March 1638/9; 04356(1), f. 19v.; Glos. R.O., D 1034, *s.a.* 1682, 1712.
50. Glos. R.O., D 1799/X 13 (15 Nov. 1736); D 1034, disbursements for 1674, 1677, 1679, 1683-4, 1706, 1715, 1719, 1721, 1724, 1727-8.
51. Wills 1571/261; 1598/114.
52. P.R.O., PROB 11/139, f. 320; Wills 1614/79.
53. Glos. R.O., D 1799/X 13 (15 Nov. 1736).
54. Kussmaul, A., *Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1981), 5.
55. *Military Survey of Gloucestershire, 1522*, ed. R.W. Hoyle (BGAS Gloucestershire Record Series 6, 1993), 8; P.R.O., E 179/113/200, m. 6; cf. *Cal. Patent Rolls*, 1436-41, 462; Glos. R.O., D 1799/T 2; Wills 1582/89; 1590/6.
56. Wills 1601/118.
57. *Ibid.* 1616/41; cf. Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, 51-4; Wrightson, K., *English Society, 1580-1680* (1982), 42; Ben-Amos, I.K., *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England* (Yale, 1994), 69-83.
58. Smith, *Men and Armour*, 196; *Military Survey, 1522*, 9; P.R.O., E 179/113/200, m. 7.
59. *Cal. Bristol Apprentice Book 1552-65*, ed. E. Ralph (Bristol Rec. Soc. 43, 1992), no. 674; cf. *ibid.* nos. 454, 1017, 1321. That instruction in housewifery was not always explicit in agreements should be remembered when reading Ben-Amos's remarks on women's apprenticeship in *Bristol: Adolescence and Youth*, 137.

60. Wills 1595/79.
61. P.R.O., PROB 11/28, f. 15v.; Wills 1549/160; 1601/118.
62. Wills 1706/45.
63. Ibid. 1628/82.
64. Ibid. 1628/20; 1668/247.
65. Anne Spencer (d. 1602); see below.
66. Wills 1600/21; P.R.O., PROB 11/124, f. 398.
67. Wills 1694/11.
68. Bristol. R.O., P/Dy/ChW/1(a).
69. Laslett, *World We Have Lost*, 12.
70. Youngs, J., *Sixteenth Century England* (Harmondsworth, 1984), 368; Mackie, J.D., *The Earlier Tudors, 1485–1558* (Oxford, 1952), 517.
71. Cf. Wrightson, *English Society*, 72–9; Sharpe, J.A., *Early Modern England: a Social History, 1550–1760* (London, 1987), 62–5.
72. Wills 1596/15.
73. Ibid. 1695/140; 1680/119; 1630/80; P.R.O., PROB 11/136, f. 150.
74. Glos. R.O., D 1799/E 96, 21 Dec. 1681; *ibid.* E 100, 30 Oct. 1724; D 2659/166 (estate map 1689).
75. *Military Survey 1522*, 8; G.D.R. vol. 4, p. 102; vol. 29, p. 53; vol. 115 (1), p. 11; P.R.O., E 179/115/387; 247/5; 116/439.
76. Glos. R.O., D 1799/E 94, 13 May 1577; *Military Survey 1522*, 9; P.R.O., E 179/116/439, 485.
77. Cf. Macfarlane, A., *Marriage and Love in England 1300–1840* (Oxford, 1986), 261.
78. Susannah Woodward; her parentage is clear from Wills 1701/209.
79. The prohibited degrees are summarized in Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love*, 246–7.
80. Bristol. R.O., P/Dy/R/1(a), *s.a.* 1592; Wills 1578/155; *Marshfield Registers*, 13, 34.
81. Margaret Rowbottom & Nich. Tyler, whose trade is given by Smith, *Men and Armour* 209.
82. Bristol. R.O., P/Dy/R/1(a), *s.a.* 1622; *Registers of Church of St Augustine the Less, Bristol, 1577–1700*, ed. A. Sabin (BGAS Records Section 3), 128; Thomas Jones's trade is given in Bristol. R.O., Glos. Bargain Book 1653–1752, f. 89v.
83. He was baptized before the surviving register begins in 1568, but his five younger brothers and sisters were born between 1569 and 1579, a cycle which suggests 1567 for the year of his birth.
84. For other parts of the country, Wrightson, *English Society*, 68; Wrigley & Schofield, *Population History*, 255.
85. Wills 1579/167.
86. Ibid. 1604/5.
87. Ibid. 1630/80. For estimates of income from agricultural holdings at this time, *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, ed. H.P.R. Finberg, iv *1500–1640*, ed. J. Thirsk (Cambridge, 1967), 657.
88. Wills 1596/15; 1620/165.
89. Ibid. 1573/215.
90. Ibid. 1610/231.
91. Bennett, J.M., 'Conviviality and charity in medieval and early modern England', *Past and Present* 134 (1992), 31–3.
92. Crew was a churchwarden in 1642 and his name appears in the tax list of 1643: G.D.R. vol. 207, p. 54; P.R.O., E 179/116/529.
93. Howell, C., 'Peasant inheritance customs in the Midlands 1280–1700', in J. Goody, J. Thirsk, and E.P. Thompson (eds.), *Family and Inheritance* (Cambridge, 1976), 145. Cf. Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love*, 94–5.
94. Wills 1579/167.
95. Those 'unable' in 1608 were John Haynes (d. 1618), Christopher Hemming (d. 1621), and Robert Mursely (d. 1614); cf. G.D.R. vol. 115(2), p. 369; G.D.R. V5/117/T2; Bristol R.O., EP/V/4/69.
96. Smith, *Men and Armour*, 1, 196–7.
97. Their only son was baptized in Dyrham in 1611; Margaret was buried in Dyrham in 1653 and Joseph in 1671.

98. P.R.O., E 179/116/554, m. 97; 247/16, file no. 27; 247/113; Bristol. R.O., 01379/1, m. 1.
99. P.R.O., E 179/116/529. George Weare's wife, unmentioned in his will (ibid. PROB 11/202, f. 239), was not buried at Dyrham. I am grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Sawyer of Healey Court for allowing me to inspect the fireplace.
100. Bath R.O., Weston Register; the family holding in Hinton was to fall in hand on his father's death, an outcome for which Anthony Taylor apologized in his will: Wills 1617/17.
101. P.R.O., PROB 11/134, f. 296; Glos. R.O., D 1799/F 7; *Gloucestershire Inquisitiones Post Mortem 1637-42*, ed. W.P.W. Phillimore & G.S. Fry (British Rec. Soc. 13, 1895), 110.
102. Dennis Weare, younger son of the farmer of Healey Court, married Alice Moreman, who had become heiress to 42 acres in Hinton two months earlier in 1573; Bristol. R.O., Audit Book 9, p. 316; cf. Glos. R.O., D 1799/M3, p. 3; Bristol. R.O., Bargain Book 1634-46, f. 107.
103. Wills 1610/231; P.R.O., E 179/116/439; G.D.R. vol. 80, p. 163; Bristol. R.O., P/Dy/R/1(a), f. 14v.
104. Ingram, M., *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England 1570-1640* (Cambridge, 1987), 219-20, 233.
105. G.D.R. vol. 3, pp. 29-30.
106. Homans, G.C., *English Villagers in the Thirteenth Century* (New York, 1960), 160-76.
107. Houlbrooke, R.A., *The English Family 1450-1700* (1984), 81; Ingram, *Church Courts*, 132-3.
108. Wrightson, *English Society*, 84-5, and authorities there cited.
109. G.D.R. vol. 8, pp. 201-5; Wills 1567/190. Cf. Ingram, *Church Courts*, 267-8.
110. Edith Fry was 27 when she had her son in 1609; Joan Jarvis died unmarried in 1631, having produced a daughter in 1600 by Walter Wise, who died a bachelor in 1604.
111. Wills 1672/93.
112. P.R.O., PROB 11/139, f. 320; it is clear from the content of the will that Pierce was her maiden name.
113. A legitimate child of Richard and Alice Hemming was baptized in April 1621.
114. *Marshfield Registers*, 30.
115. G.D.R. vol. 26, p. 34; vol. 29, p. 116; Wills 1599/66; Bath R.O., Swainswick Register, *s.a.* 1584.
116. Cf. Sharpe, *Early Modern England*, 42-9.
117. Stone, L., *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (Harmondsworth, 1979), 52.
118. All were baptized at Dyrham except two, who were christened in Bath Abbey: *Registers of SS. Peter and Paul, Bath*, ed. A.J. Jewers (Harleian Soc. 1900), 14-15.
119. Cf. Palliser, *Age of Elizabeth*, 43-4.
120. See above.
121. Glos. R.O., D 1799/X 12, 23 Jan. 1741/2. For desertion in the context of the general stability of marriage, Ingram, *Church Courts*, 148-9.
122. *Hamlet*, v.1.223; cf. Gittings, C., *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England* (1984), 72-3; for a discussion of suicide in the early 17th century, Laslett, *World We Have Lost*, 175-6.
123. Wills 1630/124.
124. Bristol. R.O., wills, John Hicks 1643.
125. Robert Burford (1601-82) and William Tyler (1634-1705).
126. Cf. Wills 1595/109.
127. Ibid. 1610/231.
128. Bristol. R.O., 01379/1, m. 11. Rather confusingly, the chamberlain's office described two tenements in 1608 and 1617 as held by a woman 'during her widow's estate': ibid. Bargain Book 1604-20, ff. 9, 95; but it is quite clear that from 1568 tenants at Hinton paid to enter their wives' names in copies, an expense inexplicable if widows had free bench: ibid. Audit Book 8, p. 241; 9, p. 316. Similar fines are recorded from tenants on the squire's land from 1545: British Library, Additional Charters 7697; Glos. R.O., D 269A/T 33; D 1799/M 2-3.
129. P.R.O., PROB 11/61, f. 212v.; Wills 1599/66; Bristol R.O., P/Dn/R/1(a), *s.a.* 1579; cf. Glos. R.O., D 1799/T 2.
130. Glos. R.O., D 1799/R 15.
131. Wills 1601/118; Bristol. R.O., Bargain Book 1604-20, f. 9.
132. Wills 1648/100; 1671/181; Invent. 1648/38.

133. P.R.O., PROB 11/28, f. 15.
134. Wills 1571/212.
135. Ibid. 1628/82; cf. Bristol. R.O., Audit Book 12, p. 162.
136. Wills 1572/4.
137. Register *s.a.* 1665; P.R.O., E 179/116/554, m. 97; 247/12; 247/16, file no. 27.
138. Wills 1594/70; P.R.O., E 179/247/2; 247/5.
139. Bristol. R.O., EP/V/69 (for 1637); Glos. R.O., D 1799/E 94, 7 June 1647; M 3, p. 7; cf. P.R.O., E 179/116/529.
140. Wills 1599/66; 1628/82.
141. Ibid. 1630/75.
142. Ibid. 1749/172.
143. P.R.O., PROB 11/245, f. 122.
144. Wills 1629/80; 1718/288; 1614/79.
145. Ibid. 1560/163.
146. P.R.O., PROB 11/270, f. 215v.
147. Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual*, 52–5.
148. Ibid. 40 sqq.
149. Wills 1579/22; 1577/192; 1639/114; 1668/247.
150. Ibid. 1693/287; 1706/45; P.R.O., PROB 11/440, f. 131v.; 11/441, f. 264.
151. G.D.R. vol. 269, f. 91v.; Invent. 1706/8.
152. Herefs. & Worcs. R.O., 008. 7/BA 3585/1a.
153. Glos. R.O., D 1799/F 15; P.R.O., PROB 11/440, f. 131v.
154. Wills 1599/66; 1614/150.
155. Brown, F., *Abstracts of Somersetshire Wills*, 1st ser. (privately printed, 1887), 87.
156. Wills 1778/198.