

'THE BUTCHER, THE BAKER, THE CANDLESTICK MAKER...

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A STUDY OF OCCUPATIONS IN SPALDING IN 1642 Antiquarians and local historians have written about the Important men of Spalding but not about the ordinary people living and working there. So, this study looks at the occupations, trades and crafts to be found in the town in 1642, and hopefully brings to life a once vibrant community. Rose Clark On 2 March 1642 men from all walks of life gathered together, most likely in the parish church of St Mary and St Nicolas, where they each swore an oath to support the king, Charles I, and the Protestant Church, by order of the Long Parliament. A similar scene was enacted in most parishes in the land. John Oldfeild JP administered the oaths, witnessed by the minister Robert Ram, the churchwardens William Lambe, John and Thomas Makemes and William Slator and the constables Robert Cliffed, Thomas Gibson and John Plomer. Some men did not take the oath but were named with the hopeful remark, 'these would have taken it if they had been at home'. This list of names is referred to as the Protestation Returns for Spalding parish, and provides a fair record of the townsmen in 1642 (1). Beside some names on the list an 'Esq' or 'g' denoted gentry status but there was no indication of status or occupation for the other townsmen. However, a search through the parish registers of St Mary and St Nicholas revealed the occupations for 375 of the 443 men named in the returns, thus providing a basis for this study.

The top strata of society was represented by a group of twenty-three gentlemen whose names were recorded on the Protestation Returns. The term 'gentlemen' applied to men whose status and possessions varied considerably. They were the elite of the town, they held most of the land in the area and were the wealthiest, most influential group in the community. Sir John Harrington and Dymock Walpoole were probably the highest in rank among the named gentry. Other important families were the Oldfeilds, Hobsons, Willesbys and Johnsons. According to local historian, E. H. Gooch (2) Sir John Harrington, head of the family lived at Wykeham Grange, while Sir John Oldfeild inherited his father Anthony's estate and mansion called Westlode Side, built on former monastic land using materials from Spalding Priory. The Hobsons lived at Gayton House, a branch of the Willesbys at Bergery House and Dymock Walpoole lived in Ayscoughfee Hall from 1641 to his death in August 1642.

Besides owning lands some of these families were crown tenants, renting lands owned by Charles and his queen, Henrietta Maria, who in 1642 held the manor of Spalding. Some gentlemen acquired this status through success in the professions or trade, men like Robert Vigrous, apothecary, Edward Wakelyn, physician, or John Dayle, mercer. With their profits they were able to purchase or rent lands.

However, all were men of importance in the community, all held lands and were the chief employers of labour in the area. Some were officials of the crown or court, many were local administrators, like Sir John Harrington, Sir John Oldfeild, Robert Vigrous and Philip Jolly, who

were all Justices of the Peace. Philip Jolly desired extra time to consider the Protestation before taking his oath witnessed by his fellow JP, sir John Oldfeild. Unfortunately, we do not know why, but the need for consideration suggests that he needed to reconcile his own opinions with the demands of the Protestation. Interestingly, many of the gentlemen supported Parliament in the Civil War, for a variety of reasons; some like Walter Johnson and John Harrington led troops to join the parliamentary armies. John Oldfeild, however, led troops to fight for the king. Few suffered for their beliefs as much as Spalding's minister Robert Ram and Sir John Harrington when in 1643 they were captured and held prisoners by the Crowland royalists.

There were twenty-four husbandmen recorded in the Protestation Returns. Husbandmen or tenant farmers rented land from local landlords such as Sir John Harrington, or absentee landlords like King's College, Cambridge. Their wealth and status in the community varied according to the amount of land they rented and the terms of their tenancy. Some, like Leonard Snell, were from well established tenant families; others such as John Almon and John Willyamson were recorded as labourers in earlier parish registers. It appears that some husbandmen had other skills; George Knitch was a musician, while Peter Denison was recorded in the parish register of 1649 as a mole catcher.

Another group of landholders, the yeomen, numbered nine only. Perhaps this reflected the pattern of landholding in the area where the crown and other large landowners preferred to rent out land rather than sell it. Yeomen owned land; it may have been only a small acreage, and often they rented land as well. They were farmers not gentlemen; nevertheless, some were important men in the town and could be appointed as Justices of the Peace. John Greaves, a yeoman, was a wealthy man for on his death in 1644 he left assets of £314 2s. 6d., and among the items on the inventory of his goods were six silver spoons, a silver cup and a silver jug.'

As one might expect, labourers formed the largest group, with ninety-four recorded, or 25% of the total. No doubt the majority were agricultural workers, but some may have been general labourers. Most labourers were poorly paid, at a time when prices were rising and their wages were falling behind. In general the labourers' standard of living was very low; some lived in abject poverty. Among the labourers on the returns were John Ashby, John Everitt, William Horner, Robert Jackson, George Swan and Edward Webb. These were men skilled in all aspects of farming. However, some labourers had other skills; for example Thomas Beech was recorded as being a carpenter in 1648, as was Thomas Braisbye in 1658, whilst John Parratt and William He'cock were described in the parish registers as fishermen. From this one may surmise that they were hired as labourers on a seasonal or daily basis. Some labourers moved up the social ladder, since in later parish registers they were called husbandmen; such were Thomas Oxley, William Merchant, Thomas Watson, William El vidge and Christopher Newton. It is unfortunate that there are few records that give information about labourers' lives.

Within Spalding in 1642 there existed a wide variety of trades and crafts catering for the necessities of life. There were twenty-one bakers providing bread and other baked foods for those whose houses did not have ovens, perhaps. Among them were Robert and Thomas Cocke, possibly running a family business; some of the others were Ferdinando Bleakely, Henry Tunnard, Bartholomew Shorthose and Thomas Wheatstraw. Most of the flour used by

the bakers would have been milled from local grain. Only two millers were named, though there must have been more; they were Richard Basse and William Lee.

Butchers numbered twelve, including Richard and Robert Thorpe, and John and Edward Oliver, probably family butchers. Often butchers were graziers too, with pasture land on which to graze animals. One of the butchers, John Wood, was a feoffee of the town, a position of trust and responsibility, so showing his importance in the community. He was one of a group of feoffees of the town who administered the bequests and income used for the relief of the poor.

General provisions were retailed by seven victuallers, among whom were Anthony Crowder and Peter Dales. There was one grocer, Thomas Thorpe, who probably sold goods such as salt, sugar, dried fruits and flour. They would have lived behind their shops, close to the centre of Spalding.

There is no evidence of a brewer in the town in 1641, but mention is made of one, Richard Wallet, in 1649. Many households - both large and small - brewed their own ale, as it was drunk by most men and women; even children drank 'small ale' or diluted ale. Sometimes ale was sold illegally from unlicensed premises, or houses, and so would not be recorded in the parish registers. However, there was one innkeeper named in the Prot-estation Returns who was Thomas Makernes, a church-warden in 1642. Unfortunately his inn was not named. Gooch asserts that there were five licensed inns in Spalding in 1621: the Old White Hart, the Cross Keys, the New White Hart, the Spread Eagle and the Black bull. (4) No doubt many a townsman was arrested for drunken and disorderly behaviour and found himself in the House of Correction under the watchful eye of Michael Blake, master of the house.

An important commodity for most households was tallow for candle making. Some households made their rush dips from fat run off from roasting meat but tallow, animal fat, could be purchased from the tallow chandlers Robert Lockett and Samuel Leacock, Candles could be purchased, too, from the chandlers John Pell and William Wragg. Tallow candles burned with much smoke and smell, but beeswax candles were expensive and were used only by wealthy households or in church.

There were twenty tailors traced in Spalding in 1642. This is quite a large number, but since all sewing was done by hand their productivity must have been low. Among the tailors named were Roger and Robert Kitchin, and Davy and John Atkinson, who were probably running family businesses. Some others were Robert Booth, Theophilus Loadsman, Joe II Shred and Thomas Wilsforth. In 1643 tailor Edward Horne, a sergeant in the militia, was to share with the minister Robert Ram and Sir John Harrington the dangers and discomforts of imprisonment by the Crowland royalists.(5)

Most likely the five mercers, who were recorded in the returns, supplied some of the materials used by the tailors, as well as the town's households, for most housewives sewed such things as shirts, gowns, under-clothes and household linen themselves. Walter Pegg, mercer, must have been an important member of the community since he was a town feoffee. So too was William Sneath senior, who, with his son William, ran a woollen drapery business, which

supplied materials to the Alms Houses, according to the records of the Spalding Town Husbands.(6)

There were sixteen shoemakers who took the oath in 1642. Most were men of modest means such as Luke Norton, whose total assets in 1644 were valued at £31 18s. 2d.(7) Among the others were William Gusse, Symon, Oldgate, Anthony Withers and William Littleton who was also a weaver. Moreover, six cordwainers were named, including Christopher and Thomas Wetherhed. Cordwainers made fine leather goods including foot-wear. They all made boots, shoes and pattens for the townspeople, probably using some locally produced leathers. Luke Norton's inventory of 1644 shows in his shop, '6 payer of patens and 8 payer of shoos' worth .C2 13s. 4d.s

Gloves were made by six glovers, among whom were Robert Codd and Henry Usher. Bryan Downham was known as a wet glover. According to a dictionary published in 1745 (9) wet glover dressed skins of lambs, sheep and goats to make fine, supple leathers; presumably these were then used for gloves. Sometimes gloves were given as special gifts, at other times they were bequeathed in wills, for they were an expensive item. Bryan Downham was out of town on 2 March when the oaths were taken, which suggests that he travelled in his trade.

Hats were worn by most men and women. Large brimmed, high crowned hats were popular at this time. Most of them were made of felt but some were of beaver, with trimmings of ribbon, leather or feather. The Mawre family were hatters in Spalding in 1642; Ambrose and William were named on the returns.

At this time Spalding supported a comprehensive group of textile trades, which produced goods for sale locally, or possibly for markets further afield. In 1642 eleven weavers worked in the town, probably weaving hardwearing broadcloth from local wool and maybe a finer woollen cloth from wool produced elsewhere. According to Dr Joan Think, the locally reared sheep were Lustre Long Wool, which grew a heavy coarse fleece, and were suited to fenland pastures.(10) Locally grown hemp and flax was woven into linen for house-hold use and for 'body garments'. The inventory of John Greaves' possessions in 1644 recorded a store of '50 stone and a half of pilled walteret hemp', worth £6 5s. Among the weavers were James Parker and Thomas and John Smith jnr. Both James Parker and Thomas Smith held land, for in some parish registers they are entered as husbandman and yeoman respectively. John Carter and John Parratt were silk weavers, a highly skilled craft catering for a limited market, since the finished fabric would be expensive.

There were two clothworkers who took the oath, William Lambert and William Lambe, who may have been weavers or may have organized a cottage industry. However, the only litster (dyer) in town appeared to be Percevall Rooth. He would, of course, use natural dyeing agents such as woad, elderberry, gorse, bramble and hazel. Fulling of cloth was carried on by William Lambert stir and Leonard Townsend, probably in a fulling mill by the river. Hemp dressing or teare dress-ing, the preparation of hemp for spinning, was the work of John Sturton and Robert Walker. There were no spinners named, so this would have been a domestic craft carried on by women spinsters. Zachariah Spurr was the only felt maker named on the returns. No doubt he supplied the Ma wres with felt for their hats.

It is apparent that the textile trades were an important part of Spalding's economy in 1642. According to the Provincial Literary Repository hemp and flax were bought and sold at the yearly fair held on 27 April in the Hemp Market or Hall place." Buying and selling hemp was the trade of Thomas Mott and Robert Swann, hemp chapmen.

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries there was an upsurge of building activity in England. Spalding followed the trend and several large houses were built in the late sixteenth century, but only Anthony Oldfeild's mansion Westlode Side appears to have been built in the early seventeenth century. However, there would have been building activity because many older houses needed repairing or replacing with houses built to a higher standard of comfort. In the Protestation Returns there were thirty-four men whose occupations were connected with building. Richard Bettisson, Mathew Peach and John Wallis were all masons but John Rowlidge was described as a free mason, that is a superior mason; perhaps he was skilled in carving stone. There were six bricklayers, five of whom at times were referred to as masons in the parish registers; perhaps they had aspirations of social advancement.

Only one brickmaker is included in this group, one James Flower. Bricks were handmade of local materials and fired in kilns, often near to the building site. However, many houses, especially smaller ones, were constructed with a timber frame, mud and stud walls and a thatched roof. All these materials were easily available.

There was employment for four joiners and twelve carpenters in the area, including Anthony Hutchins and his son Anthony, John Wright and his son John, Nicholas and Thomas Hudson and Christopher and Robert Scott. Their skills were needed in building and furnishing houses, as well as making carts and other agricultural equipment.

Roofs were usually thatched with local materials such as sedge, reed or straw; there was plenty of work for the five thatchers, Peter Bull, Nicholas and Christopher Smith, William Trench and John Wilcocke. Larger houses were often tiled but no tiler was named on the returns. The houses of poor people usually had shutters to the windows, but the gentry and up-and-coming tradesmen had glass in the windows of their houses, put there, probably, by Richard Guy and Will Foster, glaziers.

An important factor in Spalding's economy was the river Welland and perhaps the Westlode drain. By the seventeenth century the Welland suffered from deposition of silt which at times made it unnavigable. However, we do know that the Deeping Adventurers agreed to deepen and widen the river channel and this was completed by 1642. We can assume that in 1642 there was work for those men whose occupations depended on the Welland and the port of Spalding.

The boat yard of Mathew, Robert and William Hakeman would be bustling with activity as new boats were built and old ones repaired. There would be fishing (including in the Wash) for Robert Claxby, John Ward and Thomas Watson, and the part time fishermen, while William Ashwell, Richard Devill, John Johnson and at least five other watermen were employed in transporting goods. At quays along the river boats were tied up while porters such as Leonard

Goulding and Steven Sutton loaded or unloaded them. Cargoes of coal, lime, sand, stone, turves, grain and so on were carried on these river craft.

Sheds, workshops and houses clustered around the quays; perhaps the chandlers John Pell and William Wragg had their premises here, where they could provision the boats. Some of the ropes used on the craft and along the quays may have been made by Francis Skellington in his rope walk, probably situated on the west side of the river Welland. Maybe John and William Kitchin, leapemakers, made eel baskets and weirs for the fishermen in one of the workshops by the river. Eels and fish formed an important part of the diet of the people of the town. In the inventory of the goods of Robert Hunt, 1646, was the item '15 salt fishes... 7s 6d' (12).

Metal crafts were also represented in the 1642 Protestation Returns. The largest group consisted of eight blacksmiths, whose skills were indispensable to the community. Not only did they shoe horses, but they made plough shares and many other tools needed by the farmers, craftsmen and townspeople. One blacksmith, Thomas Bladesmith, was sometimes referred to as a locksmith, an indication of another aspect of their work. Among the others were John Clarke, William Earle and William Thorpe. Samuel Tompson was recorded in the parish registers as being an ironmonger, so perhaps he sold iron goods not readily available from the craftsmen.

Edward Marlay and Richard Marlow were braziers, or craftsmen in brass, making items for domestic use like pans, measures, warming pans and candlesticks. An entry in John Bistle's inventory of 1644 reads 'Item, two brass pots, five brass posset pans, two brass skimmers, a brass chaffendish... 20s (13) Perhaps John Harvy, a furbisher, worked for other craftsmen by polishing the metal goods they made. No town was without its tinker to mend the pots and pans; in Spalding he was Ralph Wright. But there were travelling tinker families in the area as well, as can be seen from entries in the parish registers.

Another important group of craftsmen worked in wood, leather and willow or sedge. There were three coopers, Robert Lawson, Mathew Lilly and Robert Meadows. They may have used locally available wood, such as alder, elder, oak, elm or willow, to make barrels, tubs and measures to hold all manner of wet and dry goods. Meanwhile William Massy, a wheelwright, would have been fully occupied in making and repairing cart wheels and carriage wheels. It is possible that Robert Massy, too, was a wheelwright in the family business which had been handed down from a previous generation.

Local materials were used by Will Everitt and Joseph Rollett, saddlers, in making saddles, collars and harnesses of all kinds. Working with them was John Crosse, saddletree maker, who skilfully constructed the saddle frames using beech. Saddlers were highly skilled craftsmen; consequently the equipment they made was expensive, hence the first item on the inventory of Robert Hunt's assets of 1646 was 'his horse brydell and saddell his cloathes and money... £4 (14) All the craftsmen in leather needed the skills of Anthony Scarborough, currier, who probably dressed local skins, preparing them for use.

Osiers or willow were (and still are) native to the area, growing in hedges, by ponds and waterways. However, there is evidence that willows were also cultivated in South Holland.

Thomas and Roger Cock were named in a law suit, at Westminster in 1640, for illegally planting willows on waste land belonging to Spalding manor, then the property of Queen Henrietta Maria. (15) Obviously, there was a demand for osiers and profit to be made. Osiers were used to make baskets for use in the home, on farms, in fishing; for panniers used to carry lime, bricks, earth on building sites; for hurdles used in farming; for making items of furniture, even cradles. Will Godfrey was the only basket maker named on the Protestation Returns, though there were the leapemen named. As mentioned earlier, these were craftsmen unique to the fens since they made eel baskets and fish weirs.

A small group of professional medical men, who served the local community, swore the oath on 2 March 1641. At this time most women had nursing skills and made potions, ointments, cough cures and other remedies to their own recipes, usually using herbs or plants from their gardens or the countryside. However, there were times when professional help was needed. Physicians were highly educated men, usually having some knowledge of Greek, Arabic, Geometry, Logic and Astronomy; they were at the top of the medical profession. Edward Wakelyn was a physician living in the town in 1642; no doubt he charged high fees for a consultation. Apothecaries, ranking next in the profession, sold herbs, purges, potions and ointments in their shops, but also they diagnosed disease and treated patients at home. Such were Robert Vigrouse and Jacob Wragg, gentle-men and men of importance in the community; both were feoffees of the town. Later Jacob Wragg became Captain Wragg when he fought in the Civil War. In the lowest rank of the medical profession were the barbers or surgeons. There were four barbers in town in 1641, Abell and Henry Drewry, John Cutle and John Skinner. They cut hair, trimmed beards and shaved customers; sometimes they extracted teeth and performed minor operations, such as removing musket shot from wounds. One other practitioner, Robert Purvoe, was known as a barber surgeon. All would work under the customary shop sign of the barbers' pole, which symbolised flowing blood and bandages!

The town's people must have enjoyed some forms of relaxation, such as singing and dancing on special occasions, perhaps to celebrate a wedding or the end of the harvest. In 1642 there were four musicians in the town, but three had other occupations too, according to the parish registers. John Palmer was a victualler, and George Knitch was an husbandman, as was Robert Hunt. Even Will Perry may have supplemented his income, but there is no evidence of this. Musicians may have been employed in wealthy households to teach members of the family to play an instrument, such as a lute, viol or harpsichord. In some churches musicians played sacred music for services, but there is no evidence to suggest their use in St Mary and St Nicolas at this time; moreover the minister Robert Ram would have regarded church music as a popish practice.

In 1642 the Reverend Robert Ram was minister of the church of St Mary and St Nicolas, an appointment made in 1625. On 2 March 1642 he took the Protestation oath with his parishioners. Robert Ram was known to be a puritan; accordingly, he placed more emphasis on preaching God's word and on praying than on ceremonial in the church services. Perhaps his Sunday services lasted as long as John Cotton's in Boston's St Botolph's, which were often five hours long. Robert Ram was a gentleman, a member of the town's elite and a feoffee of the town; obviously he was a man of great importance in the community. But it was as minister and preacher that he exercised most influence upon the members of his congregation, since he could use the pulpit to expound his views, religious and political. As a

puritan, no doubt, he welcomed the religious reforms introduced by the Long Parliament. He certainly favoured Parliament in the Civil War; in fact, according to Gooch he was indicted for treason in 1643, along with others, for opposing the king, Charles 1.(16)

Unfortunately, Spalding in the time of Robert Ram and his parishioners is poorly documented, so it has proved impossible to trace the occupations of all those men who met together on 2 March 1642 to swear the Protestation oath. In this respect the survey is incomplete. Nevertheless, of the ordinary men, the majority of Ram's parishioners, there are tantalising glimpses, as they pass like shadows across the scene, men without flesh and voices. Men who lived and worked, some-times in harsh conditions in the huddle of buildings at the heart of the town, around the market place, by the river Welland and nearby High Bridge.

One can see present in Spalding in 1642 a wide range of occupations, many of which used local resources. The overall view is of a busy, small market town and port with a broadly based economy. A town with a closely interdependent community which was dominated by the gentry and had at its base a large group of labourers, whilst in the middle were the merchants and craftsmen. It was an hierarchical society typical of seventeenth century England.

Acknowledgement

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Notes

- 1) Protestation Returns, House of Lords Record Office. The document is dated 2 March 1641 according to the old calendar, and should properly be referred to as 1641/42. The names used in the text have been transcribed but not modernized. E. 2) H. Gooch, A History of Spalding (1940), p.150.
- 3) L.A.O. Inv. 153/95.
- 4) Gooch, History of Spalding, p.151. knit,
- 5) Divers Remarkable Passages of Gods Good Providence (1643).
- 6) Spalding Town Husbands Papers, Spalding Gentlemen's Society.
- 7) L.A.O. Inv. 153/88.
- 8) Ibid.
- 9) N. Bailey, A Universal Etymological English Dictionary (1745).
- 10) Joan Thirsk, ed., The Agrarian History of England and Wales Vol. IV 1500-1640 (Cambridge, 1967), pp.190- 91.
- 11) Provincial literary Repository (Spalding, 1802).
- 12) L.A.O. L.C.C. Admon. 1646/40.
- 13) L.A.O. Inv. 153/92.
- 14) L.A.O. L.C.C. Acimon. 1646/40.
- 15) Calendar of State Papers Domestic 1640.
- 16) Gooch, History of Spalding, p.23.