

SOME NOTES ON THE CLOTH TRADE IN TAUNTON
IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

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So little is known of the origins of the West Country cloth trade and industry that any new information must be welcomed. The following small contribution towards bringing a step nearer a definitive history of the industry which was to become of such great importance locally and nationally for so many centuries, may it is hoped, lead to similar contributions from other centres in the area. It is based principally upon a study of the Pipe Rolls of the Bishopric of Winchester relating to the Manor of Taunton during the 13th century, and in this respect Taunton is singularly fortunate for few other places have such early records. Yet it must be remembered that these are the records of the lord of the manor, that there are many gaps in the series, that the references are scattered and irregular in occurrence, and that there are few if any parallel sources from which additional or confirmatory evidence can be obtained. Moreover, ministers' accounts must be used carefully. They were never intended to provide material for economic history. Bearing in mind these very considerable limitations, let us turn to the consideration of what it has been possible to extract from these sources.

The making of cloth was and indeed still is, a long and rather complicated process involving a series of specialist operations of which the origins are obscure. It is neither desirable nor possible here to describe these operations in detail, but as several are referred to later, a short outline of the sequence followed is felt to be essential for the appreciation of this paper. The raw material, wool, has always been available in West Somerset in fair quantities though in varying quality, depending on the breed of sheep and the locality. After shearing, the wool needed cleansing, and then carding or combing in preparation for spinning. When spun into yarn it was ready for the weaver who produced the loosely woven "web" of "raw" cloth. This in turn needed "fulling" with a detergent such as fuller's earth to cleanse, shrink and thicken it. Fulling might be carried out by hand or foot in a trough of water and involved the beating of the cloth to thicken the fibres and produce a "felted" fabric of greater strength, density and durability. Finally, it might be dyed, and then, in the case of finer cloths, be "finished"

by having the nap raised by teasles and then sheared to produce a soft and even surface. All of these processes were handcrafts which could be carried out in the home and most remained so until the great inventions of the 18th and 19th centuries. In recent years, however, Professor Carus-Wilson has shown ¹ how the introduction of a mechanical process of fulling by water power in the latter years of the 12th century and the early years of the 13th produced "an industrial revolution due to scientific discoveries and changes in technique; a revolution which brought poverty, unemployment and discontent to certain old centres of the industry, but wealth, opportunity and prosperity to the country as a whole, and which was destined to alter the face of medieval England." She has noted how with the new invention, water power became one of the decisive factors determining the location of the fulling branch of the industry and gave an immense stimulus to the development of the industry as a whole in the country rather than in the town. Of especial interest here is the fact that Taunton, which became an important centre in later centuries, appears to lead the movement towards the new industrial process in the West Country.² As the administrative centre of a great manor and as a growing market town, it links the two sides of the new industry, urban and rural in a way which was not possible in other areas. So we can see in the early years of the 13th century the beginnings of Taunton's principal industry for centuries to come. At the same time we must modify the previously accepted view that Edward III "revived a decaying industry"—a view which was based on a failure to appreciate the importance of rural records and a reliance on the story of decline in the cloth industry so apparent in the records of the older urban centres. His patronage and encouragement helped to increase the prosperity of a well established and vigorous industry in other parts of England as well as in Taunton, an industry which had shown steady progress throughout the 13th century.

That the Pipe Rolls of the Bishopric of Winchester would prove to be a source of some value was apparent from the printed edition of the first Roll,³ that for 1208-9, in the introduction to

1 *Medieval Merchant Venturers—Collected Studies*—E. M. Carus Wilson *An Industrial Revolution of the Thirteenth Century*. *Ec. Hist. Review* XI, No. I, 1941.

2 Similar developments may have been taking place elsewhere, of which no evidence now survives.

which attention is drawn to what was then claimed to be the first recorded fulling mills in this country, at Bishop's Waltham, Brightwell, Bishop's Sutton and Alresford. The first and third of these produced an income of 20s. and 11s. 1d. respectively; at Alresford the income from the mill was included in the *gabulum*, while at Brightwell a new mill built at a cost of £9 4s. 4d. produced an income for part of the year of 16d. These clear signs of the successful introduction of a new industrial process in the making of cloth gave hope that there would be in the accounts relating to the Manor of Taunton in the years subsequent to 1208-9, some references dealing with the development of the West Country cloth industry—a hope which was soon fulfilled.

The earliest mention of cloth in the Taunton accounts appears in 1210-11 when 507 ells of grey cloth (*grinseng*) were purchased for £17 3s. 10d., for the bishop's service. A further 1,000 ells of the same kind of cloth, purchased for £27 19s. 8d. in 1218-19, were sent to Winchester by the bishop's instructions. Where this cloth was obtained is not shown in the accounts but in 1215-16, when the defences of both the castle and the town were being strengthened, large purchases of cloth were made at Exeter for the more important members of the garrison, as follows:

17 ells of green cloth for four capes (<i>capas forpitas</i>)	
and four furs for the same for the service of	
the Constable, A. de Stawell, T. de Fluri,	
W. de Eston'	£3 9 4

181½ ells of green cloth purchased at Exeter for	
the knights' robes, with carriage for the	
same	£19 5 10

6¼ ells of blue cloth for the Steward's robe	12 7
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Included also at the same time was the cost of a cloth covering—" *in hulc' ad pann' cooperiend'* "—to protect this exceptionally large purchase on its journey from Exeter to Taunton. Though great quantities of foreign cloth were sold in England at this time it is quite possible that there was also here a well established industry of the older pattern in Exeter, an urban centre, not many miles from Taunton, probably still using the ancient handcraft methods, for there is no evidence of the application of machinery in the form of a fulling mill. Indeed, the first known reference in

Devon to such a mill occurs in the Assize Roll of 1238 when one at Dunkeswell is mentioned.⁴

The Taunton Fulling Mill.—Cloth Manufacture in Taunton.

Within a few years of the large purchases of cloth mentioned above, there appears in the Taunton accounts for 1218-19 the cost of building a new fulling mill. Whether the incentive to engage in this new enterprise came from contacts with the Exeter industry, or whether the success of the earlier ventures mentioned in the first Winchester Roll was sufficiently great to persuade the bishop's advisers to undertake what was to prove a new and profitable development in the cloth industry in Taunton, will probably never come to light. The building account itself is certainly the earliest known reference to these mills in the West Country and probably the earliest detailed reference to the machinery and tools of the new industry. The account is therefore given in full together with some relevant information extracted from the "mill expenses" section.

4 H. P. R. Finberg, Tavistock Abbey, p.151 quoting PRO Assize Rolls J.I.1, 174, m.32.

	£	s.	d.
Wages of carpenters felling and trimming timber for the fulling mill and building the mill	7	11	6
Wages of men digging trenches (fossatores) for building the said mill	2	3	3
Wages of masons about the same....		13	6
Lime		1	1½
Carriage of stone		10	5
Cutting 200 planks and other wood		16	6½
Two pairs of wheels for carrying wood and iron-work to the mill		6	5
Board nails both large and small, and laths	2	5	11½
Staples, hooks and hinges for the doors and windows		1	5
Brass for the top of the driving shaft (<i>capita arboris</i>) ...		3	3½
Roofing the mill and bars for the doors		19	2½
One pair of large shears for shearing the cloth and two pairs of small ones		8	4
Certain utensils necessary for the work of fulling and the expenses of the master fuller and the hire of a horse for his use		3	8
(<i>sic in MS</i>) Total	£16	4	5½

Food and wages of the master fuller from August 1st to the vigil of the Feast of St. Michael (Sept. 28th)	10	0
Wages of the other fullers for the same period	1	10 8
Tallow and grease	2	5
Teasles	6	8
	<hr/> £2 10 9 <hr/>	

Income from the fulling mill from August 2nd to the vigil of the feast of St. Michael (Sept. 28th)	£2 17 11
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(See Appendix I for the transcription from the Rolls).

Following immediately after the expenses account for the fulling mill comes the detailed cost of rebuilding the ancient corn mill "*sub castello*." These details are given below for comparison with the fulling mill account.

Wages of carpenters for rebuilding the mill below the castle and for felling and trimming the timber	5	6	6½
Wages of men digging trenches about the same	1	8	6
Wages of masons	6	9	
Carriage of stone	5	6½	
Board nails both large and small	13	11	
Laths	7	2	
Wages of tiler (or thatcher)	6	3½	
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(<i>sic in MS</i>)	Total	£8 14	6½
		<hr/>	

It seems reasonable to suppose that the new mill made use of the surplus water from the mill-stream which supplied the mill below the castle, that is the Town Mill, and that the two mills were situated quite close together, within the boundaries of the borough, yet controlled and administered by the lord of the manor.

Construction and Maintenance.

The construction of the fulling mill and its wheels would have presented few difficulties to those who had been accustomed to the work of building and maintaining the numerous water-mills of the manor, three at least of which were mentioned in the Domesday Survey. It is quite clear from the above accounts that the routine work of building could be carried out without the employment of a supervisor who required special payment. What would have required the professional supervision or even the practical skill of the master fuller and his assistants would have been the modification of the interior mechanism to drive the fulling-stocks, the heavy wooden hammers, which by means of drums turned by the power of the water wheel, were alternately raised and dropped on the wet cloth to shrink and felt it. That he was concerned in the direction of the work is apparent from the payment for his expenses and for the hire of his horse. Of his fee there is no mention and it must be assumed that it was either included in the accounts of another manor or paid directly through the bishop's exchequer. The record of payments to the master fuller and his men is entered only after the construction had been completed and the mill was in action, for the income from their work is reckoned from the day following their formal employment for wages. August 1st, 1219, thus marks the beginning of the new process of mechanical fulling in Taunton, a date of great significance in the history of the West Country woollen cloth industry.

The limitation of these manorial accounts as sources of historical material becomes apparent here, yet even in this abbreviated form, prepared for audit and enrolment at Winchester, they can be used to reveal much valuable information. Expenditure on tallow and grease, for example, was a normal annual item in mill expenses; the larger quantity used here in so short a period was no doubt necessary for 'running-in' the new machinery. On no other occasion, however, are teasles mentioned in the accounts during the 13th century. Here is clear evidence of the process of finishing the cloth by raising the nap with teasles being carried out by the fuller, before the final shearing. This entry recording the details of the expenses of running a fulling mill is unique in the Taunton accounts for when the mill was "farmed" the accountants were concerned with recording only the amount of the annual payment by the fuller. A single entry like this must only be used with the greatest amount

of caution. Similarly, it would appear from the exceptionally large expenditure on board nails, more than double that required for the corn mill, that these were used for the making of the racks or tenters, which, though not mentioned here by name, were essential for stretching and drying the cloth after fulling. Expenditure referred to later in this paper shows that racks were provided and repaired by the lord of the manor.

Much of the unskilled work connected with the maintenance of mills, including the carriage of timber, appears to have been one of the tenurial obligations of customary tenants of the manor. The carriage of stone, in contrast, is an expense chargeable in the accounts. Of the quarries very little is known, though the omission of any item for the cost of stone points to a source within the manor or the bishop's Liberty, as for example at Hestercombe, which is mentioned in 1270.

The provision of timber from the lord's woods considerably reduced the total cost of the mill, yet the use of unseasoned timber, a common practice in Taunton as elsewhere in the Middle Ages, seems to us today to be inviting difficulties which, indeed, became apparent in the expenses incurred later in the century. In 1224-5, 4s. 4d. was spent on repairing the mill, and in 1246-7, when a considerable amount of rebuilding was undertaken at Taunton Castle, further expenditure was incurred in "completing the fulling mill—ironwork and nails purchased, hooks, hinges and doorbands made" at a cost of six shillings. The purchase of boards—frequently obtained from outside the manor and on occasions defined as Welsh boards, most probably seasoned timber of known quality—and the cost of cutting planks came to 9s. 8½d., and five shillings was spent on making a tenter. Again in 1270-71 the mill needed repairs. Carpentry work, the purchase of boards, the sawing of timber, spikes and other large and small nails cost in all £1 18s. and the wages of a mason working on the repairing of the foundations came to 4s. 10d.

While the total cost of the structure was therefore greater than is indicated in the building account, what shows even more clearly is the use of the manorial organization in making the provision of capital for the mill and its equipment, and in maintaining it in efficient working order throughout the century.

Mention is made on several occasions of the special implements used by the fullers. The shears for finishing the cloth after the nap

had been raised were mentioned in the building account and may have been brought to Taunton by the master fuller. They remained the property of the lord and on one occasion in 1276-7 were included in the stock account :

"Item remanent penes Adam Fullat' ij forcip' ad pannum retondend' ".

The cost of repairs to the shears and of sharpening them was a charge on the lord's expenses account and on one occasion in 1283-4 they were fitted with new cutting edges of steel :

"In ij forcipibus fullon' acerand' iiijs. jd."

The racks or tenters were also in constant need of repair and the cost appears on many occasions. No new principle was involved in their construction but so little is known of their structure that any additional information, however limited, is of value. In 1289-90 an entry gives details of the construction of a new rack as follows :

	£	s.	d.
Making a new rack for the fulling mill by piece-			
work		13	4
Sawing wood for the same		3	6
Large nails purchased for the same			2
2,000 small hooks purchased for the same		2	3

In 1291-2 a hemp cord was purchased for the rack at 1s. 2d. and in 1297-8 an expenditure of tenpence is noted on "*recnayl*," possibly the large nails which were used to hold the framework of the rack together, or perhaps the hooks by which the cloth was hung on the tenter. Repairs undertaken in 1296-7 refer to several items to which no previous reference has been made in the accounts. A new "*truncum*" was made and an old one was repaired but what their exact function was is not quite clear. They were probably used in connection with the "*flabellus*," which in the same year was bound with iron and was undoubtedly the hammer for pounding the cloth which may have been supported on the fuller's block, the "*truncum*."

The "Farm" of the mill.

For the first year after its completion the mill was farmed at £3 13s. 4d. to Childwin and Roger Hore, who may have been two of the fullers mentioned in the building account. No indication is given of the method of working out the amount of the annual

payment, a rental for the use of the mill and its special implements, but there had been previous experience on the part of the manorial officials in the farming out of corn mills. An agreement made at Otterford at the end of the thirteenth century shows that the miller was obliged to maintain the building at his own cost, in good order, but that timber for repairs would be provided from the lord's woods without charge provided that the miller felled and prepared it. Securities had to be found to ensure regular payment and the amount of the farm seems to have depended on an average over a long time of the amount collected annually as toll. With the corn mills this was always in the form of a levy of a set amount of the corn brought for milling, afterwards sold and accounted for by the miller and then entered in the manor accounts. No payment in kind would be possible with the fulling mill and no indication of the scale of charges or the method of payment has survived, though the purchase of "a chest for the toll" in 1284 shows that the charge was collected at the mill. The numerous entries under mill expenses relating to the cost of maintaining the fulling mill and its special implements seem to indicate that the fuller was only a semi-independent worker sharing in part the lord's profit yet there is evidence that at least one of these fullers became quite a prosperous burgess of Taunton. Fluctuations in the amount of the farm may be taken to indicate prosperity or difficulties in the industry. The figures for the century, as far as they are available, are given below. Much of the early prosperity was due no doubt, to the novelty of the process and perhaps also to the superior finish produced by the expert worker at the mill which attracted weavers from the whole district around. This is reflected in the amount of the farm which represents to the lord the gross profit from the mill. Assuming the figures from the Rolls which have not survived, i.e. those for 1221 and 1222 to be the same as those for the preceding year, 1220, the capital outlay would have been returned within four years, and from then on the mill became an investment from which came at first a considerable profit. As new mills were built in the district, their competition reduced the amount of cloth sent to the Taunton mill and so caused a reduction in the amount of the farm. This is first noted in 1231-2 when the farm was reduced considerably "*quia alia molindina levantur ad nocumentum istius molindini.*" No further clue to the location of these competing mills is given except a mention in 1246 of a meadow "*iuxta novum molendinum fulcatorum apud Hulle,*" which would

appear to point to a mill on the river Tone probably at Hele, near Bishop's Hull, and outside the boundaries of the manor of Taunton. Of the Devonshire mills the earliest references are to those in East Devon, at Dunkeswell in 1238, at Honiton and Tiverton in 1244-5,⁵ all within easy range of the Taunton mill, where, perhaps, details of the new machinery were examined and copied. Thus the reduced income from the Taunton mill marks, not a decline in the cloth industry, but rather an extension to the whole district of the new mechanization in the fulling process and hence a breakdown in the monopoly which had been so profitable to the Taunton venture. It marks, too, that dispersion over the countryside of one of the chief branches of the woollen industry in contrast to its former concentration in large towns, and the beginning of the rise of a rural industry which was to make West of England cloth so famous.

The following table gives the detailed figures for the century as far as they are available with the names of those to whom the mill was "farmed."

					£	s.	d.
1219-20	Childwin and Roger Hore	....	....	....	3	13	4
1220-21	Will. Pullein and Childwin	....	....	....	6	13	4
1223-24	Will. Pullein	....	....	....	8	0	0
1224-25	Roger Hore	....	....	....	8	0	0
1225-26	Henry Tinctor	....	....	....	8	13	4
1226-27	Henry Tinctor	....	....	....	8	13	4
1231-32	Henry Tinctor	....	....	....	3	6	8
1232-33	Henry Tinctor	....	....	....	3	6	8
1235-36	Walter Pollard	....	....	....	3	6	8
1244-45	Richard Colt	....	....	....	3	6	8
1245-46	Richard Clott (sic in MS)	....	....	....	2	13	4
1246-47	Richard Gloft	....	....	....	3	13	4
1248-49	Galfrid. le Bole	....	....	....	1	6	8
1252-53	Maurice Fullo	....	....	....	2	13	4
	and for nine other entries at the same rate						
	up to	....	....	....
1267-68							
1270-71	Adam Fullo	....	....	....	3	6	8
1271-72	Adam Fullo	....	....	....	2	16	8
1272-73	Adam Fullo	....	....	....	2	16	8

⁵ W. G. Hoskins, *Devon*, Page 125.

In 1259 a fulling mill at Dunster yielded a rent of 13s. 4d. to the Lord of the manor again in 1279 and 1330. Sir H. C. Maxwell Lyte, *A History of Dunster*, 1909

1276-77	Adam Fullo	....	....	....	....	....	2	17	4
1282-97	With the introduction of a new system of enrolling the accounts, the farm of "all the mills of all the bartons" is entered as a sum total						....	....	....
1297-98	John Fullo	....	....	....	....	....	2	13	4
1305	part year only	....	....	....	....	....	2	0	0
1321-22	John Fullo	....	....	....	....	....	2	13	4

Suit of Mill.

Suit to the bishop's mill for the grinding of corn seems to have been one of the obligations of tenants within the manor of Taunton. No mention is made of this in the Custumal but there is equally no mention of the other obligations of heriot, recognition, marriage or entry fine, all of which were enforced and some of them recorded in the Pipe Rolls annually amongst the profits of the courts. The Customs of the Borough include one relating to multure, viz: "*Et que les ditz Burgeis moudrent lour bles et lour brecs chesqoin apres autre selonc ce que les vieignent per resonable tenure sans autre rendement*"—"And that the said burgesses shall grind their corn and their malt one after the other as it suits them at a reasonable toll without other payment." That this applied equally to tenants of the Manor is clear, for several entries relating to fines for breach of this obligation appear in the Rolls. One records that in 1244-5 Richard of Uppecot was fined 12d. "*quia moluit bladum suum ad mol' de Hele*" that is he had taken his corn to the nearest mill instead of carrying it to the lord's mill at Bishop's Hull; another in 1254-5 records a fine for Stephen of Blakedun and his companions "*pro transgr' multure*," and a third in 1283-4, a fine of two shillings for Peter Moryz "*quia moluit extra libertatem*." So it may safely be accepted that there was a seignorial monopoly of corn milling.

To this the coming of the fulling mill added a new complication. Suit of mill normally forbade expressly the grinding of corn at home with a hand-mill or quern, but the fulling of cloth at home by hand or under foot, was, and in some remote areas still is, a common practice. How then could the new process be reconciled with age-old custom? The answer would seem to be that, while fulling at home could not be forbidden, all those within the bishop's jurisdiction who would normally owe suit of mill and who wished to full their

cloth by the new mechanical process at a fulling mill, would be under obligation to take it to their lord's mill. A few entries show the enforcement of this modified monopoly when fines were imposed during the century. For example, in 1246-7, Rad. le Waleys was fined two shillings "for having his cloth fulled elsewhere"; in 1284-5 John Passage was fined two shillings at Staplegrove "*quia fullavit ad alienum molend'*"—at a "foreign" mill, one outside the bishop's liberty. In 1288-9 this is stated even more explicitly when William de Canesgrave was fined 12 pence at Poundisford "*quia fullavit pannum suum extra libertatem*," while Walter Goodman in the same year was fined six pence at Trendel and Hull for the same offence. The strength of manorial custom within the manor of Taunton would appear to have prevented the complete enforcement of the obligation to full all cloth at the lord's mill and a reasonable compromise was achieved. The contrast with conditions as for example at St. Albans, where the Abbot's insistence on complete control of fulling provoked considerable opposition,⁶ may in part be due to the fact that at Taunton there was no resident lord of the manor, and an amicable arrangement conforming to ancient practice in relation to suit of mill could have been arrived at in consultation with the administrative officers at Taunton Castle.

6 E. M. Carus-Wilson, *op.cit.* p.202.

The Cloth Trade in the Borough of Taunton.

It is apparent from the Customs of the Borough of Taunton that the cloth trade was of sufficient importance to require regulation. The third in the list, dating probably from the second half of the 12th century, restricts the retail sale of cloth to burgesses—"*Et que nul estraunge dedeins le Burgh . . . ne drap ne trenchera pour vendre santz congie des baillifs de mesme le Burgh si noun el temps de la faire*"—"and that no stranger within the Borough . . . shall cut cloth for sale without the permission of the bailiffs of the said Borough except in the time of the fair." The few surviving copies of the summaries of the Borough Court Rolls entered in Pipe Rolls during the last quarter of the thirteenth century make no reference to any traders in cloth or to any strangers offending against this regulation but the Assize Roll for 1242 mentions eight cloth merchants who were in mercy for having sold cloth against the Assize, viz : William Dwole, William Trull, Henry Tinctor, Richard Kat, Adam Dis, Roger Patrigh, Robert Fromund and Robert Nunige. The amount of their fines is not recorded here ; it would have been

collected by the bishop's officers, for Henry III had granted in 1232 to bishop Peter des Roches and his successors "all the amerciaments of all their men . . . whether justice be done in the king's court or another." In this case it is sufficient to know that there were eight traders of some substance in Taunton. Three of these are entered in the Custumal of the Manor as tenants of land outside the borough: William Trull held one acre in the Extra Portam tithing, Robert Fromund held three acres of meadow in Holway, and Henry Tinctor, of whom details are given below. The Pipe Roll for 1267-8 records further fines for breach of the Assize of Cloth. On this occasion we are fortunate in having details of the fines imposed by the itinerant justice, Richard de Mindleton, for these were entered in the bishop's Pipe Roll when the see was vacant after the death of bishop John of Exeter. Two equal fines are entered for each offender as follows:

Henry Tinctor, for wines and cloth	....	20 shillings
John le Marchaunt ....	....	10 ..
Walter Swetehgge ....	....	3s. 4d.
Adam Wethaker ....	....	5s.
Osbert Draper and Thomas George	....	3s. 4d.
Roger Pode ....	....	50 shillings

Some of these are heavy fines but one may assume that the amount of the fine was assessed not only according to the amount of cloth sold in breach of the regulations but also according to the ability of the offender to pay and so they point to prosperity in the trade. It is even possible that the fines represented something in the nature of a licence for trading, though of the traders of twenty-five years before only one had survived if we may judge by this. It has been possible, however, to discover something about him and another member of the second group in other entries in the Rolls during the century. Yet there can never be certainty that the identifications are accurate, for surnames are rare in the early years of the thirteenth century, and of those that survive *Tinctor* is a common one.

The first of these, Henry Tinctor, was in charge of the fulling mill from 1225 to 1235, a period which included the first flush of prosperity from which, no doubt, he gained some personal financial advantage. A highly skilled worker and if we may judge by the rates of wages paid in 1218-19, a highly paid one, he was dependent on the lord of the manor for the provision of his equipment and so

seems to have seized the opportunity to secure some independence by entering the ranks of traders in cloth within the borough of Taunton. Whether he continued to work as a dyer as his name suggests, and took advantage of his contacts with weavers through his experience as a fuller to expand his business, is not apparent, but his progress is indicated when in 1248-9 he paid a fine of six shillings for a "certain burgage which he had purchased from 'quodam nativo' without a licence." This may represent a combined entry fine and an amercement but from now on he is established as a burgess. In 1252-3 his rent was increased by a penny a year to include an increase in the size of his tenement. In 1262-3 he acquired a house, for a fine of £1 6s. 9d., formerly belonging to Rad(ulphus) Schwier and escheated to the lord of the manor. In 1267-8 he paid a fine of twelve pence "*pro seisinā habenda in terra*" that is in the lord's land outside the borough. This is confirmed from details in the Custumal, where he is shown as holding a messuage and a garden in the Extra Portam tithing at an annual rental of two shillings, and also as sharing with two others, Roger Pode and Adam Gaillaz, two messuages and two gardens at a rental of three shillings. The first of these co-tenants was one of the few free tenants on the manor and also apparently another cloth trader in the borough. It seems probable that the two messuages were either used in connection with trade for dyeing cloth or else were a profitable investment for sub-letting perhaps to other workers in the industry. Henry Tinctor is also entered as holding 2½ acres of meadow in Ruishton for 3s. 9d. per annum. This would provide hay and grazing for his horses to supplement his crops from his holding in the common fields of the borough. No other mention of him is made in the records until his death in 1271-2 when doubts must have arisen over rights of succession, for in that year, Adam Tinctor, probably his son, paid an entry fine of five pounds to have seisin of the land which was Henry Dyer's—the name is entered in English for the first time—"saving anyone else's right." The widow, Clarissa, paid a fine of four shillings for two acres in Ruishton which were formerly her husband's, but also asked for an inquisition, for which she paid a further fine of four shillings, to enquire concerning her husband's tenement Extra Portam. The result of the enquiry does not appear in the Roll for the next year, which is rather a pity for it would have been of interest to have learnt more about this enterprising trader and craftsman.

An inventory of the goods of another Taunton cloth merchant, John Mercator, entered in the Pipe Roll for 1283-4, gives us a glimpse of a prosperous trader who through the misfortune of his suicide forfeited his goods to his lord, the Bishop of Winchester. Whether he was connected with the John le Marchaunt who was fined before the itinerant justices in 1267-8, is doubtful, for John Mercator paid, with William Floukat, in 1282-3 a fine of 6s. 8d. "for permission to enter the lord's fee." He may have been a "foreign" trader who now wished to join in the profitable trade in the borough, but our only other certain information lies in the inventory of which the details are given below.

An account of the goods of John the Merchant, of Taunton, suicide⁷ in the above mentioned year. (1283-84).

The same render account of £6 9s. 7½d. received from Peter Pocok, servant of the said John.

And of 40s. from the sale of malt, ale, hay, firewood, pigs, horses, and carts, and utensils.

And of 70s. from the sale of grey cloth.

And of 5s. from the sale of timber.

And of 13s. from the sale of 3 qrs. 2 bus. of beans.

And of 7s. 4d. from the sale of 2 qrs. of peas.

Total £13 4s. 11½d.

Expenses.

Payment to the Sheriff of Somerset 40s. as a gift, and to the Sheriff's clerk 6s. 8d.

Payment to the collectors of the Thirtieth of the Lord King for the goods of the said John. (Not entered, but by subtraction, 8s.).

For harvesting, gathering, carrying and making into ricks the said beans and peas and for guarding the rest of the goods, 5s. 3d.

Total £2 19s. 11d.

And they owe clear

£10 5s. 0½d.

7 The Charter of Henry III to Peter des Roches granted to the bishop and his successors the chattels of all felons in their lands. (Cal. Charter Rolls I, 145) The Customs of Taunton Deane presented by the jury in 1647 include : No. XXVII. "If any customary tenant be found *felo de se* he forfeiteth to the lord of the manor all his goods and chattels but his customary lands descend unto his next heir.

And there is owing to the said John in tallies £124 16s. 0½d. as appears by a certain schedule which remains in the possession of the steward.

And there remains one horse valued at 3s. 4d. in the lord's custody.

(See Appendix II for transcription from the Rolls).

Town dwellers in the Middle Ages lived in close contact with the land. How much this was so is clear from this inventory where the beans and peas, grown in the town fields, and the pigs and horses and carts form what was then an essential part of the property of almost every merchant. No doubt the first entry of £6 9s. 7½d. represents the sum realized by the sale of the household goods usually listed in medieval wills and here left in charge of the servant, Peter Pocok. It could scarcely be the cash in hand of the trader though it might include a small sum of ready cash. To the lord's accountants what mattered was the final total. Of far greater interest to us are the clear signs of a not inconsiderable prosperity in the merchant's stock of cloth and in the amount of the debts owing to him. That the latter were so great in comparison with the amount of cloth in stock raises the possibility that they may have included some loans of money to others in the borough. The merchant as a money-lender is a subject of which little is known for certain. Though of no special interest here in connection with the cloth trade the amount of the payment to the collectors of the thirtieth seems to indicate that only the immediate possessions, and not the merchant's capital, were subject to assessment for taxation. Nothing more is recorded in the Pipe Rolls of what happened to the balance of the account, nor is there any further mention of what happened to the schedule or the horse in the lord's custody.

No more fitting conclusion to this brief commentary on the cloth trade in Taunton in the thirteenth century can be made than to draw attention to the ordinary people concerned with the making or the purchasing of cloth. Two entries relating to cloth but principally concerned with a form of annuity relating to the provision of food and accommodation for old people who could no longer carry out their tenurial obligations and so resigned their holding to another tenant under an agreement, are found towards the end of the century.

In 1296-7 Adam Stondfast resigned his messuage and half a virgate in Staplegrove on condition that "he shall retain for his

life one chamber in the south part of the hall and the third sheaf or the third bushel of whatever kind of corn by the choice of the said Adam and one cow and one pig in pasture with the animals of (the new tenant) and he shall have at once a robe of russet and a pair of boots and a pair of shoes . . . and every year one supertunic or a supertunic of russet or twenty pence at the choice of the said Adam and linen cloth such as suits him for his bed and for under-clothing for life." Russet is mentioned as one of the cheaper cloths purchased by Henry III for distribution to the poor. Here it would be the ordinary working clothes of a moderately successful tenant farmer, and was no doubt bought and sold in considerable quantities in the district.

A less prosperous tenant of the manor, Alice le Mazon, a widow who held a messuage and nine acres at Poundisford, resigned her holding on condition that the new tenant "shall find the said Alice for the rest of her life always every two weeks half a bushel of corn namely for one week one '*tolvat*' of wheat and for the other week one '*tolvat*' of pylcorn and every year at Christmas three pence and always every other year five pounds of wool." From this wool she would have spun yarn to be woven into cloth to provide just a bare sufficiency of clothing for one too old to work.

Wool and cloth form two important items in these agreements and in some way affected the lives and comforts of everyone in the area. As far as can be ascertained at present, the trade existed at this early period primarily to satisfy these local needs. Its extension into one of the principal branches of England's overseas trade came later. In the thirteenth century the foundations were laid that made this future greatness possible.

APPENDIX I

Expensa necessaria

In mercede carpent' ad meirem' ad mol' full' sternend' et scapliand' et mol' fac' vij li. xj s. vj d.

In mercede fossat' ad id' mol' statuend' xliij s. iij d.

In mercede cementar' circa id' xiiij s. vj d.

In calc' xiiij d. ob.

In petr' attrahend' x s. v d.

In CC planch' et alia meirem' secand' xvj s. vj d. ob.

In ij par' rot' ad meirem' cariand' et ferrament' ad mol' vj s. v d.

In bord' clav' tam minutis quam grossis et latis xlv s. xj d. ob.

In stapll' gun' vertevell' ad hostia et fenestr' xvij d.

In ere empt' ad capita arboris iij s. iij d. ob.

In mol' cooperiend' et ser' ad hostium xix s. ij d. ob.

In j par' magn' forfic' ad pann' tond' et ij par'de parvis viij s. iij d.

In quibusdam utensilibus necessariis ad offic' fullon' et exp' magri full' et equo locato ad opus eius iij s. viij d.

Summa xvj li. iij s. v d. ob.

Mol' sub castello.

In mercede carpent' pro mol' sub castello de novo fac' et meirem' sternend' et scapliend' Cvj s. vj d. ob.

In mercede fossatorum circa id' xxviij s. vj d.

In mercede cementar' vj s. ix d.

In petr' attrahend' v s. vj d. ob.

In bord' clavis tam minutis quam grossis xiiij s. xj d.

In lathis vij s. ij d.

In mercede coo'par' vj s. iij d. ob.

Summa viij li. xiiij s. vj d. ob.

Summa utriusque mol' xxiiij li. xix s.

In cibo et mercede mag'ri full' a j die august' usque ad vig' S. Mich'x.s.

In mercede aliorum fullon' per idem tempus xxxj s. viij d.

In sep' et unct' ij s. v d.

In cardon' vj s. viij d.

Summa Ls. ix d.

APPENDIX II

Computus de bonis Johannis mercatoris Tanton fellowis de se ipso anno supradicto

Idem reddunt computum de vj li. ix s. vij d ob. recept' de Petro Pocok garcione dicti Johannis. Et de xl s. de bras' cervis' feno busc' porc' equis et carectis et vasis venditis. Et de lxx s. pro grisis pannis vend'. Et de v s. de meremio vend'. Et de xiiij s. de iij quart' ij buss' fabis vend' prec' quar' iij s. Et de vij s. iij d. de ij quar' pisis vend'.

Summa xiiij li. iij s. xjd. ob.

In expensis lib' vic' somerset xl s. de dono et clerico eiusdem vic' vj s. viijd.

Lib. collectoribus tricessime domini regis pro bonis dicti Johannis.

In dictis fabis pisis metend' colligend' cariad' et tassand' et ceteris bonis custodiend' v s. iiij d.

Summa lix s. ix d.

Et debent de claro X li. v s. ob.

Et debentur eidem Johanni in tall' Cxxij li. xvj s. ob. pro ut patet per quandam cedulam que remanet penes sen'.

Et rem' j equus prec' iij s. in custod' domini.

Sources

The manuscript sources on which the information given in this paper is principally based are as follows :

1. The Pipe Rolls of the Bishopric of Winchester. P.R.O. Eccl. 2. Various. Only those sections relating to the manor of Taunton during the thirteenth century have been consulted. Among these are to be found towards the end of the century, the rentals of the Borough of Taunton and a summary of the Borough Court Rolls.

2. A Custumal of the Manor of Taunton which forms part of Egerton MS 2418 at the British Museum, a 16th century volume entitled *Consuetudinarius Maneriorum Episcopatus Wintoniae* consisting of copies of earlier manuscripts. The Custumal of the Manor of Taunton dates from about the middle of the thirteenth century.

3. The Customs of the Borough of Taunton. British Museum Harley MS 408. A late fourteenth century copy in Anglo Norman of customs of which the first dates from the early twelfth century.

A Research Award from the Leverhulme Trustees has made it possible for the originals of these documents to be examined in London, but the provision of photostats of all the above at the Somerset Record Office has facilitated a more detailed and leisurely study.

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