

THE FAIRS AND MARKETS OF NORTON ST PHILIP

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There is scant information on the fairs and markets of Norton St Philip that is readily available, and what little there is has often been quoted but left unquestioned. This paper sets out some of the published secondary writings and charters, explores old almanacs, lists and gazetteers, and sets the information from these sources against the primary writings and accounts.

PRINTED ACCOUNTS

Of the better-known published older writings, that by Leland on his first visit to 'Philippe-Northtoun',¹ includes the description of the place as 'a pratie market toun ... There is a faire at this toun on the fest of Philip and Jacob'; and on his second visit some years later he referred to 'Philipps Northetoune, where is a meane market kepte in a smaull towne, moste maynteyned by clothing'.²

Pepys, Defoe and Fiennes all wrote of Norton St Philip but did not mention the fairs or markets. Of old descriptive texts, Thomas Cox wrote in 1720:

Philips Norton, a Famous Market-town, ... hath one long Street four Furlongs long. The Market is on *Friday* weekly, and two Fairs yearly, one on *St Philip* and *James's Day*, *May* 1. And the other on ... [sic] One of these Fairs for a Whole-sale Trade is reputed as great a Fair as any is in *England* for one Day.³

A plagiarized version of this text was printed in Sherborne in 1742.⁴ In 1772–3 Nathaniel Spencer wrote:

Philip's-Norton is a small market-town, ... It has a very good market on Thursday, and three annual fairs, viz. the twenty-first of March, for cattle and cloth; the twenty-seventh of March, for cloth; the first of May, for cloth, &c. and the twenty-ninth of August, for cattle and cloth. The fair on the first of May is reckoned to be as great, for a wholesale trade, as most one day fairs in England.⁵

In 1791 Collinson, besides quoting Leland's second comment, also wrote:

This town had formerly a market, but at present it is discontinued. There are two fairs, the one held on the first of May; the other the 29th of August; two others, formerly famous for cattle and cloth, have been long since disused.⁶

When the Greenwoods compiled their *Somerset Delineated* in 1821 the entry for 'Norton-St Philips' was 'This town had formerly a weekly market, and four annual fairs; two of the latter are still held, one on May 1st, and the other on August 29th'.⁷ The following passage occurred in an article on the George Inn in *Illustrated London News* in 1849:

In the town of Norton St Phillip's was formerly held the most noted cloth fair in the west of England; and the large upper room of the George Inn was the exchange or place of assembling for the merchants attending this great mart.⁸

An account by Barrett in 1894 includes the following:

In support of the theory that The George at Norton St Philip was built as a hostel, it should be remembered that originally the place formed part of the Hinton Abbey lands. This abbey had license, as early as the reign of Henry III., to hold a fair on the vigil, feast and morrow of SS. Philip and James. Later on, in 1284 (sic) a charter was given to the same abbey to hold a market at 'Norton Charterhouse' every Friday. This market before that time was held at Hinton. In 1345 license for a fair to be held on the vigil and feast of the Decollation⁹ of St John Baptist was granted, and this fair was held at Norton until quite recently. In the locality it was known by the name of 'Norton Dog Fair,' the origin of which term is not quite ascertained. It has been ascribed to the fact that the date, August 28 and 29, was near the 'dog days', but personally I can hardly accept this explanation. Of one thing, however, there can be no doubt, viz. that the cloth and linen fairs held at Norton were formerly very important, and that they were held under the auspices of the monks of Hinton. The conclusion justly arrived at is, I think, that the old George Inn was built, as a hostel for the convenience of the traders and others attending the fairs, by the monks in whose interests the fairs were held.¹⁰

In E. Margaret Thompson's '*History of the Somerset Carthusians*' of 1895 there is an account of the origins of the fairs of the joint manors of Hinton Charterhouse and Norton St Philip that coincided with the feast of SS Philip and James and that of St John the Baptist; she also wrote of the markets of Norton St Philip.¹¹ In 1936 Hulbert in his '*Survey of the Somerset Fairs*' also traced some elements of the early history of the same two fairs.¹² Of the May Fair, besides quoting it as 'a great fair for cloth, etc.', Hulbert stated as a generalization for the centuries that the fair existed, 'Cattle must have been a staple of the fair, for it is as a cattle fair that it lingered on till 1902, when it came to an end'. Of the August fair Hulbert stated that it was 'for the same commodities, cloth and cattle', and adds 'It also has ceased to be held, presumably dying out at the same time as the May fair'. Besides the fairs mentioned by Collinson, Hulbert also referred to other fairs and gave the dates of 21 March, 27 March and 27 April for these; and adds 'No information is forthcoming however, about these other fairs'.

Of more recent texts, those by Dunning,¹³ Williams *et al.*¹⁴ and Bush¹⁵ contain some brief details relating to the cloth trade.

THE CHARTERS

The sequence of royal grants to the prior and convent of Henton – as Hinton Charterhouse was then known – for the fairs and markets of Norton St Philip is recorded in the Charter Rolls, and gives the alterations to the dates on which the fairs were to be held:

- 5 April 1255. Henry III granted a yearly fair on the vigil, the feast and the morrow of the feast of SS Philip and James (30 April, 1 May and 2 May).¹⁶
- 22 August 1285. Edward I granted a weekly market on Fridays.¹⁷
- 24 November 1293. At the request of the prior and convent Edward I granted that the days of the yearly fair were to be held on the three days preceding the feast of SS Philip and James (28 to 30 April).¹⁸
- 18 May 1343. Edward III granted a weekly Tuesday market to be held in a vacant place on the west side of the church.¹⁹
- 4 October 1345. At the request of the prior and convent Edward III granted that the yearly fair of Henton held on the vigil, the day and the morrow of the Decollation of St John the Baptist (28 August, 29 August and 30 August) was to be transferred to Norton St Philip and held on the same days. The reason for this requested change was that 'the clamour, noise and violence of men frequenting this fair, which is held in a place close to the church' disturbed the prior and convent in their devotions.²⁰
- 23 October 1345. Edward III granted that the days of this second fair were to be changed to the two days preceding and the day of the Decollation of St John the Baptist (27 to 28 August and 29 August).²¹
- 16 February 1346. At the request of the prior and convent Edward III granted that the days of the original Norton St Philip fair were to be changed to the feast of St Philip and St James and the two following days (1 May and 2 to 3 May).²²
- 1 May 1353. At the petition of the prior and convent Edward III granted that the May fair was to be extended in duration to five days and that it was to be held on the vigil of the feast of St Philip and St James, the feast day itself and the three days preceding (30 April, 1 May and 27 to 29 April).²³

These eight charters appear to be the extent of the evidence upon which Thompson wrote her account of the fairs. The charters record the granting to the prior and convent and their successors of the right to hold two annual fairs and two weekly markets in Norton St Philip, make the statement that the trading was not to damage either neighbouring fairs or markets, and trace the changes to the days on which the fairs were held. The charters did not grant specific rights to levy tolls, but gave to the prior and convent 'all liberties and customary rights pertaining to a fair (or market) of this kind'. The charters are silent on what goods were to be sold or on any other aspect. There may be the assumption that the two weekly markets were for the sale of general goods, just as some of today's surviving markets are. The only inferences that may be drawn are, firstly, that the volume of trade had built up in the 14th century – even allowing for the effects of the Black Death in 1348 to 1349 – such that five days rather than three days were deemed to be necessary to complete all the trading at the first fair of the year, and secondly that the prior and convent were fussy in repeatedly requesting alternative trading days!

Hulbert's account of the fairs of Norton St Philip appears to be drawn primarily from the eight charters or perhaps from Thompson's account, but he failed to give any reference or credit to these. Hulbert also wrote that 'various vague notices occur in the old lists', and referred to one in the *Travellers Pocket Book* of 1785; he tantalizingly referred to another list of fairs dating from 1729, but omitted to give its title.

OLD LISTS, ALMANACS, GAZETTEERS AND DIRECTORIES

One of the earliest almanacs to be published was *Rider's British Merlin* and it flourished from the 17th to the 19th centuries; it included a calendrical list of 'The names of the principal Fairs in England and Wales, with the month, day and place where they be kept'. From 1660 to 1752 the entry for 'Philip's Norton' came under the group of fairs held on 'May. The first day'.²⁴ Similarly, two other almanacs listed 1 May as the sole fair day.²⁵

At the beginning of the 18th century lists of the fairs held in 13 counties of the West Country were published under the title of *A Book of Fairs*. The 1709 edition, by John Bridges of 'Chippingham' gives the dates of 27 April, 1 May and 29 August for the 'Philips-norton' fairs,²⁶ and the same entry is given in the 1714 edition by Benjamin Seaward of Somerton.²⁷ A further edition of the book published in 1729 gives the same dates for 'Philips-norton' fairs; and in a new section devoted to the names of market towns as 'being of great Use to all Chapmen or Trading People', Thursday is listed for 'Philipsnorton'.²⁸

In 1720 Emanuel Bowen published his *Britannia Depicta*, and for 'Philips Norton' he stated 'a pretty Town having a Market on Friday, and 3 Fairs Yearly'.²⁹ In the first year of the publication of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1731, there appeared a series of alphabetical lists of fairs throughout England and Wales; the dates of 27 April and 1 May occur for 'Philips-norton'.³⁰

The change from the old Julian calendar to the 'New Stile' calendar in England and Wales in September 1752 caused much confusion and consternation amongst the population because September had only 19 days. One particular worry for owners of fairs was that the vendors and customers would not know when their fair would be held. Would the fair be held on the accustomed date or eleven days later as if the calendar had not been altered? The 'Act for Regulating the Commencement of the Year: and for Correcting the Calendar now in Use' failed in its attempt to make the situation clear by stipulating, *inter alia*, that:

the fixed Feast-days, Holy-days and Fast-days ... and also the several solemn Days of Thanksgiving ... shall be kept and observed on the respective Days marked for the Celebration of the same in the new Calendar

Markets, Fairs and Marts, and Courts thereunto belonging, ... kept at any moveable Time or Times depending upon the Time of Easter or any such moveable feast ... shall ... be holden and kept on such Days and Times whereon the same shall respectively happen or fall ... according to the happening or falling of the said Feast of Easter, or such other moveable Feasts as aforesaid, to be computed according to the said new Calendar, Tables and Rules

and the holding and keeping of all Markets, Fairs and Marts ... which are either fixed to certain nominal Days of the Month, or depending on the Beginning, or any certain Day of any Month, and all Courts ... kept with such Fairs or Marts ... shall not ... be continued upon, or according to the nominal Days of the Month, or the time of the Beginning of any Month, to be computed according to the said new Calendar, but ... shall be holden and kept upon, or according to the same natural Days, upon or according to which the same should have been so kept or holden, in case this Act had not been made; that is to say, eleven Days later than the same would have happened, according to the nominal Days of the new Supputation of Time.³¹

An enterprising bookseller, at Temple Bar in London, by the name of William Owen, together with Robert Goadby, a printer of Sherborne, took advantage of the general uncertainty over the dates of fairs and proceeded to ascertain from 'Gentlemen of Note, ... Town-Clerks ... Clerks of

Markets, Owners of Fairs &c' the dates for all fairs and markets held in England and Wales. On Monday 1 April 1754 Owen placed an advertisement in *The Western Flying Post* to the effect that on that day his 'Exact Account of all the Days on which all the FAIRS in ENGLAND and WALES' was to be published.³² Owen and Goadby had difficulty in obtaining accurate information for their book and it was not until 1756 that the first edition of William Owen's *Book of Fairs* appeared. In January 1756 Owen had been granted a Royal Licence from George II to print and publish the book which Owen claimed to be 'as correct and compleat as such a Thing can be'. The book which was also stated to be 'An Authentic Account Published by the King's Authority of all the Fairs in England and Wales' was printed in Sherborne by Robert Goadby. The entry for 'Phillips Norton' reads 'March 21 Cattle and cloth. March 27 Cloth. August 29 Cattle and Cloth'.³³ The second edition was published in 1759 and the entry was similar except that 'Th' was added indicating that Thursdays were market days.³⁴

By the time that the fifth edition of *The Book of Fairs* was published in 1767 the entry for 'Phillips-Norton' had been changed to 'March 21, for cattle and cloth. March 27, for cloth. May 1, a great fair for cloth, &c. August 29, for cattle and cloth. Th.'³⁵ Owen re-issued his list regularly, taking the opportunity to make any necessary corrections, but in 1773, 1780, and in his 'New Edition' of 1783 and another edition of 1788 the entries for 'Phillips Norton' are identical to that of 1767.³⁶

When a further edition of *Owen's New Book of Fairs* appeared in 1792 the entry for 'Phillips-Norton' was reduced to 'March 21, for cattle and cloth. March 27, for cloth. May 1, a great fair for cloth. Th.' and this information was repeated in further editions until 1813.³⁷ When other 'New Editions' were published in 1824 and 1827 as being 'carefully corrected', the entries are the same except that 'Aug. 29' was reinstated.³⁸ In 1834 the editor of *Owen's New Book of Fairs* was aware that 'some errors ... may still be found' and requested 'persons locally qualified to give authentic information, to favour him with their corrections'; the entry for 'Philip's Norton' remained the same.³⁹ Two decades later the book was under new editorship and all the entries were reduced to just dates and included 'Phillips Norton, Somerset., (Th.) Mar. 21, 27, May 1, Aug. 29'.⁴⁰

We have seen that in the early editions of *Rider's British Merlin*, the only entry for 'Phillips Norton' is given as May 1, where it occurs together with some 30 other places in England and Wales. In 1753 there were no entries at all for May 1, but 'Phillips Norton' and the other places are assigned the date of May 12,⁴¹ the editor having assumed that all those fairs were to be held eleven days later, according to the New Style. The date of May 12 remains in the 1754 and 1755 editions.⁴² In 1757, by which time William Owen's *Book of Fairs* had appeared, a much-enlarged list occurs in *Rider's British Merlin*, obviously based on Owen's book, and the dates for 'Phillips-Norton' are given as March 21, March 28 and August 29, but with no entries at all for May 1. The date of March 28 is accounted for by the fact that March 27 1757 was a Sunday. The same dates were repeated for 'Phillips Norton' in 1758.⁴³ From 1759 to 1770 the dates for 'Philip's-Norton' are given as March 21, March 27 and August 29. Entries are included for other places on May 1, but do not include 'Philip's-Norton'.⁴⁴ It was not until 1771 that the omission of the entry of May 1 for 'Philip's-Norton' was rectified.⁴⁵

Ogilby's and Morgan's Pocket Book of the Roads had first been published in the late 17th century as a descriptive list of the major roads in England and Wales. By the time of the eleventh edition of 1752 the book included 'A True and Exact Alphabeticall List of all the Fixed Fairs' and the dates for 'Phillipsnorton' were given as April 27 and May 1,⁴⁶ In about 1758 a new book appeared, as *The Traveller's Pocket-Book or Ogilby and Morgan's Book of the Roads*, and the entry for 'Phillips-Norton' was 'May 12, for wholesale trade reckoned as great as most for one day'.⁴⁷ The editor of this book had also assumed that the Norton fair was to be held eleven days later than it had before the alteration of the style. The second edition of *The Traveller's Pocket-Book* of 1761⁴⁸ lists 'March 21, cattle &c, March 27, cloth. Aug. 29 ditto' for Phillips-Norton

and all the other entries for Somerset fairs are very similar to those in William Owen's *Book of Fairs*. In 1767 and 1768 Robert Goadby advertised the fourth edition of *The Traveller's Pocket-Book* in his *Western Flying Post*⁴⁹ so it can be assumed that there was no objection to Owen and Goadby's information being used in another's publication. The nineteenth edition of *The Traveller's Pocket-Book* of 1778 included the entry 'Philips-Norton, March 21, for cattle and cloth. March 27, for cloth. May 1, a great fair for cloth &c. August 29, for cattle and cloth'.

In 1784 George Augustus Walpoole gave, under the heading 'An accurate list of the fairs in this county', the dates of the fairs of 'Philips-Norton' as March 22 for cattle and cloth, March 27 and May 1 for cloth and August 29 for cloth and cattle.⁵⁰ Of the apparent discrepancy of the date of March 22 in Walpoole's list, I. Fitzroy H. Jones suggested that this might have been because in 1784 March 21 fell on a Sunday.⁵¹ The fair would have been postponed until the Monday. In 1790 Philip Luckombe's *England's Gazetteer* we are told that 'Philips-Norton ... has a market on Friday, and fairs on March 21, 27, May 1 and Aug. 29'.⁵²

In 1791 William Tunnicliff published a 'description of all the principal direct and cross roads' in the western counties, and the text for the Sherborne to Bristol road states 'Fairs March 21 and 27, May 1 and Aug. 29' for 'Norton St Philips'.⁵³ In the same year *The Universal British Directory* contains the information, 'Norton St Philip's. It had formerly a market on Fridays. The fair is on the 1st of May, for cattle, sheep, horses, cloth, and pedlary wares.'⁵⁴

An 'old list' of 1815 gives the following under the title 'A New list of Fairs and Markets in the Western Counties', 'Phillips Norton, Mar. 21, 27, May 1, Aug. 29. Th.'⁵⁵ Again, the 'Th.' indicates that Thursdays were market days. Another list of 1815 occurs in G. A. Cooke's *Topographical Library* under the title of 'An alphabetical list of all the fairs in Somersetshire', 'Philip's Norton - March 21, 27, May 1, and August 29, cattle and cloth.'⁵⁶ In 1819 James Dugdale briefly gave these same dates,⁵⁷ and an almost identical entry occurs for 'Phillips Norton' in Bragg's list of the 'Fairs in Somerset' printed in 1840, except that August 30 is listed. However, in the descriptive text for the parish of 'Norton St Phillips' August 29th is given. 'August 30' must be an error.⁵⁸ In 1844 Henry Besley's *West of England Pocket Book* contained a list of 'Fair and Market Days in Devon, Cornwall, Somerset and Dorset'. Among the 117 fair towns and villages listed for Somerset was 'Philips Norton, March 21, 27, May 1, Aug 29 ... Thrs.'⁵⁹

In 1834 in James Bell's *Gazetteer* it was recorded for 'Norton-St-Philip's, or Comitis, a small market town ... the market is on Tuesday. Fairs, 21st and 27th of March and May 1st'.⁶⁰ A decade later, in another *Gazetteer* the readers were informed that for 'Norton-St-Philip, or Comitis ... the market day is Thursday; and fairs for cattle, cloth, &c are held on March 21st and 27th, May 1st and August 29th'.⁶¹ In Morris & Co's *Commercial Directory* of 1872 the descriptive text for Norton St Philip reads:

It was formerly of much greater importance, and in 1284 had a charter for holding weekly markets; in the reign of Henry III., a license was granted for holding a fair on the 'Vigil, Feast, and morrow of St Philip and St James;' and in 1345 another fair was granted to be held on 'the Vigil and Feast of ye Decollation of John Baptist.' After various alterations these fairs were eventually held on the 1st May and 29th August, as mentioned by the historian Collinson, and were noted for the sale of cloth and linen. The markets and fairs have long become obsolete, except the one on the 1st May, which is still held. The 'George', a curious old inn ... was notorious for the 'cloth and linnen faires' which were held in the large room there.⁶²

Later in the 19th century, C.W. Deacon, in his *Court Guide Gazetteer*, gave for Norton St Philip, 'In past ages the place was one of considerable importance, having a charter for weekly markets, and here was formerly held the most noted cloth fair in the west of England'.⁶³ The

early editions of *Kelly's Directory of Somerset and Bristol*⁶⁴ did not mention any fair; but the 1894 edition contained the entry 'A fair is held May 1st' and this entry continued to appear until 1910.⁶⁵

In 1888 a Royal Commission was set up to report on market rights and tolls in the United Kingdom. The Commissioners' report contained a comparison of fair days according to William Owen's *New Book of Fairs* in 1792, with those as they were in 1888. The Commissioners reported that in 1888 'Norton St Philip' had just one fair, on May 1.⁶⁶

PRIMARY SOURCES

In a survey of the neighbouring manor of Kilmersdon, taken in 1571, there is a memorandum that records the fairs and markets that the people of Kilmersdon could go to for their sales and purchases. Of Norton St Philip the memorandum states 'of Marketts ... Phillippis Norton Tewsdays 4 m[yles] ... And of Fayers ... Phillippis Norton 2 Phillip & Jacobs day, St Johanne Amidrib'.⁶⁷ In an inquiry of 1595,⁶⁸ concerning the tolls and customs of the fairs at Norton St Philip, a local yeoman, John Flower, deposed that he had known:

two wholesale fayers yerely to have ben kept at Philipps Norton ... for the sale of lynnens and wollen clothe by the packe, fardell, ballett and other parcellis with the one three cleare dayes befor Philipp and Jacobes daye and the other about a weeke after St Bartholomews day [24 August] and one upon a day commonly called 'John behedded his daye' [the Decollation of St John the Baptist – 29 August].

John Bowrne also deposed that there were:

kepte at Phillips Norton three fayers every yere, viz a whole sale fayer three dayes befor Philipp and Jacob's daye, one other fayer of retayle on Phillip and Jacob's day, one other fayer [on] St John's daye and upon Good Fridaye one markett.

It is clear from these depositions that the first fair of the year was divided into two, that on the first day being for wholesale trading and the other days for retail trading. The wholesale trading would have been carried out by the clothiers and merchants dealing in whole cloths, whilst the retail trading would have been for portions of cloths sufficient for garments for the family for the coming year, and for other general goods. By the time of a Parliamentary survey in 1652⁶⁹ there is only mention of 'twoe Faires yearly kept within the Towne of Phillippes Norton (viz) upon the seaven and twentieth day of Aprill and the first of May'. Considering the otherwise fullness of detail in this survey it is odd that the surveyors omitted to mention the cloth fair held on the 29th August.

James Twyford of Kilmersdon compiled a quarto notebook between 1679 and 1721 and in it, amongst accounts for the estate, husbandry notes etc. he noted all the fairs of the surrounding district in calendrical order. For 'Phillipes Norton' he merely records the dates of April 27 and May 1.⁷⁰

When John Strachey of Sutton Court was writing his projected history of Somerset c. 1736 he wrote of Norton St Philip:

Norton called Phillips Norton from the church dedicat[ed] to St Phillip & all saints is also sometimes stiled Norton Comitiss from the Earles of Sarum formerly Lordes of the place. The Retail Cloth Fair is kept on the Day of Dedication, May 1st but the wholesale Fair on the 27 of April before & a 3rd Fair Aug. 29 on the decollation of St Joh[n] Baptist ... a famous Market on Frydays tho the Market is now quite decayed'.⁷¹

Strachey's notebooks from which he extracted his writings add a little more detail:

The Whole Sale day viz 27 April is Very great ... a famous Market on Frydays but this is now quite decayed tho it hath been in Vain attempted to be revived. also a 3rd fair Aug. 29 [on] the decollation.⁷²

In the papers relating to disputes of the 1730s, to be looked at later, it is written:

Fairs have been held there beyond the Memory of Man on the 27th April called the Wholesale Fair, on May day called the May or Retail Fair and on the day of Beheading of St John the Baptist called St Johns Fair being the 28th of August and being the last of the Dog Days, commonly called Norton Dog Fair.

Barrett's scepticism, quoted earlier, concerning the origin of the name 'Norton Dog Fair' appears unfounded.

When Edmund Rack was compiling his topographical notes on the county of Somerset between 1782 and 1786 he wrote:

Phillips Norton ... There are two Fairs Annually held here, the first of May for cattle & 29 of August for toys. One Chartered Fair the 27 April at which great Qtys of Cloth were formerly sold, Now dropd.⁷³

MANAGEMENT OF THE FAIRS AND MARKETS

Something of the way the May fair was conducted is revealed in a rebuke given by Edward III to the mayor and bailiffs of Bristol, on 18 May 1346.⁷⁴ Several merchants and others of Bristol had gone to the fair at Norton, hired certain plots from the prior's servants, set up booths and shops to expose their wares for sale and paid their dues just the same as other merchants. So much was normal procedure. However, because the prior and convent had, in 1237, been granted by Henry III the right to buy and sell throughout England without having to pay tolls or customs,⁷⁵ the Bristol merchants and others had taken victuals, hides and other goods in retaliation from the Carthusian brethren when the latter had gone to Bristol to conduct their trade. The King ordered that the goods or the equivalent price of the goods be restored to the brethren, just as he had done in May of the previous year on a similar occasion!⁷⁶

We have seen above that the Bristol merchants had to hire plots and pay the Prior's servants for the privilege of setting up their booths. During the time that the two manors of Henton and Norton were held by the Carthusian prior and convent, the profits of the fairs and markets were taken wholly by the prior. In the lease of Norton Grange granted by Prior Batmanson to John Flower in 1523 there is the following proviso: 'And the said Prior and his officers to ocupie duringe the fayre tyme the meade called the Fayre Close with the Tolsell House the yate house of the said grange and the chambers in bothe'.⁷⁷ The first recorded reference to the profits of the Norton markets is in *Valor Ecclesiasticus* in 1535 when the profits were 60s per annum.⁷⁸ At the Dissolution the two manors came into the hands of Henry VIII. The next record of the profits of the markets is in a reeve's account of 1539 that set out the revenues that Henry VIII might have expected to receive from the two manors. A total of 65s 4d was owed 'for the profits of the fairs held there this year, as appears by a bill of particulars sworn by Morgan Phelypp the bailiff of the said fairs'.⁷⁹ The account continues, 'and allowed him 13s 4d both for the expenses of the steward as for the expenses of several watchmen at the fairs aforesaid as formerly'.

After the Dissolution the right to collect tolls from the stall-holders was farmed out. At some time during the reign of Edward VI, probably in 1550, the profits of the market for 21 years were assigned to Mathew Colthurst for a fine of 13s 4d.⁸⁰ On 8 February 1571 a lease of the farm of the tolls, revenues and profits of the Norton fairs was granted by Queen Elizabeth to Hugh Sexey for 21 years,⁸¹ and three weeks later the similar income from the Norton market became his for 21 years by Letters Patent on payment of a fine of 13s 4d.⁸² In a survey of 1606 Hugh Sexey is recorded as claiming 'by virtue of Letters Patent not shown, the tolls and profits of the divers fairs held at Phillipps Norton aforesaid at the Feast of Philip and James and at the Feast of St John in Meadow Acre. Profits of the markets held there twice in each week similarly, paying annually 13s 4d'.⁸³ From this we may assume that Hugh Sexey had had his Letters Patent re-granted in 1592.

In 1616 Charles, Prince of Wales, was granted the manors of Norton St Philip and Hinton Charterhouse by James I and in May 1624, before Charles became King, his chancellor, Sir Henry Hobart, demised the rights of holding the fairs for 90 years to Tobie Cockes for his life and the lives of John and Mathew Cockes.⁸⁴ In 1626 Charles I decided to sell the fee-farm rents of his manors in order to raise much-needed funds, and the disposal of such rents was placed in the hands of the mayor and citizens of London. The fee farm rents for Norton St Philip and Hinton Charterhouse were assigned together to Edward Ditchfeild and others, and included 'all the revenues, profits and commodities whatsoever growing, issuing or falling due from the Fairs annually ... demised to Tobie Coxe or his assigns' for the rent of 13s 4d.⁸⁵ By the time of a survey in 1638 Jeffery Flower claimed to hold the 'bennefett of the Fayres and Markettes' for the lives of Tobie and Mathew Coxe, for the yearly rent of 13s 4d, but the value was stated to be worth £13 6s 8d yearly to Jeffery; whilst 'the keepinge of the Sheepe fare is worth 20 nobles [£13 13s 4d] a yeare ... as is Credably reported' to a Thomas Yonge whose copyhold tenement included the 'Sheepe Faire Close'.⁸⁶ Jeffery Flower also held 'one little house scituat at the end of Fayre Close called Taylors Hall'. By 1652 the interest in the fairs had been assigned to John Bayly and the income that he received from stallage and pittance⁸⁷ of the two cloth fairs held on 27th April and 1st of May was estimated as being worth 40s per annum for which he paid a rent of 26s 8d. The unrecorded profits of the sheep fair were taken by a William Thresher who now held the 'Sheepe Faire Close'. Later, in 1666, by which time Sir Edward Hungerford held the two manors, Norton Grange and the moiety of the lands previously belonging to it, including Fair Close, were leased to Edward Fripp for the lives of his three sons Edward, Richard and Benjamin.⁸⁸ At the same time Eleanor Bayly was granted the lease of 'all that house in Norton called Taylors Hall ... & the use of Faire Close for 8 daye's for seting up and carrying away the standings, coops or penings &c to have for 99 years if Thomas Flower, John Flower and William Apprice soe long live' for a rent of 13s 4d.⁸⁹

In 1706, a John Harding of Hinton Charterhouse purchased the same Taylors Hall or Stock House, which was still in the possession of Thomas Flower, the 'Shambles of Norton' and the rights of holding:

all those Fairs in Norton St Phillipps comonly called ... Norton wholesale Faire, May Fair and St Johns Fair with all and all manner of pickage, stallage, perquisites and profits belonging to the said Fairs ... and alsoe all those the Marketts ... with liberty of having holding and keepeing the sayd Faires and of erecting & removeing the stalls booths and utensells of the sayd Faires in ... Faireclose now in Mr Benjamin Frippts possession, and in and upon every part and parcell thereof at such days and time &c ... as have been ... used or accustomed.

alsoe the use and benefitt of the streets of Norton St Phillipps, and other places whereon the said Faires and Markets have been accustomedly kept ... together with all Tolles dueyes perquisites profitts and advantages to the said Faires and Markets ... and Shambles.⁹⁰

From this record we may deduce that at fair times the trading spilled over into the streets in order to accommodate all the business that went on. None of the previous records of the proprietorship of the fairs and markets goes into such details; and in view of the later disputes that occurred it may also be deduced that John Harding had those words introduced into the indenture in order to establish a precedent for collecting the maximum profits from all who did business at the fairs and markets.

John Harding senior died in 1723 and the rights to hold the fairs were taken over by his son John.⁹¹ The will of John Harding senior stated, in relation to the Fairs and Markets:

I give, devise and bequeath ... the Fairs and Markets of Norton St Phillipps ... with the Goods and Utensils belonging to the same ... the Stockhouse and Market House ... to my son John.

And I ... direct that the goods, Stock and boards belonging to the Fairs of Norton and used about the same shall not be reckoned as part of my said personal estate, but shall go and be enjoyed by my said son William Harding. And ... direct that my said Trustees and executors from time to time, as occasion shall require, to buy in new Boards, Lugs, forks, Tressels and other things in the place of such as shall be broken, spoiled or decay, and to make such addition to the now Stock I have as they shall see proper for the best improvement of the said Fairs and Markets.⁹²

In 1761 John Harding died intestate and without issue, but before his death the interests in the fairs had passed to Catherine (who was the daughter of John's first cousin Catherine Harding who had married Richard Jacob of Bath) and her second husband William Wild of Bath.⁹³ William died and Catherine married Capt John Hay RN of Bath in 1769 and the fairs were part of the marriage settlement.⁹⁴ Meanwhile Catherine's sister Mary Jacob had married Stephen Skurray and had an only child Mary Skurray in 1765. In 1768 the fairs were in the possession of William Wild and Stephen Skurray, and the markets were in the tenure of a John Turner.⁹⁵ Mary married Samuel Day of Burnett, near Keynsham,⁹⁶ in 1785 and he purchased the interests in the fairs in 1792.⁹⁷ Mary and Samuel Day had a son, Samuel Skurray Day, who married the Hon Catherine Lister in 1810. She left her husband who then bequeathed his estate to his mother. Mary's renewed interest in the fairs is recorded in an indenture of 1808.⁹⁸

The trade at fairs and markets was governed by statutes, and one controlled the activities of the alnager, or wool-tax man.⁹⁹ Cloths could not be sold until the alnager had fixed his seal to each cloth and the vendor had paid his alnage or wool-tax. In 1401 Thomas Neuton, the alnager for Somerset, arrived in Norton St Philip with his servants to 'proclaim the king's letters patent and other things touching his office in the fair ... that he and his deputies might more quietly use their office there'. At this 'certain evildoers ... rose in insurrection and ... assaulted him and killed one of his servants exercising the said office there, inflicting on the said Thomas more than a hundred mortal wounds, and followed certain deputies of his to kill them so that they scarcely escaped alive from the fair'.¹⁰⁰

Other facets of the management of the fairs are revealed by the cases prepared for the hearings into the disputes of the 1730s. The holder of the fairs held 'franchizes of providing, keeping, having and using Beams, Scales and weights for weighing Goods bought and sold' and could take tolls called 'weighages' for this privilege.¹⁰¹ The 'franchise' for the collection of tolls for weighing goods came from the statute of 1429 that required every town to have a common balance and weights.¹⁰² By a statute of 1670 there was also to be a standard *Winchester* bushel for measuring goods by volume, and 'at the charge of such person ... who shall have the Toll or Profit of the market ... there shall be ... one Measure of Brass provided and chained in the publick Market-place' for the weighing of goods.¹⁰³ Regarding 'weighages', the notebook for the fair held on 29 August 1728 records that John Harding received 7s 1d for 'cheese waites',

followed by further amounts of 9s 9d in silver and 3s 0d 'more in brass'. Some idea of the volume of the cheese sales can be gained from the weighages that were allowed by the 1429 statute – a farthing on weights up to 40 lb, a halfpenny on weights between 40 lb and 100lb, and 'a penny at the most' for weights between 100lb and 1000lb.

The cases prepared for the disputes of the 1730s also show that the holder of the fairs had by tradition 'made Gapps in the Walls [of Fair Close] for the passing in and out of the persons coming to the Fairs, taking away those Booths & Standings and repairing those Gapps when the Fairs were over'.¹⁰⁴

Fair Close was part of the land of Norton Grange, or Manor Farm, and the use of it for the fairs was only allowed for the eight days that were mentioned in Eleanor Bayly's grant of 1666. From the indenture of 1760, whereby Catherine and William Wild had received the interests in the fairs, we learn that the holder of the fair had:

the use of ... Faire Close ... during the time of the Fairs there with Convenient Time that is to say by the space of Four days before and four Days after the respective Fair days ... for the fitting, placing, setting up, removing and carrying away the Utensils and Implements to the said Fairs ... with free liberty to set up and place in any Part or Parts Coops or Penfolds or any other Penning to receive and hold Sheep during the ... Fairs.¹⁰⁵

It is clear from the 16th and 17th-century references that the fairs were primarily for cloth with the May Fair also being used for the sale of sheep. From the fair notebooks and the 1760 indenture, it may be deduced that sheep were sold at all the fairs, and it could be surmised that sheep were the main livestock for sale. Evidence that animals other than sheep were sold comes in an account book kept by J. Feare who was Bailiff of the Manor of Kilmersdon. He recorded that in 1679 he went to Norton May fair on behalf of James Twyford and 'Received for a Yoake of Bullockes att Norton Faire £9 15s 0d'. This was at a time when labourers were paid about a shilling a day; and the price obtained earlier in the same year by Feare when he had sold eight sheep for his master was £2 8s. Selling the two bullocks must have been thirsty business, for later in the same account book there is the entry under the heading of 'Dissbursements', 'May 1, Paid att Norton for beare when ye bullockes were sould 8d'.¹⁰⁶ Of Hulbert's statement that 'cattle must have been a staple of the fair', it is clear that he was generalizing for the six centuries of the Norton fairs from his understanding of the last years of the May fair. It is probably more correct to say that sheep were originally a staple of the fair, with cattle and other animals of secondary importance; as time progressed, cattle came to be more important.

THE DISPUTES OF THE 1730s

Confirmation that trading took place in the street comes in a succession of events that occurred in the 1720s and 30s. The street trading caused trouble between some of the people who lived in the main street (the present High Street and North Street) and John Harding junior who tried to exert the sole right to the tolls of 4d for each pack or horse-load of goods, whether the trading was in Fair Close or in the street.¹⁰⁷ As Stephen Skurray, an attorney, recorded:

Upon ye 27th April yearly is held a Fair at Norton called ye wholesale Fair and several of the Inhabitants on that day set up standings in the street before their doors and let them to several Tradesmen for 8 or 10s apiece and so have done beyond the memory of any one now living & refuse to pay any Toll or acknowledgment to Mr John Harding, and he apprehending the persons who expose their Goods to sale are liable to pay him Toll as well as others.

The trouble appears to have started when 'Mr Harding in 1728 distrained a Pack of Wool of one Neale, which was pitch't in the street to be sold, for ye 4d Toll and detained it 2 years till Neale paid the 4d'. Matters came to a head in 1737 when Harding claimed that:

the Inhabitants have no right to sett up standings at ye Fair time to his prejudice ... but they Insist upon their Right having Enjoyed it so long. Therefore to bring the matter in question on the 27th April Mr. Harding desired Mr. Skurray to demand 4d for Toll of one of those persons & if he refused to pay, that he would distrain.

Accordingly Stephen Skurray, who was John Harding's bailiff, went to a George Woolley who had set out goods for sale in the street on a standing that had been set up by a Mr Fripp, and demanded the 'Toll of 4d for Pitching'. Woolley refused to pay the toll and was encouraged not to pay by Mr Fripp. Whereupon Skurray took 'two pieces of scarlet gartering containing 100 yards of the value of 40s' as a distraint. Support for George Woolley's refusal to pay came from 'Mr. Fripp, Mrs. Daniel, Mr. Hunt, Mr. Hoddinott, Mrs. Coles and others of the neighbourhood who are interested in the Question [and] have joynd in a Bond' and who brought an action against Stephen Skurray. The next year Edward Fripp:

paid Mr. Harding 4d each Pack or Horse load of Goods laid upon his [Fripp's] standings for the Toll or Pitching but Insists upon his right to set up standings & take ye Rent of them to himself under pretence the ground is his own before his house.

At the wholesale fair in 1739 Edward Fripp took matters firmly into his own hands in three ways. Firstly, he prevented John Harding from 'setting up and using 20 Booths 20 Standings and 20 Stalls' and erected the same number of other booths, standings and stalls for his own use and collected the tolls from the tradesmen who used them. Secondly, he repeated his action by setting up another 50 booths, standings and stalls for his own use. Thirdly, he:

knowing the premises ... did on Thursday the 27th of April 1739 at the vill [of Norton] ... erect and hold a new Fair at the vill aforesaid, by means whereof several great quantities of Wollon Stuffs and divers other Goods and Merchandizes in the said new Fair ... were then and there bought and sold.

John Harding was equally provocative, because he:

caused Tressells & Boards to be put before ... Fripps Door for standings for Tradesmen to put their Goods upon, but at such a distance from ye wall of Mr Fripps house that there was a passage for people on foot to pass between and so as not to Obstruct goeing into his house or shop Expecting he would put them away and so set up some of his own – which he accordingly did.

The events of 1737 and 1739 saw actions being brought for trespass. The first by George Woolley against Steven Skurray was to be tried at Taunton on 27 March 1738. The second by John Harding against Edward Fripp had not gone to court by 1753. The outcome of neither action is known, but 'Issue not Guilty' is appended to the case-notes prepared on behalf of John Harding, perhaps in the realization that he could not win. Perhaps, also, we see in the publications by William Owen and Nathaniel Spencer in 1756 and 1772, of Fairs being held on 21 and 27 March, the first extant announcements of Edward Fripp's rival 'new fair', on a day or days that did not conflict with the established wholesale and retail fairs.

Reference has already been made to the change from the old Julian calendar to the 'New Style' calendar in England and Wales in September 1752 and to the confusion caused by the wording of the Georgian legislation. In February 1753 Stephen Skurray sought advice on Harding's behalf that 'as the Stile is now altered ... whether Mr Harding must prepare for and hold his fairs upon this Fair Close on the Nominal days as now altered ... that is to say on the now 27th of April, 1st May and y^e 28th (sic) of August or on the Respective days on which these Feasts could have been ... vizt. the 8th of May, the 12th of May and the 8th of Sept. and this Mr Harding thinks it necessary he should be Set Right because if he should mistake his time in Entring upon the Close to hold his Fairs he will be a Trespasser'. The answer given to this question by R. Henley on 24 February 1753 was 'The Acts do not seem to me very clear upon this Question but I take it these Fairs are to be held on y^e same nominal days in y^e now Calendar'.¹⁰⁸

THE FAIR NOTEBOOKS

In the early 18th century the Hardings kept a series of notebooks that were used primarily to record the piccage and stallage for the standings etc.¹⁰⁹ Most of the notebooks relate to the wholesale fairs of 27 April, but there are a few for the other fairs. The traders' names were listed each year, most names recurring and with each stall-holder being allotted the same place in Fair Close in succeeding years. For each wholesale fair there were initially two notebooks, one kept by young John Harding for the clothiers who would have sold the medleys, Spanish cloths and other woollens; the other kept by his uncle Thomas Harding, until his death in 1729, for the 'broad clothiers' who sold the traditional fine quality broadcloths. For the wholesale fairs held on 27 April between 1708 and 1728 there were between 150 and 215 clothiers (average of 184) whose stalls were arranged in eight ranks and 50 to 70 'broad clothiers' (average of 58) who occupied another three ranks. Between 1729 and 1735 there was a gradual reduction in numbers to an average of 139 clothiers and 40 'broad clothiers'. But by 1742 the number of clothiers had fallen to 79 and there were only 5 'broad clothiers'. Between 1745 and 1750 the respective numbers were down to an average of 62 clothiers and only two or one, or even no 'broad clothiers'. The 1742 notebook contains the despondent notes - 'The Broads First Ranke not built' and 'The Third Ranke all voyd last year'. By this time one notebook sufficed for all the cloth dealers.

There are no notebooks for the critical years of the disputes of 1737 to 1741, but the marked drop in numbers from the first decades of the century to the 1740s appears to indicate that Fripp's rival fair did attract a large number of traders, although many remained loyal to John Harding. Some of the fall in numbers of clothiers who attended the Norton wholesale fairs in the 1730s may be attributed to competition from the Yorkshire weavers who produced the coarser woollen textiles. But the Yorkshire woollen industry cannot be blamed for the catastrophic fall in the number of the dealers in the fine broadcloth for which it could not compete at all.¹¹⁰ It would appear therefore that Fripp attracted virtually all the broad clothiers to his rival fair.

Another indicator of the trouble affecting the wholesale fair is shown in the records of the money received for the use of the 'Stockhouse Chamber'. Whereas in 1727, 1729, 1730 and 1742 the amounts were 5, 10, 16 and 10 shillings, from 1745 to 1750 nothing was received.

There are a few notebooks for the 'May Day Fair': in 1747 and 1748 the numbers of traders were 92 and 80, down from 124 and 139 in 1728 and 1734. There was also a fall in the numbers of traders attending the fair on 29 August. Between 1726 and 1734 there were 31 to 50 standings occupied, with an average of 41. Between 1752 and 1760 the numbers were an average of 22, with 27 or 28 in 1752-6, but with a low of 11 in 1757 and down to 15 in 1760.

The last few notebooks were kept by a T. Pearce for John Harding. Pearce apparently did not know the procedures for managing the fairs as well as Harding did, for the books include *aide-*

memoires so that, for instance, he did not forget to provide the scales and weights for weighing the cheeses, or to erect pens for the sheep or to supervise the pound. Pearce's notes reflect the change that had come over the fairs: 'Pitching every where' was noted for the 1750 wholesale fair, and 'Pitching in Sheep Faire Close' for the August fair of 1753, and 'Pitching in Faire Close, streets & everywhere' in August 1755. There is a run of notebooks for the August fairs from 1752 to 1760, and in these Pearce's *aide-memoires* include the note that 'There is a Booke for Sheep and a Booke for Tolesy'. It is unfortunate that of these books only one has survived – for the 'Norton Sheep Fair' of 29th August 1756. The book includes the tolls to be charged: 'To pay 1s per score for every score each pen holds and so in proportion' – this entry refers to pigs; and: 'To pay 4d toll for each score of sheep'. The notebook is prepared for five ranks of 20 sheep pens, but there are no entries for sheep apart from the note – 'Farmer Loscomb 3 pair sheep unpaid'. There were four 'drafts' of pigs for sale, of 18, 20, 30 and 21 pigs for a total toll of 5s 10d, with 'only 5 pigs Sould. Rec'd 10d', making the total recorded receipt of 6s 8d. Obviously the vendors were charged an entry toll for their animals and a further toll of 2d per head was charged if the animals were sold; but clearly by the 1750s the August 'sheep' fair was in trouble. The notebook for Norton Fair of 29 August 1754 includes the melancholy note 'No sheep this year, only 3 beast.'

The notebooks also reveal little details of the fairs. Each trader paid between 2s and 3s 7d for stallage and piccage at the wholesale fairs but for the May and August fairs each eight foot standing was charged a uniform 2s 6d or 2s respectively. Sometimes a dealer had two standings. The fourth rank and one half of the third rank of standings in the wholesale fair were occupied by the 'Salisbury Whites',¹¹¹ and from 1709 to 1717 there was a complete rank especially for the sale of 'Cantalones' or 'Cantalernes'.¹¹² In both 1709 and 1710 there were two 'rugg men',¹¹³ while in the 1750s the first rank in the August fair was set 'against the Cheese'. In 1728 'Henry Parker of Hornecom bought Woole of Neale carryd by ye Crookehorn Carryer'. There is a hint that shoes were among the goods sold at the May Day fair. In 1729 and 1730 2s 6d was received for the standing occupied by the 'Brassier' or 'Brazer'. For the May fairs in 1747 and 1748 the 'Braziers standings from Bath' were charged 7s 6d, and the brass men were present for the 29 August fair from 1752 to 1755 on 'standings next the Highway'. These references to the braziers of Bath would have been to the men from the brass-battery mill that had been set up by the Bristol brass company¹¹⁴ at Weston Mill, Bath, in the 1720s and employed skilled workers from the Low Countries. Brass sheet was produced at Baptist Mills on the River Frome at Bristol from Cornish copper ore and the zinc ore, calamine, obtained from the Mendip Hills. The brass sheets were converted to 'battery' at Weston Mill and other sites by beating with water-powered hammers. At this time no brass foundry-ware was produced at Weston. The brass 'battery' goods that were sold at Norton would have been in the form of bowls or pans either with or without handles. From the money received by John Harding for the brazier's standings we can assume that in the 1730s or 1740s the braziers tripled the size of their standings, presumably with a proportionate increase in brass goods offered for sale.

At least some of the standings were more than just trestle tables. We have seen that there was a note in 1742 that: 'The Broads First Ranke not *buil*', and in 1725 John Harding noted that £2 4s 2d was 'paid the workemen', 4s was paid for their 'Bear' and an unrecorded sum for the 'Nailles' that were presumably used in the building of the standings. Pride of place in the centre of the fair until 1735 was occupied by a Mr Bussell who is recorded as paying 16s for his standing in 1716 and 1725. In the notebook for the wholesale fair of 1729 there is a memorandum that records the agreement between John Harding and Thomas Case for the latter 'To have a standing half as long as Mr Bussell Standing ... & halfe as wide and to have it built in the 3rd Ranke ... and Built after Mr Bussells Fashen' for which he agreed to pay eight shillings a year.

A few notebooks contain summaries of accounts for the fairs. In 1727 the amount received at the wholesale fair by John Harding was £36 14s 5½d, and another £25 2s 9d was taken at the

May Day fair. The notebook for the broadcloth dealers at the 1726 wholesale fair contains a calculation showing that Portuguese 'Moydores', arising from England's buoyant trade with Portugal, were being used at the fair.¹¹⁵

THE DECLINE OF THE FAIRS IN THE 18TH CENTURY

What were the reasons for the lack of traders and trade at the Norton fairs in the mid 18th century? There was a general downward trend throughout England at this time in the numbers of smaller market centres: social, political and economic factors were changing the way trade was conducted, and the revenues of small or inefficient places decreased as trade was taken up by neighbouring towns.¹¹⁶ There are three possible factors that affected the Norton St Philip fairs in the mid 18th century besides the effect of Edward Fripp's rival fair.

Firstly, means of communications were improving throughout the country as roads were turnpiked. Locally, it was announced in the *Bath Journal* for December 11 1752 'the Turnpike Road from the City of Bath to the Towns of Warminster and Frome, are so far completed, that Coaches may pass with Ease and Conveniency'.¹¹⁷ What was to be seen as an improvement by those who were wealthy enough to possess a coach might have been viewed with less enthusiasm by the small farmer who now had to pay a toll for driving his animals along the new turnpike to the Norton fairs. That turnpike tolls were seen as a threat to the viability of fairs and markets is to be seen in a notice for Devizes market in 1754 that announced that 'all Cattle and Sheep will pass toll-free through the two turnpikes leading ... to the borough'.¹¹⁸ Later, the turnpiking of the White Post to Farleigh Hungerford road through Norton St Philip in 1768 would have added another threat to Norton's fairs.¹¹⁹

Secondly, a possible reason for the lack of animals at the August fair (and animals were a *raison d'être* of the Norton fairs at this time), might be found in the major outbreak of cattle plague or rinderpest that had broken out in the Essex marshes in 1745 and had subsequently spread throughout the country.¹²⁰ In May 1748 the Somerset General Quarter Sessions, in order to prevent the 'distemper' from entering Somerset from neighbouring counties, prohibited the buying and selling of 'Horned Cattle' at the fairs and markets of 'Philips-Norton' and other places.¹²¹ Again, in 1751 Somerset was threatened by the 'distemper'. Initially, in May, men were posted at the county boundaries to prevent cattle being driven into the county,¹²² and as Norton is only two miles from the county boundary with Wiltshire this action would have significantly affected the fairs and markets. On April 27 1751 the General Quarter Sessions again 'put A Stop to the Buying and Selling' of cattle 'at or in the several Fairs and Markets ... in the County'. 'Norton Saint Philips Fair' was included in the list.¹²³ Subsequently the General Quarter Sessions prohibited the movement of cattle into Somerset from Wales, Wilts, Monmouth, Gloucester, Dorset and Bristol.¹²⁴ In January 1752 fairs and markets in Somerset were permitted to be opened for the sale of fat cattle for immediate slaughter only.¹²⁵ In the Spring of 1752 outbreaks of this 'distemper' occurred in East Chinnock and Closworth and were of sufficient national interest for the East Chinnock outbreak to be reported in the *Gentleman's Magazine*.¹²⁶ At the General Quarter Sessions held at Bruton on 7 April 1752 the Somerset justices ordered that no cattle were to be moved from parish to parish, or to be brought into the county from the same areas as the year before. Further, the justices 'doth hereby forbid and put a Stop to the buying and selling of any Ox, Bull, Cow, Calf, Steer, or Heifer, at or in any Fair, or Market ... within the County of Somerset'.¹²⁷ The Dorset justices met on the same day and similarly ordered that the movement of horned cattle was prohibited between Dorset, Somerset and Hampshire.¹²⁸ On April 29 1752 the General Quarter Sessions sitting at Yeovil partially lifted the restriction on the movement of cattle but still prohibited the buying and selling of cattle at fairs and markets.¹²⁹ When the General Quarter Sessions sat on May 13 1752 to consider the abatement

of the distemper at East Chinnock and Closworth they lifted the restriction on the movement and selling of cattle at fairs and markets provided each vendor had a certificate for the animals granted by Justices of the Peace or Commissioners of the Land Tax.¹³⁰ This action would have been too late for the Norton May Fair of 1752. The plague was not finally eradicated until 1758, and must have had repercussions on the movement of other animals as well as the horned cattle.

The third possible reason for the lack of animals at the August fair was the setting up of rival fairs within the immediate neighbourhood of Norton St Philip. A fair had been established at Wellow, just three miles distant, in 1737 and held on the 6th day of October.¹³¹ It appears that a fair or 'Great Market' was established in 1750 at Colerne, about twelve miles distant, 'for Sheep, Horned Cattle, Pigs, Horses and all Manner of Wares, on Friday the 14th Day of September next; which Market will be continu'd annually'.¹³² In 1751 the 'antient Fair for Horses, Sheep and Horn'd Cattle' was revived at Calne, some twenty miles distant.¹³³ A little later another fair was revived at Rode, less than three miles from Norton, in 1757 and held on the 19th, 20th and 21st of July for the sale of 'Goods, Wares, and Merchandizes, and also all Sorts of Sheep, and other Cattle'.¹³⁴ This latter fair must have aggravated the already worsening situation for the seasonal sale of animals at Norton. The cattle plague would have affected these other fairs as well.

As owner of Norton's fairs, John Harding must have been sufficiently concerned about the downward trend in trade, particularly at the prospects for the Dog Fair in 1750 for the following advertisement to be placed in the *Bath Journal* just two days before the fair:

This is to give Notice,
 THAT the Ancient CHARTER- FAIR,
 held at *Norton St Philips*, in the County of *Somerset*; on the 29th Day of August, yearly,
 commonly called the

D O G - F A I R

For selling all Sorts of Goods, Cheese, Cattle, Sheep, Pigs &c, will be held the 29th of this present Month of *August*, 1750, on the usual Place there called the FAIR-CLOSE, and all other Places where the same used to be held in *Norton St Philips* aforesaid, for the Selling all Sorts of Goods, Cheese, Cattle, Sheep, Pigs &c, And for the Encouragement of all Persons that shall bring Beasts and Sheep to the said FAIR, the Owner will provide Sheep-pens in the FAIR-CLOSE, which Sheep-pens, and the Toll of the Sheep and Beasts shall be free for this present Fair: All other Standings, Goods Cheese, Pigs Pitching, &c to pay for standing, pitching, and Toll, as usual. The Beasts to stand on the Green next the *Church-Yard*.¹³⁵

The inducement that the sheep and beasts were to be toll-free was copied from other fair owners; the fair at Woodborough Green in Winscombe had been advertised as toll-free for three years in 1748,¹³⁶ and Bath Beast Market was made toll-free for a year in August 1747.¹³⁷ Other owners of nearby fairs were to offer similar inducements.¹³⁸ John Harding placed another advertisement in the *Bath Journal* in August 1751:

This is to give Notice,
 THAT the ancient CHARTER- FAIR, held at *Norton St Philips*, in the County of *Somerset*;
 on the 29th Day of August, yearly, commonly called the D O G - FAIR, for sale of all Sorts
 of Goods, Cheese, Cattle, Sheep, Pigs &c, will be held the 29th of this present Month of
 August, 1751, as usual, on the usual Place there called the Fair-Close, and all other
 Places where the same used to be held: And for the better Conveniency of all Persons
 that shall bring Sheep to the said Fair, the Sheep-pens, this Fair, and for the Future, will

be set up in a commodious Close, called Burt's-Padocke adjoining to the Fair-Close. The Price of the Pens and Toll as usual.

There is no Charter or Grant for holding a Fair or Market for selling of any Kind of Goods or Cattle at Wellow in October; nor for holding any Fair or Market for selling any kind of Goods or Cattle at F[r]eshford. Therefore if any Fair or Market shall be held at either of the said Places as have of late Years been used, the same will be unlawful Assemblies.¹³⁹

Something of the nature of John Harding may be discerned from this advertisement. Firstly, he dropped the toll-free concession after just one year. Secondly, the transference of the sheep fair from Sheep Fair Close – a field of some three and a half acres at the south-west end of the town, to the Burt's Paddock – of only half an acre near the George Inn and adjacent to Fair Close, was a recognition of the state of the sheep-trade in the previous venue; and the description of Burt's Paddock as a 'commodious close' was an attempt to show the situation in a more favourable light. Thirdly as proud owner of Norton's Charter fairs, and with his authority as Sheriff of Somerset, he showed antagonism towards the upstart and unchartered fairs of Wellow and Freshford, both within three miles of Norton St Philip. It is interesting that in reply to John Harding's threat that any fair or market held at Wellow or Freshford would be considered as 'unlawful assemblies', Freshford advertised that September 16 1751 was to be the date of their 'Meeting or Festival', and Wellow advertised that their 'Meeting' would be held on Monday October 7 1751 on account of the 6th of October being a Sunday.¹⁴⁰

In the autumn of 1752 and early part of 1753 a spate of notices appeared in *The Western Flying Post* and the *Bath Journal* appraising readers of the dates on which various fairs were to be held. One such notice appeared in *The Western Flying Post* on 16 April 1753 that read

Norton St Philips, in the County of Somerset, March 7, 1753.

This is to give NOTICE.

THAT the antient Charter FAIRS, called the Wholesale Fair, May Fair, and the Dog Fair, which has been held yearly at this Place on the 27th Day of April, the 1st Day of May, and the 29th Day of August, will this Year be held on those respective Days, according to the New Stile, unless either of the said Days shall happen on a Sunday, and then the Day following.

N. B. The Sheep Pens at May Fair and the Dog Fair, will be set up in a Close called Burt's Paddock, adjoining to the Close called the Fair Close, as usual.¹⁴¹

A very similar notice appeared in the *Bath Journal* on 2 April 1753.¹⁴² Perhaps these notices that the sheep pens 'will be set up ... as usual' was optimism on the part of John Harding that farmers would bring their sheep to Norton as they had done in the past. It is unfortunate that there are no extant fair books for the August or Dog Fair for the years 1735 to 1752, but we have already seen the melancholy entry of 'No sheep this year, only 3 beast' in 1754.

Earlier evidence of the demise of the wholesale fair comes from an unlikely source – the Churchwardens' accounts. The parish Church benefited from charges made for standings in the Cross. In 1690 the Churchwardens wrote 'what ye crosse must yeald yearly' and for five stalls they recorded £1.0s 6d. In the first decade of the 18th century four stalls yielded an average of 17s 6d, and during the next two decades three stalls yielded about 12s with a Mr Noble regularly paying 6s and a Mr Gamlin 3s 6d. By the late 1730s a sole stall-holder paid 1s 6d, and the last two entries for 'Cross money' are '1740 Rec'd for ye Cross of Mr Berry of Maperton 2s 0d', and 'April the 27 : 1741 Received of Mr John Newman of Steeple Langford for Standing in the cross 1s 6d'.¹⁴³ It is perhaps significant that these final single payments were collected at the same time that Edward Fripp's new fair was being established elsewhere in the town.

VISITORS TO NORTON'S FAIRS

The fairs would have attracted buyers and sellers from a wide area. It has been calculated that in Tudor and Stuart times in the south of England 66% of buyers at fairs lived within 10 miles – the same as for the weekly market, and 34% from 10 to 30 miles away. In contrast 36% of the sellers were from within 10 miles, 9% from 10 to 30 miles, but 55% from more than 75 miles away.¹⁴⁴ The Norton St Philip fairs although being specialized fairs for wool, cloth and sheep would have also dealt with other commodities and attracted merchants large and small from the surrounding area. In the 16th century one such large merchant was John Smythe of Bristol who carried on long-distance trade to Biscay, Lisbon and Andalusia importing wine from Bordeaux and iron from San Sebastian and Renteria in northern Spain. He also imported woad from Bordeaux and other dyestuffs, mordants and oil for use in the local cloth industry. His most important export was cloth, much of which he obtained from the villages on the Wilts and Somerset borders. The cloth that was sent to the London market of Blackwell Hall for export to the continent was exported unfinished, but the cloth exported to Spain and Gascony from Bristol was already dyed and dressed, Smythe was therefore an important link in the various stages of the cloth industry and in the economy of the region. Of his dealings in iron, on 5 February 1540 Smythe recorded in his ledger on the debit side, under the name of John David of Kermerdyne [Carmarthen] 'Item, the 5th of February £6 7s 6d for 1 ton 16 li. of the better Rendry [Renteria] iren payable at Phelips Norton fayer which wilbe in May next'. In 1541 Smythe recorded on the debit side under the name of Davy Gowgh of Aburgeyne [Abergavenny] 'Item. the 26 day of July anno 1541 £3 that is for a pipe of Rendry iren d[elivere]d by his comawndement ... to Robert Smythe of Aburgeyne, to be paid at Candellmas next commyng'. Two years later Davy Gowgh had not paid for the iron and Smythe wrote in his ledger, 'Memorandum the 29 day of November 1543 ... John Thomas of Aburgeyne & Symond Hanckot of Bristow taylor became shewertes [sureties] to me for the forenamyd Davy Gowgh for the above namyd £3, for to pay 20s at Candellmas next, 20s at Philips Norton fayer next after that, & 20s at Seynt Jamystide next following after that'.¹⁴⁵ John Smythe was therefore a regular visitor to the Norton fair and used the occasions not only to buy and sell but also as a place where his creditors could settle their debts to him. From other entries in his ledger it is clear that he usually paid very little in ready money, his normal method being to record the amount owed on the back of the bill, and when all that was owed had been set against other goods bought by the creditor, the bill was returned. The quoted entries from John Smythe's ledgers, of John David of Carmarthen and Davy Gowgh of Abergavenny, also illustrate the distances that some of the merchants were prepared to travel to Norton St Philip in order to conduct their trade.

An earlier reference to merchants trading with the Norton fair is contained in an ordinance for the drapers of Bristol in 1370. The ordinance stated that no merchant was to go out of Bristol to sell or buy cloth on a Friday or Saturday, and 'no one of the town sell cloth or half cloth to strangers coming to the town on Thursday or Friday ... unless it be against the general fairs, that is to say, Seint Phelippe Norton, Benangre, Midsomere Norton, Cherleton, Priddy, and the two fairs of Wells, Cosham and Bradeley'.¹⁴⁶

An implication of a Cotswold woolman coming to the Norton fairs is contained in the will of John Chapman dating from 1384.¹⁴⁷ Besides leaving money to churches in his own town of Minchinhampton and many others in Gloucestershire, he left 6s 8d for the fabric, and 3s 4d for the lights of each of the churches of Norton St Philip, Priddy and Binegar in Somerset and Maiden Bradley in Wiltshire, all places where he could have bought wool at the fairs. John Chapman would have found it convenient to visit Maiden Bradley and Norton St Philip on one journey as the two places are only 13 miles apart and the date for the Wiltshire fair was just two days before that of the Norton wholesale fair.

In the notebooks for the wholesale fairs of the early 18th century it was occasionally recorded where a particular trader came from. It appears that the traders were usually known to the Hardings, but they noted the abode of newcomers to the fairs, and places in Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Dorset are mentioned as well as those in Somerset:

'Nath. Cooper nigh Wotton undridge in Gloucestershire' in 1708,
'Edwd. Marten, Froome', 'Wm. Glase of Chiverell', 'John Cockford Cottonseller'¹⁴⁸ at
Hawford neare Bridgewater' and 'James Maiey of Woton Undredge' in 1710,
'Wm. Alford of Chard' in 1711,
'Alex. Cooke of Doncombe' and 'Morgan Edwards of Bedminster' in 1712,
'Mr. Sowerton (?) of Welles', 'James Hitt of Kilmerton', 'Wm. Draper of Haselbrough',
'Geo Lole of Chard', 'Wm. Bonell of Sherbourne', 'Richard Stanfast of Kilve near
Bridgewater', 'Phillip Hulfort of Corsham' and 'Richd. Board of Bedminster' in 1717,
'Richd. Bagg of Doncombe', 'Sam Brewer of Winsham', 'Danl. King of Mells', John
Ellot of Haselbrough near Crockhorne' and 'John Linolney (?) of Chard' in 1718 and
'Anthony Feilding of Potterne' and 'Will. Dollin of Wourton (?)' in 1728.
Also in 1728 'Henry Parker of Hornecom bought Woole of Neale carryd by ye Crokehorn
Carrier'.

There were also the men from Bath who occupied the braziers standings.

The name of Bussell has been seen as occupier of the most prominent stall at the wholesale fairs. In 1728, in addition to the main 'Bussell' stall there were others kept by John and William Bussell. The Bussells were from Exeter.¹⁴⁹

Two clothiers in partnership in Trowbridge, John Usher and John Jeffries, attended the wholesale fairs and two letters survive that show the involvement of other businessmen. On 24 April 1726 John Jeffries wrote to John Burrow, a woollen draper of Lombard St., London, '... Shall send you the light sand colour Cloth Monday, but cannot get the gray ready under a month and the olive under 6 weeks, which hope will do. Suppose shall see you at Northon fair'. On 2 May 1726 he wrote to a Nathaniel Welchman 'This adviseth you of 4 pieces of narrow cloth sent from Norton Fair. ... We paid the cash down for them in the fair, so have drawn a bill on you payable to Daniel Wayland or order for £19 ... The gray broad cloth will be sent you next week.'¹⁵⁰ These letters reveal not only that John Burrow of London was a usual visitor to Norton's wholesale fair, but that Usher and Jeffries dealt in their own medley cloth such as they had sent to John Burrow, and that they also acted as agents for others, in this case buying four pieces of narrow cloth at Norton Fair for Nathaniel Welchman.

The Norton St Philip parish register for 1733 contains the following entry: 'A stranger came from Petworth, wase buried hear ye 26 April his name not known as yeat'.¹⁵¹ Why else would this man have travelled more than 90 miles from Sussex but to attend the Norton wholesale fair on 27 April?

THE PIEPOWDER COURT

There are no direct references to any grievances being dealt with at a Piepowder court at Norton St Philip; but in indentures of sale of the joint manors of Norton St Philip and Hinton Charterhouse in 1652 and 1662, 'Courtes of Pyepowder' are included with 'Stallage' and 'Piccage' in the 'catch-all' sentence that protected the purchaser against any possible claim, along with the usual 'goods & chatels of Felons & fugitives' etc.¹⁵² We have seen that in the lease of Norton Grange granted by Prior Batmanson to John Flower in 1523 there is mention of 'the Tolsell House the yate house of the said grange and the chambers in bothe'. In a similar phrase in a

grant of Norton Grange to John Seamer 'Tolsell' is replaced by 'toll'.¹⁵³ 'Tolsell' and 'toll' are, in this context, the equivalent of 'tolsey' which was the local court of justice at fair times – the Piepowder Court – or the place where the court was held. By the time of the indenture of 1760, referred to above, the description is more explicit – 'And also the Use and Benefit of the Tolsey and Tolsey House or Gatehouse of the Farm of Norton Saint Philips ... in which the Tolsey heretofore hath been usually kept during the Time of the Fair'. These descriptions place the holding of the Piepowder Courts in the gatehouse of Norton Grange or Manor Farm.¹⁵⁴

Further evidence of the Tolsey is found in the fair notebooks of the 1740s and 50s. In the notebook for 'Norton May Day Fair 1748' there is a note that Jos. Always, Daniel Hissox, Charles Scapen Jun. and John Wingrove 'Stood Tolsey' at the 'Fair tole Gate'; Henry Friger at the 'Pigs' and John Pearce and Thomas Emes were at the 'Bridge'. This bridge was at the entrance to Sheep Fair Close. Similar entries occur in the notebooks for the 1748 and 1750 wholesale fairs where some of the same men were noted as being for the 'Tolsey up in the Street'. 'Standing Tolsey' must have been acting as overseers to ensure the fairs were conducted in the correct manner. The 'tolseymen' also had the responsibility for collecting the tolls for the 'beast, sheep and pig &c', and for the 'pitching' that took place in the streets. These 'tolseymen' were the successors of the 'watchmen for the fairs' referred to in the reeve's account of 1539.

SITES OF THE MARKETS AND FAIRS

Norton St Philip is a combination of a nucleated Saxon village and a planned early medieval town. The earlier settlement was clustered around the church whilst the planned town was laid out by the Carthusians as a detached entirety on the hill above the church at some time after the establishment of Henton priory in 1232. From the 1343 charter we are told that the market area for the weekly Tuesday market was 'in a vacant place on the west side of the church'. It would seem likely that this description fits the open space adjoining the west wall of the churchyard; the position of the market area was also just in agreement with the recent statute of Edward I in 1285 'that from henceforth neither Fairs nor Markets be kept in Churchyards, for the Honour of the Church'.¹⁵⁵ The site of the other market, presumably for the one held on Fridays, was the triangular area in front of the George Inn which in a survey of 1565 was known as The Market Place.¹⁵⁶ This area, had a market cross, the position of which was used in the survey of 1565 and other surveys as a reference point to describe the location of various tenements. The Market Place also contained the Shambles or Market House, and by the 18th century also a blind house. So it seems that originally each of the two halves of Norton had a market. A similar situation applied to the fairs.

The site for the sale of the woollen cloth was in a field, known as Fair Close, on the south side of the road below the George Inn. The close was described as 'Faire Close being the place where the Cloth Fayre is kept' in the survey of 1638. This survey also described the George Inn as having 'a faire loft where the lynn cloth is sould at the Fare tymes'. In the surveys of 1638 and 1652 there are references to a copyhold property called Sheepe Faire Close, and to 'the Sheepe Faires there holden upon the first of May yearely'. The site of this fair was at the far south west of the town at the end of Church Street. We have seen in the notice published in the *Bath Journal* in 1751 that in that year the site for the sheep pens at the May Fair and the August or Dog Fair was transferred to a 'Close called Burt's Padocke, adjoining to Fair Close'. Burt's Paddock had been a nameless copyhold property until it came to a Richard Burt and was sold by him in 1704. After being owned by three other men in succession it was bought by John Harding in 1731.¹⁵⁷

Before the Dissolution Fair Close was part of the demesne land, but from 1523 was held by the leaseholder of Norton Grange – the Flower family. In 1666 the leasehold of Norton Grange

had become vacant and a moiety of it, including Fair Close, was leased by Edward Fripp for the lives of his three sons Edward, Richard and Benjamin for 99 years. In 1681 the property was assigned to Benjamin for the remainder of the term.¹⁵⁸ Subsequently Benjamin Fripp was declared a bankrupt and in 1706 his estate was mortgaged or sold.¹⁵⁹ By the time of the dispute of the 1739, between Benjamin's son Edward Fripp and John Harding, Fair Close was owned by Lord Kinsale.¹⁶⁰ Lord Kinsale died in 1759 and by 1768 Fair Close was in the occupation of a Mr Stilman as tenant to Joseph Mortimer, a clothier of Trowbridge.¹⁶¹

THE MARKET CROSS

The earliest reference to a market cross is in the 1565 survey where the George Inn is described as being 'in front of the cross'. The Church was responsible for the Cross and not only took the 'standings' money at the wholesale fair but also paid for the upkeep of the Cross. The Churchwardens' accounts throw some light on its structure.¹⁶² It was recorded in 1703 'John Combe, mending the Cross 1s 0d' and 'paid John Sitman, mending the cross with lasts, Naills & lime 7s 4d'; and in 1714 'Paid for 1 days Tyling att ye Cross 1s 4d'. In 1718 a more detailed record of expenditure was 'Tile for the Cross 3s 4d, Nails, Lime & Laths 11d, Tilers work 1s 4d', and further costs in 1735 were:

1735	Paid the Tilers Bill for Church and Cross	£6 5s 4d
1735	Three pieces of Timber for the Cross	- 1s -
	The Tilers Bill for the Cross	£2 17s 0d
	For lathe & Nails for ye Cross	5s 2d

In 1764 and 1765 the Churchwardens received 6s from Thomas Bull 'for Timber taken off the Cross' and 10s 6d from Thomas Pearce 'for Tile taken off from the Cross'. It was also recorded 'Feb. the 13th, Rec'd for some timbers took off from ye Cross £2 8s 0d'.

From these accounts it can be deduced that the Cross was not a free-standing cross-shaped stone pillar but a stone and timber structure roofed with stone tiles. In 1739 the Churchwardens recorded 'Received for Standing *In* the Cross at Fair of Mr Simon Webb 1s 6d'. Additional hints of the nature of the Cross might be deduced from the Churchwardens' records. They wrote:

1690 what ye crosse must yeald yearly

Mr Hulatt is to pay	2s
Mr Slead is to pay	3s 6d
Mr Roggers is to pay	3s 6d
Mr Gamline is to pay	3s 6d
Mr Wyke is to pay	8s

Rec'd 27 April 1703 For the Cross as under

Mr Angier	6s
Mr Hewlatt	2s
Mt Hatcher	3s 6d
Mr Ball	3s 6d
Mr Gamlin	3s 6d

It is apparent that there was room for six stalls in the Cross, with, in each of these two cases, one stall-holder paying for two spaces. It would seem probable that the Cross was hexagonal, similar to the market Cross at Cheddar.

Apart from the necessary repairs carried out to the Cross there were annual payments of 4d 'paid for cleaning the Cross', or as in 1738 'Paid for Cleaning the Cross & Tolling the Bell last Easter to Eliz. Atkins 1s 0d. Paid her the sextons half years Wages as a low'd at a Vestry 12s 6d'.

In 1752 the Bath to Warminster turnpike road had been constructed, but the market place, with its cross, shambles and blind-house, was an impediment to the turnpike traffic. The Vestry meeting held on 26 June 1770 decided:

We ... Do consent, provided the Shambles as Market House be first removed, and proper security be given in the Name of the Trustees of the Turnpike Commissioners held at Beckington, that the Cross and blind house in the Market place of our Town be erected in a Convenient place near where they now stand, to have the same Erected in as handsome and good Condition as they now are. We I say consent that the same be removed at the Expence of the Commissioners. ... And ... that Mr Tho. Pearce, Mr James Fripp and Mr John Kidle or two of them do set out the Convenient place above referred to.'

Later, after sending 'three people in Attending the [Turnpike] Commissioners at Beckington' the Churchwardens wrote:

'At a Vestry 20 Sep 1772 ... we agree with Thos. Holdway Junr.¹⁶³ to give him One Pound One shilling for ground sufficient to Build a Blind-House in the Barton belonging to the George Inn ... And further do agree that the expence of the same shall be paid out of sum of Fifteen Pounds fifteen shillings which said sum is agreed for to be paid by the Commissioners of the Warminster Turnpike Road ... in lieu for Demolishing the Cross & Blind House that stood in our parish before'.

The Cross and blind-house were then demolished. The Churchwardens recorded in 1772-3:

Jn^o Watts & Jn^o Tovey for helping loading the Stones brot from the George to the Churchyard. 4s.

Thos Holdway for Damage done by order of the Commissioners in throwing the Cross and Blind House Stones agst the George 5s^r.

Rec'd of Mr Stepⁿ Skurray Money that he Rec'd of the Commisioners of the Warms^{tr} Turnpike Road, the same being giv'n in lieu of the demolishing the Cross & Blind house in our p^{sh} £15 15 0.

Geo Fakrwels Bill for bringing the Remaining Stones of the Cross to the Church Yard 12s 0d.

Ten years later a final one shilling was 'paid for carrying the stones of the Cross from the George'. Although there are records of the blind-house being rebuilt, the Cross was not replaced.

THE ROLE OF THE GEORGE INN

The fair established in 1255 for the days around the patronal festival of SS Philip and James would have been primarily for wool, but other wares would have been bought and sold as well. At this time England's wealth depended on the raw wool, the greater proportion of which was exported to the continent for conversion to cloth. The Carthusians kept flocks of sheep on the lands in Norton St Philip and Hinton Charterhouse and also on their grange at Greneworth (Green Ore) on the Mendips, where they had two 'sleightes for sheep' with another sleight at

Whytnell nearby.¹⁶⁴ Norton St Philip was an important collecting point for the wool from the surrounding area and the Mendips; and the George Inn came to be used for storage of the wool prior to the sales on fair days. As time went by, less wool, but more cloth was exported, and Norton St Philip became involved in the early stages of cloth making.

The role of the George Inn in the fairs is vividly described in the inquiry of 1595 when three local men, John Bowrne of Phillips Norton, weaver; Henry Davyson of Freshford, clothier, and John Tilson of Telsforde, yeoman, were witnesses on behalf of Richard Tovey, tenant of the George Inn and defendant against Hugh Sexey, complainant:

I have sene the lynnen packes brought into the sayed greate howse or Inn called the George before the fayer daye, some sevenight, fortnight, three weekes or there aboutes and that they were left at the greate howse or Inn and there kept untill the fayer daye.

against the 27th day of Aprill, the tennantes of the saide Inn have by the space of 38 years prepared the gretest parte of there romes ... for the receipte of lynnen packes against the fayer. . . the saide tennantes ... alwayes gave attendance for the receipte of the saide lynnen packes at all suche times as the same are sente and have provided portors to place the same in sundry romes of the saide howse and dothe deliver unto the bringer of every packe ticketes or notes for the receipte thereof and do charge themselves for the safe kepinge and delivery of the same againe.

The tennant of the saide howse hath against the saide fayres, displaced his tabelles and howseholde stuffe out of the haule, kitchin, two parlors, cellers and chambers to plase the said packes in at the saide fayres.

The Bayliffes or their deputies have attended usually at the gate of the saide Inn at the fayer tymes and received of the buyers and sellers somes of mony for the lynnen clothe there sold.

The stone seats, now much worn, where the bailiffs would have sat are on either side of the porch. In answer to the 'interogatory' or question 'What toll, ductie, custome, halledge¹⁶⁵ or other payment hath bene paid for every pack, fardell or ballett of lynnen cloth there brought to be sold at the said fayres by the merchantes or sellers thereof, and to whome doth the saide toll, duety, custome, halledge or paymente belonge?', the answers were, 4d for each pack, 2d for each half pack or fardell and 1d for each quarter pack.¹⁶⁶ The deposition of John Merefyld, who had been tenant of the George Inn, and whose memory went back to six years before the Dissolution, was that then the tolls were:

payed unto the Pryors baylyfs or other officer by the merchants or sellers, ... and ... sithence the dissolution of the sayed Pryory, one Mr Colthurst beinge farmer or proprietor of the sayed Fayer by the Kinges or Queenes graunt did lease or graunt the Custome dewe by the merchantes and sellers ... to one John Hardwicke for a rent of 7s by the yeare, beinge tennant to the sayed Inn.

John Hardwicke was followed in succession by Henry Osmund, John Merefyld, William Tovey and Richard Tovey, the defendant in the enquiry. John Merefyld further deposed that about 30 years previously, either Richard Tovey or his father William 'did sende unto this deponent the some of 7s for a yeares rente for the profitt or custome ... which this deponent refused to accept or receive when he was Farmer or proprietor unto her Maiestie'. Although the outcome of the enquiry is not recorded, it is obvious from the interogatories put to the

witnesses that the complainant, Hugh Sexey, thought that, as he had a Royal Patent for the tolls of the markets and fairs, he should have also received the hallage on the cloths placed in the George Inn at fair time. It appears that he received neither the hallage nor the 7s rent that had been paid in earlier times. An answer to the origin and role of the hallage may be found in further evidence given by John Pynnocke of Philipps Norton who could remember the last three Priors of Hinton. 'The rente of the said greate howse or Inn called the George in the priors time was but 40s yearly [but] ... there was a packe of lynnene cloth lost by the Inkeper'. As a result the Prior increased the rent to be paid for the George Inn by 13s 4d, presumably as an insurance against other losses of cloth. John Pynnocke, when he was bailiff had collected the 40s rent for the inn, but others collected the 13s 4d payable out of the newly imposed hallage, because he 'would not be troubled with the gatheringe thereof'. The surveys of 1565, 1606, 1638 and 1652 all record the rent payable by the copyholder of the George Inn as a single payment of 53s 4d.

Further evidence about the fairs comes from other questions that were to be put to the witnesses, but were left unanswered. The merchants had to show their tickets or notes on the 26th April before receiving back their packs of cloth. The outer gate of the Inn was shut until 8 o'clock, before which time the bailiff did not allow any selling to take place.

In the early days of the Norton fairs the main commodity traded would have been wool; later it was cloth. The weight of a sack of wool had been fixed by Statute in 1350 as 26 stones, or 364 lbs¹⁶⁷ and later wool was handled by the 'pocket' of 336 lbs or the 'sack' of 364 lbs.¹⁶⁸ Edwardian and Elizabethan statutes fixed the weight of the fine Somerset 'white cloths' at 64 pounds.¹⁶⁹ Later, in 1606, the weight of 'Plunkets, Azures and other coloured cloth which shall be made in the Shires of Wiltshire and Somersetshire ... shall weigh sixty-eight pounds the Cloth at the least'.¹⁷⁰ As a pack of cloth was ten pieces, the weight of a pack was nearly seven hundred pounds. We must try to imagine how the bales of wool or the packs of cloth, which were 5 feet and 3 inches long, were handled, especially within the confines of The George Inn. Even though some of the packs were stored downstairs in the 'haule, parlours and cellers', how were the sacks or packs taken to the 'chambers' or, perhaps, to the loft?

Williams *et al.* and Pantin have written architectural studies of The George Inn. Williams *et al.* described the access to the second floor (i.e. the 'faire loft where the lynnene cloth is sould at the Fare tymes') as being 'by a small internal stair which looks inadequate for the area served'.¹⁷¹ The authors add, 'The use to which the second floor was put remains in doubt. Tradition has it that linen and cloth were sold here, but there is no obvious access for bulky material'. Pantin wrote: 'The upper floors must have been reached by internal, wooden stairs, as the stone staircase at the back was a later addition'.¹⁷² Recent archaeological discoveries have shown that the evolution of the main range of The George Inn was as neither Williams *et al.* nor Pantin conjectured.

In 1431, only a few decades after the inn was first built, the central three bays of the principal range were opened up from the ground floor to the roof to form a 'well' with galleries on the first and second floors. This was done as part of a general reconstruction which included the whole of the roof and the timber-framed jettied front. The exposed timbers of the galleries were moulded, and even the roof timbers of the central three bays were of superior appearance, all of which was obviously meant to be visibly impressive; and the galleries were wider than necessary for normal access to the 'chambers'. Later, in the 16th century, this 'well' was floored in to form a room on the first floor; and the top floor became one large loft as it is today, complete with its mortar floor. At about 1700 the length of building was reduced at the south end by more than two and a half bays; the reason for this is not known.¹⁷³

It is postulated therefore, that in 1431 the construction of the 'well' and the galleries facilitated the handling of the bales of wool up to the first and second floors by the use of a hoist. By the 16th century the bales of wool had been succeeded by packs of cloth which could, if necessary,

have been broken down into their constituent pieces and man-handled instead of being lifted by hoist. The flooring-in of the space occupied by the redundant 'well' would have provided more space for normal occupancy or storage at fair time. By 1638 only the linen cloth was taken up to the loft. The stone staircase that Pantin referred to only went to the first floor and would have been adequate for taking goods to this floor. There may have been a staircase at the shortened south end, but we know from the 1595 depositions that, as the bailiffs 'attended at the gate to the Inn' to receive the tolls, this gateway would have been the only place of entry for the wool or cloth.

MARKET AND FAIR DAYS

The charters leave us with weekly markets held on Tuesdays and Fridays, and with two fairs, one - the 'May' fair of 1353 coinciding with the Patronal festival of SS Philip and James - being held from 27 April to 1 May, and the other - the 'August' fair of 1345 coinciding with the Decollation of St John the Baptist - on 27 to 29 August. What can be deduced from all the other records?

The history of the markets is enigmatic. The charters record the inception of markets on Tuesdays and Fridays. The 1571 Kilmersdon survey refers to the Tuesday market; and in the 1595 inquiry, we learn from John Bowne that in addition to the fairs held in Norton there was 'upon Good Frydaye one markett'. The survey of 1606 recorded that Hugh Sexey took the 'Profits of the markets held there twice in each week'. In the 1652 survey there is a more precise entry - 'Before the Priory of Henton was dissolved there was a weekly Friday markett kept in Phillipps Norton which by discontinuance is now lost, (onely uppon every Friday next before Easter there is a markett kept still)'. We might therefore assume that Hugh Sexey took the putative profits of the markets that amounted in practice to that of the Good Friday market only. However, the occurrence of a market on Good Friday is suspicious: by a statute of 1448:

all Manner of Fairs and Markets in ... [the] principal Feasts and Sundays, and Good-Friday, shall clearly cease from all shewing of any Goods or Merchandises (necessary Victual only except.) Nevertheless, [the King] ... granteth ... to hold their Fair or Market ... within Three Days next before the said Feasts, or next after.¹⁷⁴

Perhaps Norton's Good Friday market was for 'necessary victuals only', unless in 1595 there was special dispensation to hold the market from Elizabeth I who held the manor.

One piece of negative evidence occurs in a 'distance map' published by William Berry in 1685.¹⁷⁵ As the title cartouche declares, the map shows 'all the Cities, Market Towns, with the Roades from Town to Town. And the Number of Reputed miles between them'. On either side of the map is a table identifying the market days for all the places. 'Philips Norton' is shown on the map and listed in the table, but the entry for the market day is a blank. By 1685, either the market was not held, or perhaps it was so insignificant that Berry was unable to obtain the necessary information. The next record occurs in Cox's *History of Somersetshire* of 1720 where Friday is recorded. In c. 1736 Strachey wrote 'a famous Market on Frydays tho the Market is now quite decayed'. In the 1750s there are some occasional reports in the Bath newspapers of corn prices realized at Norton St Philip's market;¹⁷⁶ all these reports indicate that the market was held at this time on Fridays. As late as 1790 Philip Luckombe lists Friday as market day for 'Philips-Norton' in his *England's Gazetteer*. In 1791 Collinson wrote that the market was discontinued, and in the same year the *Universal British Directory* stated that Norton formerly had had a market on Fridays. However, from 1729 to 1859, there is mention in the lists and almanacs of Thursday being the market day.

The inferences to be drawn are that, firstly, the weekly Tuesday market was discontinued between 1571 and 1595. Secondly, the weekly Friday market had ceased to exist by the Dissolution and had been reduced to a single yearly market on Good Friday at some point in the 16th century, and that by the end of the 17th century the market was insignificant. Thirdly, the weekly market was revived in the 18th century as a Friday market, but, if Collinson can be believed, it had ceased to exist by 1791.

What is to be made of the listings of Thursday as market day? One possible answer might be that when William Owen issued his first *Book of Fairs* he used the anonymous 1729 *Book of Fairs* as a starting point, and despite the efforts to obtain correct data the entry of 'Thursday' for Norton St Philip remained in all the editions of his book up to 1859–60. Owen's *Book of Fairs* gained a reputation for authenticity and as such was used by other compilers of lists and almanacs without them checking the accuracy of the data. It might appear odd that the entry remained incorrect or simply out-of-date for 90 years, but the indications are that towards the end of the 18th century Norton's market was probably very parochial. The local people knew when market-day was, and after the market had ceased to exist it was unimportant to them what the almanacs said.

The 'May' fair continued as a five-day fair for some time with the first day being specifically for wholesale trading. However, by 1571 the villagers of nearby Kilmersdon could only attend Norton's fair on 'Phillip & Jacobs day' – 1 May. Whilst there is no mention of 27 April (which is not surprising since the villagers would not have been involved in the wholesale trading), there is no mention, either, of the other three days, 28, 29 and 30 April. So, by 1571 the five days of the 1353 charter had been reduced to two – 27 April and 1 May. The same situation pertained when James Twyford was compiling his notes from first-hand experience between 1679 and 1721. The fair on 1 May is mentioned in all the records until the Royal Commission report of 1889. Early editions of Kelly's *Directory* do not mention the fair on 1 May but it is included in the editions of 1894 to 1910. If Hulbert was correct in noting the fair's demise in 1902, Kelly must have been wrong to include it in the later editions of the *Directory*.

The latest record of 27 April occurs in John Harding's notice in the *Western Flying Post* for 16 April 1753; it was not included in William Owen's list of 1756, and Edmund Rack noted, between 1782 and 1786 when he was writing his notes, that the fair held on this date had been dropped. It is, perhaps, significant that whereas the notebooks for the August fair continue until 1760, – the year before John Harding's death¹⁷⁷ – the last notebook for the wholesale fair of 27 April is for 1751. It appears likely that the fair of 27 April – 'the most noted cloth fair in the west of England' – had indeed ceased to exist by 1756, despite John Harding's efforts to keep 'his' fair going in the changing economic times.

Of the multiple days of the 'August' fair a similar situation appears to have occurred. By 1571 the three-day fair of 1345 had been reduced to a single day's trading on 29 August. That date is included in all the records up until it was listed in Owen's *New and Correct Book of Fairs* in 1859, except when it was omitted from Bell's 1834 *Gazetteer*. By 1872 Morris stated that all the fairs, apart from that on 1 May 'had long become obsolete'. As the Greenwoods compiled their account of Somerset at the same time as their survey of the county, it is reasonable to assume that they had first-hand knowledge of their facts. In 1822 they recorded 29 August as one of the two fair days. From this can be surmised that the 'August' fair came to its end between 1822 and 1834, and that plagiarism caused it to be announced in later almanacs and lists.

What is to be made of the other two fairs which are reported for 21 and 27 March? Of these 'March' fairs there is no statutory evidence of their inception.¹⁷⁸ These two 'March' fairs are not mentioned by John Strachey c. 1736, but are recorded for the first time by William Owen in 1756 and then occur together in all the records until 1859 when they were included for the last time in Owen's *New and Correct Book of Fairs*. The 'March' fairs are not mentioned by either

Rack in the 1780s, Collinson in 1791 or the Greenwoods in 1822. Instead Collinson wrote 'two others, formerly famous for cattle and cloth, have been long since disused', and one of those was the wholesale fair of 27 April. The Greenwoods, perhaps copying Collinson, wrote that there had been 'four annual fairs; two of the latter are still held, one on May 1st, and the other on August 29th'.

One possible explanation is that Owen printed '27 March' instead of '27 April' for the date of the wholesale fair and '21 March' as the date on which Edward Fripp's rival fair became established. We are again left to assume that there might have been a large degree of plagiarism in the compilation of the later lists and gazetteer entries, without all the particulars being checked.

So, perhaps, one of these 'March' fairs had only a short life between the times when Strachey and Collinson were writing their histories. This fair was that of Edward Fripp, which set the seeds of destruction both for itself and its rival. It was started in 1739 and probably ended before Edward Fripp's death in the 1750s.

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REFERENCES AND NOTES

- ¹ Throughout this paper the spelling of the many variants of 'Norton St Philip' are given as in the original documents.
- ² L. Toulmin Smith (ed.), *Leland's Itinerary in England and Wales in or about the years 1535-1543*. Vol. 1, 139; Vol. 5, 98, 1964.
- ³ T. Cox, *Magna Britannia or Topographical, Historical, Ecclesiastical, and Natural History of Somersetshire*, 1720.
- ⁴ *A Compleat History of Somersetshire*, Sherborne, 1742.
- ⁵ N. Spencer, *The Complete English Traveller*, 1772-3.
- ⁶ J. Collinson, *The History of Somersetshire*, Vol. III, 370, (Bath), 1791.
- ⁷ C. and J. Greenwood, *Somerset Delineated*, 1822.
- ⁸ The George Inn, Norton St Phillip's, *Illustrated London News*, 27 January 1849.
- ⁹ 'Decollation' = beheading.
- ¹⁰ C.R.B. Barrett, *Somersetshire: Highways, byways and waterways*, 1894.
- ¹¹ E.M. Thompson, *The History of the Somerset Carthusians*, 1895.
- ¹² N.F. Hulbert, *SANH* 82, 91-3.
- ¹³ R. Dunning, *Somerset and Avon*, (Edinburgh), 1980; *A History of Somerset*, (Chichester), 1983.
- ¹⁴ E.H.D. Williams, J. Penoyre, and B.C.H. Hale, 'The George Inn, Norton St Philip', *Archaeol J* 144, 1987.
- ¹⁵ R. Bush, *Somerset, The Complete Guide*, (Wimborne), 1994.
- ¹⁶ Calendar of Charter Rolls 1226-1257, 443, and Public Record Office (PRO) C 53/46A m6.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.* 1257-1300, 320, and PRO C 53/73 m7 item 24.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1257-1300, 432, and PRO C 53/80 m15 item 48.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.* 1341-1417, 16, and PRO C 53/130 m17 item 22.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.* 1341-1417, 41, and PRO C 53/132 m5, between items 6 and 7.
- ²¹ *Ibid.* 1341-1417, 42, and PRO C 53/132 m5 item 5.
- ²² *Ibid.* 1341-1417, 44, and PRO C 53/133 m19 item 23.
- ²³ *Ibid.* 1341-1417, 132, and PRO C 53/138 m4 item 10.
- ²⁴ [S]C[h]ardanus Riders, *Riders Brit[t]ish Merlin*. The following editions have been examined, 1660, 1683, 1701, 1721, 1739, 1741, 1742, 1749, 1752.
- ²⁵ *The Chapman's and Traveller's Almanack and Pond's Almanack* for 1693, 1697, 1701, 1705, 1709 and 1712 have been examined.
- ²⁶ J. Bridges, *A Book of Fairs: or a New Guide to West-Country Travellers*. 7th impression. 1709. The 13

counties of the West Country are Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Somerset, Dorset, Devon, Cornwall, Glamorgan, Monmouth, Hereford, Worcester, Oxford, Berkshire and Hampshire.

²⁷ B. Seaward, *A Book of Fairs, Or a New Guide to West-Country Travellers*, 'first impression reviv'd', 1714. Benjamin Seaward is described as being 'of Somerton in Somerset-shire, Picture and Map Seller, being in the 20th Year of his Travel.'

²⁸ Anon., *Book of Fairs. Or, a Guide to West-Country Travellers*, 1729. I am grateful to David Bromwich of the Somerset Studies Library, Taunton, for identifying this book which I have found in Bristol Reference Library. It appears to be the book referred to by Hulbert and is *Ex Libris* of Emanuel Green, compiler of *Bibliotheca Somersetensis*.

²⁹ Emanuel Bowen, *Britannia Depicta or Ogilby Improved*, 1720. This book of strip-maps was a pocket-sized copy of John Ogilby's ground-breaking *Britannia* of 1675 but with added descriptions of the cities, towns and villages adjacent to the roads. A facsimile reprint was published in Newcastle upon Tyne, 1970.

³⁰ *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. 1, March 1731, 138–40.

³¹ *Statutes at Large*, 24 George II, cap. 23. 'Supputation' = calculation or reckoning.

³² *The Western Flying Post or Sherborne and Yeovil Mercury*, April 1, 1754.

³³ Owen W. *The Book of Fairs*, 1st edn., 1756.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 2nd edn., 1759.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 5th edn., 1767.

³⁶ W. Owen, *Owen's Book of Fairs*, 6th edn., 1773, *Owen's New Book of Fairs*, 1780; *Owen's New Book of Fairs, A New Edition*, 1783 and *Owen's New Book of Fairs*, 1788. There are alterations to some of the entries for Somerset fairs since Owen's 1767 edition.

³⁷ W. Owen, *Owen's New Book of Fairs*, 1792, 1795, 1802, 1813.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1824, 1827. Again, there are alterations to some of the entries for Somerset fairs.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 1834.

⁴⁰ J. Donaldson, *Owen's New and Correct Book of Fairs*, 1856, 1859–60. These late editions of the book encompassed the fairs of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland.

⁴¹ Cardanus Rider, *Rider's British Merlin*, 1753.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 1754, 1755.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 1757, 1758.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 1759 to 1770.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1771. Further entries of March 21, March 27, May 1 and August 29 have been traced in consecutive editions up to 1791, except for 1776, 1779, 1780 and 1784 when no lists of fairs were printed in the *British Merlin*. The same four dates also occur in 1800, 1836 and 1839.

⁴⁶ W. Morgan, *Ogilby's and Morgan's Pocket-Book of the Roads*, 11th edn., 1752.

⁴⁷ *The Traveller's Pocket-Book or Ogilby and Morgan's Book of the Roads*. c. 1758. This edition is not dated but it includes a map of the roads of England and Wales dated 1758.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 2nd edn., 1761.

⁴⁹ *The Western Flying Post*, Aug. 17 1767 and May 23 1768.

⁵⁰ G.A. Walpole, *The New British Traveller*, London, 1784.

⁵¹ I. Fitzroy H. Jones, *SANH* 91, 71–81.

⁵² P. Luckombe, *England's Gazetteer Vol. II*, London 1790.

⁵³ W. Tunncliffe, *A Topographical Survey of the Counties of Hants, Wilts, Dorset, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall, Commonly called the Western Circuit*, Salisbury, 1791.

⁵⁴ P. Barfoot and J. Wilkes, *The Universal British Directory of Trade, Commerce, and Manufacture*, Vol. 3, 1791.

⁵⁵ Somerset Record Office (SRO) DD/RC 2. *The Annual Miscellany or useful Appendix, delivered Gratis, with Almanacks*. This publication was printed by 'Tucker, Printer Chard' as an appendix to Francis Moore's *Almanack* for 1815.

⁵⁶ G.A. Cooke, *Cooke's Topographical Library, or British Traveller's Pocket County Directory, Somersetshire*, London, 1815.

⁵⁷ J. Dugdale, *The New British Traveller*, 1819.

⁵⁸ *General Directory for the County of Somerset*. Bragg, Taunton, 1840. This directory was given gratis to subscribers of the *Somerset Gazette*.

⁵⁹ H. Besley, *The West of England Pocket Book or Gentleman's Diary, with an Almanack 1844*, Exeter.

- ⁶⁰ J. Bell, *A New and Comprehensive Gazetteer of England and Wales*, Vol. III, Part II, (Glasgow), 1834.
- ⁶¹ *Parliamentary Gazetteer of England and Wales 1843-4*, Part IX, (London).
- ⁶² Morris & Co., *Commercial Directory and Gazetteer of Somersetshire with Bristol*, 1872.
- ⁶³ C.W. Deacon, *Deacon's Court Guide Gazetteer and Royal Blue Book*, Ed. 2, 1882.
- ⁶⁴ *Kelly's Directory of Somerset and Bristol*, 1861, 1866, 1883, 1889.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 1894, 1897, 1902, 1906, 1910.
- ⁶⁶ C.I. Elton and B.F.C. Costelloe, *First Report of the Royal Commission on Market Rights and Tolls*, HMSO, 1889.
- ⁶⁷ The Lord Hylton, *Notes on the History of the Parish of Kilmersdon*, (Taunton), 1910, 274-5.
- ⁶⁸ PRO E 134/Eliz 37/38.
- ⁶⁹ Bodleian Library Craven MSS vol 13.
- ⁷⁰ SRO DD/HY BX 12, includes the volume entitled 'James Twyford 1679-1721'. The list of fairs and markets is on page 195.
- ⁷¹ SRO DD/SH 108. Wellow Hundred.
- ⁷² SRO DD/SH 107. Eastern Division, Wellow Hundred.
- ⁷³ SRO A/AQP f52v.
- ⁷⁴ Calendar of Close Rolls 1346-1349, 75.
- ⁷⁵ Calendar of Charter Rolls 1226-1257, 228.
- ⁷⁶ Calendar of Close Rolls 1343-1346, 577.
- ⁷⁷ PRO LR 14/977.
- ⁷⁸ J. Caley and J. Hunter (eds), *Valor Ecclesiasticus, 1810*.
- ⁷⁹ PRO SC 6/Henry VIII/No 3144.
- ⁸⁰ PRO E 310/3/23/15.
- ⁸¹ PRO E 309/4/13 Eliz/33 no 8. In addition to the lease of the tolls, revenues and profits of the Norton fairs, Hugh Sexey also received leases of tenements in Drayton, Chelkewell and Brindhame in Glastonbury in Somerset and of the revenues and profits of Cornish stannaries.
- ⁸² PRO E 310/41/5 no. 459.
- ⁸³ PRO LR 2/202.
- ⁸⁴ PRO LR 1/16 f89. The lessee of the fairs was Tobie Cockes gent. of Haygrove in the parish of Wolverton; John Cockes was Tobie's brother, and Mathew was described as 'of London gent.'
- ⁸⁵ PRO E 318/53/146 (particulars of sale), and C66/2488 (grant to Edward Ditchfeild, John Highlord, Humphrey Clarke and Edward Mosse, all London merchants and citizens).
- ⁸⁶ SRO DD/RG 36.
- ⁸⁷ 'Stallage' = A tax or toll levied for the liberty of erecting a stall in a fair or market. 'Piccage' or 'pickage' = A toll paid for breaking the ground in setting up booths, stalls, tents etc. at fairs. (OED).
- ⁸⁸ A copy of the Indenture of lease is in the Chancery Proceeding, PRO C 5/320. Edward Fripp came originally from Chitterne, Wilts. but was described as of Boreham (near Warminster) Wilts.
- ⁸⁹ Wiltshire Record Office 473/54.
- ⁹⁰ SRO DD/PL 45, Indenture 4 April 1706.
- ⁹¹ This John Harding (1702-1761) was appointed Sheriff of Somerset 14 January 1752, *SANH* 109. The Hardings of Hinton Charterhouse stemmed from the Harding family of Broughton Gifford, Wilts.
- ⁹² SRO DD/RG 123/10. By John Harding's death, his son William had died, so that John Junior became sole beneficiary.
- ⁹³ SRO DD/RG 2, Indenture 2 June 1760.
- ⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, Indenture 10 Feb. 1769.
- ⁹⁵ SRO DD/RG, 123/10, Indenture 7 April 1768.
- ⁹⁶ Samuel Day (1757-1806) was appointed Sheriff of Somerset 1 February 1797, *SANH* 109.
- ⁹⁷ SRO DD/RG 2, Indenture 26 Jan. 1792.
- ⁹⁸ SRO DD/RG 1, Indenture 4 Oct. 1808.
- ⁹⁹ *Statutes at Large*, 25 Edward III, cap. 1, 1 Richard III, cap. 8. The statute of 11 William III, cap. 20 provided for the ending of alnage duties after the expiration of grants to collect alnage expired in 1716.
- ¹⁰⁰ Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1399-1401, 516.
- ¹⁰¹ SRO DD/RG 45.
- ¹⁰² *Statutes at Large*, 8 Henry VI, cap. 5
- ¹⁰³ *Ibid.* 22 Chas. II, cap. 8.

¹⁰⁴ The location of one of the 'gapps' may be seen in the wall between Fair Close and the adjacent Church Mead where a portion is of indifferent construction. This gap would have been the most convenient point of access to Fair Close from the George Inn.

¹⁰⁵ SRO DD/RG 2, Indenture 2 June 1760.

¹⁰⁶ SRO DD/HY Bx 13. *Accounts of J Feare, Bailiff of Manor of Kilmersdon, 1679-1692*. There is an inscription that reads 'This Booke for my master Twyford'.

¹⁰⁷ SRO DD/RG 45.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ SRO DD/RG 40 to 44. These notebooks were home-made, usually with covers of brown paper; other covers were made from parchment cut from indentures. The covers of some of the notebooks for 1728, 1729, 1730 and 1733 preserve pieces of two Georgian wallpapers, one with a white pattern of stripes and leaves on a green ground, the other with a green, yellow and black floral pattern on a blue ground.

¹¹⁰ *VCH, Wilts*, iv, 161.

¹¹¹ 'Salisbury Whites' were fine lightweight woollens which were mainly sent to London for dyeing and export. (*VCH Wilts*, iv, 155).

¹¹² 'Cantalones' or 'Cantalernes' (Cantaloons) were woollen cloths made in the west of England in the 18th century (OED). Cantaloons are not mentioned by Julia De L. Mann in *The Cloth Industry in the West of England from 1640 to 1880*, 1987, or by K. G Ponting in *The Woollen Industry in South West England*, 1971, or in the sections on the woollen industries in the *VCH* for Somerset (Vol. 2) or Wiltshire (Vol. 4).

¹¹³ 'Rugs' sold by the 'rugg men' were rough woollens, a sort of coarse 'frieze' that had been in common use in the 16th and 17th centuries (OED).

¹¹⁴ The full name of the Bristol brass company in the 1720s was the 'General Joint United Stock of the Societies of Bristol and Esher for Making Brass, Battery and Brass Wire'. In the early 1730s the name became 'The United Brass Battery, Wire and Copper Company of Bristol, Esher, Upper Redbrook and Barton Regis'. This information and other details of the brass industry in Bath are taken from Joan Day's *Bristol Brass: The History of the Industry*, Newton Abbot, 1973.

¹¹⁵ Portuguese moidores were current in England in the first half of the 18th century. In 1717 a writer stated that 'the Portugal moedors were received in the west of England at 28s apeice; upon notice from the mint that they were worth only 27s 7d, the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury ordered their receivers of taxes to take them at no more than 27s 6d' (OED). John Harding's calculations show that in 1726 he was regarding them as worth 27s.

¹¹⁶ J.A. Chartres, 'The Marketing of Agricultural Produce', in *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, Vol. V.II, 1750-1850 (ed. J. Thirsk), 1985.

¹¹⁷ *Bath Journal*, December 11 1752.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* August 12 1754.

¹¹⁹ J. Bentley and B. Murless, *Somerset Roads, The Legacy of the Turnpikes*, 1985.

¹²⁰ J. Thirsk, 'Agricultural Policy: Public Debate and Legislation', in *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, Vol. V.II, 1640-1750, 356-61, (ed. J. Thirsk). Also J. Brown and H.A. Beecham, Animal diseases and veterinary science, in *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, Vol. VI, 1750-1850, pp 358-9, (ed. J. Thirsk).

¹²¹ *Bath Journal*, May 23 1748. The other Somerset places affected were 'Wellow, Axbridge, Bath, Chewton, Wells, Burington, Binegar, Castle-Cary, Lydford, Pensford, Keynsham, Wrington, Frome, Shepton-Mallet, and Wincanton'.

¹²² *Ibid.*, May 6 1751.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, May 20 1751. The other Somerset places affected were 'Holloway Fair, in the Parish of Lyncombe and Widcombe, Wellow Fair, Chewton Fair, Burington Fair, Binegar Fairs, and Bath Fair. Bath Market, Frome Market; and Wincanton Market; or at any publick Sale in any or either of these Places'.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, May to November 1751, *passim*.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, January 27 1752.

¹²⁶ *Gentleman's Magazine*, April 1752, p 190.

¹²⁷ *The Western Flying Post or Sherborne and Yeovil Mercury*, 20 April 1752. (This order was reported from West Chinnock in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1752, 237.)

¹²⁸ *Idem.* and *Salisbury Journal*, 21 and 28 April 1752.

¹²⁹ *Bath Journal*, May 4 1752.

- ¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, June 1 1752.
- ¹³¹ *Ibid.*, September 16 1751.
- ¹³² *Ibid.*, August 27 1750.
- ¹³³ *Ibid.*, June 24 1751.
- ¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, July 4 1757.
- ¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, August 27 1750.
- ¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, April 15 1748.
- ¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, Aug 31 and September 7 1749.
- ¹³⁸ Colerne Fair (*Bath Journal*, Aug 27 1750) toll-free. Calne Green Fair toll-free for seven years (*Bath Journal*, June 24, July 1, 8 and 15 1751, and July 22 1754), 'Road' Fair (*Bath Journal*, June 4 1757) toll-free for the first year.
- ¹³⁹ *Bath Journal*, August 12 and 19 1751.
- ¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* August 19 and September 16 1751.
- ¹⁴¹ *The Western Flying Post or Sherborne and Yeovil Mercury*, April 16, 1753. Whilst the dates for the Norton St Philip fairs were to remain the same as before the 'alteration of the stile', this edition of *The Western Flying Post* contains notices that the fairs at Stoke under Hamdon in Somerset, Evershot and Sturminster Newton in Dorset and Culmstock in Devon were to be held 11 days later than previously, as if those eleven days had not been taken from the calendar.
- ¹⁴² *Bath Journal*, April 2, 1753.
- ¹⁴³ SRO D/P/n.ph 4/1/1, 1686 – 1752. None of the names recorded as stall-holders at the Cross are recognizable as of Norton men.
- ¹⁴⁴ A. Everitt, 'The Marketing of Agricultural Produce', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, Vol. IV, 1500-1640, (ed. J. Thirsk), 1967.
- ¹⁴⁵ *The Ledger of John Smythe 1538-50*, J. Vane (ed.), Bristol Record Society Vol. 28, 1975. A pipe of iron was 4 hogsheads or 10cwt.
- ¹⁴⁶ *The Little Red Book of Bristol*, Vol II, F.B. Bickley (ed.), (Bristol), 1900. The reference to a fair at Benangre (Binegar) in this quotation takes the date back by four centuries from that noted by Jones.
- ¹⁴⁷ W.P. Marett, *A Calendar of the Register of Henry Wakefield Bishop of Worcester 1375-95*, Worcester Historical Society, New Series Vol. 7, 1972.
- ¹⁴⁸ Despite their name the 'cottons' sold by John Cockford would have been a coarse woollen cloth of the nature of 'frieze' which had a nap, usually on one side only (OED).
- ¹⁴⁹ M.M. Rowe and A.M. Jackson, *Exeter Freeman 1266 – 1967*, Devon & Cornwall Record Society, Extra Series 1, 1973. In 1706 two members of the Bussell family, Nathaniell and Philip described as fullers, were made responsible for settling the affairs of Benjamine Fripp, a bankrupt clothier of Norton St Philip (PRO C 8/481/32).
- ¹⁵⁰ J. De L. Mann, *Documents Illustrating the Wiltshire Textile Trades in the Eighteenth Century*, Wilts Archaeol Nat Hist Soc 19, 1963.
- ¹⁵¹ SRO D/P/n.ph 2/1/2.
- ¹⁵² PRO C54/3688 no 39, and SRO DD/ML 4 (No 5).
- ¹⁵³ PRO LR 14/966.
- ¹⁵⁴ The gatehouse does not survive intact, but the site is occupied by two cottages, one on either side of the entrance to The Barton in front of Manor Farm. A pedestrian entrance of the gatehouse survives as an archway in one of the cottages.
- ¹⁵⁵ *Statutes at Large*, 13 Edward I. cap. 6.
- ¹⁵⁶ Cambridge University Library Ee.3.32.
- ¹⁵⁷ SRO DD/RG 9.
- ¹⁵⁸ PRO C 8/481/32 and C 8/619/55. By 1700 both the father and Richard had died.
- ¹⁵⁹ Some of Benjamine Fripp's estate was purchased by John Harding. (SRO DD/RG 7). After the bankruptcy in 1706 Benjamine Fripp migrated to Kinfair in Staffordshire.
- ¹⁶⁰ Reference to Lord Kin(g)sale being the owner of Fair Close is contained in SRO DD/RG 45.
- ¹⁶¹ SRO DD/RG 123/10, Indenture 7 April 1768.
- ¹⁶² SRO D/P/n.ph 4/1/1 and 4/1/2.
- ¹⁶³ Thomas Holdway was proprietor of the George Inn.
- ¹⁶⁴ PRO E 315/211.
- ¹⁶⁵ 'Halledge' or 'hallage' = A fee or toll paid for goods sold in a mercantile hall or market. A contemporary

quote of 1607 stated the 'Hallage is a fee due for cloths brought for sale to Blackwell Hal in London' (OED).

¹⁶⁶ A pack of woollen broadcloth contained ten lengths (G.D. Ramsay, *The Wiltshire Woollen Industry in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. 1943). It is not unreasonable to assume that the deponents in the 1595 enquiry, when referring to the tolls, gave answers that applied equally to woollen and linen cloth.

¹⁶⁷ *Statutes at Large*, 25 Edward III. cap. 9.

¹⁶⁸ These weights are taken from P.J. Bowden, *The Wool Trade in Tudor and Stuart England*, 1962. They are an indication of the large size of the bales that had to be handled within The George Inn.

¹⁶⁹ *Statutes at Large*, 5 & 6 Edward VI, cap. 11, 27 Eliz. cap. 17 and 35 Eliz. cap. 9.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 4 James I. cap. 2.

¹⁷¹ E.H.D. Williams, J. Penoyre, and C.H. Hale, '*The George Inn, Norton St Philip, Somerset*', *Archaeol J* 144, 1987.

¹⁷² W.A. Pantin, 'Medieval Inns', in E.M. Jope, *Studies in Building History*, 1961.

¹⁷³ K. Rodwell, pers. comm. The date of 1431 for the reconstruction of the George Inn was obtained from dendrochronological examination of timbers undertaken during a refurbishment of the inn in 1998–9. Ferguson and Mann Architects and K. Rodwell, *The George Inn, Norton St Philip, Somerset, 1999*.

¹⁷⁴ *Statutes at Large*, 27 Henry VI, cap.5.

¹⁷⁵ W. Berry, *A New Mapp of the Kingdome of England and Wales*. 1685. I am indebted to Jonathan Potter Limited, Antique Map Dealers, London, for the information given in this map.

¹⁷⁶ *Bath Journal*, March 16 1752. *Bath Advertiser*, January 1, 15, 29, February 5, 7, 1757.

¹⁷⁷ John Harding's death on 'Saturday Se'nnight' [28 November 1761] was reported in *Boddely's Bath Journal*, Monday, December 7 1761.

¹⁷⁸ A search of the Privy Seal Docquet Books in the PRO, where warrants for passing instruments to authorize the granting of fairs are recorded, has not shown one pertaining to Edward Fripp.