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**Differentiation within the artisan sector in
Saffron Walden in the eighteenth century**

PhD 2014

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Abstract

Differentiation within the Artisan Segment in Saffron Walden in the eighteenth century.

Saffron Walden has an excellent town archive. There are also other good primary sources. The argument of this thesis arose from these circumstances. The purpose of this study became an investigation of whether the artisan segment of society in a small English market town of the eighteenth century constituted a homogeneous group or whether marked differentiation occurred within that segment.

The nature of the artisan segment of the town is examined from the perspectives of the economic, religious and social structures found there. Due consideration is also given to the way in which the town was governed and to the importance of its charitable organisations. The roles of literacy and the ability to be able to afford the security granted by fire insurance in the latter part of the century also turned out to be of critical importance. Life-course analysis for a number of artisans was also carried out permitting a prosopographical approach to be adopted where relevant.

It is concluded that for an artisan in the eighteenth century in Saffron Walden a number of factors were vital in determining whether he would be successful. These included his initial family background and position within that family, the trade to which he was apprenticed, his likelihood of gaining patronage and thus access to the benefits that the town's charitable institutions could provide, including a place at the Charity School, and his religious persuasion, particularly if he was a nonconformist or a Quaker. A man favoured in these ways might gain the appellation of 'gentleman'. A less fortunate artisan might end his days as a pauper.

Differentiation within the artisan segment in eighteenth century Saffron Walden indeed existed.

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Acknowledgements

This thesis has been an incremental work, emerging from the documents studied. It tells the story of the artisan sector of society in the eighteenth century in the town where I live.

I would like to acknowledge the help and support that I have been given in the course of writing this thesis from many people and organisations.

1. My supervisor, Dr. Vic Morgan, of the University of East Anglia for all his support, advice, help and reassurance over the last six years. Without him this thesis would never have been written.
2. My second supervisor, Dr. Emma Griffin, for making herself available when asked for help.
3. The Essex Record Office for their unfailing help in providing me with the documents I needed and, in particular, the Access to Archives point in Saffron Walden Library and Zofia Everett.
4. Saffron Walden Museum for allowing me access to their fascinating collection of records about the town.
5. My husband, Peter, for reading, commenting, fixing computer glitches and generally keeping me sane.

Abbreviations

Ch	Copyhold property
Fh	Freehold property
ERO	Essex Record Office
LSE	London school of Economics
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
SRO	Suffolk Record Office
SW	Saffron Walden
TNA	The National Archives
UKDA	United Kingdom Data Archive

Conventions

Transcriptions are verbatim. The capitalisation has been retained and standard changes such as v for u have been made.

Chapter 1

Differentiation within the artisan sector in Saffron Walden

in the eighteenth century.

Introduction

So, who were the artisans of the eighteenth century? Did they form a single cohesive group and were they self-consciously aware of their own existence as a group? Or did they constitute many differentiated social elements and lack any sense of overall identity? Did their place in the overall hierarchy of society depend on the trade they followed, their social position and contacts, their religious affiliation or their position along their life course? Or did it derive from a complex interplay of these social demarcations? To what extent did mobility occur *within* the segment as well as into and out of it? These are some of the questions that this study seeks to answer in the context of the town of Saffron Walden in north-west Essex.

A study of this group in greater detail in the context of a single market town will seek to enrich our understanding of the artisanal segment of society as a whole in England at this period. As a result of the research undertaken, it has become clear that the assumption held by many that artisans formed a single cohesive, but not necessarily well-defined, group in the eighteenth century is somewhat misleading.¹ Arising out of the research itself the main argument of this thesis has emerged as something that was not in prospect at its outset: namely that the defining characteristic of this social category is its fragmented nature.

The choice of Saffron Walden for the case study for this research is based on the nature of the town in the eighteenth century. The detailed context of the town will be discussed in detail below in Chapter 2, but, at this point suffice it to say that it exemplifies the small-to-medium-sized market towns of the period. Peter Clark describes the small towns of England as being at the heart of the economic and social life of the nation, providing, as they did, a bridge between the urban and rural worlds.² Although of many and varied kinds, the smaller market

¹ This elaborates and redefines a point previously made by Henry French discussing the ‘middling sort’ in ‘The search for the ‘Middle Sort of People’ in England, 1600-1800’, *The Historical Journal*, 43.1 (2000), p.293, makes the point that this group, as well as including men involved in the ‘clean’ distributive trades who might well pay the highest taxes and view themselves as the ‘chief inhabitants’ of a town, might also include a less wealthy group involved in ‘dirty’ manual trades such as tanning, butchery and skilled wood and metal working, that is the artisans.

² Peter Clark, ‘Small towns 1700-1840’ in Peter Clark ed. *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Vol II 1540-1840* (Cambridge, 2000), p.733

towns—those below the level of the county or provincial towns such as Norwich³ or Bury St. Edmunds—provided their hinterland with a market for its produce and, increasingly, with a range of goods and services far superior to those which a smaller settlement could hope to provide. Saffron Walden was one such town. It lay on a cross road rather than a major route way—the cross road running from Chelmsford, the county town of Essex, to Cambridge, the county town of Cambridgeshire.⁴ Thus it did not attract the through traffic that permitted towns such as Stamford in Lincolnshire, with its theatre and assembly rooms, to establish themselves as social centres for the surrounding countryside. With a population of about three thousand by the end of the eighteenth century,⁵ Saffron Walden was small town with a series of charters dating back to the twelfth century when the market was transferred from the nearby village of Newport. The latest in the series of charters; that granted in 1694 by William III and Mary II,⁶ reaffirmed the rights of the town to a Corporation composed of Recorder, Deputy Recorder, Mayor, twelve Aldermen, a clerk and a Coroner. It gave Saffron Walden the status of a borough and the rights to appoint its own Justices of the Peace rather than being subject to the jurisdiction of the county magistracy. The Corporation was, thus, in Habermasian terms, the local representation of public or state authority.⁷ Although a borough, Saffron Walden did not share the status of parliamentary borough with the towns like Colchester, Maldon and Harwich, but it did, by virtue of its borough status, constitute a slightly different entity to other local small market towns such as Royston, Linton, Braintree, Halstead and Bishops Stortford. Sudbury alone of other market towns of a similar size was an incorporated town, its first charter having been granted by Queen Mary in 1554 followed by a series of later charters.⁸

If Saffron Walden is viewed from the geographical perspective of Central Place Theory,⁹ and in particular from the standpoint of the administrative model where $k=7$, that is the central place, supplies the needs of the surrounding six lower order centres, then Saffron Walden, as part of a hierarchy of settlement, forms part of a hexagon of market towns surrounding the higher order centre of Cambridge, but in its turn it supplies services to the villages surrounding it.

³ P.J. Corfield, *Towns, trade, religion, and radicalism: the Norwich perspective on English history*, (University of East Anglia, 1980)

⁴ Daniel Paterson, *A New and Accurate Description of all the Direct and Principal Cross Roads in England and Wales* (London, 1792), p.354

⁵ A figure based on the Enumeration Abstract for the 1801 Census

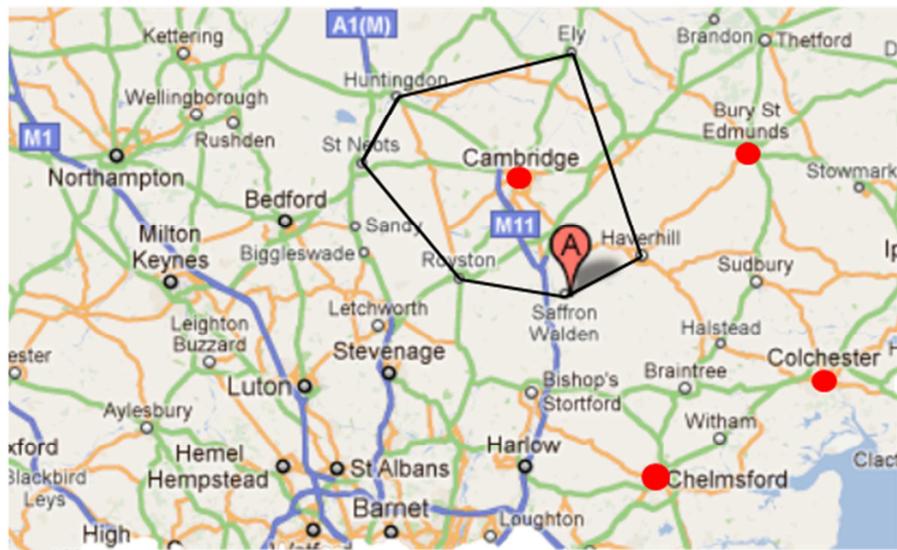
⁶ ERO, D/B 2/BRE1/23 Charter of William and Mary, 1694

⁷ Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (M.I.T., 1989 translation of 1962 edition), p.2

⁸ SRO, EE 501/1 Borough Charters of Sudbury.

⁹ Walter Christaller, *Central places in southern Germany; (Die zentralen Orte in Süddeutschland* (Jena, 1933; translated by Carlisle W. Baskin, New Jersey, 1966)

Today, other higher order centres would include Bury St. Edmunds, Colchester and Chelmsford.

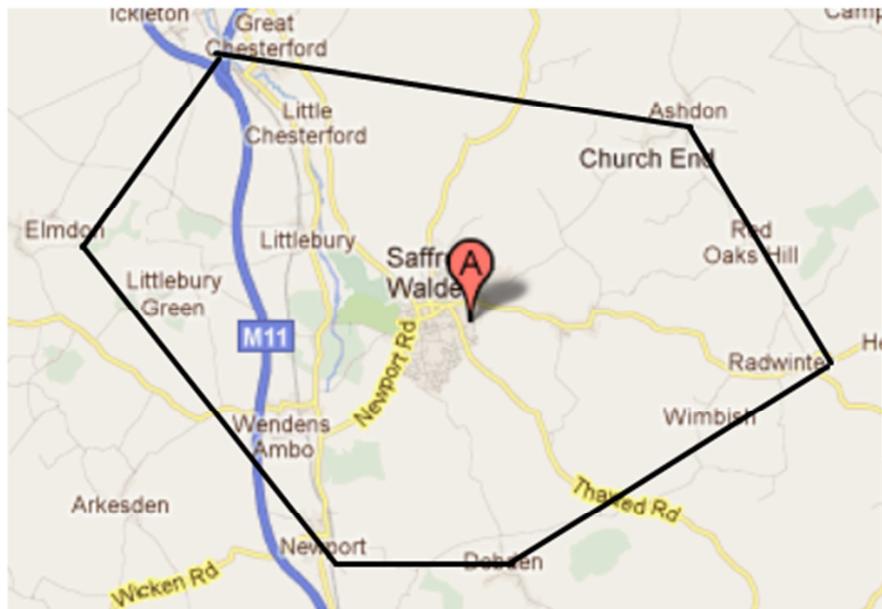


- Higher order centre

Map 1 Showing Cambridge as the higher order central place for Saffron Walden (Google Maps 2011)

However if an eighteenth century map were to be used it is questionable as to whether Chelmsford, albeit the county town, would have been a central place of equivalent importance to Cambridge, Bury St. Edmunds and Colchester.

Saffron Walden, as a small market town, would, according to Christaller's model, have served as the central place for a surrounding ring of villages, providing a tier of services below those provided by places such as Cambridge. Map 2 shows the ring of similarly sized villages around Saffron Walden that would have looked to Walden to provide central place services of the kind suited to a small market town: legal and medical services, a grammar school and a wider variety of commercial premises as well as the weekly market and occasional fairs.



Map 2 Showing Saffron Walden as the central place for surrounding villages
(Google Maps 2011)

Whilst being typical of a band of smaller market towns¹⁰ scattered across the counties of England, Saffron Walden also possesses a remarkable archive¹¹ documenting all facets of the life of the town between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries. Initially, this was one of the reasons for studying the town. It is also one of the main resources that has fed what has become the overall argument of this thesis as to the fragmented nature of its artisans.

It has also helped to delimit the chronology of this study. There is a sense in which Saffron Walden comes into view in detail as the records become more plentiful. Much of what is examined here in the eighteenth century was already in place when the study starts. In large part it is the nature of the records and the need to delimit the scale of the study that has determined the *terminus ante quem*.

It is this archive, then, in conjunction with other records held elsewhere, that has proved fertile ground for the examination of whether or not the artisan segment

¹⁰ Peter Clark and Jean Hosking, *Population Estimates of English Small Towns 1550-1851 (Revised Edition)*, (Centre for Urban History, University of Leicester, 1993), Working Paper 5. In their introduction Clark and Hosking discuss their methodology for the selection of small towns to be included. (pp. iii-ix). Inclusion in Blome's *Britannia* (1673) or Adams' *Index Villaris* (1680) was taken for evidence for the late 17th century whilst The Universal British Directory (1790-99) and the London Post Office Directory (1801) provided similar evidence for the end of the 18th century. This was then combined with population evidence, the average figure for the late 17th century being less than about 2,500 and for the early 19th less than about 5,000. Saffron Walden fits very comfortably in terms of population – 1674 Hearth Tax = 1700 and 1811 Census = 3403. The town appears in the *Index Villaris*, but is unaccountably omitted from the *Universal British Directory*.

¹¹ ERO, D/B 2, the records of Saffron Walden.

of Saffron Walden society in the eighteenth century was a cohesive or a fragmented one.

Whilst the geographical setting of the market town of Saffron Walden will be described in detail below in Chapter 2, it is now necessary to consider what is meant by the term ‘artisan’ so that the setting can provide a context for a discussion of whether differentiation existed within the artisan sector of the town, and by extrapolation in other market towns of a similar size throughout England, in the eighteenth century.

The task of defining the word ‘artisan’ is a somewhat problematic one. Many academic texts which discuss artisans seem to take as their starting point a tacit understanding that the meaning of the term ‘artisan’ is clearly understood by their readers.¹² One starting point is the definition of the word which can be derived from the *Oxford English Dictionary*. This states that an artisan was:

A worker in a skilled trade, a craftsman; (in later use) esp. one utilizing traditional or non-mechanized methods.

Formerly often taken as typifying a social class intermediate between property-owners and wage labourers.¹³

The earliest uses of the word given are in the sixteenth century. In 1538 Thomas Starkey in his *A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset* referred to ‘Few artysanys of gud occupatyon’,¹⁴ whilst in 1580 John Hay made reference to ‘Tailyeours, skinnars and other artisans’.¹⁵ The OED suggests that the word artisan was linked in middle French to the word mechanic, a manual worker. The adjective *mécanique* was characterised by its association with the use of hands and tools.¹⁶ In post-classical Latin the term *ars mechanica* was often seen as a synonym for *ars servilis* or the illiberal arts, a mediaeval distinction made to show the difference from the liberal arts.¹⁷

¹² Michael P. Fizsimmons in his book entitled *From Artisan to Worker: Guilds, the French State and the Organization of Labor, 1776-1821* (Cambridge, 2010) does not give a definition of what he perceives an artisan to be, preferring to concentrate on the role of the guilds and the French State in the change from artisan to worker.

¹³ O.E.D. online

http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50012594?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=artisan&first=1&max_to_show=10 (25.10.10)

¹⁴ Thomas Starkey, *A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset* (1538), p.105

¹⁵ John Hay, *Certaine Demands concerning the Christian Religion and Discipline, proposed to the Ministers of the New Pretended Kirk of Scotland* (1580) in T. Law’s *Catholic tractates of the sixteenth century* (Edinburgh, 1901), p.37

¹⁶ Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales gives a 1546 use of the term *artizan* drawn from Rabelais « celui qui exerce un art manuel » (RABELAIS, *Tiers liv. ch. I ds GDF. Compl. : Artizans de tous mestiers*); <http://www.cnrtl.fr/etymologie/artisan> (15.10.13)

¹⁷ O.E.D. online: <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/115543?rskey=yAlFsM&result=13#eid37499668> (13.8.2013)

By the eighteenth century it would seem that the term ‘artisan’ was one which was in everyday use although contemporary works suggest that there was some variation in how the term was employed. The earliest eighteenth century reference to the term ‘artisan’ appeared in 1708 in John Kersey’s *Dictionarium Britannicum* where it is defined as ‘Artisan, (L) an artificer or tradesman’.¹⁸ At this time many reference works include the term ‘artificer’¹⁹ when defining an artisan. In turn an artificer was defined as someone who professed an art or trade, a workman or handicraftsman; someone who made things employing skills of hand and eye. This ties in well with Defoe’s comments on the Home-Trade in his 1728 work *A Plan of the English Commerce*:

The general heads of the Home-Trade are best contain’d in the two plain and homely Terms Labouring, and Dealing. 1st. The labouring Part, this consists of Arts, Handicrafts, and all Kinds of Manufactures; and those who are employ’d in these Works, are properly called Mechanicks; they are employ’d generally speaking, about the first Principles of Trade, (viz.) the Product of the Land or of the Sea, or of the Animals living on both: In a Word, the ordinary Produce of the vegetative and sensative Life; such as Metals, Minerals and Plants, the immediate Produce of Vegetation , or such as Flesh, Skins, Hair, Wool, Silk, Etc. grown with, and produc’d by the Animals, as the Effect of sensitive Life.

2. The Dealing Part; this consists of handling about all the several Productions of Art and Labour, when finish’d by the Hand of the industrious Mechanick, and made useful to Mankind;²⁰

By the mid-to-later part of the eighteenth century, however, a new element of meaning had appeared in many of the definitions. This new element indicated a somewhat less favourable approach to the calling of artisan. In 1756, for example Doctor Johnson defined an artisan in two very different ways: as an artist, professor of an art, but also as a manufacturer or low tradesman.²¹ Three years later in 1759, Rider defined an artisan in similarly pejorative terms: as may be ‘properly applied to those professors of trades, which require the least

¹⁸ John Kersey, *Dictionarium Anglo-Britannicum: or, a general English dictionary, comprehending a brief, but emphatical and clear explication of all sorts of difficult words* (London, 1708), unpaginated

¹⁹ Nathan Bailey, *Dictionarium Britannicum: or a more compleat universal etymological English dictionary than any extant* (London, 1730), unpaginated

²⁰ Daniel Defoe, *A Plan of the English Commerce* (London, 1728), pp.1-2

²¹ Samuel Johnson, *A dictionary of the English language: in which the words are deduced from their originals, explained in their different meanings, Abstracted from the folio edition, by the author Samuel Johnson, A.M. To which is prefixed, A grammar of the English language. In two volumes* (London, 1756), unpaginated

exercise of the understanding. A low mechanic, manufacturer, or tradesman. Formerly applied to the practitioners in any art.²²

It may be that this perceived drop in the status of the artisan in the course of the eighteenth century was due to the decline in the pursuance of full seven-year apprenticeships in this period which allowed less well-qualified people to follow trades.²³ Alternatively it may have been due to changes in the ways in which trades were regulated as the structure of the guilds continued to decline. More importantly, it may reflect a fall in status as independent craftsmen became subsumed within a less skilled and larger body of workers in manufacture. We will consider below the extent to which this process occurred even in a place like Saffron Walden and even though it was not characterised by the arrival of the conventional factories of the industrial revolution. In turn, it is this change that may provide the natural *terminus ad quem* to the type of artisan society and town described in the body of this thesis.

It is also possible that the dictionary makers did not reflect the way in which artisans were perceived in society at large. There may also have been an element of snobbishness amongst the compilers of these later dictionaries which, combined with the Latinist tradition from which they sprang, led them to view those who worked with their hands from a somewhat dismissive viewpoint. The case study of Saffron Walden in the eighteenth century will permit this question to be explored more fully.

The difficulty of defining an artisan both in contemporary and modern thought is, in itself, evidence of the protean nature of this social category. This protean character is evident at any given point in time when one tries to pin down such a phenomenon but it is also apparent across the period that this study encompasses because of the nature of the artisan. It is for this reason that an old fashioned positivist desire to provide a fixed and bounded definition cannot do justice to the historical phenomenon that was the eighteenth century artisan. However, it is clear that contemporaries recognised artisans as a distinct social segment.

Modern historians have seen the segment as homogeneous and it is very much the case that there were certain discernible commonalities such as life practices – the artisan as a maker, which helped shape their *Weltanschaung*. They were a social segment recognised by themselves, their contemporaries and historians, but this does not mean that there were not interesting and significant differences within the segment leading to its fragmentation which will be explored in the course of this thesis.

²² William Rider, *A new universal English dictionary: or, a compleat treasure of the English language. ... Compiled with the utmost care and assiduity by William Rider* (London, 1759), unpaginated

²³ See the discussion in K.D.M. Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor* (Cambridge, 1985), *passim*.

But if for practical purposes for the moment the *OED* definition of an artisan is to be accepted—that is ‘a worker in a skilled trade’; a member of a social class intermediate between property-owners and wage labourers; it is worth noting that modern commentators such as John Rule having indicated similar views when he comments that British artisans are more usefully considered as a working class elite rather than a section of the middling ranks.²⁴ Furthermore it is necessary consider both what was meant by a ‘skilled trade’ and the nature of ‘social class’ in the eighteenth century.

Trade and Class in the Eighteenth Century

The means to the acquisition of the skills required to become an artisan remained what it had long been: apprenticeship. At the beginning of the century the regulations still reflected quite closely those laid down by the 1563 Statute of Artificers and Apprentices. Under the terms of this Act a seven-year apprenticeship was required before a man could practise a trade²⁵ and it was intended that the apprenticeship should not expire before the age of 24 years, moreover, an age at which he might have been expected to develop a sense of responsibility and could emerge from general oversight in another’s household.²⁶ The Statute also laid down certain rules with regard to the social status and property qualifications necessary for a boy to be put apprentice to a particular trade. Those trades which required no property qualification of the father but nonetheless requiring an apprenticeship to be served were those viewed as most necessary to support the basic activities of life in a settlement: trades such as smiths, bricklayers and the more basic kinds of weaving.

As the eighteenth century progressed many of the requirements of the Statute of Artificers fell into abeyance. The requirements of an apprenticeship began to vary between trades and the ability to pay the premium demanded by a master craftsman in return for taking an apprentice became more important than the social standing of the father of the apprentice. As we will see below in the chapter on fractionalism, apprenticeships to the more lowly trades were often filled by boys placed there by local charities, or, in the worst-case scenario, by children apprenticed by the parish. The latter were children who were being supported by parish poor relief and whom the overseers wished to see removed from their books. An efficient method of achieving this was to pay a small premium to place the child apprentice, preferably in another parish. Thereby,

²⁴ John Rule ‘The Labouring Poor’ in H.T. Dickinson ed. *A companion to eighteenth-century Britain* (Oxford, 2002), pp.183-195

²⁵ 5 Elizabeth I, c.4

²⁶ Donald Woodward, *Men at Work* (Cambridge, 1995), p.55

under the laws of settlement, responsibility for providing poor relief passed to the parish in which the apprenticeship had been completed.

Completion of an apprenticeship meant that a young man—and it was usually young men, female apprentices, although not unheard of, were relatively rare—could set up in business in his own right if he could afford it or he could work as a journeyman for another master craftsman. Albeit, Patrick Wallis has argued that the training of apprentices was less intensive and more piecemeal than in standard accounts. It is his opinion that instead of preceding useful work, the training of apprentices occurred in parallel with their engagement in profitable labour for their masters.²⁷

In many towns in the early eighteenth century there remained an element of the guild structure which had controlled admission to crafts for many centuries. In some cases the newly qualified craftsman would be required to submit a piece of his work to the guild for examination and to pay whatever dues were required. In Saffron Walden this was not the case. No records exist of a guild structure beyond those of a charitable nature such as the Guild of the Holy Trinity.²⁸ In the earlier part of the century, however, it was normal for an artisan wanting to set up in business in his own right to take the freedom of the town.²⁹ By the latter years of the century even this custom had declined in importance, taking the freedom being generally left to those men seeking to serve as aldermen or mayor.

The completion of an apprenticeship did not place all young men on an equal footing as they started out in business. Many other factors came into play. The nature of the trade in which the young man was qualified was very significant since there was a very distinct hierarchy of trades. At the bottom of the pile lay those trades which

required very little capital to set up in business³⁰ and those trades which David Cressy described as ‘dirty’,³¹ although even within these trades there was a very definite hierarchy. Young men who had completed an apprenticeship in the more

²⁷ Patrick Wallis, *Apprenticeship and Training in Pre-Modern Britain* (Working Papers on The Nature of Evidence: How Well Do ‘Facts’ Travel? 22/07, L.S.E. 2007), p.5

²⁸ ERO, D/B 2/GHT2/2 Guild of the Holy Trinity Accounts, 1652-1835. The Guild of the Holy Trinity had been closely linked with the establishment of the Almshouse in Saffron Walden

²⁹ Saffron Walden Museum Archive, 41507, Saffron Walden Freemen. Admission to the freedom was by apprenticeship, patrimony or redemption. In other words an apprenticeship within the town had to be completed or the candidate was the son of a freeman or he was prepared to pay a hefty fine to secure his freedom.

³⁰ R.Campbell’s *The London Tradesman* of 1747 provides much valuable contemporary information about how different trades were viewed, the type of apprentice most suited to specific types work, the premium to be paid on apprenticeship and the cost of setting up in business on completion of the apprenticeship.

³¹ David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1980), p.130.

lowly artisanal trades were also less likely to have families who were able to help them with the set-up costs of starting a business: many of these families had had to rely on charitable or parish support to secure the apprenticeship in the first place! Crafts higher up the hierarchy which often required considerable skill and education had higher setting-up costs but were more likely to have attracted apprentices from more affluent families: these were trades such as apothecary or cabinet maker.

So it can be seen that even the trade to which a youth was apprenticed was dependent not just on his innate ability, but also on the circumstances of his family and their ability to pay the initial premium and to help with the costs of setting up a business once he had completed his apprenticeship. There was differentiation within the artisan sector of society even at this initial point.

Having outlined in a general way that differentiation occurred in the nature of the trades that an artisan might practise once he had completed his apprenticeship, it is now relevant to consider where the artisan, whatever his trade, might fit into the overall social structure of the society of eighteenth century England and in particular with reference to the market towns scattered throughout the length and breadth of the land since it was here that most artisans would be found. It is therefore relevant to study an example of a market town as a case study for both the role of the artisan within the community and for a consideration of differentiation within the artisan segment of market town society. As mentioned above, it is for this purpose that Saffron Walden has been selected although reference will be made to other small market towns of a similar kind for the purposes of comparison where appropriate. These towns will predominantly be drawn from Essex and its neighbouring counties, although other places will be considered where pertinent.

The place of the artisan in the social order of England will be considered in much greater depth below in Chapter 3, but an initial examination will help to provide a context for the work that follows.

The part which classic conventional 19th century notions of social class has to play in consideration of the social structure of the eighteenth century is one that must be approached with a certain degree of care. The man walking through the mud of Saffron Walden's Market Place did not think of the society in which he lived in terms of social classes but times were changing. True, Penelope Corfield has suggested that the eighteenth century saw changes in the way that the social structure of England was discussed by contemporary commentators and in the language which they employed. A new vocabulary and conceptual framework for the analysis and interpretation of society came into use whereby 'class' as an

organizing concept began to emerge from the specifications of 'rank' and 'order' which had previously been employed.³² She has suggested that in the eighteenth century a range of terms were employed to indicate positions within society at any one point in time. There were those referring to a social status conferred primarily by birth being terms such as 'rank', 'order', 'degree' and 'station'. These contrasted with 'sort', 'part' and 'interest' which were employed for the more socially mobile elements of eighteenth century society.³³ Laslett suggests that in England, as a pre-industrial society, there was only one class in the Marxist sense of a self-conscious grouping, but that this class contained a number of status groups, all aware of their respective status in comparison to the others. This would seem to have been the case in the earlier part of the eighteenth century in England in general and in market towns such as Saffron Walden for the bulk of the century.³⁴ He goes on to define 'class' as a number of people banded together in the exercise of collective power, both economic and political, whereas a status group is a number of people enjoying or enduring the same social status. The system of status was a sharply delineated system which drew clear distinctions and the various gradations were clearly established and universally recognised. This might be seen as, at the least, a Marxist approach since it imposes our definitions on the experiences of the members of the artisanal segment!

If the ideas of Corfield and Laslett of a society of many gradations are to be accepted, it begs the question of whether men and women in the eighteenth century artisan viewed their society in the same way. The subject will be discussed below³⁵ in much greater detail and so it suffices to say at this point that contemporary commentators had produced a number of ways of describing the social groups within the society of which they were members. Defoe, for example, writing in 1709 developed a seven-fold classification of society,³⁶ whilst Massie writing nearly fifty years later in 1756 considered thirty different income groups in seven socio-economic categories.³⁷ These are what an

³² Penelope J. Corfield, 'Class by name and number in eighteenth-century Britain', in Penelope J. Corfield, ed., *Language, history and class* (Oxford, 1991), p.103.

³³ Corfield, 'Class by name...' p.112

³⁴ Peter Laslett, *The world we have lost – further explored* (London, third edition 1983), p.22.

³⁵ See below Chapter 3

³⁶ Daniel Defoe, *A Review of the British Nation*, vol. 6, no. 36, (25 June 1709)

³⁷ Joseph Massie, *Calculations of taxes for a family of each rank, degree or class: for one year* (London, 1756)

anthropologist would call 'participant observer' models of a society.³⁸ This topic will be elaborated below in the section 'Interpretative Framework.'³⁹

It is also germane to note that which is too often overlooked because so obvious in the English experience. And that is the relatively fine gradations of this society, and the increasingly fine degree of gradation acknowledged as the eighteenth century progressed. In this broader context what emerges with regard to artisan society as significantly fragmented is itself symptomatic of the wider context within which the artisanal segment subsisted.

It is, therefore, a question not only of how the eighteenth century artisan was seen by the commentators of the day or by us, but how he saw himself: what Ward categorises as 'participant models'.⁴⁰ It might be said that Defoe was working at the conceptual level. He observed the society of which he was a member, albeit not an artisan himself, and commented on it in a somewhat *descriptive* fashion. In this he was similar to William Petty⁴¹ and Gregory King⁴² in their works of political arithmetic. An artisan, on the other hand, would have had a more *experiential* approach to any description that he might have written of his life. He lived the life of the artisan rather than describing it, but was the life experienced by all artisans the same?

Broadly speaking, wherever possible this thesis adopts a phenomenological approach in the modern sociological sense of the term. Wherever possible it attempts to reconstruct the life experience and the life-view of those being studied rather than simply imposing on them our own analytical categories. Although, in most instances, we do not have the direct voice of the historical actors but must infer their perspective from the detailed reconstruction of their lives. This latter approach, through the technique of nominal data linkage, is most in evidence in appendices 4 and 5. It is an approach that has proved to be especially pertinent when what is being delineated is the often nuanced and fluctuating differences among artisans.

³⁸ Barbara E. Ward, 'Sociological Self-Awareness: Some Uses of the Conscious Models', *Man* n.s. 1.2, (1966), pp.201-215

³⁹ See below p. 14

⁴⁰ Ward, *op.cit.*

⁴¹ William Petty, *Political arithmetic; or, a discourse concerning the extent and value of lands, people, buildings; husbandry, manufacture, commerce, fishery, artizans, seamen, soldiers; publick revenues, ...* (Glasgow,1751)

⁴² Gregory King, *Natural and political observations and conclusions upon the state and condition of England, 1696. To which is prefixed a life of the author by G. Chalmers... A new edition* (London, 1810)

Moreover, there is a further especial relevance of the phenomenological approach when studying artisans. Authors such as Merleau-Ponty,⁴³ discussing Husserl's ideas on history, lay emphasis on the fact that consciousness is always an embodied consciousness. Clearly, artisans constituted a universe of 'makers'. They especially, among their contemporaries, understood the world through the substance of the raw materials they handled and crafted and the bodily co-ordination of eye and hand that allowed them to do with deftness things that the great majority of us today are largely not capable of doing. Richard Sennett, while commenting on all the above points, also remarks that craftsmanship names an enduring, basic human impulse, the desire to do the job well for its own sake.⁴⁴ It was this, as well as the need to earn a living to support themselves and their families, that motivated the majority of the members of the artisan segment of Saffron Walden society in the eighteenth century.

Among other things this thesis also attempts to allocate the artisanal population to a specific place within the overall social hierarchy of the town of Saffron Walden and within the social organisation of English market towns in general in the eighteenth century. Was the nature of the artisan sector of society so fragmented—economically, socially and by religious persuasion—that, at best, it can be said that while some artisans might use the appellation 'gentleman' and others might be termed 'paupers', the bulk of the group lay somewhere within the 'middling sort' of eighteenth century society? As Keith Wrightson puts it:

The criteria of social evaluation were complex and ill-defined. Local patterns of stratification varied considerably. Individual social mobility was constant and frankly recognised.⁴⁵

For the purposes of this thesis, therefore, an artisan will be taken to be a craftsman of some sort; someone who was able through his training as an apprentice to use skills of hand and eye to produce an article fit for the purpose for which it was intended. Obviously, as in all walks of life, there were more and less skilled artisans. Also contemporaries frequently made a distinction between what were seen as 'clean' and 'dirty' trades. Some artisans might progress through life to achieve the nomenclature of 'gentleman' whilst others might sink

⁴³ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Phenomenology and the Sciences of Man' in *Phenomenology, Language and Sociology, selected essays of Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, ed. John O'Neill (London, 1974), pp.227-279.

⁴⁴ Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (Yale University Press, 2008), p.9

⁴⁵ K. Wrightson, 'The social order of early-modern England: three approaches', in L. Bonfield, R. M. Smith, and K. Wrightson, eds., *The world we have gained: histories of population and social structure* (Oxford, 1986), p. 191. The idea of a long-term cultural approach to economic life is more fully developed in Wrightson's *Earthly Necessities* (Yale, 2000).

to the degradation of the workhouse and a pauper's grave. It is the reasons for these distinctions within a group which contemporaries placed variously as part of the 'middle sort'⁴⁶ or as an elite of the 'lesser sort' of person⁴⁷ that will be discussed in the following chapters in an effort to decide whether there was such a thing as an artisan segment in the eighteenth century and to what extent it was seriously fragmented. Given the empirical findings of this study with regard to the exceptionally fragmented nature of the artisan segment at this time, it may well be that the greatest commonality was their shared experience arising from their engagement in making. As Sennett commented there was a stability through shared skill, with craftwork establishing a realm of skill and knowledge.⁴⁸ However, not all artisans achieved the same degree of skill and knowledge or had the good fortune to come from families that could offer support at the beginning of their careers or when chance dealt them a poor hand later in life.

Interpretative Framework

In attempting to understand the complex picture which emerges from the empirical evidence discussed below in the main body of the text, I have considered the insights not only offered by other historians writing on related topics,⁴⁹ but also those which may be gained from conceptualisations that are derived from outside history as a discipline. Although, currently, there is less resort to this technique than in the 1960s, there are a number of authors from other disciplines whose work offers perspectives useful when discussing historical topics.

Currently the most influential of these is Jurgen Habermas. In recent years historians of the eighteenth century and earlier have found it valuable to engage with his work. Whilst the historical evidence that he draws on may seem far distant from the world of the eighteenth century Essex market town, the concepts that he crystallizes may, on occasion, be illuminating when considering the artisans of Saffron Walden. The two areas which are particularly relevant to a consideration of life in a small market town are the concepts of 'public sphere' and 'sociability'. Both of these are discussed below.⁵⁰ As both the secondary literature and the empirical evidence demonstrate, Habermas's *Öffentlichkeit* is

⁴⁶ J.J. Looney, 'Cultural life in the provinces: Leeds and York, 1720-1820', in A. L. Beier, D. Cannadine, and J. M. Rosenheim, eds., *The first modern society: essays in English history in honour of Lawrence Stone* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 489 gives his opinion of the contemporary view of artisans.

⁴⁷ John Rule, 'The Labouring Poor' in A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain ed. H.T. Dickinson (Oxford, 2002), p.183 makes reference to Defoe scheme whereby artisans were placed just above the labouring poor.

⁴⁸ Sennett, *The Craftsman*, p.64 and p.95

⁴⁹ See below, "Historiography", p.16

⁵⁰ See below, p.19

patently a rather different public sphere to that found in Saffron Walden but it nevertheless offers a certain amount of illumination of the situation in which the eighteenth century artisan found himself when strolling the streets of his native or adopted town en route to social, religious or business appointments.

The concept of sociability similarly has something to offer to a discussion of the artisan in eighteenth century Saffron Walden. He might not have had access to the grand 'salons' of which Habermas speaks, but his world was, nevertheless, one in which sociability had an important role to play, as the comments below on benefit clubs seek to demonstrate.⁵¹ The sociability of the benefit club meetings provided a sense of collective identity for its members⁵² in a way that membership of the artisan segment could not always do given its fractional nature. This topic would be discussed from many perspectives in the main body of this thesis.

However, whilst historians are currently engaged with the relevance of Habermas's conceptualisations, they are somewhat less interested in the phenomenological approach. As has already been noted, in the process of empirical research, it is the approach which is implicit in the notion of phenomenology that has proved to be the most useful. On the whole the social segment of artisans does not leave much direct expression of what they thought or felt in the period under consideration. The rare artisan kept a diary which was later published, but they were very much the exceptions. Nehemiah Wallington⁵³ dwelt most on religious topics whilst Thomas Turner⁵⁴ was more inclined to focus on local social occasions. It is, however, possible to use 'indirect evidence' within strict limits to infer sentiment from circumstances. Thus the appeal of Samuel Missen⁵⁵ when his house is destroyed by fire indicates complete desperation. A single event such as this brings home very clearly the volatility which governed the circumstances of eighteenth century artisans. Similarly it has been possible on occasion, where the evidence will support it, to reconstitute life courses to show the nature of the experiences that an artisan might undergo.⁵⁶ By applying analytical techniques it is possible to infer likely responses to experiences. From these reconstitutions it becomes very clear just how volatile the life chances of the artisan segment were.

⁵¹ See below p.20

⁵² Cf. William Outhwaite ed., *The Habermas Reader* (Oxford, 1996), p.229

⁵³ Paul S. Seaver, *Wallington's world: a puritan artisan in seventeenth century London* (Stanford, Ca., 1985)

⁵⁴ David Vaisey ed., *The diary of Thomas Turner, 1754-1765* (Oxford, 1984)

⁵⁵ ERO, QSS2/14/24, Petition of Thomas Loveday and Samuel Missen, at a date between 1729 and 1743.

⁵⁶ See Appendices 3, 4 and 5 below which deal respectively with the life courses of members of the Archer family, Thomas Scrambler and Leonard Alderson.

Another means of clarification available from the phenomenological approach is a consideration of whose model of society is employed. The way a society is perceived may vary depending on whether the observer is standing totally outside that society – a pure observer—or whether the observer is a part of that society—a participant observer to use Ward’s categories.⁵⁷ By this Ward means that the observer is looking around at the society of which he or she is a part. But even here a differentiation of perspective can be perceived. A commentator such as Defoe was part of the early eighteenth century world which he sought to describe, but he was not an artisan and therefore could not comment on what it was like to *experience the life* of an artisan in all its nuances.

The issues that are thrown up by an attempt to define what an artisan is and was have suggested that it is also useful to engage with a literature beyond the purely historical and empirical, since this literature may help us to gain a firmer grasp on the especially slippery nature of what it meant to be an eighteenth century artisan. This is but one strand in the web of understanding and it is, of course, also vital to engage with what other historians have written about related topics to provide a context for the empirical work that follows.

Historiography

When considering any topic of research, it is always important to know what has already been written about the topic, the approaches that have been adopted and the standpoints from which the material has been presented. This section will, therefore, seek to identify the historiography of the topic of eighteenth century artisans before moving on to consider in later chapters the differentiation that occurs within that sector from economic, social and religious perspectives.

To date it would seem that the artisan sector of eighteenth century society has been a somewhat neglected backwater in terms of published material and it has been this dearth of material that has made it such an interesting topic to research in this thesis.

Studies have been made of specific types of trades such as Woodward’s work on the building craftsmen of northern England in the early-modern period and the first half of the eighteenth century⁵⁸ and Davies’ work on the tailors and shoemakers of Bristol in the last thirty years of the eighteenth century.⁵⁹ There are a few biographies based on the lives of artisans such as that of the

⁵⁷ See above, p.12

⁵⁸ Donald Woodward, *Men at Work labourers and building craftsmen in the towns of northern England, 1450-1750* (Cambridge, 1995)

⁵⁹ J.P. Davies, *Artisans and the city : a social history of Bristol’s shoemakers and tailors, 1770-1800* (Bristol, 2003)

seventeenth century puritan artisan, Nehemiah Wallington.⁶⁰ Studies have been made of particular parts of the country such as Andy Wood's study of the miners of the Peak Country.⁶¹ However, such studies, although fascinating and presenting a valuable insight into the lives of an otherwise under-researched group, are fairly few in number.

More common are approaches to the study of the eighteenth century as a whole within which the artisanal segment of society is accorded a brief mention. Some of these are general volumes which help to provide a context for the artisanal segment to be studied below in Saffron Walden, works such as those by Dickinson⁶² and O'Gorman⁶³ and Langford.⁶⁴ Others focus on more specific areas such as the economic as in the case of Floud and Johnson;⁶⁵ or the economic and social for example Daunton's work on poverty and prosperity.⁶⁶ Volumes such as these provide an interesting background to the world in which the eighteenth century artisans of Saffron Walden lived, but perhaps more germane to the arguments of this thesis are those works which seek to view the eighteenth century from the perspectives of other social groups. Thus to John Cannon it was the aristocratic century⁶⁷ whilst to E.P. Thompson it was the century in which the working class found its roots.⁶⁸

More recently a number of historians have sought to discover the life style and tastes of what they have termed 'the middling sort'. Although this term in itself poses a question of who exactly constituted the middling sort. Broadly speaking the 'middling sort' might be taken to be those who fell between the two poles investigated by Cannon and Thompson. John Rule cites William Beckford's 1761 definition of the 'middling people of England' as consisting of 'the manufacturer, the yeoman, the merchant, the country gentleman',⁶⁹ while Looney preferred to define the 'middle sort' as 'consisting of artisans, shopkeepers,...,and small merchants'.⁷⁰ Various investigations of their lives in

⁶⁰ Paul S. Seaver, *Wallington's world: a puritan artisan in seventeenth century London* (Stanford, Ca., 1985)

⁶¹ Andy Wood, *The politics of social conflict - the Peak Country, 1520-1770* (Cambridge, 1999)

⁶² H.T. Dickinson ed., *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2006)

⁶³ Frank O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century* (London, 1997)

⁶⁴ Paul Langford ed., *The Eighteenth Century 1688-1815* (Oxford, 2002)

⁶⁵ R. Floud and P. Johnson (eds.), *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain I: Industrialisation, 1700-1860* (Cambridge, 2004)

⁶⁶ M.J. Daunton, *Progress and Poverty. An Economic and Social History of Britain 1700-1850* (Oxford, 1995)

⁶⁷ John Cannon, *The Aristocratic Century* (Cambridge, 1984)

⁶⁸ E.P. Thompson, *The making of the English working class* (London, 1963) and *Customs in Common* (London, 1991)

⁶⁹ John Rule, *Albion's people: English society, 1714-1815* (London, 1992), p.55.

⁷⁰ J.J. Looney, 'Cultural life in the provinces', p.489

general have been written, such as the studies by Margaret Hunt,⁷¹ Paul Langford⁷² and Jonathan Barry and Christopher Brooks.⁷³ There are also studies of the middling sort in specific locations. Thus Peter Earle focused on the middling sort in London,⁷⁴ whilst H.R. French⁷⁵ was more interested in the middle sort of people away from the capital, in the towns and villages of provincial England, at a level as low as the parish. Shani d'Cruze bridged the gap between the capital and the smaller towns and villages of provincial England with her work on the middling sort of the parliamentary borough of Colchester in the eighteenth century.⁷⁶

The rise of this ‘middling sort’ is further explored through works on consumption and gender issues. Thus Maxine Berg’s explorations of the industrial revolution as the age of manufactures and then of consumerism in Britain and Europe as the taste for luxuries spread down the social scale in the course of the eighteenth century have helped to inform our views of the lives of ordinary people at the time.⁷⁷ Meanwhile investigations into the roles that women took in the eighteenth century, be it in business or in other aspects of life, have helped to give a fuller picture of the life that artisans and their wives lived.⁷⁸ This has been an especially important development for the study of artisans as it should always be remembered that the role of a woman in an artisanal family was far more than merely that of the homemaker and raiser of children.

Although artisans belonged considerably lower down the social ladder than did the aristocrats of John Cannon’s ‘Aristocratic Century’, belonging more to Peter Earle’s middle class and according to their contemporaries to the lower part of that segment of society,⁷⁹ there was a degree of artisanal interaction with the aristocracy. Indeed, one of the set of circumstances that helped to define artisans was the extent to which theirs—the prevailing mode of production for the greater part of this period—engendered their intercourse across the social spectrum. Equally, craft manufacture required an understanding of craft among those who

⁷¹ Margaret R. Hunt, *Middling sort : commerce, gender, and the family in England, 1680-1780* (Berkeley, Ca., 1996)

⁷² Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People* (Oxford, 1989)

⁷³ Jonathan Barry and Christopher Brooks eds., *The middling sort of people* (London, 1994)

⁷⁴ Peter Earle, *The making of the English middle class : business, society and family life in London, 1660-1730* (London, 1989)

⁷⁵ H.R. French, *The Middle Sort of People in Provincial England, 1600-1750* (Oxford, 2007)

⁷⁶ Shani d'Cruze, *A Pleasing Prospect* (Hatfield, 2008)

⁷⁷ Maxine Berg, *The age of manufactures, 1700-1820 : industry, innovation and work in Britain* (London, 1985); *Luxury and pleasure in eighteenth-century Britain* (Oxford, 2007)

⁷⁸ Bridget Hill, *Women, work and sexual politics in eighteenth century England* (London, 1994); Katrina Honeyman, *Women, Gender and Industrialisation in England, 1700-1870* (Basingstoke, 2000); Nicola Phillips, *Women in Business, 1700-1850* (Woodbridge, 2006)

⁷⁹ Daniel Defoe, *A Review of the British Nation*, vol. 6, no. 36, (25 June 1709); Joseph Massie, *Calculations of taxes for a family of each rank, degree or class: for one year* (London, 1756)

were consumers. For in craft manufacture there are nuanced differences between objects even from the same workshop, and discriminations to be made among workshops.

In the case of Saffron Walden this interaction with the aristocracy was with the Howard and Griffin Griffin families of Audley End. The latter part of the eighteenth century saw a resurgence of a nobility, who although spending much time at their London properties, also wished to influence the areas around their country estates. Some aristocrats involved themselves in politics and needed to solicit the votes of the forty shilling freeholders resident in their areas, others served on the county magistracy and still others were happy to use their influence to help solve 'little local difficulties'.⁸⁰ Such topics are considered by David Eastwood in his books on the governing of the England that lay outside the metropolis and large towns.⁸¹

The artisans who held the forty shilling freehold vote and who were courted by the competing political parties at times of elections were those who would have sent their sons to the local grammar schools: not for them the boarding schools and private tutors of the gentry or the charity schools of their impoverished fellow workers. For them a reasonable standard of literacy would have been important in order to participate in a society in which the culture of print was increasingly important. As Clark and Houston explain, the end of censorship in 1695 saw a flood of newspapers and magazines which 'were powerful dynamos in the dissemination of new cultural ideas and practices.'⁸² Bob Harris points out that 'many forms of print in the eighteenth century were not simply a facet of either elite or popular culture, but rather they formed an important bridge between them.'⁸³

The newspapers which formed such an important part of the culture of print made it possible for men from small towns to learn about events happening far beyond the compass of their somewhat limited geographical worlds. These same men, artisans by day, might well have visited the local inn to gain access to the

⁸⁰ See below in the chapter on Town Governance a description of Lord Howard of Audley End's involvement in the satisfaction conclusion of the Saffron Walden Bread Riots of 1795/6.

⁸¹ David Eastwood, *Government and community in the English provinces, 1700-1870* (Basingstoke, 1997) and *Governing rural England : tradition and transformation in local government 1780-1840* (Oxford, 1994)

⁸² Peter Clark and R.A. Houston, 'Culture and leisure, 1700-1840' in Peter Clark ed. *The Urban History of Britain, II 1540-1840* (Cambridge, 2000)

⁸³ Bob Harris, 'Print Culture' in H.T. Dickinson ed. *A companion to eighteenth-century Britain* (Oxford, 2002), pp.283-293

local newspapers⁸⁴ or to attend meetings of clubs or societies. Marshall Soules suggests that a public sphere was emerging in the eighteenth century through the growth of coffee houses, associations and the press.⁸⁵ This public sphere was an embodiment of Habermas's lifeworld (*Öffentlichkeit*),⁸⁶ a public space outside the control of the state which may have grown out of the salons of the eighteenth century where individuals could exchange ideas and information. Ann Hughes sums up Habermas's 'public sphere', a realm of communicative practices and associations, as lying somewhere between the state and the intimate sphere of the family.⁸⁷ Thus Habermas provided a capsule definition of this new institution in the eighteenth century: "The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people coming together as a public."⁸⁸

The eighteenth century was an era of sociability which manifested itself for the upper part of the middling sort in gatherings to play cards or enjoy musical soirees in each other's houses as described, for example, in Thomas Turner's diary.⁸⁹ Some of these people may also have belonged to the various clubs and societies which sprang up in towns throughout Britain to serve a variety of tastes, for this was a time of associational culture.⁹⁰ Among the most common were 'benefit' clubs which provided the opportunity for sociability whilst also serving as a means of support should a member fall on hard times. Members would gather at a local tavern on a regular basis to enjoy the conviviality of each other's company but also to pay a regular sum into the coffers of the society to meet the needs of anyone falling sick.⁹¹ Barry argues that there are factors which at first sight seem to preclude association among the bourgeoisie: economic and political diversity, flux and mobility and a supposed gulf within the bourgeoisie between

⁸⁴ Papers local to Saffron Walden were the Ipswich Journal, The Chelmsford Chronicle and Cambridge Chronicle although Walden tended to be located on the edge of the sphere of influence of any of these papers.

⁸⁵ See also Peter Clark's work *British clubs and societies 1580-1800: the origins of an associational world* (Oxford, 2000)

⁸⁶ James Bohman and William Rehg, "Jürgen Habermas", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2011 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2011/entries/habermas/>>. (13.8.2013)

⁸⁷ Ann Hughes 'Men, the 'public' and the 'private'' in *The politics of the public sphere in early modern England*, Peter Lake and Steven Pincus eds. (Manchester, 2007), pp.191-212.

⁸⁸ Harold Mah, 'Phantasies of the Public Sphere: Rethinking the Habermas of Historians', *Journal of Modern History*, 72.1 (2000), pp.153-182 quoting Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (Berlin, 1962), p. 38.

⁸⁹ David Vaisey ed., *The diary of Thomas Turner, 1754-1765* (Oxford, 1984)

⁹⁰ Jonathan Barry, 'Bourgeois Collectivism? Urban Association and the Middling Sort' in Jonathan Barry and Christopher Brooks eds., *The Middling Sort of People* (Basingstoke, 1994), p.84

⁹¹ Peter Clark, *British clubs and societies 1580-1800: the origins of an associational world* (Oxford, 2000). The Rose Club in Saffron Walden, meeting at the Rose and Crown, served such a purpose in the middle years of the eighteenth century. A document dating from 1771(ERO, D/DU 66/12) shows that of thirty-five signatories, twenty-one can be identified as following artisanal trades and two more were retailers. The trustees were Thomas Rankin and John Archer. Rankin was a prosperous tallow chandler and John Archer was a successful butcher. Of the 35 signatories 8 made their mark and 6 have been identified as having been placed apprentice by one of the town charities.

the elite and the rest, however, in fact, he argues these impelled them towards association.⁹² This may well have been the case for certain members of Saffron Walden's artisan segment, particularly those who might have considered themselves an elite either socially or financially, but for those at the other end of the spectrum association was more a case of reliance on friends and neighbours when times were hard rather than a benign social experience.

The topics discussed in the clubs and coffee houses of Britain were many and varied, there is no doubt, but at some points in the eighteenth century the world beyond the shores of Britain would have been a popular one. The artisans of the market towns of England were not immune to the effects of Empire. The eighteenth century saw the British 'empire of the sea' grow as trading outposts developed.⁹³ These trading posts shipped new goods back to Britain and became, in turn, markets for the goods produced by the artisans of England. The empire of the eighteenth century has been described as the 'empire of goods'.⁹⁴

In the growing colonies of the 'New World', artisans played an important part. As in the 'mother country' American artisans followed apprenticeships, worked as journeymen and formed benevolent societies and clubs.⁹⁵ Artisans also played an important role in other European countries, although it seems that there, as was sometimes the case in Britain, there was a belief that there had always been a better artisanal past. In the 1780s, for example, Mercier, in his *Tableau de Paris* bemoaned the way in which the old family ties of artisanal production had been replaced by money and the market.⁹⁶

Sonenscher suggests that every aspect of artisanal life involved recognition of rights and obligations of some kind; that work was a continuous process of negotiation of many kinds.⁹⁷ His work on the hatters of eighteenth-century France illustrates the work of a particular artisanal trade, the way in which it was governed, the power of the guilds in particular, and the relationships between master craftsmen, journeymen and apprentices.⁹⁸

⁹² Jonathan Barry, 'Bourgeois Collectivism? Urban Association and the Middling Sort' in Jonathan Barry and Christopher Brooks eds., *The Middling Sort of People* (Basingstoke, 1994), p.89

⁹³ Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race* (London, 2003)

⁹⁴ P.J. Marshall ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire II* (Oxford, 1998) p.12 quoting T.H. Breen, 'An Empire of Goods: The Anglicization of Colonial America, 1690-1776', *Journal of British Studies*, XXV (1986), pp.467-99.

⁹⁵ Howard B. Rock, "All her sons join as one band": New York city's artisanal societies in the early republic' in Howard B. Rock, Paul A. Gilje and Robert Asher eds., *American Artisans* (Baltimore, 1995)

⁹⁶ Geoffrey Crossick, 'Past masters: in search of the artisan in European history' in Geoffrey Crossick ed. *The Artisan and the European Town, 1500-1900* (Aldershot, 1997) pp. 1-40

⁹⁷ Michael Sonenscher, *Work and Wages – natural law, politics and the eighteenth- century French trades* (Cambridge, 1989) *passim*

⁹⁸ Michael Sonenscher, *The Hatters of Eighteenth-Century France* (Berkeley Ca., 1987)

Just as the ways of working of English artisans were progressively amended as the industrial revolution began to take hold in the latter years of the eighteenth-century, so Michael Fitzsimmons suggests that the French guilds, which held far greater sway over members of their trades than did any of the few remaining English guilds, were in decline in the last quarter of the eighteenth-century and were often more a function of municipal policy than of craft identity.⁹⁹

It was not only in England and France that artisans were at work in the eighteenth-century. Throughout Europe there was an expectation that artisanship was a lifetime project in which a classic *cursus honorum* was followed leading from apprenticeship to becoming a master craftsman, although this tended to be an ideal rather than reality. Increasingly the number of journeymen tended to exceed the number who could hope to become master craftsmen and Crossick argues that the classic life-course categories of journeyman and master were becoming an increasingly unsatisfactory way of capturing the nature of artisanal work structures even before Industrialisation.¹⁰⁰

It is evident that the eighteenth century saw many changes in the way that artisans worked and related to the communities in which they lived, be they in England, France, Germany or the countries of Scandinavia. This study seeks to explore the world of the eighteenth century artisan in the setting of a small Essex market town. It will seek to answer the questions posed at the beginning of this chapter. Did they form a single cohesive group or did they form part of many different social categories? Did their place in the overall hierarchy of society depend on the trade they followed, their social position and contacts, their religious affiliation or their position along their life course? It will do so informed—although not determined—by a number of modern theoretical thinkers alluded above and in passing in what follows. And, in so doing, it will seek to contribute to the clarification the role of the artisan in eighteenth-century British society.

⁹⁹ Michael P. Fitzsimmons, *From Artisan to Worker* (Cambridge, 2010)

¹⁰⁰ Geoffrey Crossick, 'Past masters', p.8

Chapter 2

The Town of Saffron Walden

In order to appreciate fully the nature of the socio-economic world inhabited by Saffron Walden's eighteenth century artisans, it is important to have an understanding of the physical and topographical context that they inhabited. Thus this chapter is essentially and, of necessity, descriptive, providing a background against which the analysis of the socio-economic sphere can be set. People do not experience society in the abstract, but rather through many encounters and in specific contexts. It will be argued in later chapters that artisans, who formed the core of the middling sort in Saffron Walden, were more fragmented and less homogeneous than has been assumed hitherto. This fragmentation is partly hidden from the observer from the modern world, but from a phenomenological viewpoint the fragmentation and the consequences of fragmentation will largely have been experienced within the framework of the eighteenth century townscape.

It can, thus, be seen that in this respect this chapter is doing rather more than mere 'scene setting'. Rather it is depicting a vital, and often neglected, aspect of social experience, that is the 'locale'. The 'locale' will prove to be especially germane in the context of the specific argument that is to follow.¹⁰¹

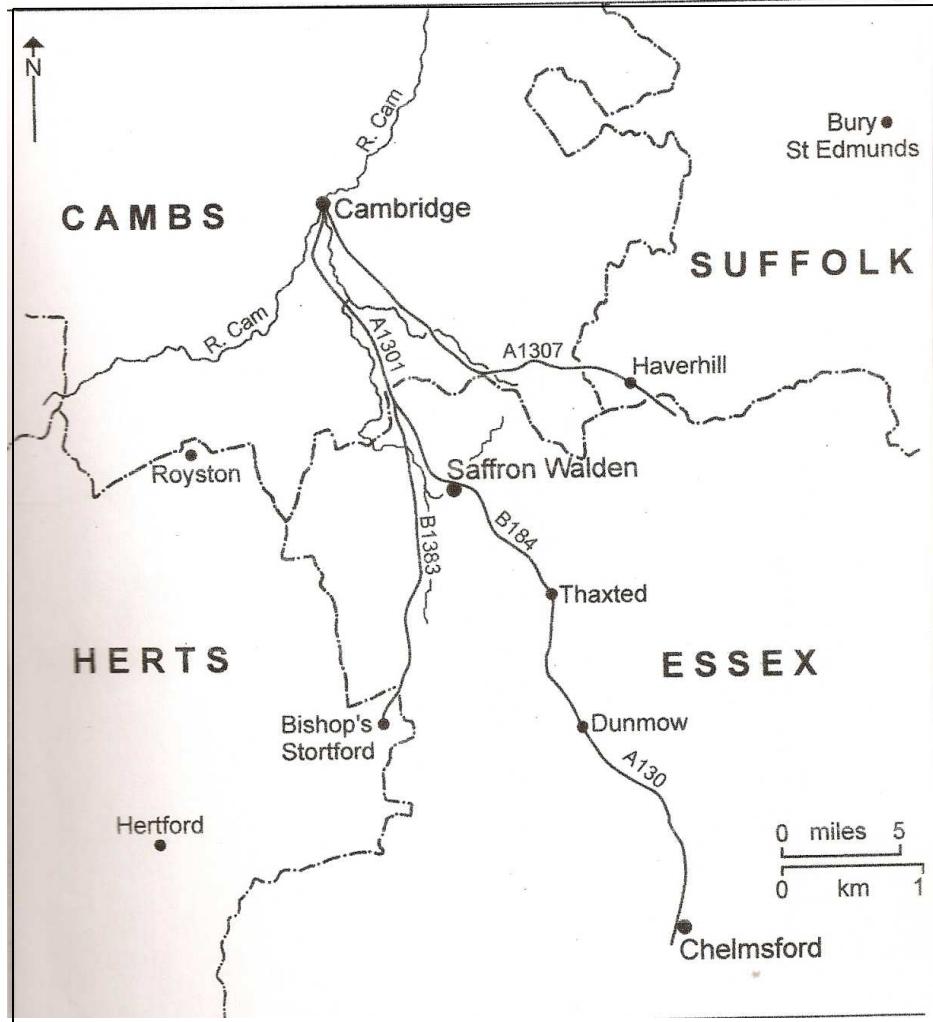
This chapter seeks to present two themes. The first is to provide a general context for the arguments that follow. The second is to present the notion of fractionalism from a spatial viewpoint by employing the specific locale of Saffron Walden.

i. Saffron Walden in its context

The market town of Saffron Walden is located in the chalk uplands of north-west Essex, in the hundred of Uttlesford, within some ten miles of the borders with Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and Suffolk. The valley of the river Cam runs about a mile to the west of the town. (See Map 1) In the eighteenth century it was one of several small market towns with a population of between 1,500 and 3,000 that lay to the south of Cambridge. Other towns of a similar size were Royston in Hertfordshire and Haverhill in Suffolk. Linton, just over the border into Cambridgeshire, had originally been one of that county's market towns, but by the eighteenth century it had shrunk in size and importance.

¹⁰¹ With thanks to Dr Victor Morgan for his thoughts on this topic.

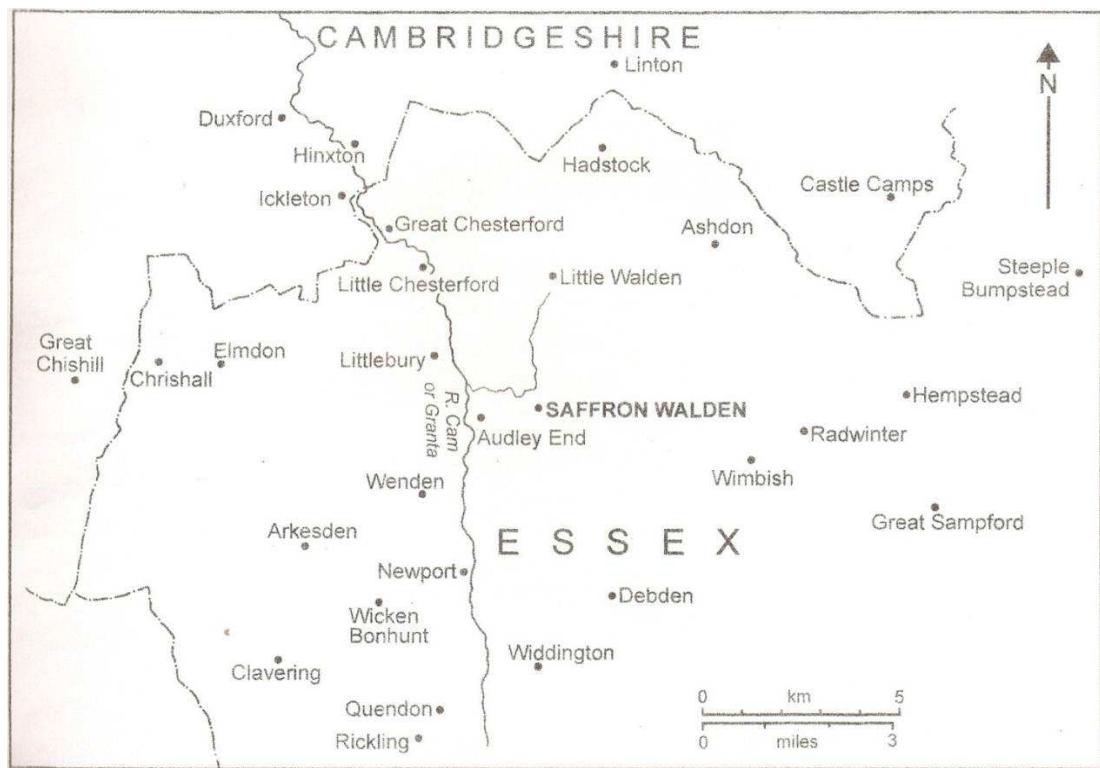
Saffron Walden did not lie on any of the major route-ways out of London, although a toll road, the Hockerill Highway in the valley of the Cam, was built in the 1740s.¹⁰² The route-ways that met in Saffron Walden, although leading to other settlements, were side roads rather than main routes. (Map 2 shows the present structure of roads and their numbers. All of these roads were extant in the eighteenth century.) Even the road from Chelmsford to Walden (B.184 on



Map 1: Saffron Walden and its surrounding counties

¹⁰² F.H. Maud, *The Hockerill highway* (Colchester, 1957).

Map 1) was described by Ogilby and Morgan¹⁰³ as a cross road, the category below major routes. Plans to build a direct route to Bury St. Edmunds, a centre of equivalent size and importance to Cambridge, did not materialise. This lack of a main route through the town was to have an impact on the type of cultural and social events that the town could offer.¹⁰⁴



Map 2: Saffron Walden and its hinterland.

Although only located on a cross road, Saffron Walden did not lack links and planned route-ways to other settlements within both its immediate area and the wider region. Its role as a market town meant that it had well-established links with the villages of its immediate hinterland, those settlements for which it served as central place and market centre, for example the surrounding ring of villages such as Newport, the Chesterfords, Ashdon, Radwinter, Wimpish and Debden. (Map 3 indicates the relative positions of this ring of larger villages as well as more minor settlements and the Audley End estate within the hinterland.)

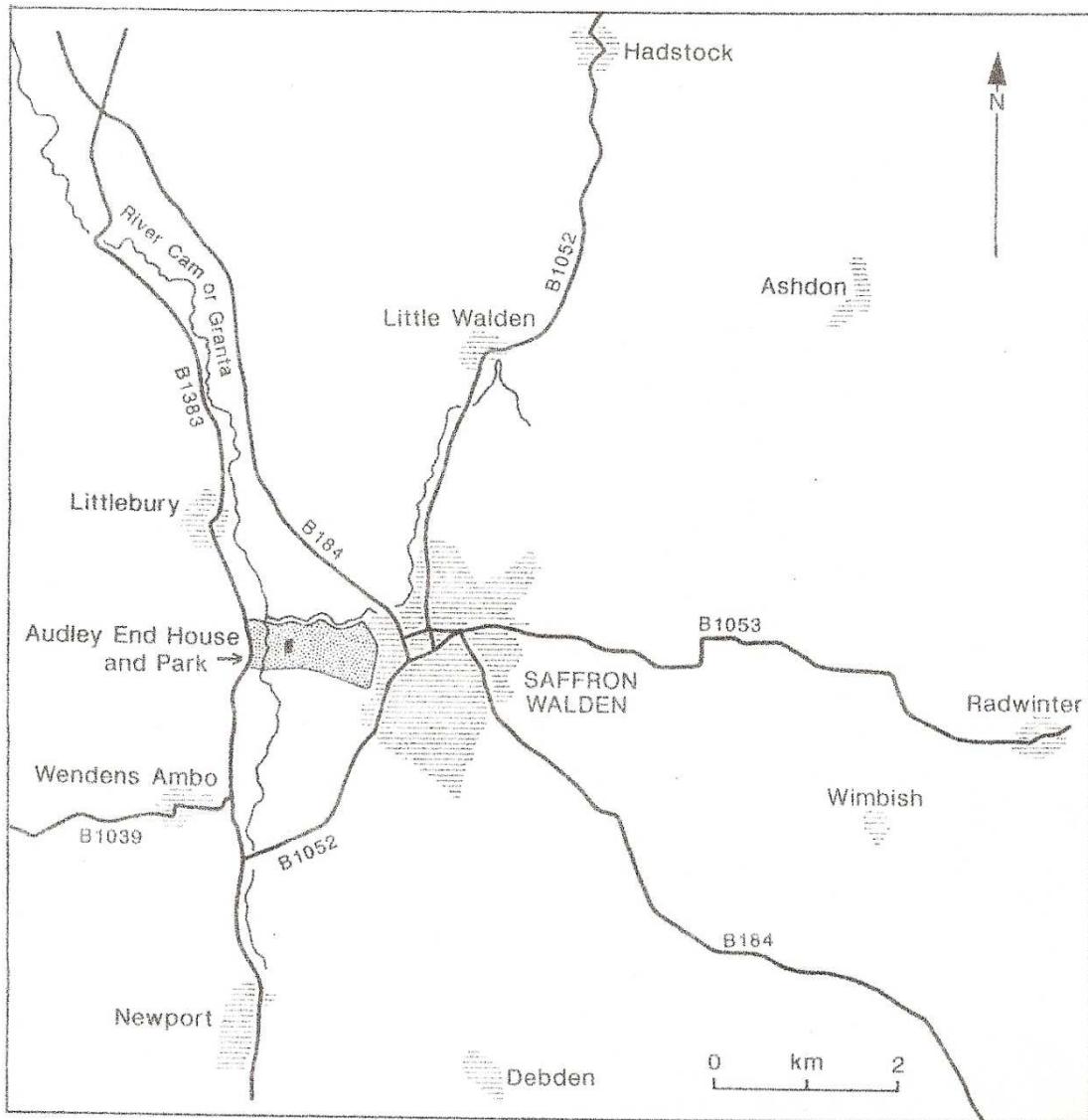
¹⁰³ John Ogilby and William Morgan, *Ogilby's and Morgan's pocket book of the roads* (London, 1752), p.55.

¹⁰⁴ Although similar in size to Walden, Stamford, Lincs., lying on the Great North Road, was able to offer its inhabitants an Assembly Rooms (1717) and a theatre (1768). (See A. Rogers *The book of Stamford*, Buckingham, 1983, p.74)

The lack of flourishing market towns in southern Cambridgeshire meant that there were well-developed links with places at a greater distance such as Balsham and Sawston. Other route-ways had trade connections, those to the east, for example, with the cloth trade. The route through Radwinter and Hempstead towards Horseheath lay in the direction of those towns which, in the early years of the eighteenth century, were still important centres of the new draperies. Routes to the south-west led into Hertfordshire and towards Ware in particular. Until the opening of the Stort Navigation in 1769,¹⁰⁵ Ware, on the Lea Navigation, was the main port of transhipment for malt destined for London brewers. The opening of the Stort Navigation meant that malt could be sent south by road to Bishops Stortford and then on by water to London. Plans to extend the Stort Navigation northwards to Saffron Walden and then on to Cambridge failed to materialise.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.jim-shead.com/waterways/History.php?wpage=STRT> consulted 24.2.2009

¹⁰⁶ Samuel Weston made a survey for the proposed extension of the Stort Navigation to Saffron Walden in 1788. This was probably part of the plan to link the Stort Navigation to the Brandon River. A meeting was held at Great Chesterford in 1789 to approve this plan and a map was produced by William Faden, Geographer to the King in 1790 under the title 'Stort and Brandon Navigation' (ERO, D/DBy P4).



Map 3: Saffron Walden and Audley End

The area around Saffron Walden has been inhabited since the Neolithic period. Evidence of prehistoric man in the form of flint tools has been found in the area. There was a large Roman settlement to the north at Great Chesterford and evidence of smaller settlements elsewhere in the surrounding area. Within the bounds of the present town a substantial Saxon cemetery was excavated between 1876 and 1878 in the area to the west of the High Street.¹⁰⁷

The origins of Saffron Walden as a market town, or 'Chepyng Walden' as it was then known, date to its grant of a market by a charter of 1141 from the Empress Matilda to Geoffrey de Mandeville, Earl of Essex and Constable of the Tower of London. By this charter the market was removed from nearby Newport to Saffron Walden to be held at the de Mandeville's castle on Sundays and

¹⁰⁷ S. R. Bassett, *Saffron Walden: excavations and research 1972-1980* (Chelmsford, 1982), p.9

Thursdays.¹⁰⁸ The charter also granted a fair to run from the eve of Pentecost for one week. Further charters granted a market to be held on Tuesdays to the Abbot and Convent of Walden in 1295 and in 1143 and 1248 a fair to be held around the feast of St. James (25th July). In both these cases the fair was granted to the Church of St. James and its monks or the Abbot and Convent.¹⁰⁹ Walden Priory, later Walden Abbey, was a Benedictine house founded between 1136 and 1139. The foundation charter granting churches and land dating from 1140, by Geoffrey de Mandeville,¹¹⁰ was dedicated to the Virgin and St. James. It was located to the west of the town on the site now occupied by Audley End House.

As a market town Saffron Walden served, and serves today, a hinterland of villages from both Essex and Cambridgeshire. The hinterland can be approximately delineated by the distance that it was possible to walk to and from the market in a single day, a distance of some ten miles. According to Central Place Theory this would constitute the main sphere of influence of the town. Theoretically, the larger the range of higher-order services the town provides, the larger the sphere of influence. Thus Cambridge and Bury St. Edmunds were higher-order settlements than Saffron Walden, offering more social facilities and professional services, but Saffron Walden ranked above the villages that, in turn, used it as a market centre.¹¹¹

ii. The economic dimension

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the main economic activity in Saffron Walden, besides agriculture, was the wool trade as it had been for several hundred years. The earlier trade in saffron, which had given its name to the town, was in decline. A.F.J. Brown suggests that 'saffron had been discontinued by 1730, when it had almost disappeared around the town',¹¹² although in the 1690s it had been not only the main marketing centre for saffron but also the centre of its growth.

Records show the presence of both woolcombers and weavers in the town in the early eighteenth century and although only one will mentions any kind of

¹⁰⁸ Samantha Letters, 'Online Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs in England Wales to 1516' <<http://www.history.ac.uk/cmh/gaz/gazweb2.html>>: [Essex] (last updated 23 July 2007)

¹⁰⁹ Samantha Letters, *op.cit.*

¹¹⁰ Diana Greenway and Leslie Watkiss (eds. and translators), *The Book of The Foundation of Walden Monastery* (Oxford, 1999), p.xviii

¹¹¹ <http://www.csiss.org/classics/content/67> consulted on 1.12.2012.

¹¹² A.F.J. Brown, *Essex at work 1700-1815* (Chelmsford, 1969), p.39

spinning or winding wheel,¹¹³ it is likely that many of the women of the town would have spun in their spare time, although not on the scale of larger centres of the wool trade such as Colchester, Braintree, Bocking and Coggeshall.

Some of the wool trade in Saffron Walden at this time was of the kind called the ‘new draperies’. The new draperies were lighter worsted cloth of the type described as ‘bays and says’. ¹¹⁴ They were particularly targeted at the Spanish and Portuguese markets.¹¹⁵ Most of the rest of the weavers were involved in fustian weaving. Fustian cloth was a coarser fabric¹¹⁶ used for clothing by the poorer classes.

By the middle of the century the woollen trade in Essex was beginning to decline. The Seven Years War (1756-1763) had led to the loss of markets for the new draperies in Spain and Portugal, a loss for which orders for military uniforms did not compensate, and the early stages of the industrial revolution saw the rise of the Yorkshire woollen trade against which Essex could not compete, although the heartlands of the Braintree-Colchester area clung on longer than outposts such as Saffron Walden. Of the twenty-five charity apprentices placed by Bromfield’s Charity¹¹⁷ in trades relating to the woollen trade, eighteen were apprenticed in the first quarter of the century. Only five were placed in the second half of the century, three with woolcombers and two with fustian weavers. The last apprentice, one Laurence Mynott, was apprenticed in 1780 to a woolcomber, Thomas Martin junior, in Clavering, a village some five miles from Saffron Walden. This apprenticeship took place two years after the last Bishop Blaize Procession in 1778.¹¹⁸ Bishop Blaize was the patron saint of woolcombers and his saint’s day, February 3rd, had been an occasion of great celebration, a procession followed by a feast. For such a popular occasion to be discontinued suggests that the wool trade had sunk to a position of insignificance in the town.

It was fortunate for the town that as the wool trade fell into decline malting began to increase in importance. Saffron Walden had possessed a malt mill from early

¹¹³ ERO, Will 253 CR 12, Frances Doughty, widow. A winding wheel and a pair of shears were left to her son James.

¹¹⁴ For the late seventeenth century cloth trade in East Anglia, see N. B. Harte (ed.), *The new draperies in the Low Countries and England* (Oxford, 1997).

¹¹⁵ P.J. Bowden, ‘Wool supply and the woollen industry’ *The Economic History Review*, n.s., 9 (1956), p.53

¹¹⁶ O.E.D., http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50091271?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=fustian&first=1&max_to_show=10 consulted 25.2.2009

¹¹⁷ See below p.121

¹¹⁸ John Player, *Sketches of Saffron Walden* (Saffron Walden, 1845), p.85.

times¹¹⁹ and Peaty suggests that by 1600 there were at least six maltings in the town.¹²⁰ Ball claims that by the early eighteenth century north-west Essex was well established as a source of good barley for malting¹²¹ and Crosby states that 'Malting became of more than local importance by the early eighteenth century when it was virtually a universal market town industry,¹²² in response to the demands of London brewers.'¹²³ By 1754, 85% of the 13,970 quarters of malt produced in the Saffron Walden area made their way to London,¹²⁴ firstly via Ware, later by the Hockerill Highway Turnpike to Bishops Stortford and then, after 1769, by the Stort Navigation to the River Lea. Ball suggests that the quantity of malt sent to London from the immediate area around Saffron Walden in 1754 represents the annual production of about fourteen malthouses and that by 1790 there were twenty-two malthouses in the town itself.¹²⁵ The malting industry reached its peak in the nineteenth century when there were at least thirty-one malthouses working in Walden. Gold Street was the centre of the trade with seven different maltings operating but the Market Place, High Street and Castle Street all had maltings. Map 4 shows the streets where the maltings were to be found. Unless the malting has survived, it is not possible to give a precise position within each street.

¹¹⁹ E.R.O. D/B 2/BRE8/3 William Hayward's survey of the town lists a malt mill in the Market Place in the 17th century.

¹²⁰ Ian P. Peaty, *Essex brewers and the malting and hop industries of the county* (New Ash Green, 1992), p.128

¹²¹ Geoffrey Ball, 'The floor malting industry of North-West Essex and East Hertfordshire up to circa 1914', *Saffron Walden Historical Journal*, n.s.. 4 (8), (2004) p.10.

¹²² In Saffron Walden brewing was carried out by maltsters, innkeepers and individuals for their personal use.

¹²³ Tony Crosby, 'The development of malthouses around the Hertfordshire-Essex border', *Industrial Archaeology Review*, 22 (2000), p.39.

¹²⁴ A.F.J. Brown, *Essex at work*, p.60.

¹²⁵ Geoffrey Ball, *Floor malting industry*, p.13



Map 4 The position of maltings by street in 1794 (Base map by Eyre 1758)

Although by the latter part of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries many of the maltings were supplying malt for the London brewing trade, some maltings continued to be small-scale operations as they had been in the early eighteenth century. Jonathan Brown points out that eighteenth century economists viewed malting as a branch of commerce rather than a manufacturing industry because there was so much trade in the product.¹²⁶ It was commercially a better deal to trade in malt than barley because a quarter of barley equalled 448lbs., whilst a quarter of malt weighed just 336lbs., thus reducing transport costs. Many of the Walden maltings in the early part of the century would have been small-scale operations. A single man could work between fifteen and thirty quarters of steeped grain and thus most maltings had a capacity within this range.

The small-scale maltings tended to handle malt that would be used in local breweries. In the 1760s about 60 % of all brewing was done at home, the remainder being in the hands of the retail brewers—publicans and beer house keepers who made their own beer. It was only towards the end of the century that common brewers, that is wholesale brewers, began to play a more important role in Saffron Walden using more of the malt that did not find its way to London. One of the earliest common brewers in Walden was the Gibson family. George Gibson, a Quaker miller from Maldon, had established a shop in the Market Place in 1763. His son Atkinson Francis married into the Quaker Wyatt family of Saffron Walden in 1789. His wife Elizabeth brought with her the family brewery which she had inherited from her father, Jabez. Jabez had described himself as a common brewer, malster and webster in his will of 1780.¹²⁷ This small brewery was the basis of the Gibsons' large-scale common brewing business.

It is interesting to note that Jabez Wyatt described himself not just as common brewer and malster in his will, but also as a webster. Most of the malsters in Walden worked at a small scale as has been noted above. Many would have also carried on another trade since in the eighteenth century malting was not a year-round occupation. In the summer there was no malting to do so men working in malting needed another way of earning a living during these months. Many would have, in common with most of the population of Walden, worked some pieces of land but others continued with the trades that they had learned in their youth before they saw the profit to be made in malting, as was the case of Jabez Wyatt the webster. Others worked in trades that were complementary to malting, jobs best carried on in the summer months such as brick and tile making or in the

¹²⁶ Jonathan Brown, 'The Malting Industry' in: *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1750-1850*, ed. G.C. Mingay (Cambridge, 1989), VI pp. 501.

¹²⁷ ERO, D/B 2/TDS5/14/23 Will of Jabez Wyatt, common brewer, malster and webster, 1780.

related trades of corn dealing and milling.¹²⁸ Brown suggests that malting was one of the soundest enterprises in pre-industrial England. Men involved in this trade often went on to invest in other businesses.¹²⁹ This was certainly the case with the Gibson family who went on to open the Saffron Walden and North Essex Bank, one of the precursors of Barclays Bank.¹³⁰

It can be seen that the two industries of wool and malt provided the economic background to life in Saffron Walden in the eighteenth century. In the early part of the period many artisans had some involvement in the wool trade in addition to their own trades, in the latter part of the century this was replaced by malting.

iii. Saffron Walden and its neighbours

As well as the villages of its hinterland and the other market towns of the area, Saffron Walden also had neighbours in terms of the local aristocracy. According to Adams' *Index Villaris* of 1680, the parish of Saffron Walden contained the seats of more than three gentlemen.¹³¹ Of these, the most important was Audley End, located about a mile to the west of the town by the river Cam.

The mansion at Audley End had been built by Thomas, Earl of Suffolk on the site of Walden Abbey granted by Henry VIII to Thomas, Lord Audley, his Lord Chancellor. For many years Audley End was in the hands of the Earls of Suffolk, but in 1668 it was purchased by Charles II as a convenient stopping point on the road to Newmarket. The mansion was returned to the Earls of Suffolk in 1701 and all monies outstanding from the Crown were cancelled. At this point the mansion was a vast building, but in 1721-2 three sides of the great quadrangle were demolished on the advice of the architect Sir John Vanbrugh.

In the mid-years of the eighteenth century the mansion and estate passed from the Earls of Suffolk first to Lord Effingham and then, in 1747, to the Countess of Portsmouth. She further reduced the size of the mansion.¹³² On the death of the Countess of Portsmouth the property passed to her nephew Sir John Griffin

¹²⁸ From an analysis of the trade references in the Grand Jury Lists for the Saffron Walden Quarter Sessions it appears that in any seven-to-fifteen-year period no more than six men described their occupation as malster. It might be that this figure suggests the number of malsters that the town could sustain.

¹²⁹ Brown, *The Malting Trade*, p.513

¹³⁰ Malcolm White, *Saffron Walden's History* (Saffron Walden, 1999), p.147

¹³¹ John Adams, *Index Villaris*, (London, 1680), p.368

¹³² Richard, Lord Braybrooke, *The History of Audley End* (London, 1836), p.93. In 1747 an estimate was made of the materials at Audley End in case it was pulled down.

Griffin, later fourth Lord Howard de Walden and first Baron Braybrooke who ran the estate until his death in 1797.¹³³

The presence of the Audley End mansion had an impact on the economy of Saffron Walden. Throughout the period it provided a number of jobs for local people, usually in the lower echelons of the staff. The more important servants, during Sir John Griffin Griffin's time at least, commuted seasonally with Sir John between Audley End and his London residence. In 1770 there were twenty five staff,¹³⁴ including some whose names are to be seen elsewhere in the town. The Archer family, for example, was represented by Sarah, the kitchen maid, and William the postillion.¹³⁵

The estate also provided employment for some of the town's craftsmen. Evidence for the early part of the period is somewhat sketchy, but from 1762, when Sir John Griffin Griffin inherited the estate, until the end of the century, monthly vouchers for household and estate expenses survive giving details of expenditure. An analysis of a sample set of vouchers from 1763-8 shows the type of trade between the town and the estate. The monthly household vouchers for 1768¹³⁶ show that, although many of the household's needs may have been provided by the same firms which supplied the family's London house, Saffron Walden tradesmen were patronised for certain classes of goods. Robert Mapletoft, the local apothecary, submitted bills in eleven out of twelve months, mostly for medicines for the servants, while William Impey, the local brazier, submitted bills in ten months out of twelve for minor repair work and John Pratt, the locksmith, eight bills. Other local tradesmen were less frequently patronised: George Gibson, a local draper, submitted a single bill as did Thomas Payne, bookseller and stationer, and Thwaites the clockmaker. James Gin Searle, a local tailor, submitted bills for clothing for the servants, but not for the family. It seems that for non-food requirements the tradesmen of the town provided for the needs of the servants rather than the family.

The tradesmen of the town also provided food supplies to the estate. John Edwards and John Rusted provided baking and milling services¹³⁷ and Bennet Reeves worked as a brewer providing beer,¹³⁸ whilst William Turner and William Swan provided meat. Malt was supplied at the local level, by Thomas

¹³³ William Addison, *Audley End* (London, 1953), p.xii

¹³⁴ ERO., D/DBy/A11 Audley End Receipt Book, 1755-1773

¹³⁵ ERO., D/DBy/A11 Audley End Receipt Book, 1755-1773

¹³⁶ ERO., D/DBy A26 Monthly Household Vouchers 1768

¹³⁷ ERO., D/By A18-21 Audley End Housekeeping Books 1765-9

¹³⁸ ERO., D/DBy A26 Monthly Household Vouchers 1768

Pennystone, the estate steward, and by a member of the Archer family.¹³⁹ The cooper's services are reflected in vouchers set against Joseph Whiston's bills. Bread and meat needed to be bought locally to supplement the fresh produce that the estate could provide. Williams comments that 'The Audley End household accounts show that local tradespeople as well as Londoners and others benefitted from Griffin's demands for a wide variety of commodities'.¹⁴⁰

Household vouchers also provide information about other services that local craftsmen supplied to the estate. The vouchers for 1768 suggest that the greatest amount of business concerned the estate livestock, the horses in particular. Thomas Johnson, the blacksmith, was a frequent visitor to the estate as was William Symonds the collar maker who dealt with problems concerning harness and tackle. John Bush, the wheelwright, also submitted regular bills, sometimes several times in a month. If all the vouchers submitted are considered, those concerning the care of the animals and working vehicles of the estate are by far the most numerous. This is to be expected since the local craftsmen would be known to the local men who worked on the estate. These were matters which did not concern the family provided they did not interfere with the smooth running of the estate and so could be dealt with by local people without the need to summon specialists from London.

As well as providing regular employment for a number of local people and patronising local businesses, the Audley End estate also provided opportunities for casual work. This was particularly the case during the considerable work that was carried out on the estate during Sir John Griffin Griffin's tenure. Although many of the master craftsmen employed were leaders in their fields at this time, others were local men. Samuel Wade, the plumber, John Bunten, plumber and glazier, George Day, one of the estate brickmakers, and Richard Ward, bricklayer, were all local craftsmen, who, in turn, employed others. For example in July 1763 Richard Ward submitted a bill for work by himself, a master bricklayer, five bricklayers, one apprentice, five labourers and two boys employed in cleaning bricks.¹⁴¹

However it was for local unskilled labour that the building work presented the biggest opportunity. Dorothy Monteith has suggested that the labour released by the decline of such traditional industries as wool, saffron and tanning had not all been absorbed by the growing malting industry and so there was a readily available source of unskilled labour available for casual work during the

¹³⁹ J.D. Williams, 'The noble household as a unit of consumption: the Audley End experience, 1765-1797', *Essex Archaeology and History*, 23, (1992), pp.67-78

¹⁴⁰ J.D. Williams, *ibid*, p.76

¹⁴¹ ERO, D/DBy/A242

renovations.¹⁴² The building work provided a source of employment for local workmen and meant that a part of the £100,000 expended circulated in and round Saffron Walden.

It can, therefore, be seen that the economic influence of Audley End on Saffron Walden was quite considerable. However, this influence was not solely economic. The owner of Audley End had the right to appoint the vicar of Saffron Walden and thus had a profound influence on the way that the cure of souls in the town was carried out. It was also from Lord Howard, as Sir John Griffin Griffin became, that advice was sought by the Mayor and Corporation at the time of the Bread Riots in 1795. Henry Archer, writing as mayor of the town, begged Lord Howard to use his influence to secure military help to control the situation.¹⁴³ Lord Howard did use his influence at this point and a troop of the Surrey Light Dragoons had the desired effect when they arrived in the town. No doubt Lord Howard was happy to assist the flustered mayor since a full-scale riot less than a mile from his house would not have been a pleasing prospect!

The presence of the Audley End estate so close to hand did have a considerable effect on the town of Saffron Walden. It offered employment for some of the town's artisans, trade for the shopkeepers, a reassuring presence to the town governors in uncertain times and occasionally it exercised its influence to ensure the comfort of favoured employees in their dotage by securing a place for them in the town almshouse.¹⁴⁴

In the wider context of John Cannon's work on the eighteenth century as the 'aristocratic' century,¹⁴⁵ it might be claimed that the relationship between Saffron Walden and the Audley End estate highlights one of the paradoxes of the period: that the emergence of the artisan part of the middling sort, at least in some locations like Saffron Walden, depended on the demand for their services from the great houses and their occupants. This case study reinforces a point which works against a tendency in pre-modern historiography which unduly compartmentalises society. On the one hand there has been the study of a broadly conceived aristocracy. On the other hand, there are 'the others'. On the contrary, this study demonstrates the mutual interdependence of these groups and the role of the aristocracy as a driver of economic activity.

¹⁴² D. Monteith, 'Saffron Walden and its environs: a study in the development of a landscape', (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of London, 1958).

¹⁴³ ERO, D/DBy O12 Correspondence and letters in connection with the Saffron Walden bread riots.

¹⁴⁴ ERO., D/Q 67/2/1 and 2 Minutes of Walden Almshouse. See below p.149 Widow Webb.

¹⁴⁵ John Cannon, *Aristocratic century: the peerage in the eighteenth century* (Cambridge, 1984)

iv. The Plan of the Town

The town of Saffron Walden in the eighteenth century was bordered by the Audley End estate to the west and an area known as the Common to the East. The presence of the Audley End estate to the west effectively limited any expansion of the town in this direction.

The road known variously as Cuckingstool End Street, Middle Watch and High Street formed the main north-south axis with three small roads running westward and five larger roads, roughly parallel, running eastward, from south to north: Baileys Lane, George Street, Market End Street (later King Street), Church Street and Castle Street. (See Map 5, Eyre's 1758 map of the town.) The Market Place lay at the end of Market End Street and the Church of St. Mary the Virgin between Church Street and Castle Street. A number of smaller streets provided north-south links between these larger roads. The High Street axis provided the link south to the Cam valley and Newport and north towards the Chesterfords and Cambridge. The road from Thaxted to Linton ran on the easterly side of the town. Other roads led to villages such as Radwinter and Ashdon.

The main commercial heart of the town lay between George Street and Church Street. It was here that the open Market Place was located as were the various rows such as Butcher, Tanner and Grocer Rows, and the Butter Market. The latter were a survival of the mediaeval market pattern of the town. Many of the town's butchers were still to be found clustered in Butcher Row. Other commercial premises were to be found elsewhere in the town, but in smaller numbers. The structure of the rows, a set of narrow parallel streets, can still be seen in their modern form. Photographs 1, 2 and 3 show Market Row, Butcher Row and Mercer Row respectively. Market Row shows the front side of the buildings and Butcher Row the back of the same set of buildings.



Map 5: Edward Eyre's 1758 Map of the town of Saffron Walden (ERO, T/M 90/1) Reproduced courtesy of the Essex Record Office



Photograph 1: Market Row



Photograph 2: Butcher Row



Photograph 3: Mercer Row

The numerous inns, alehouses and victuallers were in part a measure of the central place functions provided by the town to those who visited it. They were to be found scattered throughout the town but again the preponderance was to be found around the market. In 1786 seventeen alehouses or inns were registered in Saffron Walden.¹⁴⁶ The most prestigious, the Rose and Crown, was situated on the Market Place. It was from the Rose and Crown that coaches and wagons set off for places as far afield as London and it was at the Rose and Crown that many civic occasions and quarter session sittings took place.¹⁴⁷ It was also the meeting place of the Rose Club. The Rose Club was a benefit club active in the 1760s and 1770s.¹⁴⁸ Others whose locations can be firmly established were the Coffee House also in the Market Place, the King's Arms in Market Hill, the White Horse

¹⁴⁶ ERO, D/B 2/QSS6/2 Alehouse-keepers Licensing Book, 1786-1815. The conditions of an alehouse-keeper's licence ran:

...shall not suffer any Person whatsoever (except real Travellers) to remain tippling in his House, Outhouses, or Yards during the Time of divine Service on the Lords Day or on any other Day after nine of the Clock in the Evening in the winter Season or ten in the Summer Season and shall entertain no Strollers Gamblers or Persons travelling with Sights Farces or other Entertainment of the Stage nor suffer any Playing at Cards Bowls Loggetts or other Games Drunkeness or Disorders whatsoever in his House Outhouses or Yards but shall during the Continuance of the said License keep good Order and Government therein.

The J.Ps. in Saffron Walden aimed to keep a tight rein on the way that alehouse-keepers operated. Between 1754 and 1766 six alehouse-keepers were recorded as appearing before the Quarter Sessions charged with keeping a disorderly house. (D/B 2/QSS2/7 and 8, Quarter Sessions Books)

¹⁴⁷ Sadly the Rose and Crown burned down in 1969.

¹⁴⁸ ERO, D/DU 66/12 Direction by 35 members of the Rose Club to Thomas Rankin and John Archer to sell property in the Butter Market in 1771

in Market Street, the Hoops in Market End Street, the Cross Keys on the corner of Market End Street and the High Street, the Greyhound and the Queen's Head in Cuckingstool End Street, the Bull, the George and the Eight Bells in George Street and the Bell and the Castle in Castle Street. Over the course of the eighteenth century many other alehouses, and the smaller victuallers, came and went.¹⁴⁹ Facilities such as these must have played a key role in the sociability of the artisan and labouring classes of the town.



Photograph 4: Rose and Crown Hotel, Market Place, Saffron Walden (*penes mea*) c.1960.

The locations of the town's main industries—weaving, in the earlier part of the century, and malting in the later years—were scattered throughout the town. Little physical evidence remains of the wool and fustian weaving industries. Those cottages with 'weavers' windows', that is windows larger or more numerous than would normally be expected, tend to date from the nineteenth century silk and crape weaving industries.¹⁵⁰ Some evidence of locations for weaving can be derived from wills and rate books. For example Edward Allen, who described himself as a weaver in his will made in 1759, stated that he lived

¹⁴⁹ Evidence is drawn from sources such as the Grand Jury Lists (D/B 2/QSS1) and the Alehouse-keepers Licensing Book (D/B 2/QSS6/2)

¹⁵⁰ These later cottages were clustered in Gold Street and along the southern edge of the Common.

in the Black Swan, which the 1757 Rate Book confirms was located in Church Street.¹⁵¹ The wills of William Dabney and Robert Breen, both weavers, place them in the Butter Market and Castle Street respectively.¹⁵² There are no Poor Rate Books for this earlier period to confirm their locations.

The evidence for the location of weavers and websters from their wills is sparse. This may well be explained by the fact that only people with some property to leave or who needed to make their wishes clear made wills at this point. Many weavers were not in a position to have much property to leave on their deaths and so few wills were probably made and even fewer survive. Even where such wills do survive, the location of the property mentioned is not always given since the testator and the witnesses assumed that everyone knew it.

There are a few examples of wills of more affluent weavers. Jabez Wyatt, in his will of 1780, includes the occupation of Webster among the trades he lays claim to. It does, however, appear last in the list of three: common brewer, maltster and webster. It was the trade to which he was apprenticed, but by his death his not inconsiderable wealth was derived from his other, more lucrative, occupations.¹⁵³ He does not mention the location of his dwelling house, but it was likely to have been in Bridge End and it is unlikely that it contained any evidence of weaving!

There is more evidence of the location of maltings around the town. Although no malting survives in its entirety, parts of such buildings still remain, for example the building on the corner of Middleton Place, now a private residence, and the Central Hall in the Arcade. The arch in Gold Street (Photograph 5) is a good example of the height required to allow wagons to enter the yard of a malting. The house adjoining the yard belonged to the maltster, an indication that this was a successful enterprise. There are many references to the malting in Gold Street. It seems that this was one of the larger scale enterprises. In his will made in 1759 Charles Webb, who described himself as a gentleman, made reference to his messuage and malting office in Gold Street in the occupation of himself and Mr William Archer.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ ERO, 149 CR 17, the will of Edward Allen 1759
ERO, D/B 2/PAR11/1 1757 Poor Rate Book

¹⁵² ERO, 388 CR 14, the will of William Dabney, 1732
ERO, 317 CR 15, the will of Robert Breen, 1734

¹⁵³ ERO, D/B 2/TDS5/14/23, the will of Jabez Wyatt, 1780. It is interesting to note that the will of his father Zacharias Wyatt, also a webster, was proved in 1731 in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (TNA PROB 11/207). This suggests that the Wyatt family were weavers on a grander scale than most.

¹⁵⁴ ERO, 167 CR 16, will of Charles Webb, gentleman, 1759



Photograph 5: A former malting on the corner of Middleton Place, now a private residence, once a saffron warehouse.



Photograph 6: The entrance to the former malting in Gold Street

Although malting became more prominent in the later years of the eighteenth century, wills show that it was taking place throughout the century. In his will of 1705 John Heath described himself as a malster and gave orders that his

property, in an undisclosed location, was to be sold to settle his debts.¹⁵⁵ One of the witnesses to his will was Edward Allcraft who served as mayor of the town and master of the almshouse.¹⁵⁶ In his will of 1731¹⁵⁷ he also described himself as a malster but made no reference to any property. Given that he had served in both of the major civic roles it seems likely that his business was quite substantial.

Just as malting occurred throughout the century, so it was geographically spread throughout the town. The town malt mill, the property of the Corporation, which placed it in the hands of feoffees to lease it out, was located with its south side abutting the Market Place. The first records of the malt mill are to be found in the ‘Accounts of the Treasurer and Chamberlains of the Gild of the Holy Trinity’ dating from 1545-1651.¹⁵⁸ In the course of the eighteenth century the malt mill was variously leased to Christopher and Edward Ball in 1727, a father and son, the father being a shoemaker and the son a butcher;¹⁵⁹ to Thomas Imeson, a shopkeeper, in 1752;¹⁶⁰ to Jabez Wyatt and Thomas Rankin, common brewers, in 1766¹⁶¹ and to Atkinson Francis Gibson, common brewer, in 1797.¹⁶² In the earlier years of the century malting was a secondary activity. The Balls and Thomas Imeson gave their occupations as trades unrelated to malting or brewing. In the latter part of the century the malt mill was in the hands of common brewers, that is large-scale beer makers. This supports the argument that malting became of increasing importance in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

Apart from references in wills and physical evidence in the townscape in the form of buildings once involved in malting, evidence as to the location of maltings in the town can be found in various official documents such as Land Tax lists and parish and church rate books. In 1780, for example, Land Tax was charged on one malting in Church Street and two in the High Street. The malting in Church Street was the property of Mr Pennystone, those in the High Street were held by Mr William Archer, late Webb’s malting, and Mr Jabez Wyatt. In each case the man named was the owner occupier.¹⁶³ In the Rate Books of 1794 a considerably higher number of maltings is recorded. (See Map 4: The location of maltings by street in 1794.) The Rate Books give information about the main location of any property, the owner, the actual property held, its value and

¹⁵⁵ ERO., 99 CR 12, will of John Heath, 1705

¹⁵⁶ ERO., D/B 2/CHR11/10, Almshouse accounts

¹⁵⁷ ERO., 366 CR 14, will of Edward Allcraft, 1731

¹⁵⁸ ERO., T/A 401/2 Accounts of the Treasurer and Chamberlains of the Gild of the Holy Trinity

¹⁵⁹ ERO., D/B 2/TDS3/13/1, lease of the malt mill

¹⁶⁰ ERO., D/B 2/2/91, lease of malt mill to Thomas Imeson, 1752

¹⁶¹ ERO., D/B 2/TDS3/7/3, lease of malt mill to Jabez Wyatt and Thomas Rankin, 1766

¹⁶² ERO., D/B 2/TDS3/12/2, lease of malt mill to Atkinson Francis Gibson, 1797

¹⁶³ ERO., Q/RPI 896, Land Tax Saffron Walden, 1780

rateable value. In 1794 the rate was one shilling in the pound. However it is not always possible to be sure of the precise location of each piece of property since all properties were listed under the street in which the main property lay. Nor do we know how large the malting was, unless the malting was the only property listed. Nevertheless Table 1, below, gives an idea of how common maltings were in Saffron Walden at the end of the eighteenth century. It also shows the importance of certain families in the malting trade. It can be seen that the Archer family were responsible for five different maltings. The two maltings owned by William Archer, one in Market End and one in the High Street, were valued at a total of £98.10s. John Edwards' malting in Market End was valued at £174.10s, a very considerable sum suggesting that he was brewing on a large scale, although it is possible that this sum also included his new malting in Gold Street (See Picture 5) but not the one run by Mrs. Edwards which was rated separately. On the other hand some maltings were small; Robert Chalk's establishment in Cuckingstool End was valued at just £13.5s.

Street	Occupier	Rateable Value
Common End	Thomas Allen	£18.10s
Market End	Samuel Cole	£24.10s
Market End	William Archer	£63.10s
Market End	John Edwards (note: also new malting in Gold Street)	£174.10s
Hill Street	Joseph Eedes	£17.10s
Gold Street	Mrs. Edwards	£22.15s
Cuckingstool End St.	Robert Chalk and John Lemon	£13.5s + £11
Cuckingstool End St.	Henry Archer (2 maltings)	£61
High Street	Martin Catlin	£23.5s
High Street	Francis Gibson	£126.5s
High Street	Thomas Archer	£45.15s
High Street	William Archer	£35
High Street	John Smith	£15.15s
High Street	William Allen	£50
Bridge End	Francis Gibson (empty?)	£6.10s
Castle Street	Stephen Moul	£65.15s
Castle Street	Thomas Webb	£61.10s

Table 1: Owners of Maltings, the streets in which they are listed in the Parish Rate Book of 1794 (D/B 2/PAR11/2) and their rateable value. See Map 4.

v. The Spatial Distribution of the Social Structure of the Town

The town retained what was a characteristic feature of the pre-modern urban settlement. This contrasts markedly with the other extreme: the gated communities to be found in certain parts of the world today. Thus, although there was an emphasis on commerce in the area around the Market Place, residential accommodation was spread throughout the town. Most streets contained a mixture of wealthy and less affluent property, but there was a preponderance of more affluent residential property in Cuckingstool End, High Street and Church Street, whilst smaller, poorer homes were more likely to be found in Castle Street and Gold Street. The relatively small physical size of the town meant that it was possible to walk from one side of the town to the other in no more than fifteen minutes, meant that the eighteenth century population was accustomed to the fact that the relatively rich and poor lived in close proximity to each other. Although the town was fractionalised, it was not compartmentalised!

In the 1713 list of Almshouse Tenements, made when Mr Thomas Pennystone was the Master and Edward Allcraft the Part Brother,¹⁶⁴ almshouse tenements were listed in Horn Lane (7), Cuckingstool End (5), the east side of Gold Street (9), Butcher Row (6) and Castle Street (1) (See Map 6). The tenements in Butcher Row were shops or stables and the property in Castle Street was a baker's, the other properties were all residential. The rent of eight of the twenty-one residential properties, but not any of those in Cuckingstool End, was paid by the overseers, an indication of the poverty of the occupants.

The Poor Rate Books of the town also provide a wealth of evidence about the structure of the town. Complete books survive for 1757¹⁶⁵ and 1794¹⁶⁶ listing the inhabitants of the town street by street. In the 1757 book all the inhabitants are listed whether they contributed to the poor rate or not. Where a contribution is required, the value of the property and the rate charged, 16d. in the pound at this time, is given. Where no rate is charged there is occasionally a comment such as 'cert.', presumably a reference to the fact that the inhabitant of the property was in possession of a settlement certificate from another parish.¹⁶⁷ In 1794 the method of recording payment changed slightly. Some rate payers were recorded as being in partial arrears as well as those for whom no payment was recorded. For the 1794 figures, the percentages show those who either paid no rate or were in partial arrears. It seems reasonable to assume that a failure to contribute to the poor rate was an indication of poverty, although in some cases it might be

¹⁶⁴ ERO, D/B 2/CHR11/8, 1713 List of Almshouse Tenements and Land

¹⁶⁵ ERO, D/B 2/PAR11/1, Poor Rate Book of 1757

¹⁶⁶ ERO, D/B 2/PAR11/2, Poor Rate Book of 1794

¹⁶⁷ For material about the use of settlement certificates, see below Chapter 5, Fractionalism.

religious persuasion which caused the default as in the case of Quakers¹⁶⁸ and occasionally members of other non-conformist churches.¹⁶⁹ Those who refused to pay out of religious conviction, or, perhaps, in some cases out of sheer recalcitrance, were very much in the minority. It is therefore possible to draw up a picture of poverty in the town street by street by determining what percentage of the properties made no contribution to the poor rate in a given year. A comparison of the two available complete rate books will allow snapshots of the social structure of the town in the middle and at the end of the eighteenth century. (See Maps 7 and 8 for the location of the various streets. Both these maps are colour coded in the same way as Charts 1 and 2.)

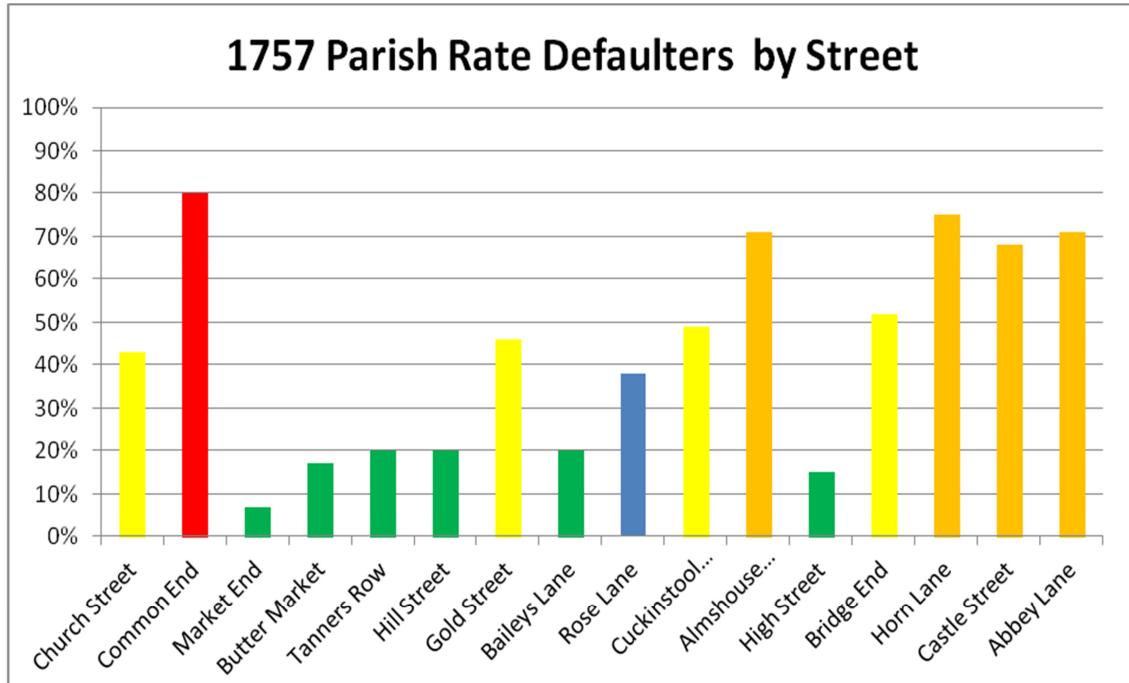


Chart 1: Percentages of the population of each of the recorded streets in Saffron Walden who did not pay the Parish Rate in 1757.

Source: ERO. D/B 2/PAR11/1

Green = Default rate of 20% or less.

Blue = Default rate between 21% and 39%.

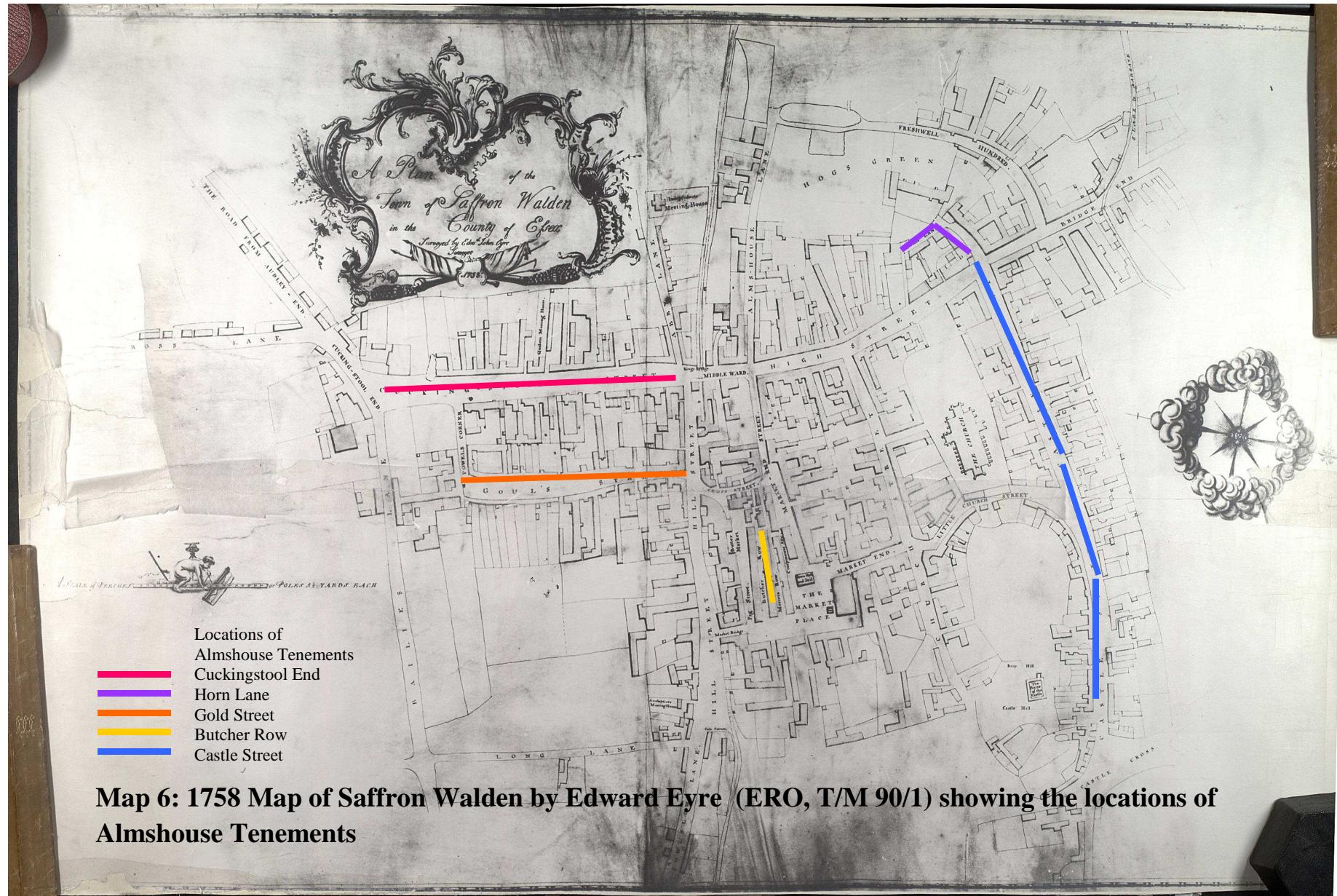
Yellow = Default rate between 40% and 59%.

Orange = Default rate between 60% and 79%.

Red = Default rate of 80% and over.

¹⁶⁸ ERO, D/B 2/PAR11/294, Lists of unpaid rates 1775-9 and 1779-84. These lists show the names of many of the most prominent Quakers in the town

¹⁶⁹ ERO, D/B 2/PAR11/305, Summons to 28 named defaulters, 1791. This document was originally entitled 'Proceedings against Quakers', but the word Quakers has been struck through and the names of the people concerned are not all members of the Quakers. Many appear to be members of either the Abbey Lane of High Street Baptist Churches. Some were men of a certain standing in the community such as Xenophon Hearn who went on to be Parish Constable in 1798.







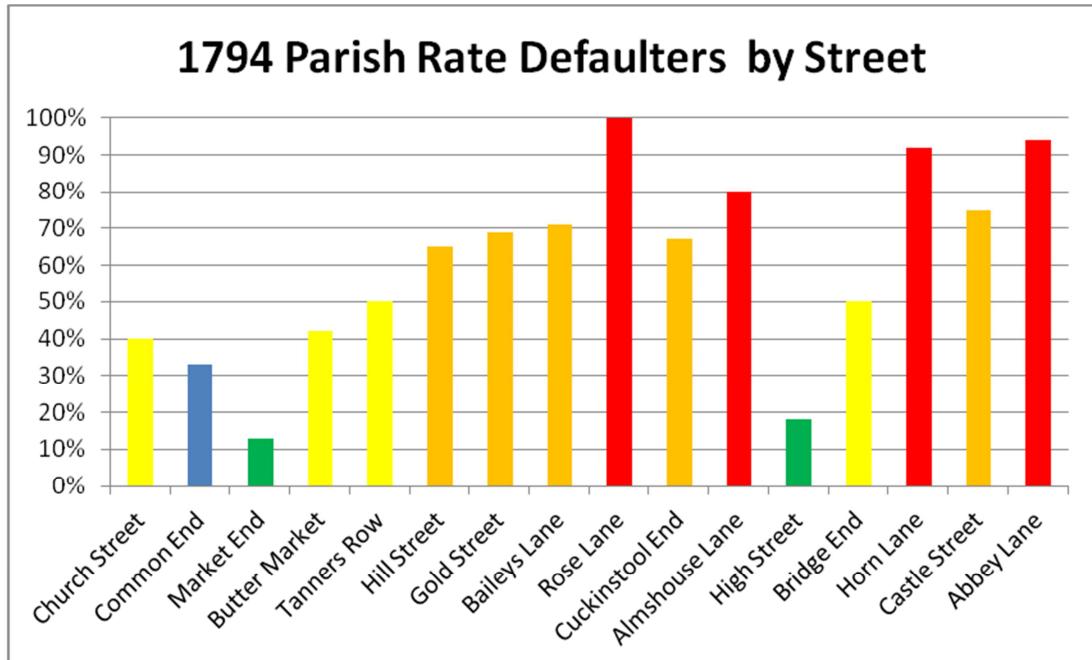


Chart 2: Percentages of the population of each of the recorded streets in Saffron Walden who did not pay the full Parish Rate in 1794.

Source: ERO. D/B 2/PAR11/2

Key to graphs: Green = 20% or less, Blue = 40% or less, Yellow = 60% or less, Orange = 80% or less, Red = more than 80%

The two charts show clearly that certain streets in the town had a poorer payment record than others. One anomaly is Common End. In 1757 it is recorded as having the highest percentage of non-payers (80%), but by 1794 the percentage of non-payers has dropped to 33%, the third lowest figure in the town. This apparently surprising variation in less than fifty years may be explained by a marked drop in the number of properties between the two dates. In 1757 ten properties were recorded, but by 1794 there were only three. Presumably a number of small properties housing poorer people had been pulled down. Another anomaly is Rose Lane, here the number of non- or partial payers increased dramatically between the 1757 and 1794 rates. The number of properties did not change significantly but it seems likely that the social status of the inhabitants had declined, since the rate was lower in 1794 than it had been in 1757, twelve pence in the pound as opposed to sixteen pence in the pound earlier.

It can be seen that at the time of both rates certain streets registered a non- or partial payment percentage of 80% or more: Almshouse Lane, Horn Lane, Castle Street and Abbey Lane. These were the poorest streets of the town where properties were most likely to be described as tenements or cottages. Market

End and High Street were the most affluent parts of the town by this measure. Market End was the commercial heart of the town and High Street contained a number of large properties, many described as houses, mansions or messuages. In 1757 the total rateable value of properties in the High Street for the purposes of the rate was given at £174, forty six out of the fifty three properties paying the rate. The highest individually rated property belonged to a Mr Flower valued at £12. By 1794 the total rateable value for the High Street was given as £548.5s with the highest rated property being that of Francis Gibson at £126.5s. It should be noted that this property was described as a brewing office, garden, house adjoining, malting, malt mill, land and land belonging to William Headland. It can be seen from this example that rateable values included both residential and commercial property and that land was listed under the street where the owner or tenant lived irrespective of where it was located. Even given this caveat, it can be seen that the Parish Rate Books provide a wealth of information about the relative social statuses of different streets in the town and the way in which this status could change over time.

It would seem, then, that some streets had a greater preponderance of defaulters, partial payers or people for whom the Overseers paid part or the entire amount. However, in neither 1757 nor 1794 did any street in the town make full payment of the rate required. Although the High Street and Market End were the most affluent parts of the town, smaller, poorer houses were still to be found there. It would seem that Saffron Walden, at this point, followed the model of even large cities such as Norwich in so much that, although there were 'wealthy' and 'poor' areas based on the preponderance of wealthy or poor people to be found in them all areas had a mix of both.¹⁷⁰

vi. The Religious Dimension

Topographically, Saffron Walden was dominated by the parish church of St. Mary the Virgin which stood on the northern side of the town on a prominence which it shared with the ruins of the castle built by Geoffrey de Mandeville in the early twelve century. Its geographical dominance was, at least in part, reflected in its dominance in the life of the town. The self-perpetuating oligarchy which governed the town—the mayor and corporation—were all obliged to hold sacrament certificates witnessing their attendance at the service of holy communion at least once a year.¹⁷¹ Nonconformists could not hope to hold any

¹⁷⁰ I thank Dr Victor Morgan for this illuminating suggestion.

¹⁷¹ ERO, D/B 2/QSS7/14 A series of some three hundred sacrament certificates exist for eighteenth century Saffron Walden. Their subjects include mayors and aldermen as well as clerics, excise officers and army officers stationed in or passing through the area. Under the terms of the Test Act of 1672 non-

of the significant public offices of the town although some did become Overseers of the Poor. For example in 1746 John Cranwell, a Quaker, was one of the overseers and is recorded as affirming rather than taking the oath when complaining to the local Justices of the Peace in a matter of settlement.¹⁷²

Although nonconformists were unable to hold the highest offices of the town, they were able to make their presence felt in many other ways. The town was home to two communities of Baptists. In 1690 an Independent Meeting House was built in Abbey Lane with William Paine as its pastor.¹⁷³ A congregation of Particular Baptists met in Hill Street in a property given in 1711 by Robert Cozens, steward of Audley End.¹⁷⁴ In 1773 a schism occurred in the congregation at Abbey Lane which led to the minister at the time, the Rev. Joseph Gwennap, and a large part of his congregation departing to establish a new Baptist Church on the corner of Cuckingstool End and Bailey's Lane. The Independents and Baptists played a prominent part in the life of the town even though they could not become members of the Corporation. For example William Rankin, a member of the Abbey Lane congregation and a leading grocer in the town, having taken his freedom in 1715/6 for the sum of ten shillings, served as overseer of the poor on three occasions between 1738 and 1760. He had the franchise in 1722 and 1734¹⁷⁵ and was involved in the running of Bromfield's Charity.¹⁷⁶ He also served numerous times on Quarter Session Grand Juries between 1726 and 1758.¹⁷⁷ William Rankin would seem to have taken as active a role as possible in the affairs of the town despite his nonconformity.

As well as the Independent and Baptist congregations in the town, Saffron Walden was also home to a congregation of the Society of Friends or Quakers. They first established a meeting house in Cuckingstool End Street in 1676. The disadvantages under which they initially laboured is reflected in the fact that in 1682 it is recorded in the Churchwardens' accounts that 4d. was paid for 'nailing

Anglicans were barred from holding public office and Sacrament Certificates were one way of policing this enactment.

¹⁷² ERO., D/B 2/PAR5/213 The removal order of Elizabeth Gazy, 1746

¹⁷³ C.B. Rowntree, *Saffron Walden-then and now* (Chelmsford, 1951), p.49

¹⁷⁴ ERO., D/B 2/NCF1/26 An account of the proceedings of the trustees for the donation of Robert Cozens, gent., deceased, the 17th Day of December, 1728

¹⁷⁵ ERO., Library, uncatalogued, *A Poll for a Knight of the Shire to represent the County of Essex* (London, 1734)

¹⁷⁶ ERO., D/B 2/CHR1/5/120 The indenture of James Scrambler, son of Thomas, to James Lyon of Bedford, cordwainer, was witnessed by William Rankin in 1731/2

¹⁷⁷ ERO., D/B 2/QSS1 Grand Jury Lists for Saffron Walden

up the Quakers' door'.¹⁷⁸ In 1693 under the terms of the Toleration Act the meeting was granted a certificate as follows:

These are to certifie to whom it may concern that at the General Quarter Sessions of the yeare of our Sovereigne Lord and Lady King William and Queen Mary holden at Chelmsford in the County of Essex on Tuesday the twenty fifth day of Aprill 1693 and in the Fifth year of their said Majesties Reigne the house of Sibill Shelford in a street called Kookinstoole End in Saffron Walden in the County aforesaid is licensed and entered according to the statute in that case made and provided.¹⁷⁹

By the mid-eighteenth century the Quakers were a very well established part of the town. Although still occasionally in dispute with town authorities over the payment of tithes¹⁸⁰ or failure to serve in the militia or provide a substitute,¹⁸¹ the members of the Quaker meeting were of growing importance in the economy of the town. Thomas Day, a thriving grocer, served as overseer in 1784. It has been argued by Judith Hurwicz that 'by the middle of the eighteenth century, Quakerism was becoming "bourgeois" both in the sense of "middle-class" and in the sense of "concentrated in towns"'.¹⁸² This seems to be the case in Saffron Walden, if the evidence of trades and professions is taken from the various records of Quaker marriages. Of 27 trades or professions listed, five were involved in agriculture, one was a physician, and the rest were all craftsmen or shopkeepers.¹⁸³

Since they could not hold high civic office it seems that the Quakers in Saffron Walden poured their energies into their businesses. The Francis Gibson who owned property with a rateable value of £126.5s¹⁸⁴ was a member of the Quaker dynasty of Gibsons who were of growing importance in the later years of the eighteenth century as their malting and brewing businesses prospered.¹⁸⁵

Nonconformity had an important role to play in the life of eighteenth century Saffron Walden. Many of the shopkeepers and artisans were members of one of the nonconformist congregations to be found in eighteenth century Walden and

¹⁷⁸ Mary Whiteman, 'The early days of the Saffron Walden meeting' (Unpublished, no date). A copy is to be found in Saffron Walden Town Library.

¹⁷⁹ Mary Whiteman, *ibid*.

¹⁸⁰ ERO, D/ B 2/ PAR 13/1, William Impey, non-payment of tithes, February 1744.

¹⁸¹ ERO, D/ B 2/ QSS5/7, William Impey refused to serve in the militia or to nominate a substitute, 1769.

¹⁸² Judith Jones Hurwicz, 'The Social Origins of the Quakers' *Past and Present*, 48 (1970), p.156

¹⁸³ ERO, T/A 904/1 Quaker Register Digests for Essex Marriages, 1659-1837.

¹⁸⁴ See above p.32.

¹⁸⁵ In the early years of the nineteenth century the Gibsons were to found a bank in Saffron Walden, now part of Barclays Bank, and were to provide many of the town's mayors and aldermen once membership of the Church of England was no longer a requirement.

these churches provided an additional tier of social support to their members beyond that provided by the state structure, and as we shall see, contributed to the fractionalism of the middling sort. The Quakers, for example, although often refusing to contribute to church rates, had their own system, through their weekly and monthly meetings, for supporting members fallen on hard times. Lloyd comments that by 1740 the Quakers had applied a national system of 'rules of settlement' for their poorer members and had established funds to support the poor and to offer advice and support to young or unsuccessful tradesmen.¹⁸⁶ The nonconformists took care of their own as well as contributing significantly to all aspects of the life of the town.

vii. Conclusion

Eighteenth century Saffron Walden was both a unique town and also an exemplar of the many small market towns which were scattered across England. Saffron Walden held borough status and was governed by a self-perpetuating oligarchy in the form of the mayor and aldermen of the corporation. Some market towns shared this mode of government; others were still predominantly manorial in their organisation. Saffron Walden encouraged its time-served apprentices to take the freedom of the town as a means of controlling trade but it lacked, even before the beginning of the eighteenth century, the gild structure, albeit in decline as Chalklin comments,¹⁸⁷ to be found in other towns of a similar size. Saffron Walden's gilds, originally religious in character,¹⁸⁸ had been more concerned with the social benefits that group membership conveyed than trade matters. Woodward suggests that in larger towns such as Chester, Newcastle and York trade gilds may have remained vigorous into the eighteenth century although there may have been a falling off towards the middle of the century. In some smaller towns the gild structure was either weak throughout the period or declined dramatically: for example the gilds of Carlisle and Lincoln may well have collapsed prior to the eighteenth century.¹⁸⁹ By the eighteenth century the surviving evidence of the gilds in Saffron Walden, apart from the Bishop Blaize processions,¹⁹⁰ was the Almshouse to which deserving elderly persons were

¹⁸⁶ Arnold Lloyd, *Quaker Social History, 1669-1738* (London, 1950), pp. 32-44

¹⁸⁷ Christopher Chalklin, *The Rise of the English Town 1650-1850* (Cambridge, 2001), p.61

¹⁸⁸ ERO., D/B 2/GHT2/1-2, Accounts of the Gild of Holy Trinity

¹⁸⁹ Donald Woodward, *Men at Work* (Cambridge, 1995), p.35

¹⁹⁰ See above p.29. The decline and final disappearance of this relic of the past glory of the gilds is indicative of the fact that trades had changed substantially, both in their type and in their organisation. Dr Victor Morgan raises the interesting question of whether such processions were a re-invention in the period of the Restoration of a presumed former tradition, rather than a tradition which had actually survived the Reformation.

elected. The gaining of one of these coveted places was an indication of patronage, but of a different kind to that which had existed when the Almshouse was originally founded.¹⁹¹ At its foundation the patronage was in the hands of the Gild, by the eighteenth century it lay in the hands of the Corporation.

In terms of its economic history, Saffron Walden was not uncommon in being largely dependent on industries based on the agriculture of the surrounding area. Like many other small market towns in both the east and west of the country, it had a long history of work in the wool trade, but unlike other market towns it also had the saffron industry. Both of these industries were failing by the mid-eighteenth century, as the wool trade was throughout southern England as new steam-powered factories were developed in the north and as cotton grew in importance. Like many other small market towns in the area to the east and north of London, Saffron Walden turned to malting to replace its failing woollen industry as the eighteenth century progressed.

Like many other market towns, Saffron Walden possessed a free Grammar School founded in the sixteenth century for the education of the sons of the more prosperous members of the community and in 1715 a Charity School was established by public donation to offer education in line with the tenets of the Church of England to the children of the deserving poor. Education in line with nonconformist beliefs was not available in any of the town's institutions in the eighteenth century. As a consequence Quakers such as the wealthy Gibson family at the end of the eighteenth century were obliged to send their children away to Quaker boarding schools elsewhere in the country.

The strong strand of nonconformity to be found in Saffron Walden was also to be found in many other market towns. Many artisans and small shopkeepers were attracted by the self-reliance encouraged by nonconformity. The strong presence of Quakers in Saffron Walden was not to be found in all small market towns, but in the East Anglian region Quaker meetings were not uncommon. Other local meetings were to be found in Royston,¹⁹² Bishops Stortford¹⁹³ and Thaxted.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ Malcolm White, *Saffron Walden's History* (Saffron Walden, 1991), pp.33-4 describes the founding of the Gild of Holy Trinity and its first charter of 1514 (ERO, D/B 2/BRE1/5 Charter). He mentions that another Gild, the Gild of Our Lady of Pity was already in existence but that it was deemed politic to found a new gild.

¹⁹² <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~engqfhs/Research/counties/hertford.htm> consulted 2.7.09 indicates that there was a Baldock, Royston and Hitchin Monthly Meeting from 1668.

¹⁹³ http://www.stortfordhistory.co.uk/guide14/new_town.html consulted 2.7.09 indicates that the first licensed Quaker meeting was established in Bishops Stortford in 1691 in Newtown Road.

¹⁹⁴ Joyce Whittington, *The Early History of the Thaxted Monthly Meeting* (York, 1995)

They were also to be found in more important county and provincial centres such as Hertford,¹⁹⁵ Sudbury,¹⁹⁶ Bury St. Edmunds¹⁹⁷ and Cambridge.¹⁹⁸

It can be seen that whilst in many ways Saffron Walden was representative of other small market towns in predominantly agricultural areas of England in the eighteenth century, in others it was unique. Although its specificity means that the findings will have certain limitations, it nevertheless provides a fertile area in which to investigate the role of the artisan in the small market towns of the eighteenth century and in particular the fractionalism of this sector of society.

Thus it is against the background of Saffron Walden in the eighteenth century that the different aspects of fragmentation within the artisan segment of society will be considered below in greater detail.

¹⁹⁵ Violet A. Rowe, *The first Hertford Quakers* (Hertford, 1970)

¹⁹⁶ C.G. Grimwood and S.A. Kay, *History of Sudbury, Suffolk* (Sudbury, 1952), p.66, the first reference to a meeting in Sudbury was in a 1666 letter from George Fox to the Men's Meeting in Sudbury.

¹⁹⁷ http://www.burystedmundsquakers.org/the_meeting_house.htm consulted 2.7.09 indicates that the first meeting house in Bury St. Edmunds was built in 1682.

¹⁹⁸ http://wiki.cambridge-quakers.org.uk/index.php/Quaker_history consulted 2.7.09 suggests that the first meeting house dating from 1655 was probably in Jesus Lane.

Chapter 3

The Social Identity of Artisans – were they of the middling sort?

The issue of the social identity of artisans in the eighteenth century poses a number of questions. It is necessary to consider both contemporary viewpoints, as later discussed, and more recent theories. How did contemporary commentators on social order view the position of artisans within any structure they might construct? Did artisans have an awareness of the social placement of themselves and their families? Was this awareness the same as that of the contemporary social commentators? Did all artisans occupy a similar position in any social hierarchy? Indeed, is 'hierarchy' an appropriate mode of categorisation at this point? Did an artisan occupy a fixed place within a social structure throughout his¹⁹⁹ working life or might his level rise or fall? Did the self-identity of individuals with contemporary social groups lead to a sense of solidarity? Can more recent theories on social ordering help to inform our understanding of the position of the eighteenth century artisan?

The case study of Saffron Walden will be used to seek to answer these questions. The use of a small market town provides one view of the life followed by artisans in the many similar places throughout eighteenth century England: life for an artisan in the metropolis or in a significant provincial centre such as Norwich might well prove to be substantially different. Not least this was because of the different experiences and opportunities arising from the differences in the size of the population in these places. In about 1750 the population of London was 675,000.²⁰⁰ The population of Bristol, a major provincial centre, was about 50,000.²⁰¹ Meanwhile the population of Saffron Walden stood at about 2,000. This suggests, perhaps, something of the differences among artisans on the national/macro scale, partly because of considerations of scale itself as indexed by the size of population.²⁰²

The answers to the above questions will depend to some extent on whether the sources available will permit them to be elucidated. This chapter will seek to provide the answers where they are available.

¹⁹⁹ The male gender has been used throughout since the majority of artisans were men although evidence does exist for female artisans, for example Elizabeth Smith, a mantua maker, received Elizabeth Rooksby, a Saffron Walden girl, as an apprentice under Turner's Charity (E.R.O. D/B 2/CHR9/7/35).

²⁰⁰ E.A. Wrigley, *People, Cities and Wealth* (Oxford, 1987), p.133.

²⁰¹ E.A. Wrigley, *People, Cities and Wealth* (Oxford, 1987), p.160.

²⁰² See below, p.61, Massie's comments on social categorisation.

I

Penelope Corfield suggests that the eighteenth century saw changes in the way contemporary commentators discussed the social structure of England and in the language they employed. A new vocabulary and conceptual framework for the analysis and interpretation of society was evolving whereby 'class' as an organizing concept began to emerge from the specifications of 'rank and order' which had previously been employed.²⁰³ James Nelson, for example, suggested that whilst the population of France should be divided into four groups, in England there were five classes.²⁰⁴ Corfield goes on to suggest eighteenth century use of social labels was highly eclectic and that the terms 'rank', 'order', 'degree' and 'station' were all still in use, each having fairly static implications, with ranks and orders implying a social status conferred primarily by birth. Meanwhile 'sort', 'part' and 'interest' were also employed but for more mobile elements of society where origins and a final level in society did not necessarily match.²⁰⁵ Moreover identity was increasingly imparted by new patterns of consumption.²⁰⁶ These classifactory terms referred to generic socio-economic positions of the moment from which individuals were capable of rising or falling rather than a position into which a person was born and there remained. Langford argues that the language of class owes its origin to the mid-eighteenth century and links it to advances in science such as the Linnaean classification of species. He claims that "Its terminology offered advantages over the traditional vocabulary of social commentary." In his view order and rank dealt with relatively fine gradations, whilst status, which was increasingly viewed as a complex mix of wealth, education, consumption, occupation and manners,²⁰⁷ was difficult to define with any degree of precision.²⁰⁸ In part, in itself, this was a measure of the change that was occurring.²⁰⁹

²⁰³ Penelope J. Corfield, 'Class by name and number in eighteenth-century Britain', in Penelope J. Corfield, ed., *Language, history and class* (Oxford, 1991), p.103

²⁰⁴ James Nelson, *An Essay on the Government of Children, under Three General Heads: Viz. Health, Manners, and Education* (London, 1753), p.273

²⁰⁵ Corfield, *ibid.* p.112

²⁰⁶ Works by Maxine Berg discuss this idea in detail. See further immediately below, this chapter..

²⁰⁷ For a discussion of politeness and manners, see Paul Langford, "The Uses of Eighteenth Century Politeness", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6 ser., 12 (2002), pp. 311-331

²⁰⁸ Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People* (Oxford, reissued 1998), p. 652

²⁰⁹ In Saffron Walden the notion of social address – the use of 'mister' and 'mistress' in documents for example – allows us to infer a contemporary's likely sense of the fine gradation of artisanal activity and generic terminology. For example a term such as cordwainer covered a wide range of differences in terms of status, house holding, office holding etc.. This gives substance and detail to Langford's ideas. The simple occupational term cordwainer covered not only the journeyman with no aspirations above earning enough to feed his family and the proto-industrialist such as Robert Catlin (see below, numerous references). It must also be borne in mind that the meaning of the term was also determined by the nature and position of the person speaking.

In her work on consumption in eighteenth century England, Maxine Berg develops the idea posited by Langford that status involved wealth and manners as a means of defining social position. In her earlier work on manufacture and the economy, she commented that there were social hierarchies of fashion.²¹⁰ Matthew Boulton, for example, would produce a commodity in various materials in order to make it accessible to all levels of society. Manufacturers of the Norwich stuffs also produced materials not only to suit all levels of society, but also overseas markets.²¹¹ Thus 'gradations of society' could be codified according to the material from which something as simple as a shoe buckle was made.

The burgeoning 'middling class', extending from professional men and merchants to ordinary trades people and artisans, embraced the new consumer goods which became available.²¹² In time, their adoption of the culture of consumption transformed even the habits of the labouring poor.²¹³ Social position became defined by the levels of conspicuous consumption possible and the quality of the goods purchased. These changed circumstances created a new and finely tuned awareness of the social order among contemporaries.

In turn contemporary social commentators published many works seeking to clarify the way in which they saw the organisation of the social structure of the time. In 1709 Daniel Defoe suggested a sevenfold categorization which attempted to establish actual differentials based on types of occupation and income levels as well as consumption levels. As we have just seen, the inclusion of levels of consumption was part of a generally recognised shift to the importance of consumption across the social scale as a means of defining position, often in conjunction with the fashionable behaviour of the moment: manners. His fourth category 'The working Trades, who labour hard but feel no want' would have covered many artisans, but some artisans might have aspired to his third category 'The middle Sort, who live well' and others, less fortunate, fell into his sixth 'The Poor that fare hard'. His fifth category belonged to country people and farmers.²¹⁴ Defoe's categorization certainly shows evidence of an awareness among contemporary observers of the possibility of fractionalism within the artisanal segment which, in his terms, was likely to fall across categories three to six.

²¹⁰ Maxine Berg, *The Age of Manufactures, 1700-1820* (London, 1994), p.129

²¹¹ <http://www.norwichtextiles.org.uk/history/overview/18th-century>, consulted 16.3.2011

²¹² Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Oxford, 2005), p.15

²¹³ Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p.19

²¹⁴ Daniel Defoe, *A Review of the British Nation*, vol. 6, no. 36, (25 June 1709)

Some fifty years later, in 1756, Joseph Massie adopted a far more fluid approach to social categorisation. He followed a threefold designation in his *Calculations of taxes for a family of each rank, degree or class: for one year*, but in his detailed tabulation of notional family expenditure he considered thirty different income groups in seven socio-economic categories. As will become evident in the detail adduced below, artisans fell into categories five and six: tradesmen in London and the Country earning between £40 and £300 a year and manufacturers in London and the Country earning between 7/6d and 12/- a week.²¹⁵

Massie's scheme reveals the contemporary perception of the breadth of income that different types of artisan could command. A cabinetmaker or goldsmith living in London or a major provincial town attracting a clientele of the local gentry could command a much higher annual income than could a small-town weaver or cordwainer.

The evidence from contemporary observers suggests that the term 'artisan' in the eighteenth century covered a considerable range of income-earning potential and this can be best explained by the wide range of different trades and crafts practised in this fundamentally artisanal society. And, as we will see, in the many small market towns like Saffron Walden, the nature of the craft was the crucial feature.

Even though, under Massie's scheme, a tradesman in London and the Country could earn as much as £300 a year, he still fell into the fifth of Massie's socio-economic categories; tradesmen in London and the Country earning between £40 and £300 a year. However Josiah Tucker, a near contemporary of Massie's, writing in 1750 suggested that anyone might engage in trade without 'disreputation' to their family and that no-one need leave off trade in order to seek respect as a gentleman.²¹⁶ It seems likely that Tucker's view might not have found acceptance in all parts of society and that certainly the 'trade' that Tucker was referring to was likely to be on a far grander scale than that practised by the average artisan: perhaps a merchant running a putting-out-system in the wool trade and employing artisan weavers and woolcombers. This was the case in Braintree and Bocking area of Essex where families such as the Savills operated such a system.²¹⁷

²¹⁵ Joseph Massie, *Calculations of taxes for a family of each rank, degree or class: for one year* (London, 1756).

²¹⁶ Josiah Tucker, *A brief essay on the advantages and disadvantages which respectively attend France and Great Britain* (London, 1750).

²¹⁷ ERO, T/Z 27, History of the Bocking Cloth Industry, p. 54, suggests that the Savill family had 743 pairs of cards for carding wool in the houses of spinners in 1776 and by 1780 employed 145 weavers.

Therefore, we can see that contemporary commentators on the social organisation of the time deployed a wide range of ways of describing the different social segments. Defoe and Massie provide, as participant observers, examples of fairly complex systems of social differentiation; others expounded a two-or three-fold classification. In 1743 Henry Fielding in *The History of the Life of the Late Mr Jonathan Wild the Great* suggested that men could be divided into two groups: those who used their own hands and those that used the hands of others. Three years later in 1746 the Profane Oaths Act (19 Geo II, cap. 21) suggested that a tripartite division of society could be made. A day-labourer in contravention of this law could be fined one shilling, all those above labourers but below gentlemen were liable for a fine of two shillings while those of higher rank risked five shillings for each offence. The division here seems to be determined partly by occupation and partly by status.²¹⁸ It would, perhaps, be true to say that the criteria changed the higher up the social scale one moved, with social status replacing occupation as the dominant criterion.

In the course of the eighteenth century a number of approaches to the description of society were employed in England. Different terminologies were used but in general their shared characteristic was that they were flexible. But over time there was a move towards a new vocabulary and conceptual framework for the analysis and interpretation of society with 'class' as an organising concept. This began to emerge from the earlier specifications of 'rank and order'.²¹⁹ In 1789 John Gray wrote in his reflections appended to George Dempster's *Discourse containing a Summary of Proceedings of the Society for extending Fisheries & improving Sea Coasts of Gt. Britain*, that "More spacious plots of ground ... may be allowed to the clergyman and schoolmaster, and to other persons superior to the working class."²²⁰ This is the first recorded use of the term 'working class', but Corfield suggests that variants of the term had been in use since the 1760s.²²¹ Victor Morgan has commented that there were other ways of self- and group-identity in this period than 'class' solidarity, most of the time, but that something like classic 'class' identity emerged from time to time.

The various contemporary methods of categorizing the structure of eighteenth century society show that the artisanal segment was not viewed as a homogeneous one by contemporaries. It should be noted that here the term 'artisanal segment' is used in an 'antiseptic way' to avoid any of the

²¹⁸ Corfield, *op.cit.* p.121

²¹⁹ Corfield, *ibid.* p.103

²²⁰ Oxford English Dictionary Online,

http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50287193?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=working+class&first=1&max_to_show=10, consulted on 21.8.2007

²²¹ Corfield, *op.cit.* p.123

presuppositions linked with the terminology of social class.²²² Certainly, the contemporary discussion of contending social classifications and the pre-judgement that that might involve suggests that—in general—we also need to consider not only how contemporaries who were not artisans may have viewed the social categorisation of artisans, but also how they viewed themselves both as individuals and—potentially—as a group. In the eyes of contemporaries fractionalism within the artisanal segment existed in terms of craft and of earning power. Indeed, of all the social segments discussed, and of all the types of categorisations of social segments that were attempted, it is possible that artisans fell across the most boundaries.

II

Evidence for the ways in which Saffron Walden's artisans viewed their own social positions and those of their fellows can be drawn from a variety of sources. The parish records of baptisms and marriages, for example, sometimes give additional information about the groom or father in terms of social position or trade.²²³ These records form an interesting link with the broader descriptive material reviewed above on the views of contemporary commentators since the records were kept by the incumbent, or the parish clerk under the auspices of the incumbent, and therefore may well reflect the views of a person of higher social position relating to the standing of the artisan concerned within the community.

The title of 'Mister' is not accorded to many. Between 1700 and 1720, for example just 57 out of 1045 baptisms, a little over 5% of the total, were deemed to qualify for this appellation. Two of these were further qualified; John Rowley was an 'Attorney at Law' and Robert Butts was a 'clerk' or 'cleric'.²²⁴ It is interesting to note, however, that when the artisan himself, or his associates, identified an appropriate title for himself—that is, he indicated his own evaluation of his social position—it might place him higher in the social order of the town than the vicar did. For example, when Edmund Harris's wife gave birth to a son Edmund in 1724²²⁵ he was accorded no particular status in the baptismal records, but in the same year Harris was listed as one of the Stewards of Bromfield's Charity with the title of 'Master'.²²⁶ The Stewards of Bromfield's Charity were selected from amongst the leading men of the town. Edmund

²²² My thanks to Dr. Victor Morgan for this suggestion.

²²³ ERO D/P 192/1/4-5 for baptisms and E.R.O. D/P 192/1/4-7 for marriages.

²²⁴ ERO D/P 192/1/4/2-3 Baptismal records

²²⁵ ERO D/P 192/1/4/3-4 Baptismal records

²²⁶ ERO D/B 2/CHR 1/2. Bromfield's Charity provided funds to pay for the cost of the apprenticeship indentures of poor children of the town selected by the Stewards of the Charity.

Harris was elected an alderman in 1722 and would have been a well-respected man,²²⁷ but to the vicar he remained a webster, an artisan, and not a gentleman!²²⁸

It could be suggested that the eighteenth century town of Saffron Walden presented a prime example of a social arena or ‘stage’.²²⁹ The population of the town carried around with them, in their day-to-day existence, a general perception of the social order of their town. However, most of the time people experienced the social order within particularised places and spaces and among the others—who like them—occupied those spaces. It is this phenomenological approach which will, at least in part, be applied to the following investigation of the place of the artisan in eighteenth century Walden society.

The formal governmental structure of the town provided one framework that served both to integrate artisans from different trades but also to provide a central measure of the pecking order in the town. Thus within the town of Saffron Walden there were a number of ways in which an artisan, whom the outside world would have labelled as a member of the lower orders, could achieve social advancement within the world of the borough and its hinterland. The charter of 1694 which restated the terms under which the town was incorporated and the corporation’s powers²³⁰ allowed for the appointment of a mayor and twelve aldermen, as well as a recorder, deputy recorder and town clerk-coroner. The mayor and aldermen, after the initial named appointments listed in the charter, were to be responsible for appointing suitable men to fill any gaps in their ranks. They were also responsible for the appointments to the other posts, although it was stipulated that the deputy recorder was to be learned in the law and to have been a lawyer for at least seven years. From the list of town clerks it is apparent that all those in office in the eighteenth century were attorneys-at-law.²³¹

The members of the corporation formed a self-perpetuating oligarchy. Often men who had previously served as overseers of the poor and churchwardens were elected to fill gaps in the ranks of the aldermen, although in the early years of the re-incorporated borough it was not uncommon for men to turn down the honour.

²²⁷ It is possible that the Edmund Harrish whose wife gave birth to a son Edmund in 1724 was the son of the Edmund Harris who was an alderman and Steward of Bromfield’s Charity, if this is the case he was a member of a leading family in the town.

²²⁸ Edmund Harris made a will in 1726, although it was not proved until 1762. This will was proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (TNA, PROB11/880), a sign that Harris was a man of considerable property. Amongst other items listed, he left his wife Frances, by that time deceased, a considerable amount of property, both free- and copyhold, within Walden.

²²⁹ Erving Goffman in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Edinburgh, 1956) uses the image of the theatre, and actors, to show the importance of human, that is social, action.

²³⁰ ERO D/B 2/BRE 1/23, Charter of 6 William and Mary, translated in Richard, Lord Braybrooke, *The history of Audley End* (London, 1836), p.308

²³¹ Richard, Lord Braybrooke, *The history of Audley End* (London, 1836), p.319

For example in 1709 John Leverett, a grocer, Edward Ball, a butcher, and Joseph Collin, a tanner, were each fined £3 when they refused to serve as aldermen.

Perhaps the role of aldermen was too time-consuming for these occupations at an early stage in each man's career. Later all these men were re-nominated and elected.²³² The men who filled the ranks of mayor and aldermen were drawn from the artisans and tradesmen of the town and it was they who selected their social betters to serve as Recorder and Deputy Recorder.

The charter also made provision for the appointment of the mayor, two senior aldermen, the Recorder and Deputy Recorder to serve as Justices of the Peace within 'the town and limits and precincts of the same'.²³³ This gave men who had started their working lives as drapers, butchers and innkeepers the right to describe themselves as gentlemen: in terms of appellation, the equals of the Deputy Recorder in style at least.

III

This section seeks to consider the opportunities provided by charities and the legal framework of the laws of settlement to those members of the artisan segment of society who failed to match the prosperity of those artisans who went on to hold civic offices. It will provide evidence of social rather than societal mobility,²³⁴ of individual social mobility and the possibility of office holding.

The artisans and tradesmen who went on to become mayors and aldermen of Saffron Walden and who described themselves as gentlemen—however subservient they might remain in their dealings with the local aristocrat, Lord Howard²³⁵—represented those who had prospered. Not all artisans in Saffron Walden achieved this degree of prosperity. Boys who were apprenticed under the various charities and parish apprenticeship schemes were frequently the sons of artisans for whom the fee to be paid on indenture was more than they—or their fathers—could readily afford. Of the 260 boys whom Bromfield's Charity

²³² Richard, Lord Braybrooke, *The history of Audley End* (London, 1836), p.318. It is possible that when they were first selected as aldermen, the men felt that the time it would take would damage the businesses that they were busy nurturing. Unfortunately it has not been possible to ascertain their ages at this point. The only clue to a relatively young age is that Joseph Collin took up his freedom of the town in 1705/6, suggesting that he was then setting up in business on his own account. (SW Museum 41507) Later, their businesses more firmly established, they felt the time could be spared. All three were successful businessmen.

²³³ ERO D/B 2/BRE 1/23 Charter of 6 William and Mary

²³⁴ For a discussion of the distinction between social and societal mobility, see Chapter 5 below.

²³⁵ For example the correspondence between the mayor of Walden, one Mr. Henry Archer, a maltster, and Lord Howard of Audley End on the occasion of the Saffron Walden Bread Riots in 1795 (ERO D/DBy O12)

placed as apprentices in the course of the eighteenth century, the occupation of the father, or the fact the father was dead, can be identified in 149 cases (57%). Of these 149, 80 followed a trade or craft of some kind. This represented 31% of the total number of indentures arranged under the auspices of the charity. Of these, it is possible to either identify the occupation of the father or to be sure of the orphan status of the candidate in 54% of cases. All the indentures identify the trade to which the child had been apprenticed.²³⁶ Under certain apprenticeship schemes elsewhere boys were placed as farm servants,²³⁷ but this does not appear to have been the case in Walden under the various charities established to place children apprentice.²³⁸

The ledgers and indentures kept by these charities²³⁹ provide a rich source of evidence of those artisans and tradesmen in Walden for whom life was less comfortable. It was men of this kind who sought support from the charities to secure a place at the charity school for a child or to fund an apprenticeship which might help the child to better their life chances. The ledgers list the names of children placed apprentice and the vouchers and indentures provide further evidence of the help that the charities offered. The vouchers, for example, may provide evidence of clothing provided to allow a child to be placed apprentice. Further evidence of those artisans who failed to prosper or who fell on hard times can also be found in settlement certificates and examinations.²⁴⁰ Men who failed to succeed in business in one place might try their luck elsewhere and this required the obtaining of a settlement certificate from their parish or facing a settlement examination in front of the justices of the peace overseeing the parish to which they wished to remove. Of course, some men chose to move in order to further their trade—not all those in receipt of settlement certificates were failures!

With such movements being common, it is not surprising that in the eighteenth century, Saffron Walden saw both immigration and emigration by artisans. It was a common practice for young artisans, particularly journeymen just out of their indentures, to apply to the parish for a certificate stating their parish of settlement before setting off to try and better their chances elsewhere. The newly qualified artisan was faced with the dilemma of whether to stay in an

²³⁶ ERO D/B 2/CHR 1/5 Bromfield's Charity apprenticeship records

²³⁷ ERO D/P 268/14 Bocking apprenticeship records

²³⁸ These charities were: Bromfield's, Suffolk and Turners (ERO, D/B 2/CHR1), Adam's, Sparrow's (ERO, D/B 2/CHR2) and Edmund Turner's (ERO, D/B 2/CHR9). The charities of Walden are listed in Richard, Lord Braybrooke, *The history of Audley End* (London, 1836), pp.243-8.

²³⁹ ERO D/B 2/CHR 1/5, E.R.O. D/B 2/CHR 9/7, D/B 2/PAR 7. In the case of Bromfield's charity deserving cases were proposed and the stewards then selected the boys to whom help should be given each year.

²⁴⁰ ERO, D/B 2/PAR4, 5 and 6. Settlement certificates, removal orders and settlement examinations.

environment where they were known and, hopefully, respected or to try pastures new. An important consideration was what might be considered 'fullness of place', a perception of what the market would bear in a particular place in terms of the number of artisans following a given craft that could be sustained by the available customer base in the town and its hinterland. Another factor that had to be considered by a young man setting up in business on his own behalf was the availability of suitable premises such as workshops and yards.

Many were attracted by the pull of the metropolis;²⁴¹ others sought a better life in market towns similar to Walden. Acknowledgements of the presentation of settlement certificates to the parish authorities give an indication of artisans moving in and out of Walden in search of better opportunities. Sometimes a new arrival might be the subject of a settlement bond whereby the parish was indemnified against any costs that might be incurred if the immigrant and his family fell on hard times. For example in 1755, John Church, a bricklayer, and his family from Baldock, Hertfordshire, had a bond of £40 taken out in order to indemnify the parish against any costs of maintenance. The bond was taken out by John Church himself, and by Clement Church a bricklayer of Saffron Walden and William Church another bricklayer – presumably family members.²⁴²

All immigrants in possession of a settlement certificate were permitted to set up homes and businesses provided that they did not fall on hard times. Should this be the case a settlement examination would be conducted by the local justices of the peace and, if necessary, a removal order would be issued requiring the overseers of the poor to organise the return of the individual, and any family, to the original parish of settlement. It is the settlement examinations which can provide evidence of artisans fallen on hard times. For example, the settlement examination of Henry Rooksbye taken in 1720 states that he was then a cooper lodging in St. Leonard's parish, Shoreditch, in the county of Middlesex. He claimed that he had gained settlement in Walden on the completion of his apprenticeship to William Archer. The settlement examination traced Rooksbye's career prior to his arrival in Shoreditch and his falling on hard times through certificated sojourns in Low Leighton and St. Botolph's without Bishopsgate.²⁴³ Henry's subsequent fate is unknown, but he would probably have either been returned to Walden or money for his relief would have been sought

²⁴¹ J.S. Taylor, *Poverty, Migration and Settlement in the Industrial Revolution* (Palo Alto, 1989), p.14

²⁴² ERO D/B 2/PAR 9/41, Indemnity bond of John Church, bricklayer.

²⁴³ ERO D/B 2/PAR 6/1, Settlement examination of Henry Rooksbye.

by the overseers of his current parish from the overseers of the poor of Walden.²⁴⁴

Between those artisans who rose to occupy positions of authority in the corporation and those who fell on such hard times that they were the subject of settlement examinations or in receipt of relief from the parish, there were many more artisans who managed to support themselves and their children and maybe rose or fell in status as their lives progressed. It was from this sort of artisan that junior parish and town officials, such as parish constables, were elected: moreover Mark Goldie suggests that in general “Parish officeholders generally held more than one office at different times, graduating from minor to major.”²⁴⁵ Goldie’s claim holds true for William Rankin who served as parish constable in 1719. In 1738 a William Rankin, grocer, served as overseer for the poor.²⁴⁶ Xenophon Hearn, a carpenter and joiner, on the other hand, did not progress beyond the rank of constable.²⁴⁷

The trade a man followed did not necessarily control his chances of advancement within the office-holding setting of Walden. Many weavers went on to become overseers of the poor and Richard Archer, a bottle maker, having served as overseer, became an alderman in 1712.²⁴⁸ However there are very few references to cordwainers holding office. Cordwaining was a trade in which a charity apprentice might be placed, since on completion of the apprenticeship little money was required to set up in business. It is likely that the returns from such a business were also low! It seems that the relative status of different trades was governed by multiple and interconnecting factors. These factors included modalities of sociability, the *cursus honorum* and life experiences. The success that a man might experience in a given trade was the result of many interconnecting and, sometimes, conflicting factors.

It has already been noted that an artisan might join the ranks of the town worthies in the course of his career, with some reaching the pinnacle of serving as mayor. However in the eighteenth century it was also possible to slip downwards if ill-health, an accident or old age struck. Social mobility within the artisan segment of society could occur in both directions in the course of a man’s working life, however, for the many, the movement was likely to be in one direction—

²⁴⁴ It is interesting to note that one of the overseers for the poor of Walden in 1720/1 was Thomas Archer, a cooper. Perhaps he was the son of the William Archer to whom Henry Rooksbee claimed he had been apprenticed.

²⁴⁵ Mark Goldie, ‘The Unacknowledged Republic: Officeholding in Early Modern England’, in: *The Politics of the Excluded, c. 1500-1850* ed. Tim Harris, (Basingstoke, 2001), p.165.

²⁴⁶ ERO D/B 2/PAR 4/157 Settlement certificate of William Barrett, carpenter, and his wife Love, showing William Rankin as an overseer of the poor

²⁴⁷ ERO D/B 2/PAR 3/1 Overseer of the Poor’s accounts showing Xenophon Hearn as a constable

²⁴⁸ ERO D/B 2/PAR 8/3 Bastardy bond showing Richard Archer as an alderman

downwards. See, for example, the case study of Thomas Scrambler 'A man whose aspirations exceeded his fate'. (Appendix 4) The extremes of social mobility both up and down was in itself a primary indication of the fragmented nature of artisanal society.

It is, of course, important to view these social movements in the context of the macro-economic environment of the time. Individual and societal mobility created new groups within society which could lead to improved life chances, but when the overall economic environment was unfavourable, as in the 1720s, it was harder for any other than exceptionally talented entrepreneurs or those with secure family backing to be assured of a comfortable old-age. The trajectories of individual lives need to be read against the background of changing macro-economic circumstances.

IV

For a young man entering a trade the future held a number of options. As a journeyman, on completion of his apprenticeship, he might remain with his old master until he had amassed the funds necessary to establish himself as a master craftsman or he might take to the road, moving from town to town as part of a travelling brotherhood, looking for improved opportunities.²⁴⁹ Some young artisans achieved the dream of becoming a master craftsman, others, with less family backing available, were condemned to spend their lives as journeymen, often little more than day labourers. It becomes evident that an important determinant of future life chances within the artisan segment was the extent of the availability of family background and support. For this latter group the future was distinctly less bright. In many cases the workhouse was already beckoning.

Only the sons of the most well-established artisans or the younger sons of gentlemen entering a trade or a craft could hope to start their working careers in a comfortable manner. For most apprentices completing their indentures and striking out on their own as journeymen' life was, at best, an uphill struggle. Wages varied greatly from trade to trade. In 1747, R. Campbell suggested the wages that a journeyman might receive in a variety of trades. In comparison with wages in the metropolis, the journeymen in Walden would have received a lower rate.²⁵⁰ A journeyman bricklayer in London received half a crown (12½p.) a day

²⁴⁹ R.A. Leeson discusses travelling journeymen in his *Travelling brothers: the six centuries' road from craft fellowship to trade unionism* (London, 1979), whilst Geoffrey Crossick discusses the same theme from a European perspective in his introduction to *The Artisan and the European Town, 1500-1900* (Aldershot, 1996).

²⁵⁰ R.Campbell, *The London Tradesman* (London, 1747). The reference is given by each trade.

and a journeyman carpenter between twelve and fifteen shillings a week (60-75p.). A journeyman woolcomber earned between twelve shillings and a guinea (60p-£1.05); a journeyman barber and perukemaker received, in London, bed and board plus between £12 and £15 a year. The young cordwainer earned no more than nine or ten shillings a week (45-50p.). Campbell claimed that many shoes were supplied by country shoemakers to keep costs down. A journeyman tailor's wages were regulated by Act of Parliament at between twenty pence (8½p) and half a crown (12½p.) a day depending on the season of the year. Campbell goes on to claim that journeymen tailors were very numerous and were generally employed via Houses of Call: that is ale-houses where master tailors would call in search of hands.²⁵¹

In Saffron Walden, at rates even lower than those mentioned above, it took time for a journeyman artisan to raise sufficient funds to set up as a master craftsman, if, indeed, he ever could. At this time to accumulate the necessary funds would have been a struggle for any young man if he could not call on financial aid from his family. In the 1790s it was suggested that some 80% of a working family's income needed to be expended on foodstuffs alone. Since the remaining 20% could easily be spent on fuel, light and clothing,²⁵² it would have been difficult to accumulate the funds necessary to set up in business.

Artisans such as Henry Rooksbye, the cooper mentioned above, might well have remained a journeyman throughout his working life, moving from place to place in search of work. Campbell suggested that a cooper would need between £200 and £500 to set up as a master in London. In Walden the cost would have been considerably less. A London shoemaker needed between £100 and £500 to set up as a master. It seems likely that the cost in Walden must have been much lower since according to the records of Bromfield's Charity²⁵³ in the 1710s there were at least four master shoemakers or cordwainers accepting apprentices; in the 1770s the figure was seven and in the 1790s six. Either business was so good in Walden for cordwainers that they were prepared to make the sacrifice necessary to accumulate the funds to set up in business, or it did not cost very much to embark on the trade. Patently the perception in Walden was that the scope for cordwainers to make a living that kept them off poor relief did not run up against any limit set by the concept of 'fullness of place'.²⁵⁴ It may be postulated that a town was deemed full to new members of a particular craft when the arrival of a

²⁵¹ R.Campbell, *ibid.* p.193

²⁵² E.H. Phelps Brown and Sheila V. Hopkins, 'Seven centuries of the prices of consumables' in *Essays in Economic History* II, ed. E.M. Carus Wilson (London, 1962) p.180

²⁵³ ERO D/B 2/CHR 1/2 Bromfield's charity accounts

²⁵⁴ See above, p.67

new member of that trade would place a burden on the funds available for the relief of the poor.

Based on detailed analysis of the records for Saffron Walden, a young journeyman either left Walden, or arrived from elsewhere, in the hope of establishing a business or working for a master craftsman; or set up in business as a master. Hard work, quality products and good fortune, in the context of a favourable macro-economic climate at the time, could help the young artisan to establish himself. Once established and paying parish rates, the artisan could expect to serve as a parish officer, first as parish constable and later as overseer of the poor and churchwarden. Civic office might then follow. Election for life as an alderman might lead to the exalted position of mayor which carried with it the role of borough Justice of the Peace and the honorific of 'gentleman.'

However, bad luck or ill health could reduce a hard-working artisan to an inability to pay his parish rates and even dependence on the parish for relief. For example, Henry Rooksbye, mentioned above, was subjected to a settlement examination by the parish of St. Leonard's, Shoreditch, when he was in need of relief in order to survive.²⁵⁵ In Saffron Walden the Overseer's Accounts Book for 1781-1797 lists those members of the parish in receipt of poor relief.²⁵⁶ On April 16th 1781, for example, William Mynott's account showed that 63 people were in receipt of poor relief, the sums ranging from 6d. (2½p.) to five shillings (25p.): a total of £4.15s.9d (approximately £4.79). Incidental expenses for the same week brought the total to £15.17s.6d (£15.87½), the account being corrected by an auditor who considered it to be 'rong Cast'. One of the names of those in receipt of poor relief was that of Leonard Alderson. Town records show that in 1726 a Leonard Alderson was apprenticed under Suffolk and Turner's Charity to Leonard Alderson – perhaps his father? – as a carpenter.²⁵⁷ The name 'Leonard Alderson' next appears in a removal certificate from Rochford in Essex to Saffron Walden when he was accompanied by his wife Sarah and two children: James aged three and Sarah one. The Leonard Alderson in the overseer's account book received one shilling and six pence (7½p.) in relief. One shilling and sixpence would not have provided enough for Leonard Alderson to live on but it would have allowed him a little support through a difficult time.

For those artisans who fell onto hard times because of old age, the King Edward VI almshouses provided a refuge. Under the terms of the charter of 1549 the almshouses could provide accommodation and food for fifteen men and women, one of whom was to act as Dame. The poor were to be elected by the

²⁵⁵ ERO D/B 2/PAR 6/1 Settlement examination of Henry Rooksbye

²⁵⁶ ERO D/B 2/PAR 3/1 Overseer's Accounts Book 1781-1797

²⁵⁷ ERO D/B 2/CHR 1/3 accounts of Bromfield's charity

Corporation from amongst those people nominated as worthy by the Masters of the Almshouses, “of the most needy and poor persons having impediment by extreme age, maimed or sick, impotent to labour”.²⁵⁸ This was a clear example of the role that patronage played in the life of artisans in eighteenth century Saffron Walden. Only elderly and needy people with contacts amongst the ‘great and the good’ of Walden stood a chance of being elected to the Almshouse. Thus it can be seen that the role of patronage served to emphasise the vertical as against the horizontal integration of society. The majority of the elderly faced a future either on a pittance of parish poor relief or in the parish workhouse. Essentially there were six ways in which an artisan’s life could end: a failure to reach old age because of premature death, a comfortable old age, an old age cared for by their family, a place in the almshouse, parish relief or the workhouse. Fractionalism within the artisanal segment was very clearly evident in the latter years of a craftsman’s life!

It is clear that there was considerable individual social mobility among artisans. This meant that two artisans starting out in life with similar chances could experience very different life courses. Individual social mobility led to considerable fragmentation within this one social segment. The range of patterns in the lifecourse that can be discerned is evidenced in two contrasting examples. In one instance that of the Archer family,²⁵⁹ a set of five brothers who all succeeded in business in the latter part of the eighteenth century and some of whom went on to hold positions of power within the town. Indeed two of them, William and Henry, went on to serve as Mayor. In the other case, that of Thomas Scrambler, a man whose aspirations exceeded his fate, Thomas seems to have been a relatively successful woolcomber who fell on hard times as he aged. It is true to say that, since he secured a position in the town’s Almshouse, his fate could have been worse, but for a man who had important enough to sign the Act of Allegiance to George I in 1715, it was possibly not the old age he had anticipated. (For details see Appendices 3 and 4).

Another key point that emerges from a detailed examination of lifecourses is the variability of fortunes within any individual lifecourse. In the course of their lives artisans could reach a level of comfort when at the peak of their skills and then sink below the poverty line with the onset of illness or age; or they could achieve the title of gentleman and the status which accompanied that title in the eighteenth century; or they could sink into abject poverty, dependent on parish relief. The baptismal records of the mid-eighteenth century provide further evidence of this.

²⁵⁸ C.B. Rowntree, *Saffron Walden—then and now* (Chelmsford, 1952), p.60

²⁵⁹ See Appendix 5 below, The Fortunes of the Archer Family.

The incumbent at the time recorded the occupations of most of the fathers of the children he baptised. Thus Benjamin Finton was recorded as a labourer at the birth of his first child in 1752. By 1756 he was recorded as a victualler and remained such at the baptism of his next child in 1759. He was moving up in the world. On the other hand in 1752 William Beardsell, husband of Mary and father of William was recorded as a woolcomber. By 1759 when a daughter Hester was baptised William was recorded as a labourer.²⁶⁰ An artisan's place in the social structure could change in the course of his life and was not necessarily fixed. He could move from Defoe's categories four and five –The working Trades, who labour hard but feel no want and The Country People, Farmers, etc. who fare indifferently – either upwards into category three – The middle Sort who fare well – or downwards into category six – The Poor that fare hard – or even category seven – The Miserable, that really pinch and suffer want.²⁶¹

There was always an inherent likelihood of fractionalism among artisans because of the very different circumstances likely to cut across an individual life course. This was for two reasons. One was the wide range of experience within the group as a whole. The other was the fluctuations in experience across an individual life course. At bottom, the essence of this difference was economic both in terms of the costs of a family and of establishing oneself and then of benefitting at other stages of family formation and established business. This is illustrated in the two case studies mentioned above, those of the Archer brothers and Thomas Scrambler.

It may be that artisans were especially vulnerable to chance and circumstance because of their often fragile economic circumstances, especially at certain stages in the course of family formation and deliquescence.

V

The eighteenth century stood on the cusp in terms of defining the position of different groups in society. 'Class' was beginning to emerge as a term replacing rank and order. Since the late eighteenth century numerous other theories of class have been developed, many of which dwell on class consciousness as in Marx's theories, or on the existence of social class as political action group. As the industrial revolution took root and bloomed, such theories of social organisation became increasingly relevant in the light of the development of organized political and/or industrial action. Of course, much of the influential

²⁶⁰ ERO D/P 192/1/5/4.1 Baptismal records

²⁶¹ Defoe, *Review of the British Nation* (1709)

oeuvre of E.P. Thompson was devoted to chronicling this process for the emergent working class and Peter Earle has carried out a similar task for the middle class in London in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.²⁶² No similar work has, to date, been completed on the artisanal segment of society and given the summary preliminary overview provided here, it might well be that no such history would be feasible for this social segment.

The only example of the artisans of Saffron Walden organising themselves as a group in any way was during the Bread Riots of 1795 when a band of artisans and labourers combined to try and seize grain and other foodstuffs to be sold at *taxation populaire* prices. In the brief for the prosecution at the Chelmsford Lent Assizes of 1796, the ringleader, Samuel Porter, was described as a cooper carrying on a very considerable business in that line.²⁶³ Six other trades represented were bricklayer, cordwainer, carpenter, sawyer, worsted maker and collar maker. It is not possible to tell whether these men were master craftsmen or journeymen. The Bread Riots show that at least some artisans found common identity with labourers and provided leadership when they felt threatened by outside events beyond their control. However this group action in defence of popular values appears to have cut through the artisan segment further indicating its fractionalised nature. While Samuel Porter, a cooper, sided with the labouring population of Saffron Walden, the mayor, Henry Archer who was a maltster, appealed to the local landowner, Lord Howard for help in putting down the riots.²⁶⁴ Both were men in a considerable way of business,²⁶⁵ so it can be seen that it was not mere wealth that dictated the line that an artisan might take in social and economic affairs. Such men enjoyed relative material comfort, independence and social assurance. It is possible that this allowed them to think, to discuss and to read. For men such as Samuel Porter it is possible that social action arose from considered principles, whilst Henry Archer saw his interests best served by allying himself to the local 'power in the land', Lord Howard.

The earlier theories of class developed by theorists and historians working outside this period, dealt most effectively with classic industrialised societies rather than one like eighteenth century Saffron Walden which had yet to achieve

²⁶² Peter Earle, *The making of the English middle class : business, society and family life in London, 1660-1730* (London, 1989)

²⁶³ ERO D/B 2/QSS4/35 Prosecution brief against Samuel Porter and others at the Chelmsford Lent Assizes 1796 as a result of the Saffron Walden Bread Riots of 1795

²⁶⁴ ERO, D/DBy O12, Correspondence in connection with the bread riots at Saffron Walden

²⁶⁵ ERO, 288 CR 20, Will of Samuel Porter, 1826, gives his occupations as corn factor and cooper and shows that he was able to leave legacies totalling at least £1200, a not inconsiderable sum. Sadly no will for Henry Archer has been found to allow comparisons.

more than a degree of proto-industrialisation.²⁶⁶ Of more recent theories, the five-class model propounded by R.S. Neale²⁶⁷ seems the most helpful in trying to develop an understanding of the social standing of eighteenth century artisans in Saffron Walden. Neale suggests that the third component group, the ‘Middling class’, would have covered the petit bourgeois, aspiring professional men, other literates and artisans, and goes on to propose that members of this social segment were “individuated or privatized like the middle class but collectively less deferential and more concerned to remove the privileges and authority of the upper class in which, without radical changes, they cannot realistically hope to share.”²⁶⁸

However, evidence to support the latter part of Neale’s proposition is not easily found among the artisans of Saffron Walden. It would seem that those of this ‘middling class’ were more keen to seek the approbation and support of the upper class than to try to remove its privileges and authority, if the case of Henry Archer, mayor during the 1795 Bread Riots, quoted above, was at all representative of the general situation.²⁶⁹ In general, deference continued to prevail.

However Neale’s suggestion that this group was continually changing in its composition as successful members of the fourth group moved up into it from below and unsuccessful members of the second segment dropped down from above strikes certain resonances in Walden. To make room for these newcomers, it was necessary either for the segment to expand or for other members of the ‘Middling class’ to move out, both upwards to be able to describe themselves as gentlemen and downwards to be considered paupers by more fortunate members of society.

Although the artisans of eighteenth century Saffron Walden do not appear to fit the classic Marxist proposition that “The history of each and every hitherto existant society has been that of class struggle”, it is, nevertheless, the case that their place in society—as they viewed it and as it was viewed by others, both above and below them in the social continuum— influenced everything that they said or did. Andy Wood suggests that “class operates in relationship to, and sometimes in conflict with, other identities” and that it should be recognised as

²⁶⁶ ERO, D/B 2/PAR9/2, Shoemaker’s account book, probably the property of Robert Catlin. The amount of work listed suggests that Catlin was probably employing other shoemakers within the Saffron Walden area to help him meet the orders. Robert was in a fortunate financial position for a shoemaker or cordwainer having received a considerable legacy from his father Nathaniel, also a shoemaker (TNA, Prob11/1137).

²⁶⁷ R.S. Neale, *Class in English History* (Oxford, 1981), p.133

²⁶⁸ R.S. Neale, *Class in English History* (Oxford, 1981), p.133

²⁶⁹ See above, p.74

“a fluid, ever-changing, emotive, dangerous force in human affairs.”²⁷⁰ Whether ‘class’ represented a ‘dangerous force in human affairs’ for the artisans of Saffron Walden for the greater part of the eighteenth century, the time of the Bread Riots apart, is, I would suggest, a moot point; but it is certainly true that “class operates in relationship to, and sometimes in conflict with, other identities”. Members of the town council saw themselves as gentlemen by virtue of their wealth and their status in town society. It seems very likely that they were seen as such by the labourers and journeymen of the town who would have treated them with due deference. However to the local gentry, they were still artisans and tradesmen, albeit ones who had made good financially.²⁷¹ This latter group had seized opportunities when presented, such as the growth in the importance of malt, to either develop existing secondary occupations or to diversify their occupations. The ability to do this was based on a number of factors such as natural acumen, the advantages deriving from favourable family circumstances and the sheer good fortune of being in the right place at the right time.²⁷² Others were less fortunate.

We may also surmise that the physical proximity enforced by the nature of the locale—described above—encouraged a sensitivity to small but important differences that in turn worked against group solidarity. Money alone was not enough to guarantee status—a truth that was so often portrayed in contemporary drama and art.²⁷³

VI

The social segment into which the artisans of eighteenth century Saffron Walden seem to fit most comfortably was a middling one that was markedly fluid in its membership. Some artisans rose to achieve the status of gentlemen and to have the right to vote in parliamentary elections for the county held at Chelmsford.²⁷⁴ Others sank into poverty and became reliant on charity, both parish and private. The majority seem, however, to have fitted well into Defoe’s fourth category ‘The working Trades, who labour hard but feel no want’, but at any point in time the fortunes of individuals might diverge, especially in old age.²⁷⁵ Their lives

²⁷⁰ Andy Wood, “Fear, hatred and the hidden injuries of class in early modern England”, *Journal of Social History*, 39 (2006), p.819

²⁷¹ Perhaps it should be borne in mind at this point that beneath what is accessible to us from surviving evidence, there may be levels of complexity that remain invisible to us.

²⁷² See above p.14 and below Chapter 5, p.112ff.

²⁷³ For example the series ‘Marriage a la Mode’ by William Hogarth ridicules the attempts of the nouveau riche to gain status through marriage as does R.B. Sheridan’s play ‘The Rivals’.

²⁷⁴ A.H.D.S. Data Set 3036, Chelmsford Voters 1702-1722

²⁷⁵ See above p.68

might not have been particularly comfortable and their hours of work would have been long, but as independent craftsmen they would have been in a position to organise their own working lives. This was in marked contrast to workers in the factories which became increasingly prevalent as the Industrial Revolution took its course. The majority would have paid their parish rates and taken their turn to serve as parish officers if called upon to do so.

The artisans and tradesmen of small market towns drew in business from and provided services to their hinterlands as well as to the populations of the towns themselves. Through their interaction with the civic, economic, social and religious life of the town, it was they who formed the backbone of their communities in the eighteenth century: it was a backbone clearly evident as an entity to both contemporaries and to subsequent historians. But it was also a peculiarly fluid backbone in that many moved into it and out of it, and the vagaries of circumstance meant that the fortunes of many within it could change markedly over their lifetimes. In these respects the artisanal segment was once again distinctly and markedly fragmented and fractionalised.

Chapter 4

Town Governance – control and care

When an eighteenth century artisan considered the way in which his town was organised, he would have referred to the governance of the town. The term ‘governance’ is defined by the *O.E.D.* as ‘the action or manner of governing’ or ‘the office, function, or power of governing; authority or permission to govern’.²⁷⁶ Any discussion of the governance of eighteenth century small market towns and the role, if any, that artisans played in this process requires not only an appreciation of the relationship between central and local government, but also of the many differing types of governance that might be enjoyed by these towns.

So what exactly did the term ‘governance’ mean to an eighteenth century artisan? The term can be viewed from a variety of perspectives: the structure of governance, the role that it took in controlling and caring for the community and the people involved in that process. That is to say, from structural, institutional and prosopographical perspectives.

The governance of an eighteenth century town had many facets, far more than in a rural setting, and these facets tended to intersect and overlap producing a very complex organisational structure. Large urban places such as Norwich were more multi-faceted in their governance, but even market towns such as Saffron Walden saw a range of intersecting facets which included the personnel involved in governance, the sequence of office holding, patronage and clientage and the interdependence of the civic, parochial and charitable organisations of the town.

It is these facets that this chapter will seek to explore in relation to the town of Saffron Walden. It will be argued that these facets in turn had an influence on the fractional nature of the artisan sector of society in eighteenth century Saffron Walden, particularly since there was frequently some confusion between executive and judicial functions. Individuals who held power often wore many ‘hats’. The power channelled through them came from a variety of sources including personal wealth that permitted patronage; their role as employer; their status as a member of the ruling oligarchy, the Corporation, perhaps even as mayor; and as a representative of central authority as a Justice of the Peace. These men exercised multiple jurisdictions, a characteristic of Early Modern England which still lingered in eighteenth century Saffron Walden. In many cases the sum total of their power was greater than that offered by its individual components. Artisans had to be able to unpick this complicated tapestry of

²⁷⁶http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50097293?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=governance&first=1&max_to_show=10 (28 October 2007)

power if they were to succeed in business, and, indeed, in life in general. Those who were able to read the patterns tended to rise in Saffron Walden society, those who could not sank towards pauperdom.

In eighteenth-century Saffron Walden the main structure of urban governance was the borough or Corporation as was also the case in Sudbury. Most of the other local market towns were still entirely managed through the system of manorial courts. Saffron Walden still retained its manorial courts, the manors of Chipping Walden and Brook Walden being the most important,²⁷⁷ but the town had been incorporated under a series of charters as will be discussed below²⁷⁸ but, although it was able to hold its own courts of Quarter Session and to appoint its own Justices of the Peace, it was not a parliamentary borough and therefore at times of election for knights of the shire it was subsumed within the county of Essex.

The town was composed of one single large parish unlike larger urban settlements such as Cambridge and Norwich. This meant that there was a degree of co-termininity between the urban and parish structures which was lacking in larger towns where the borough authorities had to deal with the overseers and churchwardens appointed by a number of parishes.

Another layer or facet of governance to be found in eighteenth century Walden was that of the manors.²⁷⁹ Although of declining importance in the overall governance of the town, the main manors of Chipping and of Brook Walden, and a number of smaller manorial courts, continued to control copyhold properties throughout the town. This meant that the holders of these copyhold properties had obligations to the manors as well as to the town and fell under the jurisdiction of the stewards of the manors with regard to their accommodation, another example of fractionalism within the artisan segment since other artisans owned freehold properties.

A further facet of town governance was exercised by the various town charities. These charities tended to operate through a system of patronage whereby the trustees selected from among those considered to be the deserving poor, those who were to receive assistance, be it in the form of a place at the charity school or help in paying apprenticeship premiums or a place in the town's almshouse for

²⁷⁷ See below, current page.

²⁷⁸ See below, p.82

²⁷⁹ See below, p.85

the elderly.²⁸⁰ A total of fourteen charities serving the town and surrounding villages are listed in *The History of Audley End*.²⁸¹

There is, however, one facet of town governance to be found in many eighteenth century towns that Saffron Walden lacked - trade gilds. Even as late as the eighteenth century in many towns admission to the ranks of skilled artisans was controlled by the trade gilds which set the rules governing who might and who might not work as a master artisan within the town. Indeed Woodward asserts, in relation to the building trades in the north of England, that in many towns the gild was the most important institution in the lives of craftsmen, offering economic advantages to its members.²⁸² Although the late eighteenth century saw the decline of the trade gilds in many places,²⁸³ in Saffron Walden no such decline took place because trade gilds did not exist. The Corporation regulated the admission of freemen, that is men free to trade within the town,²⁸⁴ as was also the case in Sudbury which, unlike Saffron Walden, retains good gild records in the form of its Cocket Books.²⁸⁵ There are no records of trade gilds existing in Saffron Walden in earlier periods. Those gilds which did exist were of a religious, social and charitable nature; the Gild of the Holy Trinity²⁸⁶ and the Gild of Our Lady of Pity. Although there are no records of trade gilds, some kind of informal trade associations undoubtedly did exist. For example the organisers of the annual Bishop Blaize procession, St Blaize being the patron saint of woolcombers.²⁸⁷

The various facets of town governance in eighteenth century Saffron Walden had a significant degree of overlap, particularly in terms of the men who occupied posts of responsibility in the various different strands of town governance.

²⁸⁰ See below, p.96

²⁸¹ Richard, Lord Braybrooke, *The History of Audley End* (London, 1836), pp.243-248

²⁸² Donald Woodward, *Men at Work* (Cambridge, 1995), p.28

²⁸³ Wendy Smits and Thorsten Stromback, *The Economics of the Apprenticeship System* (Cheltenham, 2001) p.16 suggest that it was the pressure of industrialisation led to the gradual breakdown of the gild system in late eighteenth century England, culminating in the repeal of the Statute of Artificers in 1814.

²⁸⁴ See below, p.83. The Role of the Corporation in the Economic Life of Saffron Walden.

²⁸⁵ SRO, (Bury St. Edmunds), EE 501/4, Sudbury Cocket Books

²⁸⁶ The Gild of the Holy Trinity was closely connected with the Corporation. After the Reformation the Corporation continued to use the account books of the Gild for civic affairs until 1835. (ERO. D/B2/GHT/2/1 and 2).

²⁸⁷ No references have been found to St. Blaize processions before the seventeenth century. It seems likely that the processions were instituted after the Restoration, perhaps as a salute to what were seen as past golden times.

Setting the Scene

The relationship between central and local government in the eighteenth century has been the subject of considerable discussion. Richard Price has suggested that ‘the relationship between the centre and the local is a defining property of state structures.’²⁸⁸ His argument is that the relationship between central and local government has never been straightforward and that, historically, British culture has been antagonistic towards any centralizing tendencies. Frank O’Gorman has contended that, in peace time, the Hanoverian regime was maintained by a constant set of interactions between central government and the localities. In the first half of the eighteenth century British bureaucracy grew rapidly, became more coherent and increased in efficiency, but in peace time, at least, most of the powers of the state, particularly its legal powers, were administered locally.²⁸⁹ Jonathan Barry has suggested that, although from the mid-seventeenth century onwards, the state began to establish a greater presence in English towns through tax officials, such as supervisors of excise and gaugers, who were posted there, and through the presence of military men, the hold of the centre on less contentious areas of local government, especially in the socio-economic sphere weakened.²⁹⁰ This was, no doubt, to the great relief of the local population who were profoundly suspicious of the executive branch of government.²⁹¹

It is clear that for artisans at this time the state existed but how they fitted into it is a more interesting question. As producers and consumers they were contributing to the funding of the state, particularly as there was an increasing use of excise duties.²⁹² Unlike labourers, they were less likely to be called upon to take the king’s shilling at times of conflict since the practice of a trade made them more useful in their home communities and there tended to be a tacit societal acceptance of this. However, at the level of the parish, men from the among the artisan segment were ‘the state’.²⁹³ They were often the parish constables and the overseers of the poor; sometimes the church wardens, the aldermen and, more often than might be anticipated, the mayor. Their competencies were employed. At this level the artisans were, to a large extent, the state that their neighbours experienced.

There was a great deal more diversity between towns than there was between county administrations in the eighteenth century, so although in many ways a

²⁸⁸ Richard Price, *British Society, 1680-1880* (Cambridge, 1999), p.155

²⁸⁹ Frank O’Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century* (London, 1997), pp.134-5

²⁹⁰ Jonathan Barry, ‘Provincial Town Culture, 1640-1780’ in: *Interpretation and Cultural History*, ed. J.H. Pittock and A. Wear (Basingstoke, 1991) p.204

²⁹¹ O’Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century ...*, pp.134-5

²⁹² J. Brewer, *The SineWS of Power* (London, 1989), pp.89-93

²⁹³ See below, p.88, iii Governance and the Parish

typical small-to middling-sized eighteenth century market town, in terms of its relationship with central government, Saffron Walden was somewhat different to many of its neighbours. Saffron Walden, unlike Royston, Linton, Braintree and Bocking, Bishops Stortford or Halstead, was an incorporated town.²⁹⁴ The last in a series of charters dating back to the reign of Henry IV had been granted by William and Mary in 1694.²⁹⁵ Rosemary Sweet has suggested that incorporated towns were bound to the monarch's government in a way that unincorporated towns were not,²⁹⁶ whilst David Eastwood has argued that by the eighteenth century 'local government at the King's command', the granting of royal charters and so on, was becoming 'local government at parliament's command' since the powers of local government were defined, ultimately, in terms of parliamentary statute.²⁹⁷ Whether the monarch or parliament had the ultimate control at this period, Saffron Walden, as an incorporated town, was more closely bound to central government than its unincorporated neighbours, but as a consequence of its incorporation had privileges that they lacked.

State intervention in local government in general was considerably more marked at county level than it was in relation to small market towns. At county level, for example, in the early years of the century the Commissions of the Peace were subject to regular and partisan remodelling. Sweet has suggested that no comparable interference was attempted with respect to towns. It is her contention that this was because civic office was regarded as a form of property and eighteenth century governments were wary of any action which might be construed as interference in the property rights of Englishmen.²⁹⁸ This argument suggests concern about interfering with the interests of the urban elite who ran the towns. It is the nature of this urban elite that will be considered in this chapter in relation to the governance of eighteenth century Saffron Walden. Was it solely composed of men drawn from the gentry and the professional sector? Or did a segment of the artisan sector form part of the urban elite of the town? If the latter is shown to be the case, then this is further evidence of the fractional nature of the artisan sector of Saffron Walden in the eighteenth century: part of it consisted of governors; the remainder were governed.

²⁹⁴ William Stow, *Remarks on London, being an Exact Survey of the London and Westminster, Borough of Southwark and the suburbs and liberties contiguous to them, ...* (London, 1722). Stow lists 676 market towns in his 1722 work. Of these he says 28 were cities. The 1835 Municipal Corporations Act identified 246 corporations, about one third of the number of market towns listed by Stow just over 100 years earlier..

²⁹⁵ ERO, D/B 2/BRE1/2 Charter of Henry IV, 1402

ERO, D/B 2/BRE1/23 Charter of William and Mary, 1694

²⁹⁶ Rosemary Sweet, *The English Town, 1680-1840* (Harlow, 1999), p.62

²⁹⁷ David Eastwood, *Government and Community, 1700-1870* (Basingstoke, 1997), p.18

²⁹⁸ Sweet, *The English Town ...*, pp.64-5

i. Central government presence in Saffron Walden

The governance of the town of Saffron Walden can be viewed from many perspectives. One element of the governance of the town was the way in which central government influence was felt. The most obvious example of this was the presence in the town of central government officials such as resident excise officers and the collectors of various taxes such as the Land Tax and the Window Tax. Between 1715 and 1800 thirty-seven excise officers, supervisors of excise and collectors of excise revenues were resident in Saffron Walden and in receipt of sacrament certificates.²⁹⁹ Excise officers were appointed centrally by written examination. The country was divided up into 'collections' which were roughly equivalent to English counties in area. Some eight times a year the Collector collected duties made on the basis of assessments by resident gaugers and their supervisors.³⁰⁰ In order to avoid any fraudulent avoidance of excise duties, excise officers were subject to a series of removes by which they were moved around the country from division to division and from collection to collection in search of promotion but also to ensure that close relationships did not develop between the excise men and the traders with whom they worked.³⁰¹

In 1718 Rowland Maugham gave his profession as officer of the duty of hides when he applied for his sacrament certificate.³⁰² In the early part of the eighteenth century tanning was an important industry in Saffron Walden. The resident officer would have been responsible for ensuring that the appropriate duty was paid on all hides handled. As the century progressed the resident excise officers were more concerned with the gauging of beer produced by local brewers. Between 1715 and 1800 thirty-eight excise officers, two supervisors of excise and one collector of excise received sacrament certificates in Saffron Walden.³⁰³ No excise officer received more than one sacrament certificate, confirming the idea that officers were moved around the country. It was not uncommon for a group of three excise officers to receive sacrament certificates on the same day confirming that in the local context the general principle was applied. Thus in 1718 John Palmer and Edward Clarke also received their

²⁹⁹ E.R.O. D/B 2/QSS7/14 Sacrament Certificates. Sacrament Certificates were required of people holding civic or state office as proof of their attendance at services of the established church. The taking of holy communion according to the tenets of the Church of England had to be witnessed and a certificate obtained at least annually.

³⁰⁰ John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power* (London, 1989), p. 102

³⁰¹ Brewer, *Sinews...*, p.110

³⁰² E.R.O. D/B 2/QSS7/14/66 Sacrament certificate of Rowland Maugham

³⁰³ ERO, D/B 2/QSS7/14 Sacrament certificates

certificates on April 6th.³⁰⁴ In 1790 James Marshall, Thomas Willcox and John Woodwards, all describing themselves as Officers of Excise, received sacrament certificates on November 7th.³⁰⁵ It would seem that throughout the greater part of the eighteenth century a complement of three excise officers was deemed necessary to assess the duties to be paid in Saffron Walden and its hinterland, a not inconsiderable number of men representing a new type of central government presence in the localities as a result of the introduction of various types of excise duty.

As well as excise officers who served in Saffron Walden before moving on elsewhere, central government was also represented in Saffron Walden by local men who were appointed to collect taxes levied on specific commodities. For example in 1788 a sacrament certificate was issued to Jonathan Bowtell who gave his profession as window surveyor.³⁰⁶ Window Tax was collected annually from 1696 until 1798. Professional surveyors were appointed by the Tax Office to assess the duty payable.³⁰⁷ Bowtell was a tanner by trade but must have possessed the necessary qualities for the job.

Although, as seen above, there were representatives of central government such as the excise officers working in Walden in the course of the eighteenth century, for the most part the governance of the town was an internal matter. The county authorities had little influence except at times of parliamentary elections, when county poll books showed who was entitled to vote and how those votes had been cast,³⁰⁸ or when prisoners were sent to Chelmsford from the local quarter sessions to be dealt with at the assizes for crimes more serious than could be dealt with by the local justices of the peace.³⁰⁹ As an incorporated town, Saffron Walden was able to appoint its own justices of the peace rather than using those appointed centrally to the county Commissions of the Peace.³¹⁰

It can be seen, then, that although central government did have an active local role to play in the governance of small market towns, it was not, in Saffron Walden, a very significant one.

³⁰⁴ ERO, D/B 2/QSS7/14/65, 66 and 67 Sacrament certificates of John Palmer, Rowland Maugham and Edward Clarke. Palmer and Clarke describe themselves simply as Officers of Excise.

³⁰⁵ ERO, D/B 2/QSS7/14/277-279 Sacrament certificates of excise officers, 1790

³⁰⁶ E.R.O, D/B 2/QSS7/14/269 Sacrament certificate of Jonathan Bowtell, window surveyor.

³⁰⁷ J.V. Beckett, "Land Tax or Excise: The Levying of Taxation in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century England" *The English Historical Review*, 100, (1985), pp.285-308

³⁰⁸ For example the poll books of 1715 (ERO, D/DKw/O2/14), 1734 (ERO library, uncatalogued), 1768 (ERO library, uncatalogued) and 1774 (ERO library, uncatalogued). The county poll books gave a list of those men who held the franchise by right of their land holdings (the 40shilling freehold), the parish in which they lived, the parish in which the land was held and how they had cast their votes.

³⁰⁹ ERO, D/B 2/QSS4/35 In 1796, following the Saffron Walden Bread Riots, the ringleader Samuel Porter, a cooper, was sent to be dealt with at the Chelmsford Lent Assizes.

³¹⁰ See above page 82

ii. The Role of the Corporation in the Economic Life of Saffron Walden

If, as indicated above, central and county authorities had only a relatively minor impact on the way in which incorporated towns such as Saffron Walden governed their affairs, how then did such governance occur? By the eighteenth century in Saffron Walden the governance of the town was divided between matters that were purely civic, those that came under the auspices of the parish and those that were of a charitable nature.

Saffron Walden was divided, principally, between the manors of Brook Walden and Chipping Walden. However as an incorporated town, the manors had, by the eighteenth century, little impact on town governance other than in the way that copyhold property was transferred. This continued to be done in the manorial courts. For example, on 17 March, 1749 the steward of the Manor of Brook Walden, John Craster, oversaw the transfer of a tenement in Castle Street from Hannah Cranwell, deceased, formerly the wife of Samuel Burgis, a cabinet maker and freeman of the town,³¹¹ to her daughter Hannah, wife of John Burr, a Quaker.

Effectively the system of civic governance of the town of Saffron Walden that prevailed in the eighteenth century had its origins in a charter granted in 1694 by William III and Mary II.³¹² This charter provided for a Corporation consisting of a Mayor, a Recorder, a Deputy Recorder, twelve Aldermen (in addition to the Mayor), a Town Clerk and a Coroner. The Recorder, Deputy Recorder, Mayor and two senior Aldermen were to be Justices of the Peace, the Mayor being given the right to continue as such for a year after the end of his term of mayoralty. These were Justices of the Peace specifically for the town; they were not on the list of the Commission of the Peace for the County of Essex.

The Charter of 1694 gave the Corporation the same rights that had previously been enjoyed by officials known as the Treasurer and Chamberlains and the Commonalty under previous charters. These rights included the administration of and profits from the Market of Walden and the town Malt Mill, which had been purchased outright in 1618 from the Earl of Suffolk to whose family the rights had been transferred from the Crown.³¹³

The Mayor and Aldermen of Walden were responsible for the control of the Borough Quarter Sessions, the Petty Sessions, the management of markets and fairs and the regulation of trade in terms of the admission of freemen of the town.

³¹¹ Saffron Walden Museum 40838 List of freemen

³¹² ERO, D/B 2/BRE1/23 Charter of William and Mary, 1694

³¹³ C. B. Rowntree, *Saffron Walden Then and Now* (Chelmsford, 1952), pp.17-24

Their role was one which dealt with both the economic and legal aspects of the town. These aspects frequently overlapped.

By controlling admission to the body of freemen of the town, the corporation was able to exercise a considerable control over who was allowed to trade in the town. The surviving records of the admission of freemen are somewhat patchy in their coverage, but sufficient exist to identify that freedom of the town could be acquired through patrimony, that is by having a father who was a freeman of the town; through redemption - by purchase; and through an unnamed category, presumably by the completion of an apprenticeship in the town, often referred to as freedom by servitude.³¹⁴ Of the surviving collection of 155 records, dating from 1700 to 1762/3, 107 (69%) belong to the unnamed category. For example in 1694 one Thomas Archer was apprenticed to John Beltham, a Saffron Walden glover. The premium for this apprenticeship was paid by Bromfield's Charity.³¹⁵ Nine years later, in 1703, a glover named Thomas Archer paid ten shillings for his freedom of the borough. Nine years would have allowed a sufficient period of time for Thomas to complete his apprenticeship, usually a period of seven years, and to have served some time as a journeyman. It is possible that by 1703 Thomas was in a position to set up in business on his own behalf and therefore needed to become a freeman of the borough in order to trade. In 1706 Bromfield's Charity arranged the apprenticeship of John Barker to Thomas Archer, a Saffron Walden glover.³¹⁶ Some years later in 1720 John Archer was apprenticed to his father Thomas, a glover, by the same charity.³¹⁷

The achievement of freedom by patrimony seems to have been quite uncommon and records only exist for it occurring in the first twenty years of the eighteenth century. It is possible that in Saffron Walden, at least, this was a custom which no longer held the relevance that it had once had. Only three freedoms by patrimony were recorded, two in 1712/3 and one in 1716/7. In each case a fee of ten shillings was paid.

Forty-two freedoms by redemption were purchased between 1700 and 1762/3. The fee for purchasing a freedom in this way tended to be higher, ranging from the standard ten shillings to as high as £20. Many of those who purchased their freedom by redemption were incomers who needed the freedom in order to trade in the town. For example William Impey, a Quaker brazier, paid 120/- for his freedom by redemption in 1719/20 having arrived in the town from Harrowden,

³¹⁴ Saffron Walden Museum 41507, Freemen.

³¹⁵ E.R.O. D/B 2/CHR1/5 Apprenticeship records of Bromfield's Charity

³¹⁶ E.R.O. D/B 2/CHR1/5/50 Apprenticeship of John Barker

³¹⁷ E.R.O. D/B 2/CHR1/5/90 Apprenticeship of John Archer

Northants., in 1718 with a Quaker certificate of removal to the Saffron Walden meeting.³¹⁸

The protection of the privileged trading rights which freemen of the borough possessed was an important way in which the Corporation interacted with the economic life of the town. If an outsider attempted to break the trading monopoly exercised by freemen of the borough, the Corporation was expected to take action. Woodward asserts that in the north of England the relationship between gild membership and freedom of the town is imperfectly understood because of the variation of practice.³¹⁹ In Saffron Walden there was no gild involvement but freedom to trade was seen as an important right and was fiercely protected as it was in nearby Hertford where it was re-asserted in the bye-laws of 1752. In Hertford freedom to trade and manufacture had declined in importance by 1839 when there were only 366 freemen out of a population of over 5,000.³²⁰

The way in which the Corporation in Saffron Walden set out to protect the privileged trading rights of its freemen is illustrated by the following examples. On 29th May, 1718 Robert Dodman, Thomas Bush and Joseph Wright were presented at the Quarter Sessions by the Grand Jury for following the trade of a bricklayer and plasterer. The three men had presumably either failed to complete an appropriate apprenticeship or, more likely, had failed to purchase their freedom of the borough.³²¹ In October 1725 George Smith, Samuel Burges and John Kay were presented for trading without being freemen of the town.³²² The Corporation took its duty of protecting the privileges of its freemen very seriously. This was seen as being necessary for the good governance of the town.

* * *

The Corporation was also responsible for the operation of the market, another vital way in which it interacted with the town's economic life. It was responsible

³¹⁸ Friends' Meeting House, Saffron Walden, Shelf 3, Case C.1

³¹⁹ Woodward, *Men at Work*, p.73

³²⁰ 'The borough of Hertford: Introduction, *A History of the County of Hertford: volume 3* (1912), pp. 490-501. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=43648>

Date accessed: 15 September 2009.

³²¹ ERO, D/B 2/QSS1/25 Grand Jury List, 1718. There is no reference to Robert Dodman or Thomas Bush in the Freemen's List (SW Museum 41507), but a Joseph Wright did purchase his freedom in 1705/6. Whether this is the same man or not is impossible to say. A Thomas Bush, a wheelwright from nearby Littlebury, was in possession of a settlement certificate in 1712 (ERO, D/B 2/PAR4/28).

³²² ERO, D/B 2/QSS1/52 It is interesting to note that Samuel Burges presented by the Grand Jury in October 1725 had purchased his freedom by redemption at a cost of 42 shillings in the year 1725/6 (SW Museum 41507). There is no record of either of his two fellow defendants purchasing their freedoms, although it is known that John Kay was a joiner from Middleton in Lancashire from his settlement certificate of 1717 (ERO, D/B 2/PAR4/40).

for leasing out the stalls at the Saturday market and ensuring that the rules governing the market were obeyed. An official was appointed by the corporation to collect market tolls and to ensure that rules were followed.³²³ Action was taken at the Quarter Sessions against anyone who broke the market rules. In August 1718 Henry Mead was presented by the Grand Jury for buying goods in the Rose and Crown and for forestalling the market. Thomas Allen, a butcher from Radwinter, a nearby village, was presented for bringing meat to town on a week day, that is, not on a market day.³²⁴ That the market should be properly controlled by the Corporation was essential for the freemen-artisans of the town who relied on the market as a way of marketing their goods to Saffron Walden's wider hinterland. The weekly market drew in customers from the surrounding villages, expanding the potential range of clients to whom goods could be sold and services offered. For the butchers and victuallers of the town it was particularly important that the market should be properly regulated otherwise traders from outside such as Thomas Allen, instanced above, might steal potential customers, or fellow butchers such as Richard Cocket and John Stubbing of the nearby village of Wimbish might practise regrating.³²⁵

The Corporation was also responsible for setting the prices of basic foodstuffs in times of crisis. During the period surrounding the Saffron Walden bread riots of July 1795 it was agreed on the 27th that a Quatern loaf would be sold at 10d but that the poor would only pay 7d. The price of cheese was set at 4d per pound and meat at 4½d per pound for a month. Throughout the period of unrest, Henry Archer, the mayor, was in correspondence with Lord Howard at Audley End about the best course of action.³²⁶

iii. Governance and the Parish

Over the past forty years, a theme of small community studies in early modern England has been the fragmentary nature of these communities. Many studies see the roots of this as lying in three processes. The first of these concerns economic differentiation in the second half of the sixteenth century. This gave rise to a distinction between the socially upwardly mobile on the one hand and those reduced to a condition of landless and intermittently employed labourers on

³²³ ERO, D/B 2/PAR11/257 The 1792 Church Rate showed John Kent as being rated not only for his house in Market End, but also for the tolls of the Market and Fairs. Other employees of the town included the town gaoler and the master of the workhouse prior to the establishment of the Union.

³²⁴ ERO, D/B 2/QSS1/26 Forestalling the market meant buying goods before they had reached the market with the intention of selling them again at a higher price. This remained an offence until 1844.

³²⁵ ERO, D/B2/QSS1/83,87 and 108 Regrating the market meant buying up commodities with the intention to resell them at or near the market at a profit.

³²⁶ ERO, D/DBY O12 Correspondence concerning the Saffron Walden bread riots of 1795.

the other. The second was the emergent religious divisions realised in the distinction between godliness on the one hand and the reprobate on the other leading to morally justifying power plays within small communities – the religious versus the aficionados of the alehouse. And thirdly the proliferation of administrative activities for which the parish was the smallest functional unit placed considerable administrative power in the hands of the parish elites. Moreover, there is some evidence that these groupings of parochial elites substantially overlapped. All this created inherent ongoing divisions within the small communities of early modern England which continued throughout the eighteenth century. Saffron Walden, as a borough, had a more complex structure than the standard parish.

The evidence suggests that these characteristic features of fragmentation in England's small communities found a precise realisation in Saffron Walden. In particular they contributed not only to fragmentation within the community, but also fractionalism within a segment such as the artisans.

When the poor of Saffron Walden were issued with tickets to allow them to buy food at the reduced prices during the period of the Bread Riots in 1795, accounts show that 1,254 people were relieved by ticket at a value of 3d each in either bread or flour. It was agreed that when the Subscription Fund for the relief of the poor was close to exhaustion, the Churchwardens and Overseers should make a rate upon the inhabitants for a sufficient sum in addition to whatever might be necessary to answer other usual expenses, at a rate not exceeding 4d in the pound.³²⁷ This was an example of the borough authorities working in concert with the parish authorities. In Saffron Walden this was easier to bring about than in other towns of the same or slightly higher populations such as Sudbury in Suffolk, because in Saffron Walden there was only one parish whereas in Sudbury there were the parishes of St. Gregory, St. Peter and All Saints, all of which would have had churchwardens and overseers with whom it would be necessary to negotiate.³²⁸

The parish was responsible for the election each year of a set of officials: Churchwardens, Overseers of the Poor and Parish Constables. Most parishes also elected a surveyor of highways who was responsible for ensuring that local roads were kept in reasonable repair. The ratepayers of the parish were responsible for the election of the above mentioned officials. One of the Churchwardens was normally elected, the other was nominated by the incumbent. The Overseers were elected annually by the parish vestry. The

³²⁷ ERO, D/DBY O12 Correspondence ... 1795.

³²⁸ Barry Wall, *Sudbury* (Stroud, 2004)

Parish Constables were formally elected each year.³²⁹ Theirs was the only parochial appointment that had to be ratified by the town magistrates. In practice many constables served for several years, received fees for services performed and were, therefore, semi-professional³³⁰ as had become the case in the counties in the late sixteenth century.³³¹

The Churchwardens were the most senior of the parish officials and their office also tended to be the least burdensome. They were *ex officio* overseers of the poor, but usually devoted more of their time to routine aspects of church management, the levying of special church rates and the maintenance of the fabric of the church.³³² Sidney and Beatrice Webb noted that the churchwardens were bound by oath to report at the annual visitation of the Archdeacon on the performance of the parish clerics, the state of the church and on any moral or religious delinquency amongst the parishioners. They could levy a Church Rate where necessary to recoup expenditure, but were required to submit accounts and a proposal to make the rate at a meeting of the inhabitants.³³³ In Easter 1792 the Church Rate for Saffron Walden was levied at the rate of one shilling in the pound by the Churchwardens George Archer and Jonathan Bowtell.³³⁴ The Saffron Walden Churchwardens' accounts included inventories of church plate and goods, as well as disbursements and resolutions concerning the church clock.³³⁵

The duties of the overseers of the poor were much more time consuming. Elected annually and numbering between two and four, the overseers were supposed to meet with the approval of the local justices of the peace to whom they were also supposed to submit their accounts under the 1598 Act *For the Relief of the Poor* (39 Eliz. I c.3).³³⁶ Eastwood's description of the duties of the overseers includes investigating the circumstances of claimants, calculating any entitlements, managing parish work schemes, and supervising the workhouse if

³²⁹ Anon, *The Complete Parish Officer* (London, 1763) gives full details of the election and duties of Parish Constables. It was the sort of book that a man seeking to achieve office within his community might purchase since as well as constables, it also discussed the roles and duties of church wardens, overseers of the poor and surveyors of the highways.

³³⁰ David Eastwood, "Local Government and Local Society" in *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. H.T. Dickenson (Oxford, 2002), p.47

³³¹ Joan R. Kent, 'The English Village Constable 1580-1642' in *Journal of British Studies*, 20.2, p29

³³² David Eastwood, *Governing Rural England* (Oxford, 1994), p.39

³³³ Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *English Local Government* (London, 1906), pp.24-5

³³⁴ ERO, D/DBy Q3 Rate for the repair of the parish church, 1792. It should be noted that Jonathan Bowtell provides an example of the overlap of personnel within the different areas of town governance. He is mentioned above p.77 as serving as Surveyor of Windows, a central government appointment. He was a tanner.

³³⁵ ERO, D/P 192/5/3 Churchwardens' Accounts

³³⁶ Paul Slack, *The English poor law, 1531-1782* (Cambridge, 1995 edition), p.20

the parish maintained one.³³⁷ In Saffron Walden the overseers were involved in arranging the settlement examinations of claimants for relief who were believed not to be the responsibility of the parish, such as Susannah Crisp who was removed to Thaxted in 1771.³³⁸ They were also involved in tracking down the putative fathers of bastard children whom it was thought might become a charge on the parish. The overseers were also responsible for deciding who was entitled to be paid relief and for the organisation of parish work programmes such as spinning.³³⁹ This provided an opportunity for the exercise of patronage and gave those men, many of whom were artisans—62 out of 176 names can be definitely identified as artisans (35%)—considerable power in the community. The overseers had the power to decide who was deemed to be a member of ‘the deserving poor’ and who was not. Who was to receive parish relief and who was to be condemned to the workhouse. Thus men who *were* from the artisan sector had power to decide the futures of other men from the same sector. Again we have a clear indication of fractionalism within the artisan segment of Saffron Walden society in the eighteenth century.

This power was exercised at the time of the Bread Riots in 1795. Two hundred and twenty families received an additional allowance for spinning in the week of the 29th June at a cost of £5.12s.10d.³⁴⁰ Earlier, in 1735, it was ordered at the Quarter Sessions that a stock of hemp and flax be laid in for the employment of the poor.³⁴¹ The Overseers were also responsible for the parish workhouse³⁴² and for sundry other duties such as the burial of people without means.³⁴³

Overseers might find themselves forced to deal with conflict between the poor of the parish and the rate payers on whom the parish rates were levied, especially when the rate in the pound rocketed in times of hardship. In Saffron Walden, for example, between 1794 and 1800, a period covering the lack of stability represented by the Bread Riots, the rate in the pound rose from 1/- to 5/-.

³³⁷ Eastwood, *Governing ...*, p.39

³³⁸ ERO, D/B 2/PAR5/223 Removal of Susannah Crisp, 1771

³³⁹ ERO, D/B 2/PAR9/4 Hemp and sack or spinning book, 1783-1819

³⁴⁰ E.R.O. D/DBy O12 Correspondence concerning the Saffron Walden Bread Riots, 1795-6

³⁴¹ E.R.O. D/B 2/QSS5/5 Order of the Quarter Sessions concerning the establishment of houses of correction at the workhouse and at the common gaol and of the laying in of stocks of hemp.

³⁴² In 1709 a draft bill proposing the establishment of a workhouse was obtained (ERO, D/B 2/PAR3/11). On 3 January 1734/5 the White Hart and land in Saffron Walden was conveyed to the Churchwardens and overseers. Due to the increase in the number of the poor a workhouse was to be built (ERO, D/B 2/TDS1/5/2). From 1709 there are references to people coming from the workhouse in burial records ERO, D/P 192/4/7 and 8). These references increase in number after 1730.

³⁴³ ERO, D/P 192/1/4 Register of births, marriages and burials 1674-1749, Saffron Walden, St. Mary the Virgin

Reference	Date rate made	Rate in the £	By whom rate made
D/B 2/PAR11/2	9 th May 1794	1s in the £	
D/B 2/PAR11/3	13 th February 1795	1s 6d in the £	Thomas Warren
D/B 2/PAR11/4	10 th July 1795	2s in the £	Thomas Webb
D/B 2/PAR11/5	13 th November 1795	3s 6d in the £	John Day
D/B 2/PAR11/6	15 th July 1796	2s 6d in the £	John Smith
D/B 2/PAR11/7	26 th January 1798	2s 3d in the £	Robert Swan
D/B 2/PAR11/8	17 th January 1800	5s in the £	Daniel Kent
D/B 2/PAR11/9	28 th July 1800	5s in the £	William Cockerill

Table 2: Poor Rates made between 1794 and 1800 (ERO, D/B2 PAR11/ 2-9

Each rate had to be approved by two justices of the peace and was also signed by leading members of the parish. Sometimes the overseers were forced to make up shortfalls in the rate from their own pockets by a loan to the parish if disbursements exceeded the amount allowed for in the rate.

Unlike Churchwardens who had to be members of the Church of England, all rate payers were eligible to serve as overseers. Dissenters and Roman Catholics were not excluded from serving as parish officers and in Saffron Walden both Baptists and Quakers took their turn as overseers. Abraham Cornell, listed in the 1744 Collection from the Abbey Lane Baptist Church³⁴⁴, served as parish Overseer in 1741.³⁴⁵ In 1734 William Impey, a Quaker brazier, served as Overseer.³⁴⁶

The office of parish constable did not hold the kudos of churchwarden or overseer and, as mentioned earlier although technically elected annually, parish constables often held office for a number of years if they proved effective. The constable was, by common law, a ‘Conservator of the Peace’, whose staff of office was the equivalent of the modern warrant card. Parish constables were authorised to apprehend anyone who committed a felony as well as those responsible for minor offences and breaches of the peace and to hold them until they could be brought before a magistrate.³⁴⁷

The parish constable’s role was thus one of control but also of the imposition of the values that those who held power in the community saw as crucial for the harmonious governance of the town. This latter role meant that the appointment as parish constable might be a helping hand on to the lowest rung of the *cursus honorum* for a man who held opinions and acted in a way that those who held the

³⁴⁴ E.R.O. D/NC 16/1/1 Church book, 1743-1775, Abbey Lane Congregational Church

³⁴⁵ E.R.O. D/B 2/PAR8/12 Bastardy bond of Thomas Browne, of Saffron Walden, surgeon, naming Abraham Cornell, baker, as one of the overseers of the poor in 1741

³⁴⁶ E.R.O. T/A 327/1 Microfilm of the Borough of Saffron Walden General Account Book, 1587-1792

³⁴⁷ The Webbs, *English Law* ...

reins of power in the town deemed appropriate, an example of patronage in action. Other parish constables were simple men, men viewed as being of upright character but unlikely to climb the *cursus honorum* within the town. It was this latter group who tended to hold the office for many years.

The constables worked in conjunction with the Justices of the Peace executing their warrants and attending Petty and Quarter Sessions where they made presentments and presented their returns. Unlike Churchwardens and Overseers they were entitled to some customary fees and were allowed to claim certain expenses. Technically they were the underlings of the High Constable of the Hundred in which they lived.

As well as their role in the preservation of law and order, the parish constable also had duties under the Poor Law. J. J. Tobias describes these as the suppression of begging and the arrest of vagrants found without means of support in the parish. These vagrants were then passed along the chain of constables, from 'hand to hand', from parish constable to parish constable, as the vagrant passed across an area of jurisdiction, to return them to their parish of origin.³⁴⁸

It can be seen that the parish offices available to men in eighteenth century Saffron Walden formed a hierarchy, from the lowly parish constable to the heights of churchwarden. A man might climb as high as his wits and talents allowed, but he might also be helped by patronage or hindered by religious affiliation. Some artisans remained forever without office, perhaps from choice, the duties of maintaining a home and family being as much as many men could manage. Others failed to climb because they were not seen as deserving or able, or because their religious beliefs meant that they could never attain the pinnacle of a churchwardenship. Religious affiliation did not present a problem in the lower offices of constable and overseer where, perhaps, aptitude was more highly valued. Those identified as worthy of patronage were assisted by people already further along the *cursus honorum*. Thus the holding of parish office in itself added to the fractional nature of the artisan sector of Walden society. Another measure of the level of fragmentation would be the ratio of parochial office holders to the available pool of talent together with the rate of succession. Unfortunately the surviving evidence will not bear such sophisticated analysis.

³⁴⁸ J. J. Tobias, *Crime and the Police in England, 1700-1900* (Dublin, 1979), p.30

iv. The Parish and Charity

The Poor Law ensured that the parish took some responsibility for the provision of aid to the poor, the aged and those unable to support themselves. Surviving accounts kept by Saffron Walden's overseers of the poor show the sums of money that were expended to help the less fortunate of the parish. For example in the week of the 16th April, 1781, the accounts of William Mynott, the overseer, show that he paid out sums of between 6d and 3s.6d. to 63 deserving poor, that is people in need of assistance including widows, orphans and people who were the responsibility of the parish but living elsewhere. He also paid monies out under the heading of 'Incidents' to a further twenty-two people. These payments included payments to the sick: Lydia Archer, Richard Archer, the widow of James Archer and the wife of Edward Francis. The wife of one Burling was paid for nursing W. Thurgood. There was also a payment 'for crying people going to the Pest House *etc*'. These 'incidental' payments seem to have been one-off ones rather than regular week-to-week payments.³⁴⁹

The parish also took some responsibility for funding the apprenticeship of poor children. Between 1702 and 1784 apprenticeship details for fifteen children who were apprenticed by the parish survive, including the apprenticeship of at least five girls.³⁵⁰ The Corporation of the town of Walden also took an interest in ensuring that the young were suitably employed, but their approach was somewhat more punitive than that of the town charities involved in the placing of apprentices. Those young people who refused to 'go into service', that is accept the job that had been found for them under terms of various Poor Law Acts, were presented to the Quarter Sessions by the Grand Inquest. Sadly the papers giving punishments handed down no longer exist, but this would seem to be yet another example of control of those deemed to be the 'undeserving poor'.

In Saffron Walden, as in many towns, the support offered to the disadvantaged by the parish was complemented by charities. The charities had an organisational structure of their own which offered another facet to the governance of the town. Two particular ways in which charities contributed to the well-being of the town were funds to help poorer children secure apprenticeships and the Almshouse which offered a home to some of the elderly of the town, but other charities also existed for relief of the poor through doles of cloth and bread.

A number of charities offered funds to provide apprenticeships for children whose parents could not afford the premiums. These charities included:

³⁴⁹ E.R.O. D/B 2/PAR3/1 Overseers' Accounts, 1781-1797

³⁵⁰ E.R.O. D/B 2/PAR 7/25-41 Parish apprenticeship indentures

Bromfield's Charity, Suffolk and Turner's Charity and Edmund Turner's Charity.³⁵¹ Dr Matthew Bromfield left land to finance the funding of charity apprenticeships. The charity was run by trustees who nominated boys whom they deemed merited help in securing an apprenticeship. These were boys whose parents were seen as decent members of the community, perhaps poorer relatives, but undoubtedly the 'deserving poor'. This was a clear example of patronage in action in the town and, incidentally, demonstrates the importance of kin beyond the co-residential group. The trustees elected stewards who were responsible for overseeing the day-to-day work of the charity. The stewards were men of status in the town, the sort of men likely to become aldermen. Between 1700 and 1798 over 250 apprentices were placed by the charity, with provision for extra funds to help with clothing and expenses where necessary.³⁵² An examination of the surnames of the children who were placed by the charity shows that many of the boys were the sons of men who took a role, albeit a low level one, in the governance of the town, for example as members of the Grand Inquest to the Quarter Sessions. Other boys came from more humble origins, with parents whose status did not entitle them to even the lowliest role in the governance of the town. This tendency to afford assistance to the sons of men seen as worthy of help, the deserving poor, continued throughout the eighteenth century. The ability to provide help to those seen as worthy helped to establish links of obligation between the givers and receivers of patronage. Patronage was, thus, an important link between the poor of the town and those in positions of power. It implied obligations to be fulfilled by both sides, helping to ensure a prevailing vertical social integration except in times of crisis.

The boys were apprenticed to a wide variety of trades both in Walden and elsewhere. The furthest that a boy was sent under Bromfield's Charity was to Tardebigg, just outside Redditch, Worcestershire. In 1793 Daniel Gilbert Mackenzie an illiterate boy and son of James Mackenzie, a perukemaker, was apprenticed to John Moore, a needle manufacturer.³⁵³ The stewards in that year were Thomas Pennystone and Thomas Headland. Of the 250 or so boys that were apprenticed by Bromfield's Charity in the course of the eighteenth century, 99 were apprenticed in locations outside the parish of Walden. Some were placed in the surrounding villages, but 66% were placed more than ten miles away from Walden,³⁵⁴ perhaps in the hope that they would gain settlement there

³⁵¹ Braybrooke, *Audley End...* pp.243-8

³⁵² E.R.O. D/B 2/CHR1/5 Bromfield's apprenticeship indentures

³⁵³ ERO, D/B 2/CHR1/5/247 Apprenticeship of Daniel Mackenzie, 1793

³⁵⁴ E.R.O. D/B 2/CHR1/5 Bromfield's apprenticeship indentures

by completion of their apprenticeships and not return to be a potential burden to the parish of Walden.³⁵⁵

While charities such as those of Matthew Bromfield and Edmund Turner catered for the placing of apprentices, Thomas Penning left £500 which was used to help fund the charity school established by subscription in 1715 for the ‘instruction of poor children to read and learn the Church catechism’.³⁵⁶ The school continued to attract further charitable donations enabling it to provide clothing for the children admitted as scholars, both boys and girls. Once again the Charity School provided a means for the leading members of the town to exert patronage enabling the children of favoured members of ‘those persons of honest lives and conversation otherwise unable to give their children learning’,³⁵⁷ to secure a place at the Charity School and thus a step on the road towards economic and social advantage. It is interesting to note that eleven of the first fifteen boys to be granted a place at the charity school can be identified as subsequently being placed apprentice by a town charity.³⁵⁸ Jeremy Schmidt has remarked that the charity schools movement offered goods and services for the upbringing of children and while some children came from families who, at some point in their history, were dependent on poor relief, others came from relatively well-paid artisanal households.³⁵⁹ Whatever the precise social origins of the applicant for a place at the Saffron Walden charity school, it is clear that the support of an influential patron would prove invaluable.

Other charities provided for annual gifts of bread and clothing to the deserving poor, for example that of Anthony Pennystone³⁶⁰ who, under the terms of his will of 1654, left money to provide bread and money for poor men and women of Saffron Walden who had been housekeepers. However, the main charitable institution in Walden to provide care for the elderly was the Almshouse. The Almshouse had originally been founded under the auspices of the Gild of Our Lady of Pity in the early fifteenth century to care for thirteen poor men and women. It was entrusted to the oversight of the Corporation of Walden under the terms of the Charter of Edward VI of 1549. The Almshouse was governed by the Master or Keeper and his co-brother who were to be elected annually, although the real work amongst the now fifteen residents was done by the Dame. The

³⁵⁵ See below, Chapter 5.

³⁵⁶ C.B. Rowntree, *Saffron Walden ...*, p.67

³⁵⁷ ERO, D/B 2/SCH2/2 Deed of the new trustees of the charity school of 1749

³⁵⁸ ERO, D/B 2/SCH2/1 List of subscribers for erecting a charity school, 1715-1745

³⁵⁹ Jeremy Schmidt, ‘Charity and the Government of the Poor in the Charity Schools Movement, circa 1700-1730’ *Journal of British Studies*, 49.4 (2010), p.779

³⁶⁰ ERO, D/B 2/CHR7/1,2 Pennystone’s Charity

Dame was one of the residents who was appointed to cook and care for her fellows.³⁶¹

Any vacancies in the number of residents of the Almshouse, who were to be 'of the most needy and poor persons having impediment by extreme age, maimed or sick, impotent to labour', were to be filled from among nominations made by the Masters to the Corporation who then voted on them. This is yet another example of the importance of patronage in the way in which the town was governed.

Those people deemed as worthy of help in their old age by the men holding the reins of power in the community were helped towards a place at the Almshouse. Failure to secure a place at the first attempt did not mean permanent exclusion from the benefit. The Walden Almshouse Book 1749-1772³⁶² shows many examples of candidates gradually gaining votes until they eventually succeeded in gaining a place. Couples were accepted if one party had been elected but on the death of the electee the relict was expected to vacate the room and wait to be elected in his or her turn.

³⁶¹ Rowntree, *Saffron Walden ...*, pp.59-60

³⁶² ERO, D/Q 67/2/1,2 Almshouse accounts 1749-1772

Date	Name	Other Information	Most senior civic office held
1700-1	John Wale	Gentleman	Deputy Recorder
1701	Lancaster Rickard	Gentleman	Alderman
1702	Edward Allcraft	Mister	Mayor
1703-5	Robert Filbridge	Saddler	Mayor
1705-6	Thomas Ingrey	Mister	Mayor
1707	John Gorsuch		Mayor
1708-9	Thomas Ingrey		Mayor
1709	William Holgate	Esquire	
1710	Robert Cosen	Esquire, nonconformist	
1712-17	Thomas Penning	Esquire	
1717-18	Robert Cosen	Esquire, nonconformist	
1718-19	Richard Archer	Mister	Mayor
1719-21	John Leverett	Mister	Mayor
1721-22	Joseph Collin	Mister	Mayor
1722-24	Richard Archer	Mister	Mayor
1724-25	George Browne	Mister	Mayor
1726-27	Charles Howard	Honourable, of Audley End	
1736	Thomas Bowyer	Gentleman	Overseer of the Poor
1742	Henry, Earl of Suffolk	Owner of Audley End	
1749-50	Edmund Taylor	Mister	Overseer of the Poor
1751-52	Abraham Knott	Mister	Churchwarden
1753-54	James Raymond		Mayor
1755-1769	John Winstanley		
1770-1782	John Collin	Gentleman	
1783-86	Ebenezer Maurice		
1787-1800	Martin Catlin		Mayor

Table 3: Masters of the Almshouse and the most senior civic role held by the Master, if any.
(ERO, DD/B 2/CHR11/10 and other documents)

Masters of the Almshouse exercised considerable power, since it was only by their nomination that a person could be considered for a place at the Almshouse. An examination of the names of the masters (see Table 3 above) places them among those people who served the Corporation or parish in the more senior offices. Their power was reinforced by the right of the Corporation to vote on the suitability of the various nominees. It is interesting to note the number of names of people, or their widows, being admitted to the Almshouse who had previously figured among those serving as officers in the governance of the town or as members of the Grand Inquests to the Quarter Sessions. For example of the

men admitted to the Almshouse between 1749 and 1799³⁶³ 47 out of 74 (64%) had served as members of the Grand Inquests to the Quarter Sessions. It would seem that care was provided to those deemed as being worthy of it by services previously rendered to the community. This is an interesting example of the importance of being deemed ‘worthy’ by the community in which a person lived. In this context being worthy may be considered to be the same as being a person of good reputation or credit.³⁶⁴ No matter what a person’s social standing in the town, ‘honour’ was important at all levels of society, for the poor as much as the wealthy.

v. Parish constables and the artisans who filled this role

The preceding exposition of the structures of government has provided a context for the following discussion of the part which an artisan might play in the governance of the eighteenth century town of Saffron Walden. The various types of governance have been discussed and it now remains to ascertain how the officers who administered it were selected, whether artisans might aspire to such roles and whether there was any kind of *cursus honorum*³⁶⁵ in the order in which a man might fulfil certain offices.

The least eminent of all the officers mentioned above was that of the parish constable. A.F.J. Brown suggests that they were usually of humbler social standing³⁶⁶ than other officers involved in governance of the town. The records showing references to constables are less complete than those for overseers, Masters of the Almshouse or members of the Corporation. It is possible that there are fewer references to parish constables because many of their duties did not involve much writing and, as a consequence, reliance must be placed on references to be found in other documents.

The records show varying numbers of people fulfilling the duty of constable at any one time, ranging from one to four, but during times of unrest additional constables could be sworn in as required. During the period of the Saffron Walden bread riots in 1795 it is recorded that an additional 32 constables were sworn.³⁶⁷ The earliest reference found to the post of constable from the eighteenth century giving the names of the men holding the office dates from 1718 when Henry Baron, Benjamin Barrett, Erasmus Starlin and Matthew Cole

³⁶³ ERO, D/Q 67/2/1-2 Minutes of the Saffron Walden Almshouse 1749-1776 and 1772-1850

³⁶⁴ Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers* (Oxford, 1996), pp.128-133

³⁶⁵ Thanks to Dr Victor Morgan for his suggestion of the use of this term.

³⁶⁶ A.F.J. Brown, *Prosperity and Poverty, Rural Essex, 1700-1815* (Chelmsford, 1996), p.146

³⁶⁷ ERO, D/DBy O12 Correspondence concerning Saffron Walden Bread Riots, 1795

were listed.³⁶⁸ It seems likely that Benjamin Barrett was a blacksmith.³⁶⁹ A Henry Barron was one of the Grand Inquest presenting to the Quarter Sessions in 1715, 1721, 1722, 1724 and 1725³⁷⁰ and may have been a woolcomber since a Henry Barron is given as master to Henry Reeder when he was apprenticed under Bromfield's Charity in 1722,³⁷¹ but there are also references to a Henry Baron who practised the trade of bookbinder.³⁷² An Erasmus Starling, who was illiterate, was part of the Grand Inquest in 1741 and 1742, but no reference to Matthew Cole has been found.

In 1719 three constables are listed: William Rankin, William Rowning and Robert Seabrook. It seems that Robert Seabrook was a woolcomber, since a man of that name became a freeman of the town by redemption at a cost of 21s. in 1719/20, but no other information is available about him.³⁷³ Meanwhile William Rowning appears to have been a member of the Baptist Church since four of his children were buried in the Meeting Yard between 1730 and 1733³⁷⁴, but his trade is not known.

William Rankin, on the other hand, is well documented. In 1715/6 he became a freeman of the town, paying 10s which suggests that he was a native of the town or had completed his apprenticeship there.³⁷⁵ The baptismal records of three of his children show that he was a grocer and this is confirmed in at least two deeds in which he is a named party.³⁷⁶ By 1749 he was living in Market End, one of the major streets of the town,³⁷⁷ having taken a lease on a shop in the Market Place in 1729. In 1751 he was listed as the joint steward of Bromfield's Charity with his son Thomas to whom Edward Cambrick was apprenticed, but by then his trade was given as tallow chandler and soap boiler.³⁷⁸

These are not the only references to William Rankin, however. Unlike the other constables mentioned above, William Rankin seems to have used the position as a stepping stone to advancement within the town. Records show that he served

³⁶⁸ ERO, T/A 327/1 Microfilm of the Borough of Saffron Walden General Account Book, 1587-1792

³⁶⁹ A Benjamin Barritt is listed as father of Ann in the baptismal records of 1709 (E.R.O. D/P 192/1/4/2-3) and as the widower of Sarah in 1710 (E.R.O. D/P 192/1/4/7-8). He was made a freeman of the town in 1709/10, paying a fee of 10s.

³⁷⁰ ERO, D/B 2/QSS1 Grand Jury lists

³⁷¹ ERO, D/B 2/CHR1/5 /94 Apprenticeship of Henry Reader

³⁷² ERO, D/B2/QSS1 Grand Jury lists

³⁷³ Saffron Walden Museum 41507 Freemen

³⁷⁴ ERO, D/P 192/1/4 Register of births, marriages and burials 1674-1749, Saffron Walden, St. Mary the Virgin

³⁷⁵ Saffron Walden Museum 41507

³⁷⁶ ERO, D/DU 87/25 Conveyance and assignment of mortgage

D/B 2/TDS3/4/7 Assignment of lease

³⁷⁷ ERO, D/P 192/3/6 Account of small tithes

³⁷⁸ ERO, D/B 2/CHR1/5 Bromfield's apprentices

as an overseer of the poor three times in his life, in 1738, 1738/9 and 1760.³⁷⁹ Further preferment to the post of churchwarden was not open to him since he was a member of the Abbey Lane Church. His name appears in the list of Confession of Faith of 1761.³⁸⁰

The next set of constables for whom records survive were Thomas Clayden, Richard Burrows, Henry Archer and Arnold Nash in 1781. Little evidence remains about Thomas Clayden or Arnold Nash. Thomas Clayden seems to have been a basket maker. Bromfield's Charity records show two sons of a Thomas Claydon being apprenticed through the charity in 1746 and 1751.³⁸¹ The date of the baptism of Arnold Nash, the 13th. December, 1726³⁸² and his death in 1781 of small pox are known.³⁸³ Since he was buried inside the church and appeared in the Poll Books for 1768 and 1774, he must have been a man of some status. Nash was about fifty-five years old when he served as constable, Claydon, with two children apprenticed in 1746 and 1751, was probably even older. These two men were unlikely to have progressed any higher in the echelons of town governance at such advanced ages.

The two men who served as constables at the same time as Nash and Clayden are much better documented and progressed much further in the *cursus honorum*. Richard Burrows was a cabinet maker by trade.³⁸⁴ There is no evidence of him serving as either overseer or churchwarden, but in 1785 he became a freeman of the town and was made an alderman in the same year.³⁸⁵ He went on to serve two terms as mayor, in 1787 and 1796.³⁸⁶ How it was that Burrows avoided service as overseer or churchwarden is not certain. Membership of a nonconformist church would have prevented him from serving as a churchwarden, but this does not seem to have been the case since he was not listed in the Abbey Lane Baptists Church Book³⁸⁷ or in the membership list for the Saffron Walden Quaker Meeting for 1786,³⁸⁸ but he was in receipt of a

³⁷⁹ ERO, D/B 2/PAR4/157, Settlement certificate of William Barrett and his wife Love showing William Rankin as an overseer of the poor, 1738;

D/B 2/PAR8/9, Bastardy order against Edward Church is annotated by William Rankin of monies received by him as overseer, 1738/9;

T/A 327/1 Microfilm of the Borough of Saffron Walden General Account Book, 1587-1792

³⁸⁰ ERO, D/NC 16/1/1 Church book, 1743-1775, Abbey Lane Congregational Church

³⁸¹ ERO, D/B 2/CHR1/5 Bromfield's apprentices

³⁸² ERO, D/P 192/1/4 Register of births, marriages and burials 1674-1749, Saffron Walden, St. Mary the Virgin

ERO, D/P 192/1/5.4 Burial record, Register of births, marriages and burials 1674-1749, Saffron Walden, St. Mary the Virgin

³⁸⁴ ERO, D/B 2/BRE2/3 Register of freemen and aldermen, 1742-1817

³⁸⁵ ERO, D/B 2/BRE1/29 Copy charters

³⁸⁶ Richard, Lord Braybrooke, *The History of Audley End* (London, 1836) p.317

³⁸⁷ ERO, D/NC 16/1/1 Church book, 1743-1775, Abbey Lane Congregational Church

³⁸⁸ Saffron Walden Friends' Meeting Archive H2

sacrament certificate in 1786 1793 and 1796.³⁸⁹ Non-conformity would not, however, have excluded him from serving as an overseer of the poor.

Henry Archer, the last of the group of four constables for 1781, followed a similar route to power as Richard Burrows. He was a maltster at a time when malting was becoming of increasing importance to the economy of Saffron Walden and his success in business may have contributed to his rise through the ranks of the town. He became a freeman of the town and alderman in 1783.³⁹⁰ He also went on to serve two terms as mayor, in 1785 and 1794-5³⁹¹ and received sacrament certificates in 1785, 1793 and 1794.³⁹² He was mayor at the time of the Saffron Walden Bread Riots. Once again it is unclear as to why he did not serve as either overseer or churchwarden. In both cases it is possible that these successful men pleaded pressure of work to avoid serving in offices which would have required considerable inputs of time, especially in the case of the role of overseer of the poor given the requirements of the role. They were, however, happy enough to serve as alderman and mayor of the town, posts which held considerable prestige but which, perhaps, required a lower level of day-to-day involvement.

In 1782 three men are listed as serving as parish constable: Thomas Clayden, as in 1781, George Archer and Martin Catlin. A George Archer was born in 1746 to Thomas and Anne Archer. It seems likely that he became a fellmonger, glover and breeches maker since Bromfield's Charity records the apprenticeship of a Thomas Howard in 1780 to a George Archer of Saffron Walden following that trade.³⁹³ In 1786 George Archer served as churchwarden,³⁹⁴ and again in 1791, 1793 and 1794.³⁹⁵ No other references have been found to George Archer's subsequent career.

The third of the three men to serve as parish constable in 1782 was Martin Catlin. He was born in 1752 and served as overseer in 1787.³⁹⁶ His trade is given as currier in the Book of Freemen in 1800,³⁹⁷ the year in which he became an alderman.³⁹⁸ Records show that he later served as mayor of Saffron Walden. Unlike the other men mentioned above who held the higher offices of the town,

³⁸⁹ ERO, D/B 2/QSS7/14/267, 283, 288 Richard Burrows' sacrament certificates

³⁹⁰ ERO, D/B 2/BRE1/29 Copy charters

³⁹¹ Braybrooke, Audley End ... p.317

³⁹² ERO, D/B 2/QSS7/14/262, 286, 287 Henry Archer sacrament certificates

³⁹³ ERO, D/B 2/CHR1/5 Bromfield's apprentices

³⁹⁴ ERO, D/B 2/PAR4/196 Settlement certificate of William Atkinson and family, 1786

³⁹⁵ Saffron Walden Friends' Meeting Archive E7, Distrainst

³⁹⁶ ERO, D/B 2/PAR3/1 Overseers' accounts, 1781-1797

³⁹⁷ ERO, D/B 2/BRE2/3 Register of freemen and aldermen, 1742-1817

³⁹⁸ ERO, D/B 2/BRE1/29 Copy charters

Martin Catlin also served as part-brother of the Almshouse in 1783 and was the master from 1787 to 1800.³⁹⁹

The last set of information about parish constables comes from the records of distraints which were levied against members of the Quaker community of Saffron Walden for failure to pay Church Rates.⁴⁰⁰

Date	Name	Trade	Other Positions Held	Other Information
1793	William Wiseman	Shopkeeper	1798 Overseer ⁴⁰¹	
1794	John Barham	Joiner and cabinet maker		Died 1799
1794	John Simon			
1795	Jesse Green	Glover		
1796	John Barton	Watchmaker		
1796	Thomas Spicer	Shopkeeper and inn keeper		1791 Licensee of the King's Arms
1797	John Barton	Watchmaker		
1797	John Barham	Joiner and cabinet maker		Died 1799
1798	Xenophon Hearn	Joiner		
1799	John Seamer	Gloves and breeches maker ⁴⁰²		John Seamer was apprenticed by Bromfield's Charity in 1777
1800	John Seamer	Gloves and breeches maker		John Seamer was apprenticed by Bromfield's Charity in 1777
1800	Charles Pettit			
1800	Stephen Moul	Maltster		Based in Castle Street

Table 4: Parish Constables named in Quaker Listing of Distraints levied for non-payment of Church Rate. (ERO, D/B 2/PAR11)

As can be seen, at this point in the eighteenth century information about the trades of the men chosen as parish constables is less easy to find. The parish registers of baptisms had ceased to record occupations of fathers on a regular basis and, since it is difficult to be sure of the precise ages of the men concerned at a time when sons frequently had the same first name as their fathers and, indeed, brothers who predeceased them, it is often impossible to identify relevant information with any degree of certainty. It is possible that some of the parish

³⁹⁹ ERO, D/B 2/CHR11/10 Almshouse accounts, 1689-1725

⁴⁰⁰ Saffron Walden Friends' Meeting Archive E7, Distraints

⁴⁰¹ ERO, D/B 2/PAR3/1 Overseers' Accounts, 1781-1797

⁴⁰² ERO, D/B 2/CHR Turner's apprentices

constables may have gone on to serve as overseers or churchwardens in the nineteenth century and further searches of later records may provide evidence to this effect.

What do these individual biographies reveal? By tracing the careers of the men who served as constables in the eighteenth century for whom information is available, it seems that they can be divided into three groups: those who did not progress beyond the office of constable, those who went on to serve the parish in the capacity of overseers and/or churchwardens and those who went on to hold office in town government as aldermen or mayors. Although all the men discussed above started by holding the humble rank of constable, the groups appear to be clearly defined when they move on to higher office. The route seems to be either in the holding of parish office or in membership of the Corporation. It is a finding of this particular piece of research that in Saffron Walden the two routes rarely seemed to overlap.

Those men who served only as parish constables seem to have come to the office relatively late in life, Clayden and Nash, for example, who were constables in 1781 were both well over fifty. Those for whom parish constable was merely the first step on the ladder or parish or civic preferment tended to serve at an earlier age. George Archer, for example, was thirty six in 1782 and Martin Catlin was just thirty.

It will now be necessary to consider the careers of those men for whom records start with their appointment as overseers of the poor to see if any of them went on to hold offices in the Corporation or in charities such as Bromfield's and the Almshouse, or whether their route to preferment remained parish based as with the constables such as George Archer. This may permit a consideration of whether the role a man held in the governance of the town was a further indication of fractionalism within the artisan segment of eighteenth century society in Saffron Walden.

vi. Overseers of the Poor and Churchwardens and the artisans who filled these roles

A study of the careers of men who served as overseers, and whose progress can be traced shows that fifteen out of 134 of them went on to serve as churchwarden. This may appear to be quite a small percentage, 11%, but it should be noted that, whilst listings of churchwardens are quite good up until

1750,⁴⁰³ from that date they are very erratic and so only three of the records refer to dates after 1750. From a study of these fifteen occurrences it becomes clear that the post of overseer did not necessarily precede that of churchwarden. Both Robert Swann and Mathew Wines, for example, served as overseers in 1727⁴⁰⁴ and had been churchwardens in 1722. Indeed, seven occurrences of the post of churchwarden preceding that of overseer can be found, but three of these apply to one man and in another case it is not clear whether the reference is to the father or the son of the same name. Accurate identification of individuals is frequently impossible due to a tendency to use one forename many times within a family.

Five of the overseers in this early period who attained the office of churchwarden appear not to have progressed any further in the civic hierarchy, but the other men who held the office of both overseer and churchwarden tended to move on to hold other offices, either within the Corporation or the major charities. See Table 5.

⁴⁰³ E.R.O. T/B 559/1,2 Transcription of Churchwardens' accounts by R.H. Browne, 1622-1756

⁴⁰⁴ E.R.O. D/B 2/PAR8/6 Bastardy bond indemnifying the parish of Saffron Walden against the costs arising from the unborn child of Elizabeth Clayton, showing the names of Robert Swann and Matthew Wines as overseers of the poor, 1722

Date	Forename	Surname	Trade	Church Warden	Alderman	Mayor	Steward of Bromfield's Charity	Master Of Almshouse	Freeman
1703	Charles	Winstanley		1710; 1711					
1705	Richard	Archer	Bottlemaker	1711	1702; 1712	1721; 1731		1718-9; 1722-4	
1706	Robert	Ryley		<i>c.</i> 1721					
1707	Robert	Lagden		1723; 1724-5					
1713	William	Starr		1712-4					
1720/1	Thomas	Archer ⁴⁰⁵		1728	1729	1732			1709/10? ⁴⁰⁶
1727	Robert	Swann	Draper	1722	1725-1737	1727			1716/7 ⁴⁰⁷
1727	Mathew	Wines							1705/6 ⁴⁰⁸
1729	Edward	Leverett	Grocer	1729; 1731	1730	1734; 1742; 1752			1723/4
1735-7	Philip	Martin		1731	1750				1750
1741	Abraham	Cornell	Baker	1733					1711/2 ⁴⁰⁹
1742	John	Leverett		1750/1	1752				
1747	George	Cockett		1750-3			1750; 1752; 1754		
1752	John	Fuller	Yeoman	1752-3					
1753	Abraham	Knott	Painter	1741-2				1751-2	

Table 5: The civic offices held by men who served as both overseer and churchwarden in Saffron Walden. Drawn from a variety of sources.

⁴⁰⁵ Two men by the name of Thomas Archer were extant at this time. One was a cooper and the other a glover. It is not possible to be certain which one this is.

⁴⁰⁶ This reference refers to the Thomas Archer who was a cooper

⁴⁰⁷ Saffron Walden Museum, 41507. Robert Swann's freedom was purchased by redemption at a cost of 200s. This suggests that his origins were probably outside of Walden but there is no reference to him in the Acknowledgements of Settlement (E.R.O. D/B 2/PAR). This is not unexpected since he was in a position to pay 200s for his freedom. Measuring Worth.com calculates this to be the equivalent of £1241.53 in 2006, a very significant sum. Lawrence H. Officer, "Purchasing Power of British Pounds from 1264 to 2006." MeasuringWorth.com, 2007.

⁴⁰⁸ Saffron Walden Museum, 41507. This freedom was also purchased by redemption at a cost of 64/6d, the equivalent of £466.67.

⁴⁰⁹ Saffron Walden Museum, 41507. By redemption, 120s. The 2006 equivalent is £639.04.

99 names are listed of men who only held the post of churchwarden, but many of these men held the post on more than one occasion. There are in fact only 50 men named. Of these, sixteen went on to serve as alderman and twelve as mayor, often holding the office more than once. Some of the churchwardens also went on to serve the community in a senior office of one of the major charities, either as Steward of Bromfield's Charity or Master of the Almshouse. Seven served as Steward of Bromfield's, some such as John Wale, Edmund Harris and Philip Martin, all of whom would have described themselves as 'gentlemen', occupying the post for many years. Thomas Ingrey was a rare exception in that he served both as Steward of Bromfield's Charity and as Master of the Almshouse. Five other men are listed as Masters of the Almshouse, four of them serving for a term of more than one year. The majority of these men described themselves as gentlemen when they held the posts listed above, although some began their working life as artisans. Edmund Harris, for example, was a weaver and Richard Archer a bottlemaker.

Although some men served the town of Walden in a wide variety of capacities, the majority were more limited in their scope. Many overseers progressed no further up the civic tree. Perhaps they had reached the limit of their capacity to offer effective service to the community and this was recognised at parish meetings or perhaps their social status was deemed insufficient for a more elevated role. Henry Taylor, for example, one of the overseers in 1754 was illiterate.⁴¹⁰ As an overseer that was not an insuperable handicap, since someone could scribe for him where necessary; but a churchwarden needed to be able to make returns to the diocesan authorities as well as keeping accounts. Other competent overseers were barred from service as churchwardens because they were members of one of the town's nonconformist churches. It seems to have been quite permissible for the parish meeting to appoint a nonconformist as overseer of the poor since they, too, would have paid the poor rate; but certainly Quakers refused to pay the church rates and often had distraints levied against them.⁴¹¹

Nonconformists might be barred from serving as churchwardens, but the evidence suggests that town of Walden had a pragmatic approach to life and consequently talented nonconformists often found themselves serving the community in other ways. The grocer William Rankin, who served as parish constable and overseer, and who seemed to have his civic career cut short

⁴¹⁰ ERO, D/B 2/PAR8/17 Bastardy bond indemnifying the parish of Saffron Walden against any costs ensuing from the bastard child of Elizabeth Butcher showing Henry Taylor as one of the overseers of the poor, 1754

⁴¹¹ ERO, D/B 2/PAR11/290 Distraint against William Impey in 1769 for non-payment of church rates. A William Impey served as overseer in 1734.

because of his nonconformist leanings, in fact went on to serve as Steward of Bromfield's Charity on four occasions, from 1745 to 1747, in 1751, from 1757 and again in 1761.⁴¹² Similarly Richard Burrows, a skilled and well-to-do cabinet maker with premises in King Street, by-passed the posts of overseer and churchwarden to serve as alderman and mayor. His seven children born between 1788 and 1798 were listed in the register of baptisms at the parish church,⁴¹³ but those born after 1790 were listed as having been privately baptized. Private baptism was frequently a sign of status but could also be a way of avoiding the ritual of the established church. Richard Burrows was mayor in 1787 and again in 1796.

It is impossible to be certain of exactly how it was determined which path through civic government a Saffron Walden man might take, but it would appear that there was a distinction between the paths taken. Many men, of course, in a parish the size of Walden might never be selected, or might avoid selection, altogether. Others took different paths for a variety of reasons. Literacy, or rather the lack of it, ruled some men out of the higher offices, but there were ways round a poor level of literacy. In the Corporation for example, it was the posts of Town Clerk and Coroner, and that of Recorder and Deputy Recorder which required a high level of literacy. The men filling the post of Town Clerk were required to be Attorneys at Law and the Recorder and his deputy were men of considerable status within the community, for example Lord Maynard, local member of the aristocracy and a trained lawyer, filled the post of Recorder for a number of years. These were roles that no man who began his working life as an artisan could ever hope to fill; they were restricted to men of a higher social status, those who were recognised by the community as gentlemen.

The Corporation itself was a self-electing oligarchy. Men were elected aldermen to fill gaps that had occurred through death or resignation. There were examples of men who turned down the honour and they were duly fined. For example in 1709 John Leverett, Edward Ball (butcher)⁴¹⁴ and Joseph Collin (tanner) were each fined £3 for refusing to become aldermen when elected. For an artisan, be he employed in trade or commerce it is possible that the duties of an alderman were viewed as too onerous and time consuming. Thus some artisans may have been to some extent disadvantaged by their occupations in terms of office holding. It is interesting to note however that all three of the men mentioned above accepted the office of alderman a few years later. Perhaps their businesses were better established by then and could be left in the hands of journeymen and

⁴¹² ERO, D/B 2/CHR1/2 Bromfield's Charity Accounts

⁴¹³ ERO, D/P 192/1/5-6 Registers of St. Mary the Virgin, Saffron Walden, 1740-1814

⁴¹⁴ ERO, A8704 Deeds of 9/11 Market Row and 2 Butcher Row, Saffron Walden

apprentices? Edward Ball went on to serve five terms as mayor, whilst John Leverett was mayor in 1722 and Joseph Collin also served his turn in 1718.⁴¹⁵

vii. Conclusion

How did civic office relate to the trades and occupations of Saffron Walden? It is possible to ascertain the trades or professions of some of the inhabitants of eighteenth century Saffron Walden by combining information from a wide range of sources, but, inevitably, the trades of some men will always remain unknown.

Those who aspired to serve in the highest offices, those of Mayor or Alderman, appear to have been men of considerable standing in the town. As mentioned above a number of men were fined for refusing to serve. Indeed ten men were fined £5 each in 1700 for refusing to accept the office of mayor when elected. It seems likely that they were successful businessmen and master craftsmen. They were prepared to pay a substantial fine, the equivalent of some £625 today,⁴¹⁶ to avoid the inconvenience of taking the office. Of these ten men however, seven later did serve in the office of mayor. The other three may have served in the years preceding 1700.

A man who served as mayor was also a justice of the peace for the town and this qualified him to use the title of 'gentleman'. Thus a man who started life as an apprentice might end up as mayor and a gentleman, although no evidence has been found of charity apprentices reaching such an elevated position. Of the mayors whose occupations have been identified, in 36 years of the eighteenth century the position was filled by an artisan. There were, in fact, nineteen different men of artisan origins (32% of the total) who held the post of mayor. They included websters, bakers, tanners and butchers as well as a shoemaker,⁴¹⁷ a bottlemaker and a cabinet maker. It should be noted however that the vast majority of these men are listed in the various poll books available. That is, they were sufficiently affluent to be accorded the vote in elections for a knight of the shire. These men were master craftsmen at the peak of their professional lives.

The men who served as churchwardens also tended to be men of substance in the town. Most churchwardens tended to be literate which suggested attendance at the charity school at least but more probably at the town's grammar school.

⁴¹⁵ Braybrooke, *Audley End* ... p.316

⁴¹⁶ Lawrence H. Officer, "Purchasing Power of British Pounds from 1264 to 2006." MeasuringWorth.com, 2007. 21.11.2007

⁴¹⁷ It should be noted that the shoemaker, Robert Catlin, was a shoemaker on a considerable scale as his account book shows. (ERO, D/B 2/PAR9/2) It seems likely that he put work out to other shoemakers who were operating on a smaller scale than was he.

Regrettably no records survive of the boys who attended the grammar school in the eighteenth century.

There is no complete list of the men who served as churchwardens in the eighteenth century. For the earlier part of the century the names can be found from the churchwardens accounts⁴¹⁸ but these do not survive for the later years of the period and so the list has had to be compiled from references found in other sources and is, therefore, somewhat less reliable where no cross-checking is possible. Many men served more than one term as churchwarden. It was not uncommon to serve two consecutive years, the first as the junior warden serving under a more experienced colleague.

The occupations of 59 eighteenth century churchwardens have been identified with a reasonable degree of certainty. Of these 59 men 27, or 46%, followed artisanal trades. Unlike the men who served as mayor, there were no professional men serving as churchwardens, but there were ten farmers or yeomen. No mayors were identified in this category. In the earlier part of the century men identified as gentlemen did serve as churchwardens but this group did not appear after 1750.

It can be seen then that a greater proportion of artisans served as churchwardens than as mayor. It now remains to be 'seen' whether the number of artisans serving in the less elevated role of overseer of the poor is even higher. This has implications in terms of contemporary perceptions because artisans were more associated with the lesser than the most senior civic office.

Although overseers were respected men in their community, the role of overseer required more personal attention and less education than did the role of churchwarden. To be an overseer was a much more hands-on job, requiring interaction with both those seeking help and with the justices of the peace who regulated such matters as settlement and the legal extraction of funds to help support bastard children who might otherwise be drain on parish funds which it was preferred should be targeted at the 'deserving poor'. Although literacy was useful in this role, it was not always essential since help with keeping accounts could be obtained.

It is harder to identify overseers reliably than it is churchwardens or mayors. There is no list of them and the names have to be extracted from other sources such as settlement paper, bastardy cases and accounts of various kinds. The trades of a total of 105 individuals who served as overseer of the poor have been identified. Of these 105 men, 50 or 47.5% followed artisanal trades. The next

⁴¹⁸ ERO, T/B 559/2 Churchwardens' accounts, 1684-1756

largest group worked on the land, their descriptions including husbandman, yeoman and farmer. Among the churchwardens it was the shopkeepers and traders of various kinds that formed the second largest group, but among overseers they constituted the third group. The number of men who could be identified as gentlemen was also lower in the overseers group, only 3% as compared to 8% among the more prestigious churchwardens.

Occupation	Total Number	Percentage
Artisan	50	47.5%
Farmer	23	22%
Trader	14	13%
Maltster	7	6.5%
Innkeeper	6	6%
Gentleman	3	3%
Other	2	2%

Table 6: Occupations of 105 men serving as Overseers of the Poor whose occupation has been identified. Data drawn from a variety of sources.

This data suggests that the role of the artisan in the governance of the town of Saffron Walden increased as the perceived social standing of the office decreased even in the course of the eighteenth century. The smallest percentage of artisans achieved the highest office, that of mayor, and all of these men considered themselves and were viewed as gentlemen by the rest of the town. They were artisans at the peak of their trades. In London, it might be suggested, these men might have taken leading roles in the city livery companies. Men who served as churchwarden might go on to greater things or might have reached the level of office that their talents or social standing merited. For some men the post of overseer of the poor was a stepping stone to greater office within the town, for many more it was the peak of their achievement.

It is interesting to note that the trade that an artisan followed did not appear to be of particular importance in determining the level of office he might achieve. In all three of the offices discussed above, there were examples of bakers, butchers, shoemakers, tanners and weavers. It was, perhaps, not so much the trade as the level at which it was practised that determined the suitability of the man for a particular level of office within the town, a subtlety which is largely invisible to us today. In addition, the personal qualities that each individual man displayed were no doubt taken into consideration. It seems likely that a man who had been educated at the charity school, or not at all in any formal sense, and who had been apprenticed by one of the town charities, would be unlikely to achieve a rank of distinction within the town. None of the men identified as artisans who served as overseer of the poor can be linked to any of the boys who were placed

apprentice by Bromfield's charity. Indeed, there is only one possible charity apprentice who might later have served in any kind of civic office, one John Seamer or Seymour who was apprenticed in 1777 to William Archer as a tailor, glover and breeches maker by Bromfield's charity. John Seamer served as parish constable in 1799. Is this another example of the element of meritocracy which existed in this artisanal, face-to-face society? Perhaps it is more a case of life chances being determined by early experiences.

Once again it is clear that the 'life chances' of an artisan, as determined by his starting point in life, played a significant role in determining whether or not he would be deemed suitable to play a role in the civic hierarchy of the town and at what level. This is another clear example of fractionalism within the artisan sector in eighteenth century Saffron Walden.

It can be seen, then, that artisans did play a role in the civic governance of the town of Saffron Walden but that role was, at least in part, determined by the initial social origins of the man concerned. Charity apprentices had little chance of achieving civic office, although a few might achieve the rank of parish constable as in the case of John Seamer, mentioned above. The level of civic office that an artisan achieved was determined in part by his birth, those who were apprenticed privately within Walden had a much better chance of achieving office, and in part by his own ability. Those men who achieved the highest office of mayor, for example, tended to be men of considerable wealth as their wills show, whether proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury or more locally within Essex. They were also recognised by their peers as having the ability to handle the requirements of their office, negotiating with the local aristocracy as required.⁴¹⁹ Those men who progressed only as far as churchwarden or overseer of the poor either did not want higher office or were felt by their peers and patrons to lack the ability to carry them out.

In terms of civic governance, the town of Saffron Walden sought to both control and care for its townsfolk, as described above. Artisans played an important role in this at levels that were suited to their perceived status and ability. Within their role in government there is evidence of marked fractionalism within the artisan sector of Walden society. Artisans might reach the peak of civic governance, or they might sink into that category of society in which the role of civic governance in care and control was the most marked. Those who sank into abject poverty, where their only future lay in the workhouse, lacked the patronage which secured for others a place in the civic hierarchy of the town and a more comfortable old age, possibly as a resident of the town's almshouse.

⁴¹⁹ As Henry Archer did in his capacity of mayor during the 1795 Bread Riots.

A strong element of fractionalism can be observed when considering the role of artisans within the civic governance of the town of Saffron Walden in the eighteenth century. The nature of this fractionalism was determined to a very large part by the life chances of the artisan concerned. Boys apprenticed privately by their parents after an education at the local grammar school stood a much better chance of climbing the slippery pole to the peak of the civic hierarchy, the role of mayor with its attendant function of J.P. and its appellation of gentleman, than did a charity apprentice with no formal education. However a reasonable financial start in life was not on its own sufficient to secure a place in the civic hierarchy: religious persuasion also had a significant role to play. A member of a nonconformist denomination was unable to hold a civic office above that of Overseer because he was unable to prove his membership of the established church by gaining a sacrament certificate, no matter how wealthy or well educated he was. Of course, no member of a nonconformist church could attend university because this too required membership of the Established Church.

Apart from the life chances provided by family and religion, fractionalism within the role that artisans could hold in civic governance in the eighteenth century was also influenced by patronage. An artisan who secured the patronage of either the local major landowner, the owner of the Audley End estate, or of a man already well-established in the hierarchy of civic governance, stood a much better chance of gaining a step on the ladder towards power in his community.

Thus family, education, religion and patronage all had a part to play in determining not only whether an eighteenth century Saffron Walden artisan would gain a role in the civic hierarchy, but also just how high he might hope to climb. It might even be as high as taking his turn as mayor with its attendant role of Justice of the Peace and the appellation of gentleman.

Therefore, a survey of the institutional structure and the movement of individuals within that structure confirms that governance and office holding served to impose distinctions among the artisans within an eighteenth century market town such as Saffron Walden. This constitutes further evidence of fractionalism within the artisan sector.

Chapter 5

Fractionalism as a consequence of mobility

The preceding chapter has begun to reveal the fractionalist nature of the artisan social segment within the town of Saffron Walden in the eighteenth century. This chapter will examine the role that mobility had in the development of this characteristic. It uses the rich sources of evidence available to explore this phenomenon.

The Mechanisms and Consequences of Mobility

In order to discuss the importance of ‘mobility’ as a cause of fractionalism within the artisan segment of the population of eighteenth century Saffron Walden, it is crucial to clarify what is meant by ‘social’ and ‘societal’ mobility. Social mobility may be defined as the ability or potential of individuals to move between different social levels or segments. This is more properly termed ‘vertical mobility’. Social mobility may also occur in the horizontal plane when individuals move between different occupations of similar standing in the community. Social mobility, be it vertical or horizontal, may also involve geographical mobility.⁴²⁰ Crompton, writing with reference to industrial and post-industrial societies, sums up social mobility as the mobility of individuals between occupations and / or occupational origins, both between generations and over the life cycle.⁴²¹ Taking a more historical viewpoint, Victor Morgan defines social mobility as the mobility of an individual within an existing social structure. He considers ‘societal mobility’, on the other hand, to refer to changes in the structures of society, albeit ultimately realised through the movement of large numbers of individuals.⁴²²

Much of the material to be explored in this chapter is concerned with social mobility – be it geographical, intergenerational or as a result of the stage within the life course of a given artisan – but this social mobility was set in a time when a great shift in ‘societal mobility’ was about to occur as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution.

In the course of a lifetime a single artisan in Saffron Walden might experience a range of types of mobility. Geographical mobility might be his lot when he was first apprenticed or, later, when he sought better opportunities for himself and his

⁴²⁰ http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50229731?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=social&first=1&max_to_show=10, consulted 9/9/2008

⁴²¹ Rosemary Crompton, *Class and Stratification: An Introduction to Current Debates* (Cambridge, 1993), p.60

⁴²² My thanks to Dr Victor Morgan for his thoughts and advice on this topic.

family. In the course of his life he might experience social mobility as a result of the age at which he found himself, the different stages of the life course being critical in determining whether or not mobility took place. Some fathers and sons might experience intergenerational social mobility as result of the opportunities, or the lack of them, which were presented to them.

These various types of mobility affected different members of the artisan segment of Saffron Walden society in different ways. Some remained within the town, others moved far away. Some saw their fortunes improve as they moved through their lives to a comfortable old age. The latter might be provided for by their families or in the town almshouse through the patronage of influential friends. Others were less fortunate and ended their lives in the workhouse. Some moved up through the *cursus honorum* of the town allowing them to be called and to call themselves 'gentleman'. At their burial others were recorded in the parish registers as paupers.⁴²³

The use of the word 'mobility' therefore allows a discussion of the many ways that movement occurred within the artisan segment in terms not just of geographical location, both within the town and outside it, but also within the society in which the artisans lived in terms of their life courses. The overarching social order—the societal structure—as discussed earlier, may have been virtually static, but movement within it was possible as the circumstances of the artisans of Saffron Walden demonstrate. In a town such as Saffron Walden where religious dissent had a major influence on all aspects of the life of the population, this additional strand contributed to the influence that mobility had on the fractional nature of the artisan segment of society. As we will see in a later chapter,⁴²⁴ the religious persuasion of an artisan could also influence whether his life was a mobile or a static one.

i. Geographic mobility – the case of the apprentices

In common with all eighteenth century small towns, Saffron Walden continued to expect the sons of artisans, and indeed some of the sons of men who might well have considered themselves, and have been seen as gentlemen by men of their acquaintance, to be put apprentice. Joan Lane states that by the eighteenth century apprenticeship was common in all but the highest levels of society.⁴²⁵ Malcolm Kitch argues that, although the apprenticeship system was already in

⁴²³ ERO, D/P192/1/5/4 Burial register for the parish of Saffron Walden

⁴²⁴ See below Chapter 7

⁴²⁵ Joan Lane, *Apprenticeship in England, 1600-1914* (London, 1996), p. 9

decline, it remained – until the middle of the eighteenth century at least – the common mode of entry into a wide range of occupations.⁴²⁶

When an eighteenth century parent or guardian chose a career for their children or wards, Lane argues, certain factors influenced their selection almost regardless of the segment of society from which they came. Although contemporary commentators such as Collyer, Campbell and Defoe⁴²⁷ argued that it was important to select an occupation which would suit the ‘genius’ and temperament of the individual child, other considerations appear to have been of greater importance to the adults placing the young people. Lane contends that in most cases the choice of an occupation was influenced by its potential to offer long-term security, both in terms of the availability of work and its earning potential.⁴²⁸ It might also have been important to consider the regard in which the occupation was held by others⁴²⁹ and the practical constraints of cost and available connections.

The apprenticing of a young person, at about the age of fourteen, was a crucial point in their life course since choice of occupation at this point was very important in determining future life chances. Such was the perceived importance of placing a child apprentice to an occupation which would provide him, or her, with a secure livelihood in the future – and in some cases even the chance of social advancement by apprenticeship to a highly regarded trade – that it was common to find bequests in wills to assist the placing apprentice of children or young relatives.

This point is demonstrated by Saffron Walden wills which made reference to funds left to allow younger relatives to be placed apprentice, a measure of what was perceived to be the most fruitful use of scarce capital. For example in his will of 1717 John Spackman, a brazier, left £6 to be used to purchase wearing apparel for his grandson John London during the time of John’s apprenticeship.⁴³⁰ Somewhat later in the century in his will of 1745 James Hearne, a victualler, left £5 to his grandson Edward Pettit to put him

⁴²⁶ Malcolm Kitch, *Apprenticeship and Occupations in Southern England, 1710-1760* (Papers in Geography 24, University of Sussex, 1996), p.26

⁴²⁷ Joseph Collyer, *The Parent’s and Guardian’s Directory* (London, 1761);
R. Campbell, *The London Tradesman* (London, 1747);
Daniel Defoe, *The Complete English Tradesman* (London, 1738)

⁴²⁸ Joan Lane, *Apprenticeship 1600-1914* p.33

⁴²⁹ Under the terms of the Statute of Artificers, 5 Eliz. c. 4 xxiii (1563), certain trades were allowed to take apprentices from landless families. These occupations tended to be held in lower esteem than those requiring property qualifications, however they might still offer future financial security if not social advancement.

⁴³⁰ ERO, Will 38 CR 13, John Spackman

apprentice⁴³¹ and in 1794 Charles Baron, a cordwainer, left £10 to put his grandson Nathaniel Jeffery apprentice.⁴³² It is interesting to note that monies left in wills with the intent of placing relatives apprentice were not restricted to boys: the James Hearne who left money to apprentice his grandson Edward also left money to his granddaughter Mary Pettit, a sum of £20 which he placed in trust in the hands of the local surgeon Thomas Browne to be given to Mary at the age of 21 unless part had been used to put her apprentice.⁴³³ A few years later in 1754, William French, a yeoman, left £10 in trust for Martha, the daughter of Martha Young, to be given to her at marriage or at the age of 21, or to put her apprentice if she so wished.⁴³⁴

It is rarely possible to ascertain where the young person was indeed put apprentice since wills mention relatives often without stating where they live. However the Nathaniel Jeffery who was left £10 to put him apprentice by the will of his grandfather Charles Baron in 1794 is listed in the records of Bromfield's Charity, one of the Saffron Walden charities to be discussed below, as being apprenticed in 1797 to one Thomas Barron of Saffron Walden, a cordwainer,⁴³⁵ and his uncle. Other apprentices might be sent further afield.

Both national and local sources provide evidence of apprenticeship. Individual London Livery Companies kept records of the boys who were apprenticed to members of their companies.⁴³⁶ Most of the apprentices covered were boys placed in London but some company records also include boys placed with members in the provinces. For example the Griggs family of Saffron Walden included members of the Tylers and Brickmakers Company:

⁴³¹ ERO, Will 198 CR 15, James Hearne

⁴³² ERO, Will 187 CR 18, Charles Baron

⁴³³ ERO, Will 198 CR 15, James Hearne

⁴³⁴ ERO, Will 390 CR 16, William French. The case of female artisans, and the way that they were perceived in eighteenth century Saffron Walden, will be discussed elsewhere. (See below, Chapter 7)

⁴³⁵ ERO, Will 198 CR 15, James Hearne

ERO, D/B 2/CHR1/5/264 Apprenticeship of Nathaniel Jeffery

⁴³⁶ Cliff Webb, *London Livery Company Apprentice Registers Series* (Society of Genealogists, London, 1996 to present)

Date	Apprentice's Surname	Christian Name	Father	Master's Surname	Christian Name	Location
1706	Griggs	Enoch	Enoch ¹	Durville	Thomas	
1710/1	Griggs	William	Enoch ¹	Durville	Thomas	
1714	Griggs	Thomas	Enoch ¹	Griggs	Enoch ¹	Saffron Walden
1721	Read ²	John	William	Griggs	Enoch ¹	Saffron Walden
1746	Holloway	Thomas	Thomas	Read ²	John	

Table 7: Relationships between people with Saffron Walden connections listed in the Tylers and Bricklayers Register of Apprentices.

Source: London Livery Company Registers: v.2: Tylers' and Bricklayers' Company 1612-1644 and 1668-1800, ed. Cliff Webb (1996 to present)

Other names may be found in the City and County Registers of Apprentices (Apprenticeship Books) created by the Board of Stamps under the terms of Anne c. 5 (1709)⁴³⁷ whereby masters were required to pay a duty on any premium paid when an apprentice was taken on.⁴³⁸ Kitch points out that these registers do not necessarily provide accurate information about apprentices listed for the period 1710-60 since the duty was often paid considerably in arrears.⁴³⁹

More locally records were kept of children who were apprenticed either at the public expense, that is, by the parish, or by local charities. In Saffron Walden records exist for these categories of apprentice. Parish apprenticeships were organised by the parish overseers of the poor and recorded by them.⁴⁴⁰ Two of the town's charities in particular existed to help poor children to be apprenticed – the overwhelming majority of whom were boys⁴⁴¹ – Bromfield's and Suffolk and

⁴³⁷ The National Archive, IR 1/1-79, Board of Stamps: Apprenticeship Books, 1710-1811

⁴³⁸ An apprentice placed at the public charge, that is a parish apprentice, or by a charity was exempt from duty and therefore did not appear in the Apprenticeship Books of the Board of Stamps.

⁴³⁹ Kitch, *Apprenticeship and Occupation*, p.5

⁴⁴⁰ ERO, D/B 2/PAR 7 Parish apprenticeships. Sixteen records exist for the period between 1700 and 1784.

⁴⁴¹ ERO, D/B 2/CHR1/5, D/B 2/CHR1/3, D/B 2/PAR7. Of the six girls placed apprentice by the parish, 3 were placed in Walden, 1 in Cambridge and the fifth in Bethnal Green, the location of the sixth is not known. They were apprenticed to a basket maker, a silk weaver, a butcher and a mantua maker, the remaining two were placed with the instruction that they were to be trained in good housewifery. This suggests that they were placed as household servants rather than apprentices. The same may be true of the girl apprenticed to a butcher, hardly a usual trade for a girl! The six girls specifically placed to be trained in housewifery, although one was also to receive some training in straw hat making, were placed in Saffron Walden or very nearby, as was the girl apprenticed to a butcher. Four other girls were placed by one of the charities. For a discussion of the roles of women in the artisan class see Chapter 7 below.

Turner's.⁴⁴² In their wills, Richard Bromfield, a physician, the Earl of Suffolk and Edmund Turner all left money to help poor boys to find apprenticeships which might set them on a path to escape poverty. Bromfield's and Suffolk and Turner's Charities placed over 400 boys as apprentices. From apprenticeship indentures preserved in the Saffron Walden Town Archive it is possible to analyse the mobility of those young people apprenticed under the auspices of either the parish or of town charities.

It has been argued that the eighteenth century saw the terminal decline of the apprenticeship system in England. Dunlop and Denman argued that the system had begun to collapse by the 1720s and that it had ended by about 1780.⁴⁴³ This view was also taken by Dorothy Marshall who linked the decline to the diminishing power of the gilds.⁴⁴⁴ Historians such as the Hammonds placed the decline rather later, towards the end of the eighteenth century and in the early years of the nineteenth,⁴⁴⁵ whilst others, especially those focusing on London, such as Kellett⁴⁴⁶ and Kahl⁴⁴⁷ claimed that the decline began even earlier, from the mid-to-late seventeenth century. In 1979 Peter Clark argued that, assuming the decline of apprenticeship as early as the 1690s, apprenticeship records provide a dubious source for the study of labour mobility.⁴⁴⁸

More recently K.D.M. Snell argued that little is known about the regional diversity of the decline of apprenticeship, but believed that a decline did occur between 1700 and 1840.⁴⁴⁹ From the evidence presented by the apprenticeship records of Saffron Walden it would seem in this market town apprenticeship certainly did not start its decline as early as some of the historians mentioned above believed. The apprenticeship indentures continue until 1832.⁴⁵⁰

It is pertinent to remark at this point that those boys who were apprenticed under either the parish or a charitable scheme were unlikely to be drawn from any other than the artisan or labouring sectors of the town and were unlikely to be placed apprentice to the major London livery companies. These boys were more likely to be apprenticed to trades that were excluded under the terms of the 1563 Statute

⁴⁴² ERO, D/B 2 CHR1, Bromfield's and Suffolk and Turner's

⁴⁴³ O. J. Dunlop and R.D. Denman, *English apprenticeship and child labour: A History* (London, 1912), pp.226-232

⁴⁴⁴ D. Marshall, *The English Poor in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1926), pp.183-5

⁴⁴⁵ J. L. and B. Hammond, *The Town Labourer* (London, 1917), pp.293-4

⁴⁴⁶ J. R. Kellett, 'The breakdown of gild and corporation control over the handicraft and retail trades in London', *Economic History Review*, X (1957-8), pp.381-94

⁴⁴⁷ W. F. Kahl, 'Apprenticeship and the freedom of the London Livery Companies', *Gildhall Miscellany*, VII (1956), pp.17-20

⁴⁴⁸ P. Clark, 'Migration in England during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries,' *Past and Present*, 83 (1979) pp.57-90, 62

⁴⁴⁹ K. D. M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor* (Cambridge, 1985), pp.231-2

⁴⁵⁰ ERO, D/B 2/ CHR 1. The records of other local charities show apprentices being placed even later.

of Artificers, 5 Eliz. c. 4.⁴⁵¹ For these trades the decline of the gilds had less significance and they continued to take apprentices in small market towns such as Saffron Walden.

However it is also possible to identify a certain number of boys from Saffron Walden who do appear in the Index to Apprentices 1710-1774 drawn from the Apprenticeship⁴⁵² and in records of the London Livery Companies.⁴⁵³ This latter group were likely to have come from a more affluent sector of society since the premiums required by the Livery Companies were higher than those that most small town artisans could afford. Furthermore, it may be surmised that these apprenticeships could provide evidence of commercial networks between members of the Saffron Walden artisan segment and the wider business world not otherwise evident.⁴⁵⁴ A further set of apprenticeships would have been arranged privately through contacts, and of these no formal records remain.

Some evidence exists for boys from artisan families being apprenticed to members of London Livery Companies or to masters who paid the duty required on the premiums they received and thus appear in the Registers of the Commissioners for the Board of Stamps. For example in 1716, James Catlin, son of John Catlin, a cordwainer, is listed in the Index to Apprentices as being apprenticed to Benjamin Catlin of Saffron Walden, a baker and presumably a relative, for a premium of £3. In 1737 a John Catlin, son of John, a shoemaker, was apprenticed to a Samuel Pilkington, a shoemaker living in the parish of St. Saviour's in Southwark for a premium of £2.⁴⁵⁵ The London Livery Company Apprenticeship Records available to date yield references to thirty-three boys from Saffron Walden being apprenticed to a wide variety of trades but regrettably the place in which the master lived is rarely given and nor is the premium which was paid.⁴⁵⁶

The boys placed by parish apprenticeship were mostly the sons of families who had fallen on hard times. The indentures which were completed when they were apprenticed by the parish gave the names of the then church wardens and overseers of the poor, parish officials, and described the boy as 'a poor Child of the said Parish'.⁴⁵⁷ For these children apprenticeship was particularly important. It secured them the chance to learn a trade and, perhaps, escape from a life of

⁴⁵¹ For more details see p.8 above.

⁴⁵² ERO, T/Z 393/3 Index to Apprentices 1710-1774

⁴⁵³ Cliff Webb, *London Livery Company Apprentice Registers Series* (Society of Genealogists, London, 1996 onward)

⁴⁵⁴ See above, Chapter 2

⁴⁵⁵ ERO., T/Z393/3 Index to Apprentices

⁴⁵⁶ Cliff Webb, *op. cit.*

⁴⁵⁷ Steve Hindle, *On the parish?* (Oxford, 2004), p.196

abject poverty. Between 1706 and 1784 parish apprenticeship indentures for thirteen children have survived, nine for boys and four for girls. The formula used includes the words ‘And also shall and will soe find & provide for the said apprentice that he be not any way a charge to the Towne & Parish of Walden aforesaid or parishioners thereof But of & from all charge shall & will save The said town & parish & parishioners harmless & indemnified during the said Terme’.⁴⁵⁸ It would seem from this wording that the aim of the authorities, represented here by the churchwardens, overseers of the poor and justices of the peace who signed the indenture, was to place these children in such a way that they would place no further strain on the finances of the town once the cost of the apprenticeship premiums had been covered – sums ranging from one guinea to as much as £11.

Of the nine boys, only one was apprenticed within Walden. The other eight were placed beyond the parish bounds. Some were placed in nearby villages but others were found masters further away, either within Essex or within neighbouring counties at a distance of as much as thirty miles away as the crow flies. The girls were placed much closer to home, only one was sent beyond the parish bounds. These children were a charge on the parish and it was the aim of the parish to ensure that they should cease so being once they had been apprenticed.⁴⁵⁹

In 1779 James Whisbey’s father John was described as being unable to maintain him,⁴⁶⁰ while in 1784 Robert Mott and Elizabeth Pettit were described as pauper children.⁴⁶¹ The parish authorities were keen to place such children in apprenticeships which removed them from the parish of Saffron Walden, completion of an apprenticeship being one of the ways in which settlement in a particular place could be achieved.⁴⁶² Thus the parish was spared both the cost of maintaining the pauper child and the risk that they might have to continue this support into adulthood. The exact location where a parish apprentice was placed depended on a number of factors such as the availability of prospective masters, and their ability or willingness to take an apprentice at a specific point in time. Within the parish an apprentice could be imposed upon employers under the

⁴⁵⁸ ERO, D/B 2/PAR7/29 Parish Apprenticeship of Henry Webb in 1708

⁴⁵⁹ In placing its male pauper apprentices outside the home parish, Saffron Walden does not follow the pattern suggested by Malcolm Kitch in *Apprenticeship and Occupation in Southern England*. His study of the counties of Surrey, Sussex and Wiltshire indicated that parish apprentices were more likely to be placed in their home parish.

⁴⁶⁰ ERO, D/B 2/PAR7/38 Parish Apprenticeship of James Whisbey in 1779

⁴⁶¹ ERO, D/B 2/PAR7/40/1 and 40/2 Parish Apprenticeships of Robert Mott and Elizabeth Pettit in 1784.

⁴⁶² Under the terms of the 1598 Act for the Relief of the Poor, 39 & 40 Eliz. c. 3, churchwardens and overseers of the poor were enjoined to bind pauper children as apprentices. It remained in the parish’s interests to continue to do so because under the 1692 Act for Supplying the Defects of the Former Acts the completion of an apprenticeship earned settlement in that particular parish.

terms of the poor law. It was possible to pay a fine to avoid this and the money thus gained could be used as an incentive to the next prospective master or mistress in the form of an increased premium.⁴⁶³ It seems likely that parishes would also have had reciprocal arrangements with regard to the placing of parish apprentices. Hindle comments that by the eighteenth century parish apprenticeship had become ubiquitous. The compulsory binding of poor children could act as a deterrent to discourage applicants for relief from approaching the parish officers.⁴⁶⁴

It has not been possible to identify the occupations of most of the fathers of the children placed apprentice by the parish: many may have been dead or have deserted their families resulting in their children being described as poor or pauper children. Similarly, because the children tended to be placed apprentice outside Saffron Walden it is not possible to be certain what became of them. Of the thirteen children apprenticed by the parish for whom records survive, only one can be identified at a later stage: Robert Mott who was sent to Foxton in 1784. In the Quarter Session returns giving the Calendar of Prisoners for Saffron Walden at Michaelmas 1815 and Epiphany 1816 one Robert Mott is listed: charged in 1815 with the theft of money and two silver spoons from William Carrington and in 1816 with felony.⁴⁶⁵ His fate beyond this point is not known but it seems likely that his apprenticeship did not equip him with a useful trade.

The records for those children placed apprentice by charities in the town have a much higher survival rate than those apprenticed by the parish. The two main charities involved in putting children apprentice were Bromfield's and Turner's. Matthew Bromfield left money in 1682 and Edmund Turner in 1690⁴⁶⁶ and so the eighteenth century enjoyed the fruits of their beneficence. A third charity started a little later under the name of Suffolk and Turner's Charity⁴⁶⁷ also put boys apprentice.⁴⁶⁸ In order to analyse the material, Bromfield's Charity will be the focus of the consideration of charity apprenticeships and fractionalism within the artisan segment since the records for this charity are the fullest. Reference to the two other charities named above will be made where appropriate.

⁴⁶³ K. D. M. Snell, *Annals ...*, p.251

⁴⁶⁴ Steve Hindle, *On the parish.*, p.226

⁴⁶⁵ ERO, D/B 2/QSS3/91 and 92, Calendars of prisoners

⁴⁶⁶ H.C. Stacey, *History of the Walden Charities*, (Typescript, Saffron Walden Town Library, 1967)

⁴⁶⁷ ERO, D/B 2/CHR1/3 The Accounts of the Trustees of the Ashdon Lands for the Use of the Poor of Walden with £100 from the Rt. Hon. James, Earl of Suffolk (10th. July, 1688) and £200 from Edmund Turner of Audley End

⁴⁶⁸ These benefactions are evidence of the fact that in some parts of the country apprenticeship was still seen as a useful thing to do, an example of the regional differences which became progressively more apparent.

One of the main differences between the poor children apprenticed by the parish and those placed by the charities was that, with the charities, at least one parent was normally recorded. Of the 206 children listed as being apprenticed by Bromfield's Charity between 1700 and 1798 in the charity's ledger and in the apprenticeship dockets⁴⁶⁹ the names of 177 parents are given and another six can be established from other sources. The recording of the name of at least one parent in the case of 86% of the apprentices allows an examination of the type of families which were receiving assistance from the charity to apprentice their children – the name of the trade of the father is only given in 147 cases (71%). Of the 147 trades or conditions given, nineteen are given as widow (13%). This, however is somewhat misleading since in other cases the trade of the father is given but there is an annotation to the effect that he is deceased. In these cases the trade of the father has been retained since it helps to give a fuller picture of the type of families assisted by Bromfield's Charity. A further eighteen fathers (12%) are classified as either husbandman or yeoman, indicating that their main method of making a living was agriculture of some kind. The largest appellation employed is that of labourer, thirty-one (21%).

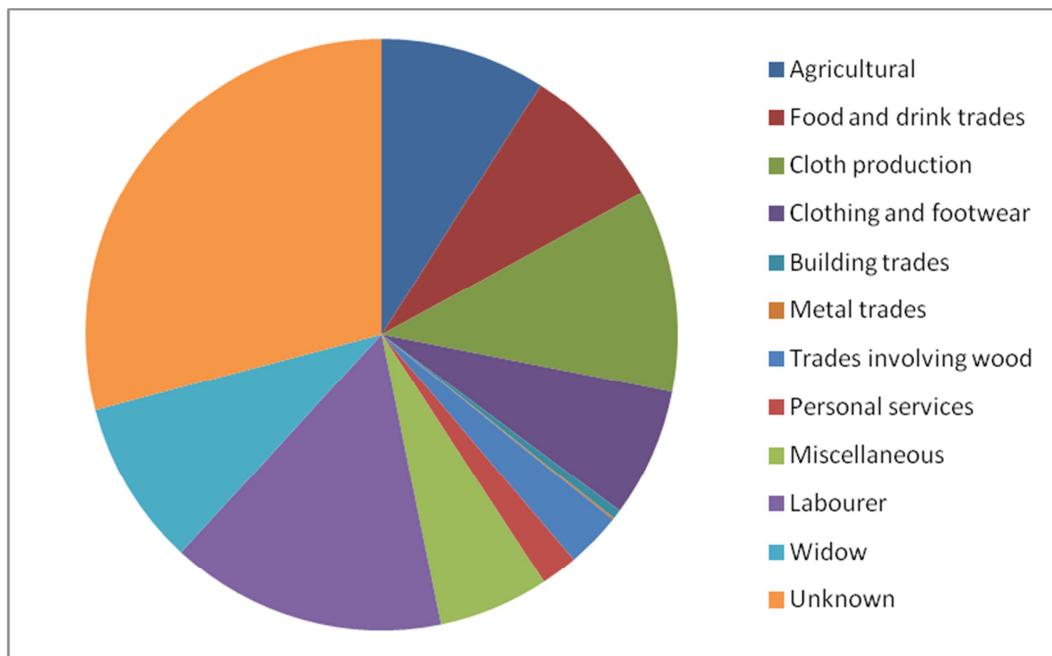


Chart 3: Occupations of the parents of apprentices placed by Bromfield's Charity, 1700-1798

Source: ERO, D/B 2/CHR1/2 and D/B 2/CHR 1/5 Records of Bromfield's Charity

The use of the term 'labourer' during the eighteenth century presents a number of difficulties. A labourer might be a man who sold his labour by the day to

⁴⁶⁹ ERO, D/B 2/CHR1/2 and D/B 2/CHR1/5 Records of Bromfield's Charity

whoever would employ him, either on the land or doing odd jobs. As such he belonged to the lowest of all groups in eighteenth century society save those entirely dependent on relief from the parish. Joseph Massie placed such a man in the lowest of the thirty ranks he invoked in 1756 when calculating what a family in each rank, degree or class would need to pay in taxes.⁴⁷⁰ However the term 'labourer' might also refer to a man, who having completed his apprenticeship, was working as a journeyman for a master craftsman whilst attempting to gather sufficient funds to set up in business himself.⁴⁷¹ Saffron Walden baptismal records, for example, show men described as labourer on the birth of their earliest children that later had the name of a trade attributed to them. This might suggest that first-born children were born whilst their father was still a journeyman and later ones when he had established himself as an independent tradesman.⁴⁷² A journeyman was situated slightly higher up Massie's ranks. A labourer working with metal or wood in the countryside he placed in the twenty-eighth rank, whilst one involved in the manufacture of woollen cloth fell into the twenty-ninth.⁴⁷³

It is thus very difficult to be certain of the perceived rank which a man described, in the period, as a labourer might hold. He might be a labourer of Massie's lowest kind, he might be a young man moving forward on his career path or he might be a man fated to spend his life working for a master, never able or willing to amass the funds necessary to set up on his own account. Irrespective of the precise role held by these labourers, however, they all had one thing in common, they either had the initiative to seek help from the charity to place their son apprentice to the best advantage or they were the recipients of patronage from the oligarchy who ran the town.

Boys seeking support from the charity had to be nominated and receive the approval of the Stewards of the Charity. It is interesting to note that of the first fifteen boys elected to the Charity School on its opening in 1715,⁴⁷⁴ eleven can

⁴⁷⁰ Joseph Massie, *Calculations of taxes for a family of each rank, degree or class: for one year* (London, 1756), p.44

⁴⁷¹ The various records of Saffron Walden contain very few references to the term 'journeyman'. The parish registers show three references to burials of journeymen in 1708, 1728 and 1741. The trades given were comber, tanner and knacker. Saffron Walden did not have any gild books listing dates when artisans became master craftsmen. The only other possible sources are the List of Saffron Walden Freemen, Saffron Walden Museum 41507 and various references in the Town Archive such as ERO, D/B 2/BRE2/3 which lists some freemen from 1742 onward.

⁴⁷² ERO, D/P 192/1/4/1 Saffron Walden Baptismal Register shows Edward Salmon as a labourer in 1701, but on the birth of subsequent children in 1702 and 1704 he is listed as firstly 'shoomaker' and then 'cordwinder'.

⁴⁷³ Massie, *op. cit.* pp. 42-3

⁴⁷⁴ ERO, D/B 2/SCH2/1 List of Subscribers for erecting a charity school. This volume contains the names of the first fifteen boys and fifteen girls admitted to the Charity School in 1715. The names of the attendees at the meeting called to instigate the establishment of the school in July 1715 are very similar to

be identified as having been apprenticed by one of the town charities once their schooling was complete. Their parents obviously hoped to set their sons on the path to a successful future by ensuring that they received the help which could be made available to them through the various town charities.

Of the remaining named trades, apart from that of 'labourer', across the entire period cloth production contributed the highest number of entries to apprenticeship, but its incidence was heavily weighted towards the earlier part of the century. Indeed, the first quarter of the eighteenth century contributed thirteen of the total of twenty-three entries, whilst the last quarter to 1798 saw only one boy apprenticed from a family which earned its living in this way. In 1782, John Grimston was apprenticed to John Hales, a tailor living in the nearby village of Hempstead.⁴⁷⁵ John must have been an orphan since his uncle, a woolcomber, signed the indenture. This decline in the number of apprentices from the families of cloth workers reflects the situation in the wool trade which had experienced a considerable decline in the Saffron Walden area⁴⁷⁶ and elsewhere in the middle of the century caused, in part, by the loss of markets for the 'New Draperies' as a result of foreign wars.⁴⁷⁷

The next largest group of men sending their sons to be apprenticed by Bromfield's Charity was those engaged in the production of clothing and footwear. These were trades in which a journeyman might set up in business relatively cheaply but which frequently did not return a very high income. Such families were probably glad of the help which the charity could offer.

The only other significant group seeking help in the apprenticeship of their sons consisted of men involved in the food processing industries such as bakers, butchers, millers and victuallers. Seventeen apprentices came from this background, the vast majority being the sons of butchers. R. Campbell in *The London Tradesman* (1747) suggests that, although a skilled trade, returns for butchers were not high.⁴⁷⁸

When considering charity apprentices, two other points arise which are worthy of consideration in this discussion of the contribution of fractionalism through

those found at a meeting of the Corporation with the exception of one, a widow by the name of Mary Gorsuch. However her late husband would have fitted the profile of subscribers perfectly.

⁴⁷⁵ ERO., D/B 2/CHR/1/5/237 Apprenticeship indenture of John Grimston

⁴⁷⁶ John Player, *Sketches of Saffron Walden*, (Saffron Walden, 1845), p.85 records the last St. Blaize's Day procession in Saffron Walden in 1778. Bishop Blaize was the patron saint of woolcombers. The annual procession on February 3rd, followed by speeches and a dinner at the Rose and Crown, had been an important date in the life of the town during the supremacy of the woollen industry.

⁴⁷⁷ See comments above, Chapter 2

⁴⁷⁸ R. Cambell, *The London Tradesman* (London, 1747), p.281

apprenticeship mobility. The first concerns the trades to which they were apprenticed and the second the locations in which the apprenticeships took place.

The trades to which boys were apprenticed were influenced by a variety of factors. For those boys who were not apprenticed at public expense or by a charity, an arrangement by the family was the most common way of setting up an apprenticeship.⁴⁷⁹ Parents and guardians sought to ensure that apprenticeship would provide the child with long-term security in terms of both work available and earning potential. They were keen to make sure that the child would avoid the stigma of being an impoverished labourer, the lowest of Campbell's four categories of income earners.⁴⁸⁰ For each category—the lower but not pauperized tradesman, the highly skilled craftsman and the professional or quasi-professional—the earning potential was in direct ratio to both the premium and then, later, the cost of setting up as a master.⁴⁸¹

The actual choice, however, was determined by a set of further factors: the actual cost of the premium and the later cost of setting up as a master; family and business contacts which could be called upon to help secure a suitable apprenticeship and finally the aptitude and physical capacity of the would-be apprentice. Collyer commented that parental social aspirations and avarice could lead to the choice of an inappropriate master, for, he claimed, there was little point to paying a very high premium if the boy, on completion of his apprenticeship could not afford the cost of setting up as a master in a reasonable way of business.⁴⁸²

Family and business contacts were called upon to help arrange apprenticeships. Some parents sought to apprentice their sons in order to enhance advantageous business links. In these cases the boy might find himself apprenticed to a trade that dovetailed well with the family business, either within the home area or in London. In other cases members of the extended family or kin who had located away from the home area might be called upon to help arrange an apprenticeship, either in their own business or in the businesses of friends and business acquaintances.

A final factor, perhaps less considered by some parents than it should have been according to contemporary commentators such as Campbell, Collyer and Defoe, was the natural aptitude and physical capacity of the potential apprentice. Trades such as blacksmiths and masons required a considerable degree of physical

⁴⁷⁹ Kitch, *Apprenticeship and Occupation*, p.3

⁴⁸⁰ Campbell, *London Apprentice*, pp.331-40

⁴⁸¹ Lane, *Apprenticeship in England*, p.34

⁴⁸² Collyer, *Parent's and guardian's directory*, p.26

strength, whilst others such as clockmakers and cabinet makers depended on dexterity and a degree of ‘mechanic genius’.⁴⁸³

We may surmise that for boys being apprenticed by a charity, the same factors applied but were influenced less by the aspirations of the parents than the contacts that could be used by the officials of the charity. The parents of the boys sought to give their sons better opportunities than they could, themselves, fund by applying to the charities for help with the premiums required to apprentice their sons.

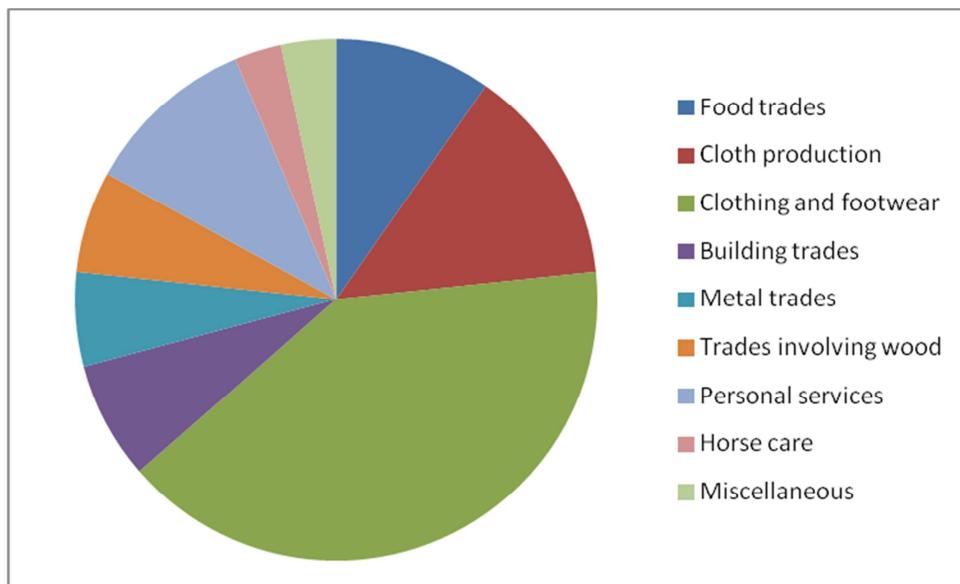


Chart 4: Trades to which Bromfield's Apprentices were sent
Source: ERO, D/B 2/CHR1/2 and D/B 2/CHR 1/5 Records of
Bromfield's Charity⁴⁸⁴

It can be seen clearly from the above pie chart that by far the most popular destination for the apprentices placed by Bromfield's Charity was trades involved in the production of clothing and footwear. Of these trades it was shoemaking that attracted by far the largest number of apprentices, 60 out of the 82 placed. The premium to apprentice a boy to a shoemaker or cordwainer was modest even for privately arranged apprenticeships. John Catlin, for example, in 1737 paid only a £2 premium to apprentice his son John to Samuel Pilkington a cordwainer from St. Saviour's, Southwark.⁴⁸⁵ Campbell commented in 1747 that the pay for journeymen was not high but work was pretty much continuous. He further commented that “It does not require much Strength, nor a mechanic

⁴⁸³ Campbell, *London Tradesman*, p.250 and p.171

⁴⁸⁴ Trades falling into the miscellaneous group tended to be less common and included, for example, the two children apprenticed to basket makers in 1712 and 1751 respectively and the boy apprenticed to a clockmaker in 1720.

⁴⁸⁵ ERO., T/Z393/3 Index to Apprentices

Head; a moderate Share of Ingenuity goes to the compleating this Tradesman: A Youth may be bound at about Fourteen, and at coming out of his Time be sufficiently qualified to set up for himself, or work Journey-work; unless he has idled his Time, or been bound to a very ignorant Master".⁴⁸⁶ It would seem that almost any boy could be apprenticed to this trade, irrespective of physical strength or intellect, and hope to make a living of some kind. This made it the ideal trade in which to place a charity apprentice!

Shoemaking remained a popular trade throughout the century. Others, like cloth production, saw periods of popularity and then of marked decline. Generally it would seem that the trades chosen were those which should enable the boy to earn a living without being forced to the recourse of parish relief except in times of extreme weather or unforeseen personal circumstances such as ill health. Once placed, it was up to the boy to make the most of his opportunities.

It might also be worth considering, though, whether apprenticeship by a charity—that is sponsored apprenticeship—which had a cushioning effect on the mobility of the majority of these boys, might also have curtailed the opportunities of prospective high fliers. Bromfield's Charity sought to ensure that the boys it sponsored had the chance to climb on to the ladder which would lead them to, at least, reasonable security in the future, but as will be shown below, it did not seek to apprentice them to the higher-earning trades. Perhaps those boys who showed the greatest aptitude at the Charity School were furnished with scholarships to Saffron Walden Grammar School which might lead to a brighter future. Unfortunately no records for such placements at the Grammar School have survived. In other words, placement as an apprentice by the charities is unlikely to have provided a finely tuned matching of personal aptitudes to trades—a matter on which, as we have seen, contemporary commentators were vocal.

It now remains to consider the locations in which the boys were apprenticed and whether these were influenced by the chronological period within which they occurred or the trade concerned and how this might have affected mobility. It might be expected that the charity officials who arranged the placing of charity apprentices would make use of any contacts that they had. It should also be considered whether locating the charity apprentices away from Walden would reduce the risk that they might later in life be a charge on the parish as seems to have been the motivation with parish apprentices.

⁴⁸⁶ R. Campbell, *London Apprentice.*, p.219

The following set of pie charts show the locations to which charity apprentices were sent in – approximately – each quarter of the century.

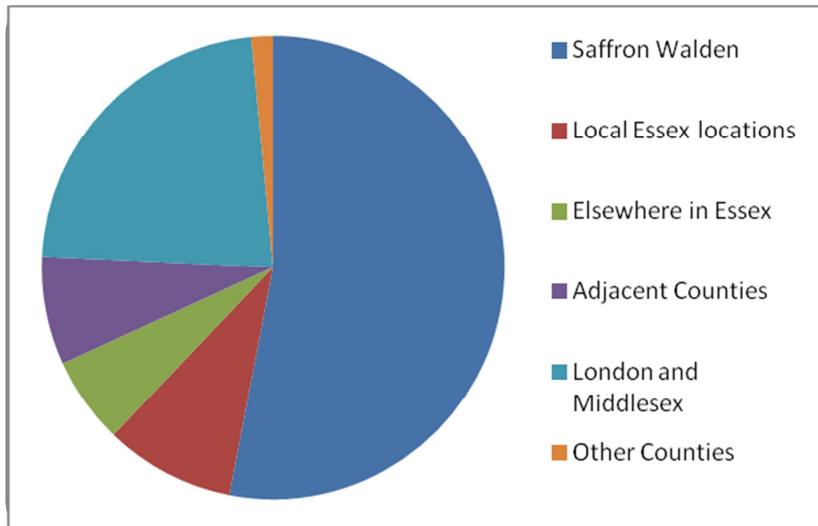


Chart 5: The locations in which Bromfield's Charity Apprentices were placed, 1700-1725
Source: ERO, D/B 2/CHR1/2 and D/B 2/CHR 1/5
Records of Bromfield's Charity⁴⁸⁷

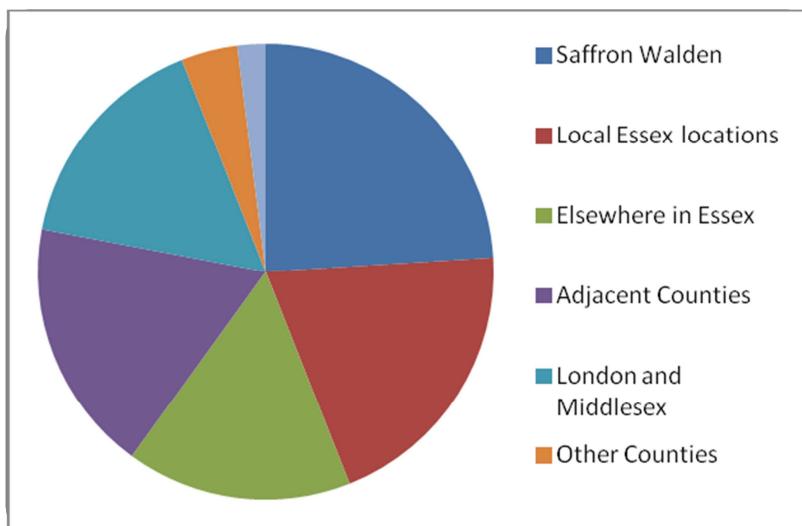


Chart 6: The locations in which Bromfield's Charity Apprentices were placed, 1726-1750
Source: ERO, D/B 2/CHR1/2 and D/B 2/CHR 1/5
Records of Bromfield's Charity

⁴⁸⁷ The locations referred to as 'Local Essex locations' are those which would have viewed Saffron Walden as their central place, that is within about 10 miles of Saffron Walden.

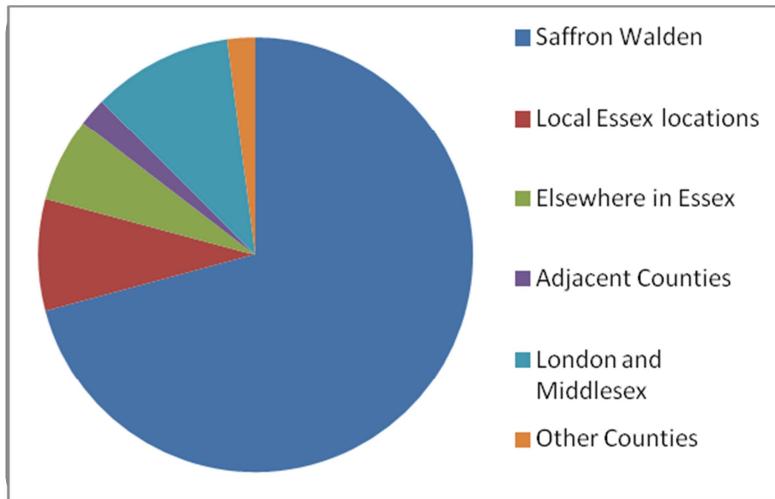


Chart 7: The locations in which Bromfield's Charity Apprentices were placed, 1751-1775

Source: ERO, D/B 2/CHR1/2 and D/B 2/CHR 1/5
Records of Bromfield's Charity

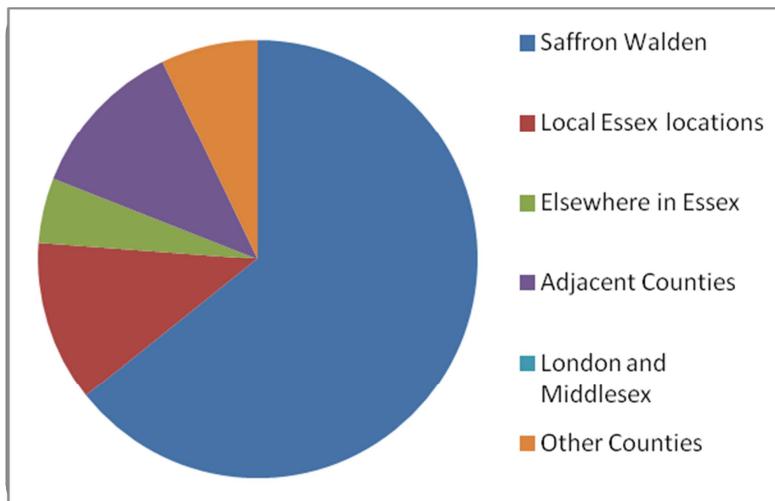


Chart 8: The locations in which Bromfield's Charity Apprentices were placed, 1776-1798

Source: ERO, D/B 2/CHR1/2 and D/B 2/CHR 1/5
Records of Bromfield's Charity

A comparison of this set of pie charts shows that in each quarter of the eighteenth century Saffron Walden was the location in which the largest numbers of charity apprentices were placed. Indeed in every quarter except that from 1726 to 1750, the number of apprentices placed in Walden outnumbered the total placed in all other locations. So it would seem that there was less incentive to place the charity apprentices, sons of hard-working but possibly struggling families, well away from the parish bounds of Walden. Charity apprentices, it would seem, were expected to gather sufficient skill and business sense from their training to prevent them from becoming a burden to their native parish and therefore there

was less incentive to ‘dump’ them on other parishes as was the case with parish apprentices. It may also have been the case that some of the trustees, who were also Saffron Walden businessmen, were keen to generate a local labour force that was dependent on their patronage. However there is only one definite case of a Bromfield’s apprentice being placed with a serving trustee of the charity: in 1718 Thomas Reader was placed with Edmund Harris as an apprentice woolcomber.

External economic factors may have also had a role to play in deciding where a charity apprentice was to be placed. In the second quarter of the century, when a majority of Bromfield’s apprentices were placed outside Walden, the woollen industry was declining and malt had yet to pick up the slack created. In this poor economic climate less than a quarter of all apprentices were placed in Walden.

In the first three quarters of the century London attracted a fair proportion of the apprentices, as might be expected in a period when the metropolis was expanding rapidly. Wrigley believes that at this period at least one sixth of the adult population of England had, at some point in their adult lives, direct experience of London.⁴⁸⁸ These migrants were more likely to be young and single and some, at least, were apprentices. Peter Clark suggests that such apprentices were examples of ‘betterment’ mobility.⁴⁸⁹

Trail blazers who had left Walden to make their way in the big city might be relied upon to either accept apprentices from their native town or to organise placements for them. Thus Henry Erswell was apprenticed in 1725 to Joseph Williamson, a good Walden name, who was a barber surgeon and citizen of London. In his turn he accepted James Mackenzie, the son of James Mackenzie a labourer, as an apprentice to his business of barber and peruke-maker in St Leonard’s, Shoreditch in 1746.⁴⁹⁰ In the last quarter of the century no charity apprentices were placed in London, but three apprentices were placed in counties further away than London: two in Gravesend in Kent with the same barber and peruke-maker and one with a needlemaker in the Redditch area of Worcestershire.⁴⁹¹

It now remains to be seen if the trade to which a boy was apprenticed had any influence on the location in which he was placed. The table below shows that although some boys were placed in Walden for each group of trades, some trades

⁴⁸⁸ E.A. Wrigley, ‘A simple model of London’s importance in changing English society and economy, 1650-1750’ *Past and Present*, 37 (1967), pp.44-70, at p.49

⁴⁸⁹ P. Clark, ‘Migration in England during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries’, in P. Clark and D. Souden, eds., *Migration and Society in Early Modern England* (London, 1987), p.215

⁴⁹⁰ ERO., D/B 2/CHR1/5/108 and 149 Apprenticeship indentures of Henry Erswell and James Mackenzie

⁴⁹¹ ERO., D/B 2/CHR1/5/236, 239 and 247 Apprenticeship indentures of John Pettit, John Wisby and Daniel Mackenzie, son of the James, who had been apprenticed to Henry Erswell in 1746 but who had returned to work as a peruke maker in nearby Thaxted.

had significant numbers of apprentices placed in their home town. The categories where most apprentices were located in the immediate locality were building trades, horse care i.e. curriers, and clothing and footwear production. It is not surprising that these trades could accommodate so many apprentices locally. Building trades needed labour and the eighteenth century saw a great growth in building work in Saffron Walden as houses were brought up to date by refronting or at least adding a bay window or two⁴⁹² and a new Town Hall was built.⁴⁹³ Building work was also going on at nearby Audley End House in the latter part of the century and although master craftsmen from elsewhere would probably have taken the lead there was work for local men as well.⁴⁹⁴

Trade	Total number of boys apprenticed	Number of boys apprenticed in Saffron Walden or local villages (See Map 2 villages, p.16)	Local apprenticeships as a percentage
Food trades	20	6	30%
Cloth production	28	20	71%
Clothing and footwear production	83	66	80%
Building trades	15	13	87%
Metal trades	12	7	58%
Trades involving wood	13	4	31%
Personal services	22	9	41%
Horse care	6	5	83%
Miscellaneous	7	3	43%

Table 8: Number of boys in each category of apprentices whose masters were located in Saffron Walden or nearby villages

Source: ERO, D/B 2/CHR1/2 and D/B 2/CHR 1/5 Records of Bromfield's Charity

It is also unsurprising that Saffron Walden offered opportunities for boys to be apprenticed to curriers. It was served by a mail coach stopping at the Rose and

⁴⁹² ERO., D/B 2/TDS1/8/1 Borough of Saffron Walden, Rents of purprestures, penthouses, ground rents and profits of fairs, markets, stallage etc. For example Robert Mapletoft added a bow window to his house (1774) and John Pratt put out the north front of his house for its entire length (1768).

⁴⁹³ Work to build a new stone-faced town hall to replace the old gild hall began in 1761. This also involved the removal of certain buildings in Middle Row. (ERO, D/B 2/BRE5/3 Accounts of the building of the town hall.) The new town hall was in keeping with the idea of urban improvement discussed in C.W. Chalklin, *The rise of the English town, 1650-1850*, (Cambridge, 2001)

⁴⁹⁴ ERO., D/DBy A44/2 Audley End payments to workmen: J. Bunten, plumber and glazier

Crown in the Market Place and there were also carrier services⁴⁹⁵ as well as privately owned horses.

The high percentage of apprentices placed in clothing and footwear production in Saffron Walden is more unexpected. However the businesses in which they were placed were probably small one-man enterprises and it is possible that, as Campbell suggests, some of the shoemakers were producing goods for the London market.⁴⁹⁶

Other trades were more likely to have apprentices placed in London. Those providing personal services such as barbers and peruke-makers might well be able to accommodate one or two apprentices in a small town such as Saffron Walden, but large numbers were more easily absorbed in the growing metropolis of London.

It would seem that many charity apprentices were placed near to home although others undertook the adventure of a move beyond the bounds of their hundred and in some cases even their county. There does not appear to have been the same desire to place charity apprentices well away from their home parish as there was with parish apprentices. Some of the apprentices who moved away eventually made their homes near to or where they had served their apprenticeship, others chose to return to Saffron Walden once their term of apprenticeship was complete.

The last group of apprentices to be considered were those whose placements were arranged privately, usually through family or business contacts as mentioned above. The majority of those whose records can be drawn from the Index to Apprentices were placed in Saffron Walden, although a few were apprenticed further afield, but when the records drawn from the Livery Companies are considered, very few of the masters were based in Saffron Walden. In the latter cases the majority were placed in London, not unsurprisingly since the Livery companies were based in London, and the trades to which boys were apprenticed were much more various than those to which charity or parish apprentices were sent. Of the thirty-four records extracted from the Livery Company Registers over the period, the occupations of thirty-two of the parents can be identified. Seventeen men who apprenticed their sons to the Livery Companies can be classified as artisans, fourteen of whom apprenticed their sons to trades which might be deemed artisan in nature. The remaining three apprenticed their sons to stationers. The premiums required by members of

⁴⁹⁵ ERO, D/B 2/CHR1/5/230, Apprenticeship indenture of James Nott, son of Clement Nott who was a carrier in Walden.

⁴⁹⁶ R.Cambell, *London Apprentice*, p.218

the Livery Companies were likely to have been higher than those elsewhere. Two of the stationers demanded premiums of £18 and £42 respectively in the 1730s.⁴⁹⁷ Only artisans well established in their careers could have afforded premiums of this kind.

Boys from artisan families expected to be apprenticed, as might the younger sons of the gentry, but not all artisans' sons could expect to be apprenticed in the same way. The younger sons of the gentry and the sons of wealthy artisans could expect to be apprenticed to either the professions, for example to an attorney⁴⁹⁸ or to a high level trade such as an apothecary.⁴⁹⁹ Somewhat lower down the social scale parents personally arranged for their sons, or left money in their wills, to be apprenticed to a variety of trades paying premiums recorded in the Registers of the Board of Stamps ranging from as little as £1 to over £150.⁵⁰⁰ Where the parents could not afford the premium, they were able to apply for sponsorship from one of the town charities which were dedicated to helping with apprenticeship premiums. Some of these charities even helped with the provision of the clothing which the apprentice would need during the placement.⁵⁰¹ By way of contrast, those children at the very bottom of the social range in Saffron Walden could hope at best for a parish apprenticeship to one of the lowest types of trade, a trade which was unlikely to furnish them with anything better than a subsistence living.

At both ends of the social range in Saffron Walden there were children who became apprentices. The gentry might apprentice younger sons, but the elder sons were more likely to be destined for the universities or the Inns of Court. At the opposite end of the scale, the children of paupers could, at best, hope for a parish apprenticeship but parish funds were unlikely to stretch to placing all children apprentice. Some, undoubtedly, would have been forced to pick up work as and when they could with the shadow of the workhouse ever hanging over them. We may conclude that apprenticeship offers clear evidence of fractionalism within the artisan class in eighteenth century Saffron Walden.

⁴⁹⁷ Cliff Webb, *London Livery Company Records*.

⁴⁹⁸ In 1713 Richard Reynolds, son of Richard Reynolds, was apprenticed to Samuel Mason, a London attorney, for the enormous sum of £215 (ERO, T/Z 393/3, Index to Apprentices' Indentures 1710-1762)

⁴⁹⁹ ERO, T/Z 393/3, Index to Apprentices' Indentures 1710-1762. In 1732 Alexander Ingrey, son of Thomas Ingrey a wealthy maltster, was apprenticed to Thomas Browne of Saffron Walden for £60. In 1768 Robert Mapletoft was apprenticed to Maurice Pugh, a Chelmsford surgeon, for £100.

⁵⁰⁰ ERO, T/Z 393/3, Index to Apprentices' Indentures 1710-1762

⁵⁰¹ ERO, D/B 2/CHR1/5/312 ff. Vouchers relating to apprenticeship costs.

ii. Geographical mobility – artisans and settlement

The movement of people in the eighteenth century cut across the boundaries of rank, order and sort, however the reasons for movement varied depending on the part of society to which the person concerned belonged. As has been discussed above, boys might travel over considerable distances to be placed apprentice. Indeed the furthest distance travelled by a Saffron Walden boy was that of Daniel Mackenzie who covered well over a hundred miles as the crow flies to reach his new master, John Moore, a needle manufacturer, in Tardebigge, near Redditch, Worcestershire.⁵⁰²

However migration was not limited to boys setting out on their life's work. Leeson discusses the various travelling brotherhoods of journeymen with their houses of call and cards to identify them as they moved from town to town 'on the tramp' in search of work⁵⁰³ and settlement papers provide a good source of information for investigating the types of moves that artisans might make in a life time.

Pooley and Turnbull suggest that in the second half of the eighteenth century the mean distance moved in a migration was 37.7 km (23.5 miles),⁵⁰⁴ a surprising distance in an era when most people were reliant on their own feet or a wagon to transport them. The settlement papers for Saffron Walden reveal a considerable amount of movement in and out of Walden for members of the artisan and labouring class.⁵⁰⁵ The documents fall into five groups: an account of certificates received from different parishes;⁵⁰⁶ acknowledgements of settlement;⁵⁰⁷ settlement bonds, that is bonds taken out in support of incomers to Saffron Walden to ensure that they did not become a burden to the parish;⁵⁰⁸ settlement examinations of both incomers to Saffron Walden and of people with settlement in Walden but then resident elsewhere⁵⁰⁹ and finally removal papers of people whose settlement was found wanting at their examination, both to and from Walden.⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰² ERO., D/B 2/CHR1/5/247 Daniel Mackenzie's indenture

⁵⁰³ R.A. Leeson, *Travelling brothers: the six centuries' road from craft fellowship to trade unionism* (London, 1979)

⁵⁰⁴ C. Pooley and J. Turnbull, *Migration and mobility in Britain since the 18th century* (London, 1998), p.65

⁵⁰⁵ Members of the professions and the gentry did not require settlement papers since they could purchase a freehold or copyhold, rent a property worth at least £10 a year, pay parish taxes or offer themselves to serve as parish officers.

⁵⁰⁶ ERO., D/B 2/PAR1 Chronological list of certificates received from 1700 to 1789

⁵⁰⁷ ERO., D/B 2/PAR4 Individual settlement certificates

⁵⁰⁸ ERO., D/B 2/PAR9/35-42 Indemnity bonds

⁵⁰⁹ ERO., D/B 2/PAR6 Settlement examinations

⁵¹⁰ ERO., D/B 2/PAR5 Removal orders

Whyte suggests that often only about a third of the inhabitants of a given parish had their place of legal settlement there but cites Snell who suggests that the range was somewhere between 20 and 55%.⁵¹¹ Exactly where Saffron Walden lay in this range is not clear, but between 1700 and 1789, 190 settlement certificates issued by other parishes were recorded in a volume entitled ‘An account of certificates received from different parishes’ as having been received in Saffron Walden.⁵¹² When this list is cross-checked against the actual certificates it would appear that this was an underestimate with some eight names being omitted. Unfortunately the trade of the certificate holder is not always given, but, of those that are, the furthest distances travelled were from Lancashire and Somerset. The man who came from Barrington in Somerset in 1708, one Thomas House, was a woolcomber. No information is given as to his family so it is likely that he was a young single man travelling from one area of woollen cloth production to another. His certificate makes it clear that Saffron Walden was his intended destination. He was not randomly wandering in search of employment but had a job to which he was travelling.⁵¹³ Two men made the long journey from Lancashire. In 1707 a fustian weaver called William Foole and his wife Sarah set off for Saffron Walden. Eleven years later a joiner called John Kay, probably a single man, made the journey south. Foole’s journey can be explained by his trade, a weaver moving to another area where weaving was an important industry, but Kay’s journey cannot be explained. However the respective certificates make it clear that whereas Foole had always intended to come to Walden, Kay’s certificate was granted once he had arrived and found the place to his liking.⁵¹⁴ Nonetheless, these instances do suggest the existence of wide ranging networks of knowledge among artisans of which we are otherwise largely ignorant.

A much shorter journey was much more common. Of the 198 certificates received, 112 were issued by parishes within Essex and 69 of these parishes were no more than six miles from Saffron Walden. For the people from these 69 parishes Saffron Walden would have been a familiar location from attendance at weekly markets and the less frequent fairs. It was also these men who were most likely to be accompanied by family members, only six of them were not accompanied by at least one dependant.

⁵¹¹ Ian D. Whyte, *Migration and society in Britain 1550-1830* (Basingstoke, 2000), p.59, quoting K.D.M. Snell *Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England, 1660-1900* (Cambridge, 1985)

⁵¹² E.R.O., D/B 2/PAR9/1 Chronological list of certificates received from 1700 to 1789

⁵¹³ E.R.O., D/B 2/PAR4/18 Settlement certificate of Thomas House

⁵¹⁴ E.R.O., D/B 2/PAR4/15 and 40 Settlement certificates of William Foole and John Kay

Where a trade is given, the most common is that of labourer⁵¹⁵ among certificates dating from 1730 to 1781. Blacksmiths, cordwainers and barber/peruke-makers are also relatively common, but after 1757 weavers and woolcombers are no longer to be found amongst certificate holders, an indication of the decline of the wool trade that mirrors the findings of the analysis of apprentices above.

A further set of certificates also merits mention at this point: the removal certificates of the Society of Friends. As dissenters Quakers were barred from those professions which required a university education. As a consequence they tended to focus their endeavours on trade. Many began their working lives as apprentices to other Quakers and their placement often involved travel over considerable distances. Apprenticeship completed, journeymen also tended to work for Quaker masters. The names of this set of migrants do not appear in the parish records since the Quakers supported the members of their faith. A Quaker wishing to move needed to secure a certificate of removal from his monthly meeting which he could present to the monthly meeting covering the area in which he wished to settle. The certificate stated that he, or she, was of good character and religious belief and was not leaving any debts or encumbrances behind. If the certificate did not satisfy the requirements of the receiving meeting, further enquiries would be made before acceptance. It was such a certificate that John Farmer, a woolcomber, applied for to his meeting in 1710 when he sought permission to remove to Colchester for 'the better convenience of work'.⁵¹⁶ None of the certificates mention the trades of the recipients, but, of the twenty-eight relevant certificates dating from 1707 to 1775, sixteen were from outside Essex, two from as far away as Yorkshire. Some of these certificates may have referred to apprentices since it was common for Quakers to apprentice their children within their faith and others might have been for men coming to work with fellow Quakers already established in Saffron Walden. For example it is noted on Philip Pitsto's certificate from the Luton (Bedfordshire) meeting that it had been requested by a William Impey.⁵¹⁷ William Impey was a Quaker brazier already well-established in Saffron Walden.

It would seem that many of the holders of settlement certificates were probably men near the beginning of their careers, perhaps not long out of apprenticeship and often with a young family to maintain, who were prepared to move to better their employment opportunities.

⁵¹⁵ Perhaps a journeyman as discussed above, but equally possibly an agricultural labourer

⁵¹⁶ Friends Meeting House, Saffron Walden, Archive, Shelf 3, Case C.1

⁵¹⁷ Friends Meeting House, Saffron Walden, Archive, Shelf 3, Case C.1

The subjects of the indemnity bonds were also looking to improve their fortunes.⁵¹⁸ Between 1739 and 1766 eighteen bonds were taken out by relatives and friends of men seeking to settle in Saffron Walden.⁵¹⁹ The purpose of the bonds was to indemnify the parish against any costs that might ensue from granting settlement to the men and their families. The bonds ranged in value from £20 to £50 (approximately £2,570 to £5,570 at 2007 prices),⁵²⁰ very considerable sums of money. Undoubtedly the indemnifiers relied on the subjects of the bonds never requiring support from the parish of Saffron Walden but they must still have been men of substance otherwise the parish authorities would not have accepted the bond.

In twelve of the bonds the trade of the subject of the bond was identified. Eleven of the twelve subjects of the bonds were artisans, one was a labourer. The men who stood surety for the bonds tended to have a strong connection with the subject of the bond, either as perhaps employer as in the case of Thomas Reeve of Newmarket, who was also the landlord of John Churchman, pie man, in 1754,⁵²¹ or as family member. On two occasions the Archer family stood surety for relatives. In 1757 Thomas Archer senior and John Archer, both breeches makers of Saffron Walden, stood surety for Thomas Archer junior, also a breeches maker, who was keen to return to Walden with his wife Ann from Harlow, where, it might be surmised, he had completed his apprenticeship.⁵²² In 1764 John Archer, a glover, his wife Mary and son John were the subject of another indemnity bond. This time however it was against any costs incurred in returning them to Walden, they having sought a certificate of settlement from the parish to permit them to seek work elsewhere a few days before. The sureties for this bond of £50 were John Archer of Saffron Walden, perhaps the subject of the bond, and John Archer of Newport, also a glover.⁵²³ Where a bond was arranged in such significant sums of money it seems likely the subject of the bond was an artisan held in good stead by his community.

It is unfortunate that only eleven settlement bonds have survived where the subject is clearly a member of the artisan segment of the community since the names of the indemnifiers help to provide evidence of some of the networks that existed in the Saffron Walden area in the eighteenth century. These eleven bonds cover the period 1750 to 1764 and each involved an arrangement struck between the indemnifiers and the churchwardens and overseers of Saffron Walden to

⁵¹⁸ See above, p.135

⁵¹⁹ ERO., D/B 2/PAR4 and 9 Indemnity bonds

⁵²⁰ Officer, "Purchasing Power of British Pounds from 1264 to 2007."

⁵²¹ ERO., D/B 2/PAR3/16 Settlement indemnity bond of John Churchman

⁵²² ERO., D/B 2/PAR4/137 Settlement indemnity bond of Thomas Archer junior

⁵²³ ERO., D/B 2/PAR4/159 Settlement indemnity bond of John Archer, glover

ensure that the subject of the bond would not become a charge on the parish. Some of the bonds allowed the subject to be considered legally settled in Saffron Walden, others indemnified the parish against any costs that the subject of the bond might incur whilst resident elsewhere.

The networks, in turn, provide evidence of patronage. The indemnifier, be it an employer or a relative, took the role of patron in the patron-client relationship. The subject of the bond was the client, dependent on patronage from someone with more power or greater economic means. Economic production in Saffron Walden, in the middle of the eighteenth century, was taking place in an operational framework of patronage-client relations which illustrated both horizontal and vertical integration within the artisan segment of society. The anonymous face of the market had yet to become dominant in the Saffron Walden area.

Most of these clients were people with a need to maintain their reputations. Reputation was crucial to a tradesman in the eighteenth century: be it a reputation for work of a high quality or an acknowledgement that the artisan could meet his financial obligations in a society that had a high dependence on credit. Craig Muldrew suggests that trust had to be generated, communicated and negotiated by each household involved in the market.⁵²⁴ This was also true of the individual artisan. Muldrew goes on to say that access to goods, wealth and to the social status and power conferred by wealth—office holding or patronage—was dependent on access to credit within the ‘serial sociability’ of an economy driven by credit based on reputation.

Whether these clients were wishing to settle in Saffron Walden or to travel elsewhere in search of better prospects, they were unlikely to become a charge on the parish and were, therefore, either successful in their own right or the possessors of successful families or friends. In 1751 the latter must have been the case for Henry Green, bricklayer, his wife and family when a bond was made in his favour,⁵²⁵ he having been the subject of a removal order from Cheshunt, Hertfordshire to Saffron Walden in the same year.⁵²⁶

The same was less likely to be true of those artisans who were the subject of settlement examinations followed by the issuing of removal orders. In the course of the eighteenth century Saffron Walden both issued removal orders to and received removed persons from other parishes. Eighty-one removals to Walden and 102 removals from Walden are recorded. The people removed varied from

⁵²⁴ Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation* (Basingstoke, 1998), p.151.

⁵²⁵ ERO., D/B 2/PAR9/38 Settlement indemnity for Henry Green

⁵²⁶ ERO., D/B 2/PAR5/33 Removal order for Henry Green

unaccompanied children, often listed as ‘bastard’ or the children of deceased persons, to single men and women and complete families. Removal orders themselves rarely give much information about the circumstances of the subject of the order other than the ages of any children; trades are only given in a very few cases. Where a trade is given, the most frequently occurring is labourer followed by cordwainer. This is to be expected since labourers were frequently itinerant, moving from one job to another as conditions dictated. As mentioned above, the trade of cordwainer was one to which poor children were often apprenticed. It did not offer a good source of income, but a cordwainer could expect to find work almost anywhere in the country.⁵²⁷

The subjects of removal orders had fallen on hard times and, since they did not have settlement in the parish in which they were living, the parish officials were within their rights to require them to return to their parish of settlement. It was not uncommon for the parish of settlement to provide some kind of relief to their people living elsewhere. For example in 1730 Ann Holton, the widow of a John Holton who had been apprenticed to George Pettit a Walden shoemaker, and her three children were removed to Walden from the parish of St. Giles, Cripplegate.⁵²⁸ In 1738 she was back in London, in St. Botolph’s Aldersgate, and in a letter sent from the officials of that parish to the parish officials in Walden the threat was made to return her if her complaints about lack of relief were not addressed.⁵²⁹ The numerous examples quoted by Sokoll⁵³⁰—sadly none from Saffron Walden—suggest that networks spread out across the country, centred on the place of settlement, because of the crucial dependence on a person’s settlement status.

More information about these unfortunate people who had sunk to such a low point is to be found in some of the settlement examinations that were conducted where there was some doubt about the true place of settlement of an individual. Many of those who underwent settlement examinations by local justices of the peace were described as vagrants or beggars, but others had trades. Joseph Mayor, a shoemaker, was examined by John Rowley, J.P. in Saffron Walden in 1738. Mayor claimed that he was about thirty years old, had been born in Saffron Walden and at about fourteen years of age was apprenticed to John Todd, a Walden shoemaker. He served Todd until the latter’s death two years later and had since practised his craft getting work where he could. He asserted that he

⁵²⁷ Campbell, in *The London Tradesman* p.219, suggests that country shoemakers were often employed to make goods for the London market since they were cheaper to employ. Country cordwainers also made shoes to satisfy local requirements.

⁵²⁸ ERO., D/B 2/PAR5/11 Removal order for Ann Holton and family

⁵²⁹ ERO., D/B 2/PAR9/7 Correspondence concerning Ann Holton

⁵³⁰ Thomas Sokoll, *Essex Pauper Letters, 1731-1837* (Oxford, 2001)

had never gained settlement elsewhere and his birth in Saffron Walden would be sufficient to secure him settlement there if he could prove that it was his father's place of settlement. There is no comment about this in the examination but the illiterate Mayor must have found it difficult to survive on just two years training and this or an appeal for help to the parish brought him to the attention of the authorities.⁵³¹ Mayor does not appear in the list of people removed from Walden so perhaps his claims were accepted and he was provided with some form of relief.

Another partially qualified cordwainer was William Wisby who was examined as to his settlement in the parish of Long Itchington, Warwickshire in 1732. He claimed to have been born in Walden and apprenticed by the parish to a cordwainer in Newport Pond, a parish adjoining Saffron Walden, who was himself a 'certificate man'.⁵³² Wisby served about four years of his time and then worked for about two and a half years for the Audley End estate but without being employed as a servant,⁵³³ after that he got his living as a journeyman where he could.⁵³⁴ It seems that Wisby survived this examination because it is not until 1743 that a removal order is issued for him and his six-and-a-half-year-old son Richard.⁵³⁵

Although some of the settlement examinations dealt with partially trained artisans, there is also evidence to be found of the future that awaited some hard-working artisans on whom fate did not smile. In 1720 the illiterate cooper Henry Rooksbye⁵³⁶ was examined whilst he was lodging in the parish of St. Leonard's, Shoreditch. To come to the attention of the parish authorities in Shoreditch, Rooksbye must have fallen on hard times and may well have been trying to claim relief from his parish of settlement. Alternatively the parish of St. Leonard's was attempting to claim recompense from the Saffron Walden authorities for expenditure made. If no money was forthcoming, Rooksbye would have been returned to Walden, his parish of settlement, at their expense, not a very glorious end to the life of a fully-trained artisan who Campbell states could have expected

⁵³¹ ERO., D/B 2/PAR6/5 Settlement examination of Joseph Mayor

⁵³² A certificate man was someone not living in his own parish. Therefore Newport Pond would not have become Wisby's parish of settlement even if he had completed his seven years apprenticeship.

⁵³³ Working for a year and a day as an indentured servant was another way of gaining settlement

⁵³⁴ ERO., D/B 2/PAR6/4 Settlement examination of William Wisby

⁵³⁵ ERO., D/B 2/PAR5/26 Removal order for William and Richard Wisby to Saffron Walden. What subsequently happened to William is unclear, but Richard was taken up as a vagabond in November 1743 in Long Itchington and was ordered to be removed from House of Correction to House of Correction until he reached Saffron Walden (PAR9/9). In 1752 he was apprenticed by the parish to a tanner in Huntingdonshire (PAR7/37)

⁵³⁶ ERO., D/B 2/PAR6/1 Settlement examination of Henry Rooksbee, cooper, 1720. For further details, see above p.66.

to earn fifteen to sixteen shillings a week (£107-£114 at 2007 rates)⁵³⁷ in London as a journeyman a few years later.

iii. Life course - mobility among artisans

The term 'mobility' covers more than mere movement in space: it can also refer to movement within the social order to which artisans belonged. These two definitions are often interlinked. Two factors which could influence this mobility were where someone was in their life course and household formation, especially their status or lack of status as a householder.

Whilst it was not impossible for an artisan to leave the social order determined by his training and craft, Saffron Walden provides many examples of artisans who earned the right to style themselves 'gentlemen' and others who fell to classification as paupers by men that they might once have viewed as peers. The majority of artisans, no matter how wealthy or poor they became, continued to style themselves by the trade to which they had served an apprenticeship. One exception to this rule appears to have been those who, in the second half of the century, became maltsters as the demand for malt grew after 1769 once transport via the Lee and Stort Navigation from Bishops Stortford became an easy route to London.⁵³⁸ These men appear to have been successful artisans with money to invest in what they saw as a good business opportunity. For example John Edwards, a member of the Edwards family of bakers, is described as a maltster in the Grand Jury Lists in the last decade of the eighteenth century.⁵³⁹

For an artisan there were a number of points in his life course which might prove decisive in determining how his life would run from that point forward. The first of these occurred very early in life: his place in the family order. It might be argued that the eldest son of an artisan's family stood the best chance of securing an apprenticeship to a trade which would earn him a secure living if the laws of primogeniture were followed. A father, ambitious for his son, but without the means to secure a good apprenticeship might approach the various town charities⁵⁴⁰ or the charity school.⁵⁴¹ Where it has been possible to identify the children who benefitted from those institutions, it appears that the majority were eldest children. For example William Turner, a Walden butcher, applied to

⁵³⁷ Officer, "Purchasing Power of British Pounds from 1264 to 2007."

⁵³⁸ R.Campbell, *London Tradesman*, p.243

⁵³⁹ See above, p.26

⁵⁴⁰ ERO, D/B 2/QSS1/8-214, Grand Jury Lists

⁵⁴¹ See above, p.115, Geographical mobility – the case of the apprentices

⁵⁴¹ ERO, D/B 2/ SCH2/1 List of first children admitted to the Saffron Walden Charity School, 1715

Bromfield's Charity for help in placing his elder son William in 1716.⁵⁴² There is no record of any assistance being sought for the younger son, Thomas. It may be that this was because his father was then in a position to place his son apprentice privately. Alternatively, charity funds could not stretch to apprenticing more than one child from each deserving family. If the latter were the case, probably Thomas could look forward to no better future than that of an unqualified day labourer or servant.

The next point in their life course that could prove crucial for the aspiring artisan occurred on the completion of his apprenticeship. Most apprentices could then expect to serve some time as a journeyman. For some this was a time of further experience whilst they gathered the finances necessary to set up in business as a master craftsman; for others it was the end of their ambitions. They either could not acquire the necessary finance from their families or their own hard work or they lacked the requisite business acumen. Their future lay in working for someone else and as Campbell described in *The London Tradesman* (1747), the rates which journeymen earned would not have made renting a home and raising a family easy.

If a man succeeded in becoming a master craftsman, his life course was then influenced by two factors: his own business acumen and skill and the prevailing economic conditions. No man could hope to make a success of his business if he lacked the former, but even the most skilful worker could find prevailing economic conditions working against him.

Old age provided another crunch point in an artisan's life course. This and the above factors will be discussed in greater depth below.

As has been discussed earlier,⁵⁴³ most artisans' sons were apprenticed to a trade at about the age of fourteen, whether by private arrangement by their parents, a town charity or, at worst, the parish. The trade to which they were apprenticed was generally of a level similar to that followed by their father,⁵⁴⁴ although some

⁵⁴² ERO, D/B 2/CHR1/5 Bromfield's apprentices

⁵⁴³ See above, Geographical mobility – the case of the apprentices, p.115

⁵⁴⁴ In the eighteenth century not all trades carried the same level of esteem. First came the twelve great London Livery Companies, e.g. the goldsmiths; then other trades which required a significant degree of education and finance, first to pay the apprenticeship premium and later to set up in business independently. Lower down the scale came crafts which required less education, for which fees were lower and which often involved dirty or hard manual labour. At the bottom of the scale came the sorts of crafts to which poor children of the parish were routinely apprenticed, easily learned crafts which required little financial backing. These in turn tended to produce a poor living, although this was not always the case.

A goldsmith, according to Campbell, required between £500 and £3000 to set up in business. A journeyman goldsmith could earn between eighteen and twenty-five shillings a week. Thus any goldsmith wishing to set up in business as a master craftsman would require financial backing from his

parents aspired to better for their sons and some, through lack of funds, were forced to settle for less. Whatever the craft to which a boy was apprenticed, the aim was to provide him with a trade which would enable him to support himself and any future family he had without recourse to relief from the parish.

The first evidence of any fractionalism within the artisan class in this area is presented by a consideration of whether or not an apprentice completed his apprenticeship. As mentioned above, some of the men who were examined as to their place of settlement, presumably because they were viewed as likely to become chargeable to the parish in which they were living, had failed to complete their apprenticeships for a variety of reasons.⁵⁴⁵ Failure to complete an apprenticeship left the partially-qualified youth to seek whatever work he could find. In some trades he might have found work as a journeyman, completing the less skilled aspects of the work for poor wages, but in others he would have been turned away to find unskilled work wherever he could, perhaps becoming a charge to the parish. The officials would have been unlikely to have viewed such a man as an example of the deserving poor to whom parish relief was more readily given.

Those young men who had completed their apprenticeship became journeymen, that is men employed by a master craftsman by the day or piece. Campbell's *The London Tradesman* published in 1747 gives a fascinating insight to the wages that journeymen could hope to receive in various trades in London, ranging from the poorly paid journeyman shoemaker at nine to ten shillings a week to braziers who might earn as much as a guinea a week. The wages in a small town such as Walden would, no doubt, have been lower making life as a journeyman shoemaker a hand-to-mouth existence. It also needs to be remembered that some trades, such as building or brick-making could only work when the weather was favourable.

family. A less prestigious trade such as that of cooper required between £200 and £500 to establish a business. A journeyman cooper could earn fifteen or sixteen shillings a week. A hard-working and financially astute journeyman cooper could hope to amass the necessary money in something over five years if his family was not able to help him. A London cordwainer, one of the most lowly trades, would need, according to Campbell, something over £100 to set up as a master; a country shoemaker somewhat less. A journeyman shoemaker was poorly paid at little over ten shillings a week.

⁵⁴⁵ ERO., D/B 2/PAR6/16 Settlement examination of Thomas Lewis. The illiterate Lewis was examined in 1780 and claimed that he had been apprenticed to John White, a baker, of Saffron Walden, and that two years into his apprenticeship the said John White "broke and ran away". John White was, indeed, a baker in Walden at this time but he was a prosperous one and Lewis's claim seems rather unlikely. In other cases when a master was unable to complete the training of his apprentice, he transferred or turned them over to another master, as was the case in 1743 when James Webb, baker, was unable to continue the training of James Seamer and turned him over to Robert Churchman (D/B 2/TDS2/2/3/52).

Some journeymen would have continued working for the master they had been apprenticed to, others might have ‘gone on the tramp’,⁵⁴⁶ in search of better opportunities, carrying with them, in most cases, their certificates of settlement gained on completion of a seven-year apprenticeship in a parish.

It is likely that most journeymen aspired to amassing sufficient funds to enable them to set up in business as an independent craftsman but Rule suggests that in some trades high capital costs meant that employer status, that is an independent craftsman employing others, remained out of reach of skilled men who were therefore forced to remain employed by the day.⁵⁴⁷ Wrightson agrees that among urban craftsmen the number of lifelong journeymen had grown.⁵⁴⁸ Thus fractionalism could occur at this stage in the artisan’s life course. Could he or could he not set up in business independently and take apprentices in his turn? It is hard to find evidence of this in Walden due to the lack of use of the term ‘journeyman’—as mentioned above.⁵⁴⁹

Once established as master craftsmen or continuing to work as journeymen, probably married and fathers of growing families,⁵⁵⁰ the artisans of Walden, although members of a recognised segment of society were not a homogeneous group in the eighteenth century.

Through the use of the techniques of nominal data linkage it is possible to create a picture of a given life course and thus to examine the ways in which these changes affected individual artisans living in Walden at this time. Joseph Whiston provides an excellent example of a successful Walden master craftsman. His date of birth is not known, but he first appears in the town records as paying ten shillings and sixpence to secure his freedom as a cooper in 1737.⁵⁵¹ The payment of ten shillings and sixpence indicates that his freedom was secured either by patrimony, his father may have been a dyer called Joseph Whiston, or by completion of his apprenticeship within the town. In 1738 he took the office of constable,⁵⁵² a sign that he had secured a degree of respect among his peers, and in 1739 he first appeared on the Grand Jury Lists of the town for which he must have held the necessary property qualification.⁵⁵³ Two children were

⁵⁴⁶ Leeson, *Travelling brothers*

⁵⁴⁷ J.G. Rule, *The experience of labour in the eighteenth century* (London, 1981), p.22

⁵⁴⁸ Keith Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities* (London, 2002), p.316

⁵⁴⁹ See footnote 467 above

⁵⁵⁰ The journeyman stage was the earliest point at which a man could contemplate respectable fatherhood. Incidences of earlier fatherhood occurred, but evidence of these tends to be found among the town’s collection of bastardy bonds (ERO, D/B 2/PAR8). For example in 1763 Xenophon Hearn, joiner, was bound in the sum of £40 on behalf of one of his sons who was under 21. (ERO, D/B 2/PAR8/27)

⁵⁵¹ Saffron Walden Museum, 41507 Saffron Walden Freemen

⁵⁵² ERO, D/B 2/QSS 2/4 Walden Order Book 1735-1746

⁵⁵³ See above, Grand Jury Lists

baptized in 1744 and 1745.⁵⁵⁴ Later references to Joseph Whiston include his payment of Market Tolls to the Corporation of £2 in 1748,⁵⁵⁵ the payment of church tithes on a property in the High Street in 1748/9⁵⁵⁶ and his signature in Bromfield's register of apprentices when George Petitt was apprenticed to John Hopwood, a currier, in 1749.⁵⁵⁷ After this point he continues to appear in Grand Jury Lists until 1776. He appears in Quarter Sessions records twice, once as the victim of an assault and on the occasion when he was charged with an assault on John Savile junior in 1762.⁵⁵⁸ It is interesting to speculate whether John Savile junior was an awkward apprentice, but there is no evidence to support this theory. As well as his appearances in the offences record, as victim, accused and, on another occasion, as a bondsman, there are also references to Whiston's trade with the Audley End estate.⁵⁵⁹ Joseph Whiston died sometime after 1776 and no will has been located.

It seems that he was a master craftsman of the middling sort. Sufficiently wealthy to be eligible to pay church rates and to qualify for Grand Jury service, he never progressed further than the rank of constable in the town oligarchy. Whether this was by choice or because of lack of suitable patronage it is impossible to say.

It would be interesting to be able to compare the life course of Joseph Whiston with another Walden artisan who never progressed beyond the level of a journeyman, but because of the lack of references to journeymen in the town records this is not possible. The less successful a member of the Walden population was, the more limited are the records mentioning him. If he was a problem to the town he might appear in Quarter Session records. If he fell into abject poverty he might appear in workhouse records and on death in the parish burial registers as a pauper. These records, though, tend to provide, at best, patchy references to any trade followed and it is difficult to be sure that they refer to the same man. It is more by their absence than by their presence that these people are recorded. The man who was either unable to amass the necessary funds to establish himself as a master craftsman, or who lacked the skill or business acumen would not become a freeman of the town, serve on a Grand Jury list or hold a post in the corporation's organization. It is thus very hard to discover any details about his life course.

⁵⁵⁴ ERO, D/P 192/1/4/4 Baptismal record

⁵⁵⁵ Saffron Walden Museum, unclassified, Market Tolls

⁵⁵⁶ ERO, D/P192/3/6 Church Small Tithes List

⁵⁵⁷ ERO, D/P 192/CHR1/5 Bromfield's Apprentices

⁵⁵⁸ ERO, D/B 2/QSS2/8 Offences committed from Sessions Books

⁵⁵⁹ ERO., D/Dby A 26 Monthly household vouchers for Audley End, 1768

However, even among those who are recorded, there is evidence of the fractional character of the artisan segment. The evidence for this type of fractionalism is drawn from a variety of sources. Those artisans, moving towards their middle age, who were successful businessmen, began to take leading roles in the organisation of the corporation and parish. A first step on the road towards civic importance was to serve as parish constable or overseer of the poor. Some men progressed no further, either because this was the perceived limit of their competence or willingness to serve, or because they were not members of the Church of England. Dissenters could not serve as churchwardens! Others became church wardens and were elected to the self-perpetuating oligarchy that was the Corporation, serving as aldermen and perhaps mayor. Any man who became mayor, irrespective of his origins became a justice of the peace and adopted the style of 'gentleman'. Of the 88 mayors whose occupations can be identified, 77 were either artisans or shopkeepers.⁵⁶⁰ If shopkeepers are eliminated, since it is difficult to be certain of the size of the businesses of grocers and drapers, 65 mayors were drawn from the artisans of the town, although some may have been, by this time, quite considerable businessmen, particularly if their trade involved malting. Artisans had become gentlemen.⁵⁶¹

Most artisans reached the peak of their careers in their middle years, perhaps around their mid-to late forties, master craftsmen employing other men and training apprentices, able to put some savings aside for their old age. Others as mentioned above might have been less successful and advancing years would have been faced with dread. Unless an elderly artisan, no longer able to earn a living wage for himself and his wife, had been able to accumulate savings or had a family on whom they could rely for support, life was hard. For many old age represented a decline into poverty. The age at which a person was viewed as 'old' by the rest of his or her community was, according to Susannah Ottaway,⁵⁶² a category created by a combination of functional and cultural as well as chronological factors. She asserts, however, that by the end of the eighteenth century the age of sixty served as a clear marker for entry into old age.

For those in need of support in old age, three possibilities existed in eighteenth century Saffron Walden. A select group received the patronage of the influential men who ran the town. These elderly people were nominated to fill vacancies at the town's Almshouse.⁵⁶³ The statutes of the Almshouse stated that any

⁵⁶⁰ Richard, Lord Braybrooke, *The History of Audley End* (London, 1836), pp.316-8 provides a list of the mayors of Saffron Walden

⁵⁶¹ See above chapter 4 for further details on the civic offices available and the type of men who secured these posts.

⁵⁶² Susannah Ottaway, *The Decline of Life* (Cambridge, 2004), pp.17-18

⁵⁶³ For further details see above p.97

vacancies were to be filled by election by the Mayor and Corporation from nominations made by the Master and Part Brother⁵⁶⁴ of the Almshouse. The nominations were to be 'of the most needy and poor persons having impediment by extreme age, maimed or sick, impotent to labour'.⁵⁶⁵ The minutes of the meetings of the Mayor and Corporation and the Master of the Almshouse and his Part Brother,⁵⁶⁶ elected annually from amongst the town's most influential citizens, give the names of persons nominated and those elected to a place. Failure to secure a place at the first attempt did not mean permanent exclusion from the benefit: the Walden Almshouse Book 1749-1772⁵⁶⁷ shows many examples of candidates gradually gaining votes until they eventually succeeded in obtaining a place. Couples were accepted where one party had been elected but on the death of the electee the relict was expected to vacate the room and wait to be elected in his or her turn.⁵⁶⁸

Election to a place in the Almshouse assured the electee of board, lodging and firing for the rest of their lives provided they did nothing which caused their expulsion, such as theft, disobedience or the frequenting of alehouses—two warnings were allowed for the last offence. The lists of electees show that that about half the people elected were widows.⁵⁶⁹ Often they were the widows of artisans, as in the case of the widow of Thomas Wright, a carpenter, elected in 1765. There are also references to artisans being elected. In 1765 John Ryley, a glover, was elected, in 1775 William Kent, a clockmaker, and in 1783 Joseph Colling, a barber, joined the Almshouse. Only the deserving elderly stood any chance of being elected to the company of the Almshouse, but it is interesting to note the number of people, or their widows, admitted who had previously served as town officials or had, at the very least, been members of the Grand Inquests to the Quarter Sessions.⁵⁷⁰ Of 79 men admitted to the almshouse between 1749 and 1799,⁵⁷¹ 46 can be identified in the Grand Jury lists. Of the 46, the trades of 36 can be identified. The most common group were those involved in clothing and footwear production, particularly shoemakers.

⁵⁶⁴ The Part Brother was the title given to the Deputy Master of the Almshouse. The Part Brother could expect to fill the role of Master when his predecessor retired or resigned.

⁵⁶⁵ C.B. Rowntree, *Saffron Walden - then and now* (Chelmsford, 1952), p. 60, extracted from the Ordinances of the Almshouse (ERO., D/Q 67/1/1)

⁵⁶⁶ ERO, D/Q 67/2/1 and 2 Minutes of the Almshouse

⁵⁶⁷ ERO, D/Q 67/2/1 Minutes of the Almshouse 1749-1776

⁵⁶⁸ ERO, D/Q 67/2/1 Minutes of the Almshouse 1749-1776 In February 1758 it was recorded that the wife of Christmas Hurry had died. Since she had been the elderly person elected to the Almshouse it was then necessary for Christmas to be elected in his turn. This was in response to a decision made on 26th December, 1757 that the spouses of dead inmates were to be removed immediately after the burial and the rooms cleared to make space for the newly elected people..

⁵⁶⁹ Between 1749 and 1758 43 people were elected of whom 21 were widows (49%). In the next ten years 21 out of the 40 people elected to vacancies were widows (52.5%).

⁵⁷⁰ ERO, D/B 2/QSS1/8-214 Grand Jury Lists.

⁵⁷¹ ERO, D/Q 67/2/1 and 2 Minutes of the Almshouse 1749-1776 and 1772-1850.

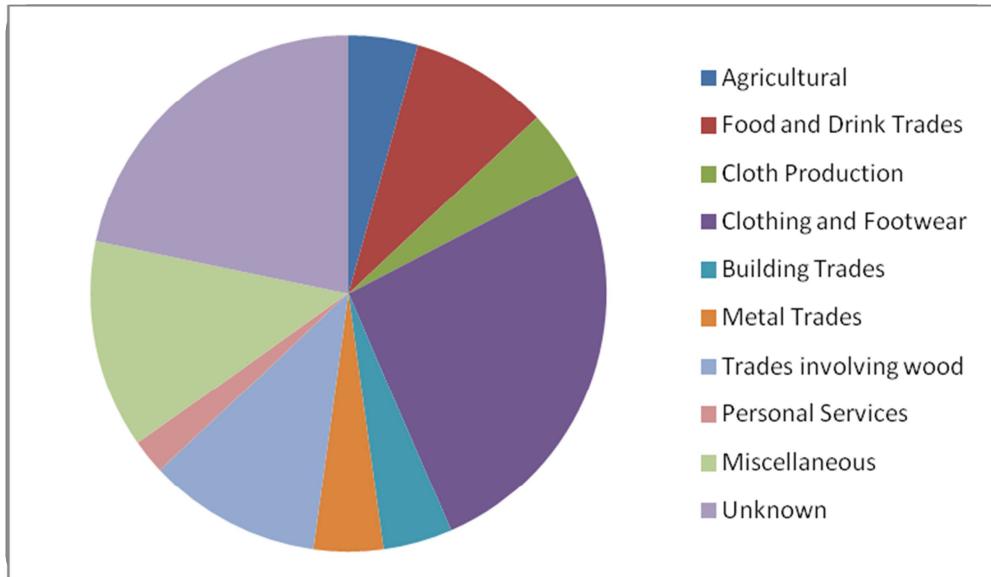


Chart 9: Occupations of men admitted to the Almshouse who also appeared in the Grand Jury Lists

Source: ERO, D/Q 67/2/1 and 2 Minutes of the Almshouse and D/B 2/QSS1 Saffron Walden Grand Jury Lists

Some residents of the Almshouse had, as mentioned above, served the town in some official capacity—or their late husbands had. Edward Cornell, a weaver who had been church warden in 1734, entered the Almshouse in 1751. Whilst in 1753, George Pettit who had served as parish overseer in 1721 was elected. John Small, who had served as a parish constable, was admitted in 1770. Seven percent of the male electees to the Almshouse can be clearly identified as having served as parish officers. Widows of other servants of the town were also elected but are often less easy to identify with complete confidence, however the widow of George Cockett, a farmer who had served as both overseer (1747) and church warden (1750-3), was admitted in 1760.

These examples seem to suggest that election to the Almshouse tended to be reserved for those who had either served the town in some capacity or who were seen as deserving of the town's support in their dotage because of the respect that they had gained in their working lives. Certain surnames also appear more than once in the lists of electees, for example there are three Pomfretts and two examples of several surnames. In fact, any examination of the life course of artisans reveals dependence on repeated acts of discriminatory patronage and sponsorship. It is therefore interesting to note that the Minutes of the Walden Almshouse also record one instance where the sponsor of a future inmate was of

an even more elevated status than a member of the town corporation. In 1792 it was noted that Widow Webb replaced the lately deceased Widow Mackenzie at the request of Lady Howard. Lady Howard was the wife of Lord Howard who owned Audley End. It might be speculated that Widow Webb had been a member of the staff, or the wife of a staff member, at Audley End. She was probably a native of Saffron Walden and was now too old and feeble to be retained in the household.⁵⁷²

A place in the Almshouse was not available to all artisans in their old age, a clear example of fractionalism among artisans. For these elderly people there were two possibilities. Some were offered support in the form of parish relief. In 1781, for example, William Mynott, one of the Overseers of the Poor, recorded in the first week of his accounts a payment of one shilling and sixpence a week to Leonard Alderson.⁵⁷³ Leonard Alderson was a sawyer whose apprenticeship by Suffolk and Turner's charity was recorded in 1726.⁵⁷⁴ He died in 1783. The burial registers recorded that he was a pauper.⁵⁷⁵ The overseer's payments continued until Alderson died. The week after his death his widow is recorded as being given two shillings and six pence.

Mynott recorded weekly payments to over 60 poor people, including Robert Tyrrell. Robert Tyrrell was a bricklayer and he too received one shilling and sixpence. The majority of the payments were made to widows, but there were also payments to help support children, perhaps those left orphans. As well as the regular weekly payments, Mynott also recorded incidental one-off payments such as sixpence to William Turner, a butcher.

The aim of these payments was to help those in need to stay in their own homes and this would have been the way that many artisans ended their lives in Walden, their deaths being recorded in the parish registers as those of paupers.

There was, however, a third way that paupers in Walden might end their lives and this was in the town workhouse. The workhouse was the last resort for the poor with no other means of support. For them the outdoor parish relief to supplement their living was insufficient to sustain them, they may even have been in need of accommodation, and so they entered the workhouse.⁵⁷⁶ In June 1783 William Barrett, one of the overseers of the poor, recorded a total of 71 paupers in the workhouse. The list included the names of James and Thomas

⁵⁷² ERO., D/Q 67/2/1 and 2 Minutes of Walden Almshouse

⁵⁷³ ERO., D/B 2/PAR3/1 Overseer's Account Book

⁵⁷⁴ ERO., D/B 2/CHR1/3 Suffolk and Turner's Apprentices

⁵⁷⁵ ERO., D/P 192/1/5/4 Saffron Walden Burial Register

⁵⁷⁶ The workhouse was located at the top of Cuckingstool End Street, well away from the centre of the town.

Archer, both of whom may have worked in the leather trade and William Webb who may have been a blacksmith.⁵⁷⁷

It can be seen that at every point in an artisan's life course fractionalism was present. Some artisans were advantaged from the very start of their careers due to the circumstances of their birth, others achieved recognition by their hard work or were advantaged by demands within the wider economy. These men moved upwards within the rank of artisan, some even achieving the style of 'gentleman' due to service in the higher echelons of the corporation. Others met with little success, possibly due to the trade to which they had been apprenticed as a charity or parish apprentice and may have depended on parish relief from time to time throughout their lives, ending their lives as paupers, possibly in the workhouse. The majority of artisans fell between these two extremes, pursuing a life that was neither particularly comfortable nor very harsh, but mobility could be both up- and downward in the course of an artisan's life depending on chance and prevailing economic conditions as well as the hard work and talent of the artisan concerned. It seems overall that within the artisan segment of society life chances tended to be determined by birth, be it the financial position of the father or sibling position within the family, although education, locus and connections – the latter closely associated with the financial position of the father – might also have a part to play in allowing an apprentice to break out of traditional constraints.

iv Religious fractionalism and mobility

In the preceding discussion of apprentices, life courses and mobility, allusion was made to the religious persuasions of some of the artisans concerned. Parish records can give the impression that the Church of England was the dominant faith in the town, but this was not the case. Although the majority of the population were probably nominally members of the established church, in Walden the voice of dissent was strong. Indeed, as we will see, in the case of Saffron Walden—and possibly elsewhere—the social and economic consequences of the emergence of dissent in the late seventeenth century is one of the key features that sets off the eighteenth from preceding centuries. It also imparted a very distinct character to the town.

The first dissenting congregation in Walden dated from about 1665, although their first permanent place of worship, at a place called Froggs' Orchard in

⁵⁷⁷ ERO., D/B 2/PAR9/4 Lists of inmates of the workhouse in the Hemp and Sack Book. The list for June 1783 also includes the name of Robert Mott, who was apprenticed by the parish in 1784.

Abbey Lane, was not established until 1694.⁵⁷⁸ Another dissenting congregation was established in Hill Street in 1711. This was a congregation of Particular Baptists which met in a property provided by Robert Cozens, steward of the Audley End estate. In 1774 a new Baptist congregation was established at the top of Cuckingstool End Street as a result of a schism between the then minister of Abbey Lane, the Reverend Joseph Gwennap, and a part of his congregation. The Reverend Gwennap and his supporters established the new Baptist congregation and the Abbey Lane church became Congregationalist.

The Walden dissenting congregations enjoyed the support of many of the town's artisans. The Abbey Lane congregation included bakers, shoemakers, tailors, wheelwrights and grocers.⁵⁷⁹ The populations of the Hill Street and Cuckingstool End Street Baptists had similar compositions. Some members of these congregations went on to serve the town as overseers of the poor, for example Abraham Cornell of Abbey Lane in 1744, William Rankin in 1760 and his son Thomas in 1763. But they could not progress to hold higher offices or become members of the Corporation for which membership of the Church of England was a requirement.

It does not seem that dissenters were particularly concerned to apprentice their sons to other dissenters, but this was not the case with the other religious denomination which flourished in Saffron Walden in the eighteenth century, that is the Society of Friends. For example in 1772, Septimus Moxon of Balby, Yorkshire was sent to Old Sampford, a village about seven miles from Saffron Walden, to Isaac Bedford,⁵⁸⁰ although there is no mention of a trade. In 1785 Atkinson Francis Gibson, son of George Gibson, a miller from Maldon who had moved to Walden and begun brewing, returned to Saffron Walden with a certificate of removal from the Balby Monthly Meeting.⁵⁸¹ He had served an apprenticeship to the Sheffield land surveyors William Fairbank and William Fairbank junior,⁵⁸² but he was returning to take his place in the family brewing business.

It was not only Quaker apprentices who travelled in search of masters: journeymen also moved around the country to work with other members of their

⁵⁷⁸ Rev. Henry Pepper, *A brief history of Abbey Lane Congregational Church* (Saffron Walden, 1900), p.6

⁵⁷⁹ ERO, D/NC 16/1/1 Abbey Lane Church Book

⁵⁸⁰ Archive of the Friends' Meeting House, Saffron Walden, Shelf 3, case C. 1 Friends' Removal Certificates

⁵⁸¹ ERO., D/DGi F8/19 Atkinson Francis Gibson's certificate of removal from the Balby Meeting, Yorkshire

⁵⁸² A. Stuart Mason, *Essex on the Map: The 18th century Land Surveyors of Essex* (Chelmsford, 1990), p.116

denomination. As mentioned above,⁵⁸³ William Impey, a Saffron-Walden-based brazier, requested a certificate to permit Phillip Pitsto from Luton to join the Thaxted Monthly Meeting, which covered Saffron Walden.⁵⁸⁴ Impey had bought his freedom by redemption for 120 shillings in about 1720 after arriving with his own certificate from Little Harrodon, Northamptonshire.⁵⁸⁵ Pitsto was joining a well-established business.

The requirements of trade, however, were not the only reason why Saffron Walden Quakers travelled. John Farmer, the woolcomber, mentioned above, who moved to Saffron Walden from Somerset to further his trade and then moved on to Colchester, returned to Saffron Walden to settle his family before he set off on another sort of journey. Quakers were enjoined to travel in the ministry if the spirit moved them and it was for this reason that John Farmer returned with his family to Saffron Walden. Having settled his wife, daughter and step-daughter back in Walden in 1710, he set off on his travels in the ministry. In 1711 he travelled widely in England and Ireland before taking ship for America. He then travelled throughout much of Virginia and Pennsylvania before returning via the West Indies.⁵⁸⁶ John Farmer made a second journey to Pennsylvania and appears to have settled there since his will of 1724 gave his place of residence as Germantown, Philadelphia.⁵⁸⁷ Farmer was not the only Walden Quaker to travel in the ministry. After his death his wife travelled to Holland and there are also records of two other women: Anne Humphreys and Elizabeth Nottage, as well as William Impey, the brazier, who travelled in the ministry between 1740 and 1757.⁵⁸⁸

The travels in the ministry of Walden's Quaker artisans make them the best travelled of the town's artisan community, a case of distinct fractionalism in itself, arising from religious differences within the group. In their travels they made many contacts, both business and personal.⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸³ See above, p.137

⁵⁸⁴ Archive of the Friends' Meeting House, Saffron Walden, Shelf 3, case C. 1 Friends' Removal Certificates Removal certificate request for Phillip Pitsto

⁵⁸⁵ Lawrence H. Officer, "Purchasing Power of British Pounds from 1264 to 2007." The 2007 equivalent of 120 shillings is about £796

⁵⁸⁶ Archive of the Friends' Meeting House, Saffron Walden, Shelf 3, case F Farmer collection

⁵⁸⁷ Will of John Farmer, proved January 1724/5. In his will he left all that he had in Saffron Walden to his wife Mary and anything in America to his daughter Ann who, by this time, was living in Whitechapel. It is not clear why John and his wife lived apart in the later years of his life, but perhaps Mary was unwilling to make the arduous journey to Germantown leaving behind her two grownup daughters, the elder of whom appears to have been physically disabled in some way.

⁵⁸⁸ Archive of the Friends' Meeting House, Saffron Walden, Shelf 3, case F, F4, F10, F9.

⁵⁸⁹ Arthur Raistrick, *Quakers in Science and Industry* (New York, 1968), pp. 34, 45, 355. The Gibson family of Saffron Walden had marriage links with the Atkinson family of Yorkshire, possibly through the same business links which had furnished Atkinson Francis Gibson with an apprenticeship with the Fairbanks firm of land surveyors in Sheffield.

The Quaker network was wide ranging compared with that of many artisans. The wider geographical horizons of many Quaker artisans are also evident in their marriage patterns. Quakers were expected to marry a fellow Friend of similar social and financial standing and many found partners through their travels, preaching, trading and attendance at quarterly and annual meetings.⁵⁹⁰ Records of marriages contracted are to be found in the Meeting House Archive⁵⁹¹ but the extent of the Quaker network of a single unmarried Walden Quaker woman can be assessed from another source, Mary Fullbig's visitors' book.⁵⁹² Mary was the step-daughter of the much-travelled John Farmer and this may explain her visitors from some of the more far-flung places recorded. Mary seems to have been disabled in some way and probably relied on her visitors to keep her abreast of what was going on in the world outside Saffron Walden. She kept her book from 1731 to 1758, but it falls into two parts. Between 1731 and 1740 the journal is kept meticulously, after this less so.

In the first part of her journal Mary received four visitors from America, three women from Pennsylvania,⁵⁹³ and a man from New England, as well as an unnamed visitor from Holland.⁵⁹⁴ Within England her visitors came from places as far afield as Cumberland, Hampshire, Northumberland and Yorkshire. The greatest number came from Hertfordshire, and from Royston in particular, but visitors from London were also very common. John Crackingthorp of Royston⁵⁹⁵ is recorded as having visited eleven times in this period of time. These visitors came to Walden for a variety of purposes, for example John Cranwell of Earith visited three times in a matter of weeks in 1738. Perhaps this was about the time that he married Hannah Burgis of Saffron Walden and Mary Fullbig had been involved in the arrangements? Some other visitors probably were relations and yet others travelling in the ministry. The latter explanation seems the most plausible for visitors from very far afield.

⁵⁹⁰ Gillian Cookson, 'Quaker networks and the industrial development of Darlington, 1780-1870' in *Industrial Clusters and Regional Business Networks in England, 1750-1970* ed. J.F. Wilson and A. Popp (Aldershot, 2003), pp.153-177

⁵⁹¹ Archive of the Friends' Meeting House, Saffron Walden, Shelf 3, Case J Marriages, consent of parents and meeting

⁵⁹² Archive of the Friends' Meeting House, Saffron Walden, Shelf 3, Case L. Mary Fullbig's book

⁵⁹³ They were travelling in the ministry, that is preaching, as Mary's mother had also done.

⁵⁹⁴ Mary's stepfather, John Farmer, had visited America twice and her mother had visited Holland.

⁵⁹⁵ ERO., T/A 904/1 Quaker Digest of Essex Marriages, John Cranwell and Hannah Burgis. The will of John Cranwell of Earith is dated 1754 (Cambridgeshire Record Office, Huntingdon, 18/1/10)

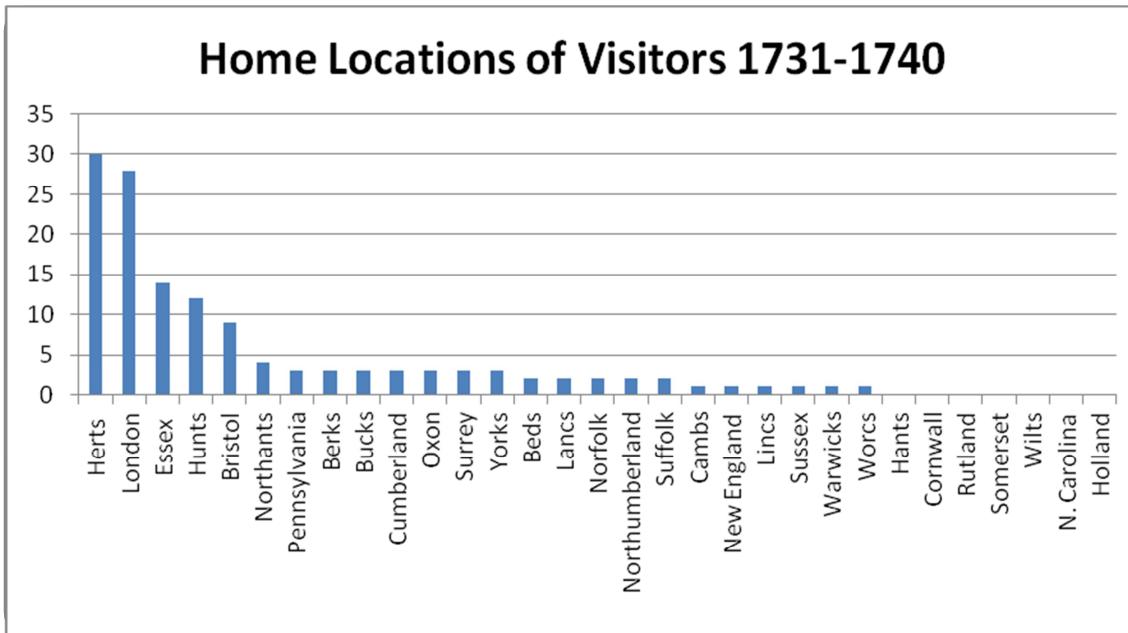


Chart 10: Home Locations recorded in Mary Fullbig's Visitors' Book, 1731-1740
Source: Archive of the Friends' Meeting House, Saffron Walden, Shelf 3, Case L, Mary Fullbig's book

Although Mary continued to record her visitors, in the period 1741 until 1758 her recording is less meticulous, although there is no clear reason for this change. Between 1741 and 1758 she received another seven visitors from America. Most of these visitors came from Pennsylvania, the state in which her step-father had settled, but Thomas Nicholson came from North Carolina, a state John Farmer had visited earlier in his travels. Visitors continued to come from all over England, from within Essex and as far away as Cornwall and Wiltshire, but the number of visitors from London dropped considerably as did those from Essex and Hertfordshire. It is possible that Mary decided to concentrate on recording visitors from further afield and also that some of her earlier visitors from nearby had died.

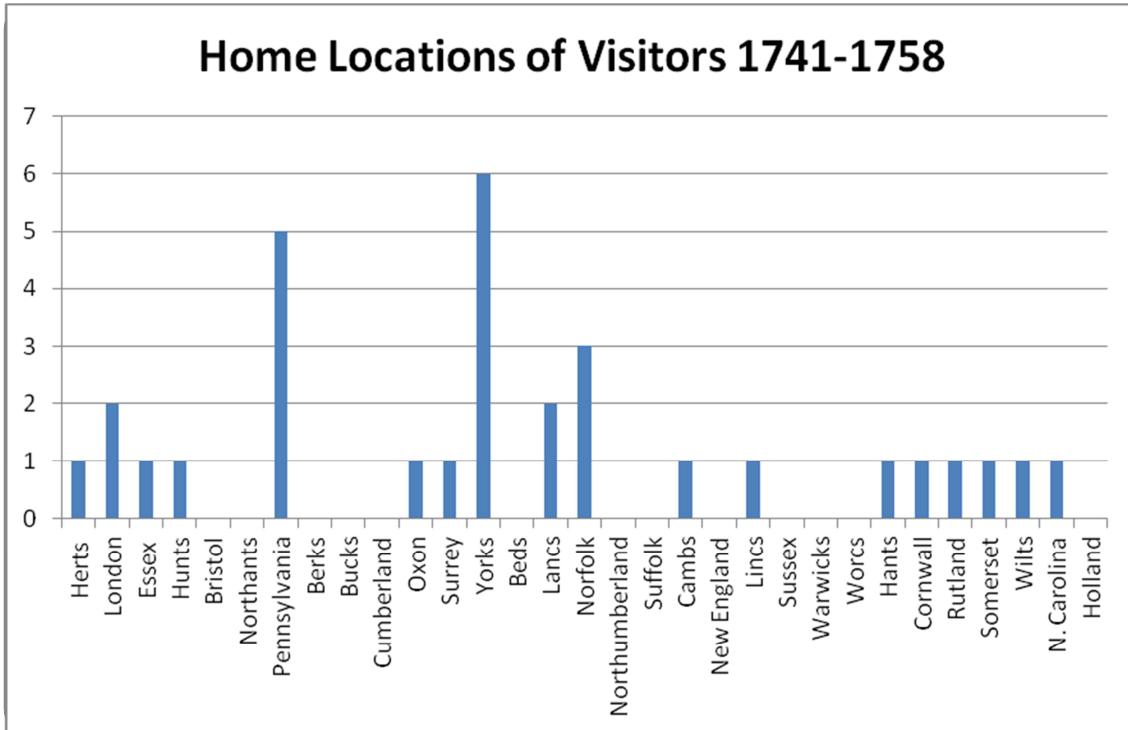


Chart 11: Home Locations recorded in Mary Fullbig's Visitors' Book, 1741-1758
Source: Archive of the Friends' Meeting House, Saffron Walden, Shelf 3, Case L, Mary Fullbig's book

Some of Mary's visitors over the life of the journal are recorded several times. For example members of the Adkison (Atkinson) family from Yorkshire visited in 1733, 1738 and 1757.⁵⁹⁶ Other visitors are recorded only once and it seems likely that these were passing itinerant Quaker preachers who were offered hospitality on their visits to Walden. Where only one or two people came from any given county, it is likely that they too were travelling preachers rather than part of Mary's network of relatives and social contacts. The number of visitors from the American states is somewhat surprising when it is considered the distances these people, some of them women, had travelled. In 1745, for example, Elizabeth Shipley and Hester White, both from Wilmington, Pennsylvania, visited. They were, presumably travelling together, as were Mary Pennell and Ann Roberts in 1733. Of Mary's American visitors, five out of eleven were women.

It is not possible to identify the occupations of Mary's visitors with any degree of precision, but since John Farmer and William Impey were both artisans, it seems likely that some, at least, of her visitors were also artisans.

⁵⁹⁶ The leading Walden Quaker family of Gibson married into the Yorkshire Quaker family of Atkinson, so visits to the town by relations might be expected. It is possible that Atkinson Francis Gibson met his future wife whilst serving his apprenticeship in Sheffield and attending the Balby Meeting.

So it can be seen that in terms of the mobility among the artisans of Saffron Walden in the eighteenth century, there was considerable fractionalism as a result of the differing religious persuasion of the people concerned. This fractionalism was not only evident in terms of religion as such. In the case of the Quakers in particular, the practices of this religious community also had the effect of providing them with a very different set of geographical horizons compared with non-Quaker artisans. It is clear from the preceding evidence that some members of the Society of Friends at least were far better travelled than their fellow dissenters or than members of the established church. The nature of their faith was responsible for this desire and need to move around the country, and, as has been shown, this mobility was not limited to the male members of the denomination.

v. ***Conclusion***

It would seem, then, that mobility, in all its various guises, was one of the factors which contributed to the fractionalism within the artisan social segment in eighteenth-century Saffron Walden.

Geographical mobility—resulting from a variety of causes—had an impact on fractionalism within the artisan segment of eighteenth century Saffron Walden society. For those born into the artisan segment, apprenticeship was the expectation for boys, and some girls, but as discussed above not all artisans' children could expect to be apprenticed in the same way or in the same sort of locations.⁵⁹⁷ Parish boys tended to sent away from their home parish—some to nearby parishes, others further afield—to where a master who would accept them could be found. The aim was to prevent them being a further drain on the parish poor rates through the provision of outdoor relief or accommodation in the workhouse since under the Act of Settlement of 1691, the first forty days served by an apprentice gained them settlement in the parish where this time was served.⁵⁹⁸

Boys from the upper tiers of the artisan segment, the sons of more affluent retailers and those of professional men and the lesser gentry, were also likely to be placed apprentice at some distance from home. They, however, were more likely to be apprenticed to masters in larger provincial towns and in London. In

⁵⁹⁷ See 'Geographical mobility – the case of the apprentices' p. 115

⁵⁹⁸ Bridget Hill, *Women, work and sexual politics in eighteenth century England* (London, 1994), p.87

London they could expect their masters to be members of the more respectable London Livery Companies.⁵⁹⁹

Those boys who were placed apprentice under the auspices of one of the town's charitable schemes might find themselves sent some distance from home – to London or beyond – but equally they might be placed with a master in a neighbouring village or in Saffron Walden itself. Their placements were greatly influenced by the interpersonal links that were enjoyed by the town's hierarchy – the members of the corporation and the trustees of the various charities. It is fair to say that some, at least, of these links were cases where the advantages deriving from the favour of a charity apprenticeship early in life was repaid by the acceptance of similar charity apprentices once a business had been established.⁶⁰⁰ There seems to have been a sense of personal dependence on and gratitude to the charity which, it was felt, should be repaid.

The laws of settlement on the one hand and a desire for social improvement on the other also resulted in geographic mobility within the artisan segment.⁶⁰¹ As we have seen above⁶⁰² it would appear that the lower part of the artisan segment – those more likely to become reliant on parish charity at some point during their lives – were also most likely to fall foul of the laws of settlement. These people might be subject to examination and forcible return to their parish of settlement. Their fortunes were in decline. Those whose fortunes were in the ascendant might choose to seek better employment opportunities elsewhere. They might arrive armed with a settlement certificate from the home parish which promised to pay any costs that they might incur in the new parish.⁶⁰³ Others were welcomed by relatives or employers who would enter into a bond on their behalf to pay any expenses incurred.⁶⁰⁴ The most fortunate were able to rent or buy property which was subject to parish rates and thus circumvent the laws of settlement altogether. This latter group were more likely to be professional men or the more highly skilled artisans. There is less systematic evidence of their

⁵⁹⁹ D.F. McKenzie (ed.), *Stationers' Company Apprentices 1701-1800* (Oxford, 1978). For example five boys were apprenticed to members of the Stationers Company between 1702 and 1783.

⁶⁰⁰ ERO., D/B 2/CHR1/5 Bromfield's Charity. In 1732 William Archer was apprenticed by Bromfield's Charity to George Warren, a barber and peruke maker, of St. Olive's, Southwark. In 1747 one William Archer, barber and peruke maker of Lambeth, Surrey, accepted William Cater as an apprentice via Bromfield's Charity. Eight years later in 1755 he took Robert Daniel as an apprentice under the same scheme.

⁶⁰¹ See above 'Geographical mobility – artisans and settlement' p.135

⁶⁰² Geographical mobility – artisans and settlement

⁶⁰³ See above p.136 , the case of Thomas House

⁶⁰⁴ See above p. 138, the case of John Churchman

moves but references may sometimes be found in property deeds when they purchased property in Saffron Walden or took out mortgages.⁶⁰⁵

There was one further group which might choose to change their place of settlement in the furtherance of their careers. These were members of religious groups moving from one community to another as was the case with members of the Society of Friends.⁶⁰⁶ Quakers preferred to apprentice their sons to other members of the Society, and, as mentioned above, they also married within the Society or risked expulsion for ‘marrying out’.⁶⁰⁷ Saffron Walden, it might be claimed, served as a magnet for mobile members of the Society of Friends, for they knew that they would be well-received if furnished with the appropriate certificate from their previous meeting and might encounter old friends previously met at Annual Meetings, on preaching tours or through business.

Geographical mobility was not, however, the only cause of fractionalism within the artisan segment of Walden society. The stage reached within his life course that an artisan occupied might also affect his social position within the community. How this operated in the case of apprenticeship has been summarised above. But mid-life and old age also saw considerable variation in the position a man occupied within the social order among artisans.

The middle years of his career might be considered those in which a man was most secure in his standing in the community, both in the larger social order, but more particularly within the social segment composed of his fellow artisans. In what was, in many ways, a face-to-face society, contemporaries would have been very conscious of their relative fortunes over their near parallel life courses. In an ideal scenario he should have become an independent master who was himself training apprentices and employing journeymen and occupying a position within the organisational hierarchy of the community, perhaps as an overseer of the poor or as a churchwarden. Some men far exceeded this. Artisans such as maltsters, shoemakers and bakers became mayors of the town and therefore justices of the peace. They deemed themselves to have become gentlemen and were seen as such by their fellow townsmen. Others, less fortunate, began to slide towards pauperdom as businesses failed and illness struck.⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰⁵ Release and conveyance of a property in Market End between Mr William Mapletoft, gentleman, and Richard Burrows, cabinet maker, 3rd. July, 1787 and a mortgage between Richard Burrows and Samuel Cole, maltster, in the sum of £300, 4th. July, 1787. MSS *penes me*.

⁶⁰⁶ See above ‘Religious fractionalism and mobility’ p. 151

⁶⁰⁷ See above ‘Religious fractionalism and mobility’

⁶⁰⁸ See above ‘Life course – mobility among artisans’ p.142

Fractionalism continued into old age. Some artisans had become wealthy and were able to live comfortably when too old to work; others were reliant on their families or on charity. It is in the group in receipt of charity that the extent of fractionalism is most clear.⁶⁰⁹ Some were in receipt of patronage from the ruling oligarchy of the town and found themselves comfortably accommodated in the town's almshouse; others were forced to seek support from the overseers of the poor, either in the form of weekly outdoor relief or through admission to the town's workhouse. It was this latter group who suffered the ignominy of being recorded as paupers in the burial registers.

It is interesting to consider at this point whether the circumstances mentioned above reflect divergent life-course paths that originated in a relatively flat original playing field or whether the divergent outcomes of these life-courses were already inscribed in the opportunities that were available to a child as a result of the family into which he was born. Certainly those children born into the more affluent Saffron Walden families had a better chance of being apprenticed to a trade which would allow them to generate the sort of income necessary for a comfortable life style and which would allow them to move swiftly up the town hierarchy. For example in 1732 Alexander Ingrey, the son of Thomas Ingrey—an affluent maltster who twice served as mayor as well as being Master of the Almshouse—was apprenticed in the sum of £60 to Thomas Browne, a Saffron Walden apothecary who also served as mayor.⁶¹⁰ Sadly there are no further records of Alexander which would permit us to see if his privileged background led to a successful career and civic office other than the record of his interment in the parish church in 1754 with the title of 'Gent'.⁶¹¹ However the records also show examples of boys from more straitened circumstances who did well and climbed the greasy pole of civic power. Butchers, bakers and fellmongers are to be found among the Mayors of Walden as well as grocers, surgeons and cabinet makers. However none of these appear to have started their working lives as charity apprentices even if their chosen careers did involve trades in which their hands got dirty! Perhaps it is fairest to say that birth could set a boy upon the path to wealth and social standing, but personal attributes also had a major part to play in both career and civic standing as did his ability to respond to the emergent opportunities in the wider economy. This was a distinctive sociological characteristic of this period and place although we should not assume that it is true of all periods.

⁶⁰⁹ See above 'Life course – mobility among artisans'

⁶¹⁰ ERO, T/Z 393/3 Index to Apprentices 1710-1762.

⁶¹¹ ERO, D/P 192/1/5/3 Saffron Walden Parish registers, Burials.

It can be seen, then, that mobility could be prompted by motives on the part of individuals that were primarily economic, social or religious in nature. In each case it caused divisions within the artisan segment, between those who had and those who had not; between those who belonged to a particular denomination and those who did not. Within the artisanal segment which had distinct and discernable commonalities as argued above,⁶¹² each sub-group of artisans had different expectations of what life might bring them and of what status they might attain; in effect each group therefore experienced a different way of life. Mobility, it is true to say, was driven by the macro-economic changes that were taking place in the eighteenth century and the way in which these intersected with the life-courses of numerous individuals. It depended on the contemporary reading of these changing circumstances and an individual's ability to respond positively to them. Moreover, given the nature of the records, often we can only just perceive the main contours of the nuanced differences that would have been clear to contemporaries. In turn these perceived differences must have helped to shape different expectations among artisans.

Furthermore, the ability to grasp the opportunities or to avoid the threats posed by macro-economic circumstances must have depended on the perspectives available to individuals and to groups. The evidence provided here suggests that these could have been substantially different among the various elements that constituted the artisan segment of society.

Whatever the cause for the mobility it resulted in an artisan segment that was progressively less and less homogeneous over time. As we have seen above, members of the artisan segment might be on the verge of pauperdom or they might have achieved the appellation of 'gentleman'. They might be self-employed master craftsmen working with a small team of apprentices and journeymen. Other artisans might be part of a 'process economy'—involving increasingly fragmented stages of production—either as a craftsman working for a large scale employer or, in a very few cases, the proto-industrialist himself. They might even range across the various sublevels between pauperdom and wealth at different points in the course of their lives. They might be members of the established church, the dissenting congregations or the Society of Friends. Their religious affiliation might also have changed in the course of their lives. But quite evidently mobility was a distinctive factor in the differentiation of the artisan segment of society.

⁶¹² See above p.7.

Chapter 6

Economic fractionalism in the artisan segment in Saffron Walden in the eighteenth century

Any discussion of economic fractionalism within the artisan segment of eighteenth century Saffron Walden society begs a number of questions. The first, and overarching question, enquires whether economic fractionalism occurred in a small market town. Subsequent questions are concerned with whether any such fractionalism was determined by the trade or craft that a man followed; the extent to which personal ability was influential; and the influence of other factors such as religious persuasion.

The first question: ‘Did economic fractionalism occur within the artisan segment of Saffron Walden in the eighteenth century?’ is, perhaps, the most easy to address. Contemporary commentators saw their society as a stratified one.⁶¹³ Defoe, for example, in 1709, considered that most artisans belonged in his fourth degree of society: ‘*The working Trades, who labour hard but feel no want*’, although some might have aspired to membership of the third category: *The middle Sort, who live well*’ and others might have sunk into the sixth category: ‘*The Poor that fare hard*’.⁶¹⁴ Some fifty years later in 1756, Joseph Massie’s more complex categorisation developed to help ascertain the taxes that any given family might be expected to pay, placed artisans into the fifth and sixth of his categories.⁶¹⁵ These contemporary observations suggest that there was a considerable variation in the earning potential of different trades and crafts and this will be considered at greater length below. Massie’s work, which quantifies the incomes which tradesmen in the different categories could expect to earn, suggests that there was, without doubt, economic fractionalism at large among eighteenth century artisans be they resident in London, or one of the other main provincial towns, or in small market towns such as Saffron Walden.

⁶¹³ See above Chapter on Artisans and Class

⁶¹⁴ Daniel Defoe, *A Review of the British Nation*, vol. 6, no. 36, (25 June 1709)

⁶¹⁵ Joseph Massie, *Calculations of taxes for a family of each rank, degree or class: for one year* (London, 1756), see above p.59 for further details.

I

Was economic fractionalism within the artisan segment of Saffron Walden society in the eighteenth century determined by the trade or craft which an artisan followed?

Commentators such as Massie and Josiah Tucker⁶¹⁶ indicate that there was a considerable variation in the income and status which an artisan could hope derive from his work. Indeed Tucker goes so far as to say that anyone could engage in trade without bringing their family into disrepute and no-one need leave off trade in order to be respected as a gentleman. It is, of course, necessary at this point to make it clear that the men to whom Tucker was referring and the tradesmen in Massie's fifth category, those in London and the Country earning between £40 and £300 a year, were very much the exceptions rather than the rule in small market towns such as Saffron Walden. However Campbell in his 'The London Tradesman' of 1747⁶¹⁷ makes very clear the sort of remuneration that different trades would bring based on the cost of placing a boy apprentice and the sums deemed necessary to set up as a master. Although this book was designed for those aiming to enter the London market, with some adjustment it gives a good indication of what might have been the case in a town such as Saffron Walden. Thus a cabinet maker might expect to have to find somewhere between £200 and £2,000 to set up as an independent master craftsman, the former figure being more likely in a town such as Walden. Campbell comments that 'A Master Cabinet-Maker is a very profitable Trade; especially, if he works for and serves the Quality himself; but if he must serve them through the Chanel of the Upholder, his Profits are not very considerable.'⁶¹⁸ In Walden it is likely that a cabinet maker such as Richard Burrows would have worked for himself.

A shoemaker, on the other hand, required between £100 and £500 to set himself up as an independent master craftsman. Campbell comments that those who specialised in women's shoes could expect a better return and that many country shoemakers supplied the 'Sale-Shops' in London because the cost of their labour was so much lower.⁶¹⁹ It would be interesting to speculate how many of Walden's many shoemakers were involved in such a way, and were engaged in a putting out system akin to that practised by clothiers in the New Drapery centres of Bocking and Braintree.⁶²⁰ Using the apprenticeship records of Bromfield's

⁶¹⁶ Josiah Tucker, *A brief essay on the advantages and disadvantages which respectively attend France and Great Britain* (London, 1750).

⁶¹⁷ R. Campbell, *The London Tradesman* (London, 1747)

⁶¹⁸ R. Campbell, *The London Tradesman*, p.171

⁶¹⁹ R. Campbell, *The London Tradesman*, p.219

⁶²⁰ ERO, T/Z 27, History of the Bocking Cloth Industry, p. 54, suggests that the Savill family had 743 pairs of cards for carding wool in the houses of spinners in 1776 and by 1780 employed 145 weavers.

Charity as a source it would appear that in the first quarter of the eighteenth century seven shoemakers accepted apprentices from the charity in Walden, in the second quarter there were five, in the third quarter seven and in the final quarter nine.⁶²¹ Some of these shoemakers such as the Barron and Catlin families accepted more than one apprentice, perhaps suggesting that they were operating on a somewhat larger scale. There is no evidence available to suggest it, but perhaps they were working as middle men for some of the London 'Sale-Shops' mentioned by Campbell.

Another way of considering whether or not economic fractionalism existed between different trades and crafts in Saffron Walden in the eighteenth century is by a consideration of the wills which artisans left. It should be noted at the outset that only some artisans left wills, others had no assets to leave which merited the production of will and the executing of it after the death of the testator. Nevertheless a considerable number of wills do exist for artisans in the eighteenth century.

These wills fall into two groups: those granted probate in one of the local archdeaconry courts and those where probate was granted by the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. Consistory Court wills were not included due to the small number of examples dating from the period under consideration. The distinction between these two groups is informative in itself. If the property was all within one archdeaconry then the will was proved in that Archdeaconry court. If the property was to be found in more than one archdeaconry but all within one diocese, then the will was proved in the Consistory Court of that diocese. If the goods were in more than one diocese and valued at more than £5, then the will had to be proved in the Archbishop's prerogative court which for Saffron Walden was the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.⁶²² Essentially wills were proved at the most local court subject to their value.

Of 329 wills proved in the local archdeaconry courts, those of the archdeaconries of Colchester and Middlesex, 192 can be identified as those of artisans and traders. A further eight wills are those of women who appear, from their wills, to have been following a craft or running a business. The Prerogative Court of Canterbury saw at least another 95 wills of artisans proved between 1700 and 1850. It is difficult to be precise about the number of wills of artisans proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury since although most men chose to retain

⁶²¹ ERO, D/B 2/CHR1/5, Apprenticeship Indentures of Bromfield's Charity

⁶²² <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentsonline/wills.asp> consulted on 26.1.2010

their trade appellation, others preferred to term themselves gentleman in their wills.⁶²³

In order to assess the extent to which wills can provide a source of evidence of economic fractionalism within the artisan segment of eighteenth century Saffron Walden society, samples of the wills were analysed. The wills of various different types of artisan were studied with the aim of establishing whether economic fractionalism existed not only between, but also within different trades.

The wills of seven different groups of artisans will be considered. The groups have been chosen to provide a cross section of artisanal trades. Some trades were more highly valued and respected than others as evidenced by the premiums paid to place boys apprentice, others were of a lower status and were more likely to be in receipt of charity apprentices. The groups chosen are: bakers, cabinet makers, clock and watchmakers, cloth makers (weavers and woolcombers), cordwainers, maltsters and metalworkers. Cordwainers required a relatively low level of capital to set up in business and were often targeted to receive charity and parish apprentices at low levels of premium. Cabinet makers and clock and watchmakers required a higher level of skill and commanded higher apprenticeship premiums. Master craftsmen in these latter trades produced luxury goods commanding high prices. Bakers and metalworkers occupied a middle position in any ranking of trades, providing essential goods to their community. Cloth workers and maltsters were chosen because these two trades were crucial to the economic life of Saffron Walden at different points in the eighteenth century, the cloth workers in the earlier part of the century, the maltsters in the mid to later eighteenth century.

The first part of the analysis considers what differences, if any, in the economic status of artisans can be identified from their wills. The second stage considers if any differences can be seen within the wills of a single trade. At all times it must be borne in mind that, as mentioned above, the wills do not represent a true cross section across any trade since many artisans did not make wills because they had nothing of value to bequeath. We will consider the characteristics of each group individually before making overall comparisons.

⁶²³ It seems that it was permissible to use the appellation of gentleman provided a man's peers accepted the usage.

i. The Cordwainers

The wills of eleven cordwainers, or shoemakers, have been identified in the local and national archives. The dates at which the wills were made range from 1724 to 1826. Wills dating from the early nineteenth century have been included since it is reasonable to presume that these men began their working life in the eighteenth century. The wills were proved between 1725 and 1830. Of the set of eleven wills, nine were proved in the local archdeaconry courts and two in the Prerogative Court at Canterbury.

Because these wills were made at all, it seems likely that in most cases some property was involved. This is the case in ten of the wills. In some only a mention of property is made, in others the type: freehold, copyhold or leasehold, and the location of the property is given. Six of the wills give the location of the property and they reveal a scatter throughout the town: two references to Cuckingstool End and two to Castle Street, then Gold Street, High Street, Bridge end and Market end.

Other references to property show that some of the cordwainers also held areas of agricultural land in the vicinity of the town. George Pettitt, Thomas Partridge and Nathaniel Catlin all thought it important to detail the acres of land that they owned.

Details of legacies made show that sums between one shilling and a total of £125 were deemed worthy of mention. Other details included specified who should receive the all-important tools of the trade, wearing apparel, furnishings and household goods and, in one case, two brass kettles.

ii. Bakers' Wills

Nine wills of bakers have been identified. Six were proved locally and three in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. The group of bakers' wills is unusual in that it contains the will of a woman, Ruth Rusted, a widow, who was trading as a baker. The dates the wills were made range from 1733 to 1832. They were proved between 1733/4 and 1837.

Seven of the nine wills make reference to property. Most of the property is in the Saffron Walden area: Gold Street, Cuckingstool End and Castle Street are mentioned as locations. Other references do not mention the location within the town, but reference is made to two baking offices, a malting office and water mill. The bakers also had property in locations beyond Walden to bequeath. John Button makes reference to property in Hadstock, Gt Chesterford, Haverhill

and Shudy Camps as well as in Walden;⁶²⁴ whilst William Pamplin leaves property in Fordham and Soham, both in Cambridgeshire.⁶²⁵ Only John Edwards makes any reference to land. He leaves two acres of arable land and some farming goods.⁶²⁶

Six of the wills make specific reference to legacies to be paid, ranging from £31.1s to £210 and one makes reference to money owed. References are made to the disposition of stock-in-trade, in one case mentioning that the goods are in his daughter Rachel's shop, interesting evidence of the role of women in trade at this period.⁶²⁷ Ruth Rusted leaves her baking equipment to her unmarried daughter, presumably to provide her with a means of livelihood.⁶²⁸ Other references are made to household goods and furniture, wearing apparel and a watch.

iii. Metalworkers' Wills

This category brings together the wills of blacksmiths, braziers and tinmen. Eight wills have been identified, five proved locally and three in the Prerogative Court at Canterbury. The wills were made between 1712 and 1827 and proved between from 1713 and 1839.

Seven of the eight wills make reference to property. Much of the property is located in Walden. References are made generally to property in Walden, but specific reference is made to property in Hill Street, Abbey Lane and the Butter Market. There is also reference to property in Little Walden, Langley, Duddenhoe End, Wethersfield, Stirbitch Fair Field, Cambridge;⁶²⁹ and the Minories in London. The types of property mentioned include houses, two inns: the Bell and the White Horse, a nail warehouse, ironmonger's and smith's workshops and a foundry. There is one specific reference to land.

Legacies range from forty-shillings to over £1,000. Specific items mentioned in the wills include tools and stock-in-trade, furniture and a silver bowl.

⁶²⁴ TNA, Prob 11/791, the will of John Button

⁶²⁵ TNA, Prob 11/747, the will of William Pamplin

⁶²⁶ TNA, Prob 11/1232, the will of John Edwards

⁶²⁷ ERO, 55 CR 17, the will of Abraham Cornell, proved 1767

⁶²⁸ ERO, 347 CR 18, the will of Ruth Rusted, proved 1790

⁶²⁹ Stirbitch or Stourbridge Fair Field was the location of the annual Stourbridge Fair which attracted tradesmen from all over England as well as from overseas. The property was probably a booth let to another tradesman visiting the fair.

iv. Clock and watchmakers' wills

Six wills of clock and watchmakers with links to Saffron Walden have been identified. Of these, one is, perhaps, somewhat anomalous. The will of William Rogers gives his place of residence as Saffron Walden and his status as gentleman, but it gives his previous address as Saint John Square, Clerkenwell, Middlesex and his trade as watchmaker. It seems likely that he was the brother of David Rogers, a Saffron Walden watchmaker who predeceased him. There is no record of the birth of either William or David Rogers in the Saffron Walden registers so it is not possible to say whether Saffron Walden was their place of origin or whether trade brought David to Saffron Walden and William followed on his retirement.⁶³⁰

Of the six wills, two were proved locally and four at the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. The wills date from 1729 to 1835. Probate ranges from 1730 to 1838. Four of the six wills mention property, but only the two listing property outside Walden given a location: Ashdon and Holborn in London.

Legacies range in value from 6 guineas to £100. Possessions specifically mentioned as bequests include stock-in-trade and household effects and, in the case of John Barton, brewing equipment.

v. Cabinet makers' Wills

Only three wills of cabinet makers have been identified, and of these, one, Richard Burrows has adopted the status of gentleman in his will.⁶³¹ All three wills were proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. They were written between 1731 and 1832 and probate was granted between 1732 and 1833.

All three wills make mention of property. Richard Burrows requests that his unspecified property should be sold to meet his debts and so forth. It is known that he possessed a property in King Street or Market End Street in Saffron Walden⁶³² in the course of his life but he may have disposed of this property before writing his will. Samuel Burgis, who purchased his freedom of the town in 1725/6 for 42 shillings,⁶³³ was probably an incomer to the town. The price of his freedom suggests that it was purchased by redemption, i.e. he had not served

⁶³⁰ TNA Prob11/1841 Will of William Rogers. A bequest is made to the Abbey Lane Sunday School suggesting that the Rogers brothers were nonconformists.

⁶³¹ TNA Prob 11/1817, the will of Richard Burrows. Richard Burrows was mayor of Saffron Walden in 1796. He and his peers would have credited him with the status of gentleman from this point forward although his trade was that of cabinet maker.

⁶³² Deeds of property, personal collection.

⁶³³ Saffron Walden Museum 41507, Freemen

his apprenticeship in the town and nor was his father a freeman of the town. His will shows property held in the Spitalfields area of London. John Barham held property at Holt in Norfolk as well as probably property in Saffron Walden.

Samuel Burgis' will shows legacies totally £120 whilst Richard Burrows made specific reference to silver, plate, china, pictures and beer and liquor among his household effects.

vi. Cloth workers' Wills

Fifteen wills of artisans involved in cloth making have been identified, as well as three wills from the nearby hamlet of Audley End. The artisans involved in cloth making included weavers, sometimes called websters, woolcombers and woolstaplers. One was a woman, Frances Doughty, a widow, and weaver of swaddling bands. Of the fifteen wills, eight were proved locally and seven in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. They were written between 1711 and 1784 and proved between 1714 and 1785.

All of the wills make reference to property, but some are more specific than others. Within Saffron Walden two properties are mentioned by name: The Pinnacles and Black Swan; the other locations mentioned are: Castle Street, High Street, Cuckingstool End, Long Lane and the Butter Market. Castle Street is the location most frequently mentioned. Outside Walden property is mentioned in Littlebury, Sewer's End, Newport and, most surprisingly, Basseterre in the island of St. Christopher.⁶³⁴ The properties mentioned included residential property, a shop, business premises, a malting and parcels of land.

Legacies left by artisans working in the cloth trade ranged from the one shilling left by Robert Breens⁶³⁵ to his brother Thomas in 1749 to legacies of more than £1,200 left by John Bunyard in 1761. John Bunyard expected his legacies to be paid out of his holding of £2,100 worth of stock in the South Sea Company.⁶³⁶ Other artisans left the tools of their trade such as a pair of blades, a winding wheel, a loom, warping bars and a skillet; as well as household goods, stock-in-trade, plate and wearing apparel.

⁶³⁴ Basseterre is one of the oldest towns in the eastern Caribbean. Today the island of St. Christopher is known as St. Kitts. John Bunyard, in whose will the property is mentioned, was not the only Walden man with property in the Caribbean. Thomas Mead, who described himself as a planter of the island of Jamaica but now residing in the Saffron Walden, died in 1781, some twenty years after John Bunyard.

⁶³⁵ ERO, 317 CR 15, will of Robert Breens, 1749

⁶³⁶ TNA, Prob 11/817, will of John Bunyard, 1761

vii. Maltsters' Wills

Maltsters' wills constitute the largest group in the sample. Although malting grew in importance towards the latter part of the eighteenth century, it had been an industry of some importance in Saffron Walden from before the beginning of the century. Twenty-two wills of maltsters have been identified. Ten were proved in the local archdeaconry court and twelve in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. The wills were made between 1702 and 1837 and proved between 1703 and 1837.

Only two wills make no reference to property of any kind. Some wills make general reference to property in Saffron Walden, but others are more precise. References are made to property in Castle Street, Gold Street, Bayleys Lane, Cuckingstool End Street, Market End Street and the Market Place. Some of the properties are residential but others are described as malting offices. There are also references to land. Beyond Saffron Walden references are made to properties in surrounding villages such as Debden, Widdington, Wenden, Newport, Great Chesterford and Littlebury, and further afield in Essex in Rochford. Beyond Essex there are references to property in Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire.

Legacies left by maltsters range from £5 to well over £4,350. As well as the legacies, specific bequests include references to furniture and household goods, sometimes in considerable detail, personal property such as wearing apparel and gold rings, china, plate, pictures and chap books, carriages and stock-in-trade. Two slightly more unusual bequests were of ten quarters of malt left to his wife by Thomas Goodwin⁶³⁷ and twenty dozen bread left to the poor of Walden by Edward Allcraft in 1732.⁶³⁸

* * *

The wills of the seven sample groups of artisans offer possibilities for comparison and contrast. For example it is possible to compare the average sums of legacies left by the different trades, although it has not always been possible to assess precisely the legacies left in individual wills.

⁶³⁷ ERO, 214 CR 12, will of Thomas Goodwin, 1711

⁶³⁸ ERO, 366 CR 14, will of Edward Allcraft, 1732

Type of artisan	Number of Wills	Average size of legacies
Cordwainers	11	£35.29
Clock and watchmakers	6	£36.22
Cabinet makers	3	£40.00
Bakers	9	£67.89
Cloth makers	15	£177.23
Metal workers	8	£194.63
Maltsters	22	£502.33

Table 9: Average legacies left by different artisanal groups based on locally proved wills and wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury

It can be seen that the legacies left by maltsters had by far the highest average and those of the cordwainers the lowest. The sample size for cabinet makers is too small to be particularly reliable, especially since only one of the cabinet makers' wills makes mention of monetary bequests. Even so, it is clear that there was a significant difference between the average legacies left by cordwainers and maltsters. Differences in properties left can be seen in the tables for the wills of the different artisanal groups (See Appendix 1), but the different trades can be compared by examining the percentage of each group which left no property and the percentage of each group with specific reference to the location of property.

Type of artisan	Percentage leaving property	Percentage with reference to the specific location of property
Cordwainers	91%	45%
Clock and watchmakers	67%	33%
Cabinet makers	100%	67%
Bakers	78%	67%
Cloth makers	87.5%	75%
Metal workers	100%	73%
Maltsters	91%	82%

Table 10: Percentages of different artisanal groups making reference to property in their wills. (Based on locally proved wills and those proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury)

A further comparison which can be made between the seven sample groups is not directly related to their economic position, but may have some bearing on their degree of success. This comparison is of the percentage of each group able to sign their names on their wills. It should be borne in mind that the sample group does not cover all workers in a particular trade, only those with property of some kind to leave. If it were possible to include all workers in a trade, the results for literacy might be different.

Type of artisan	Percentage of sample able to sign their name
Cordwainers	72%
Clock and watchmakers	100%
Cabinet makers	100%
Bakers	100%
Cloth makers	73%
Metal workers	75%
Maltsters	86%

Table 11: Percentages of each sample group able to sign their name on their will. (Based on locally proved wills and wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury)

It can be seen, then, that the trade to which a boy was apprenticed could have a significant impact on the degree of economic success that he experienced in the course of his working life. A cordwainer was unlikely to have as much property or money to leave at the end of his working life as a maltster. Indeed many cordwainers would have had no reason to leave a will at all. It now remains to be seen as to whether it was the trade alone which determined economic success or failure, or whether the personal qualities of the man concerned also had a role to play.

II

Was economic fractionalism within the artisan segment of Saffron Walden society in the eighteenth century determined by the personal qualities of the artisan concerned?

In the section above the role of the trade followed has been discussed as a possible cause of economic fractionalism within the artisan sector of society in eighteenth century Saffron Walden. It is now important to consider whether there was also economic fractionalism within any given craft.

As seen above the craft which a man followed was likely to have some impact on his economic success or failure within his working life, with those trades to

which charity and parish boys were apprenticed being less likely to provide a comfortable lifestyle. However the lists of mayors and aldermen of eighteenth century Saffron Walden suggest that it was possible for men from humble beginnings to climb the greasy pole of the corporation's hierarchy. But this was not possible without, at least, a degree of financial security. Dinners had to be attended, toasts drunk and suitable clothing worn. All these bore a cost! Butchers, bakers, weavers, maltsters and at least one shoemaker make an appearance in the list of mayors in the company of apothecaries, lawyers, surgeons, grocers and drapers.⁶³⁹ This suggests that even within the more humble trades it was possible to make a successful living through hard work and talent.

The wills of the cordwainers examined above do not include the will of Robert Catlin the shoemaker who was mayor of Walden in 1800, but they do show a considerable variation in the economic success of those men who thought it necessary to make a will. The sample contains the wills of two members of the Catlin family: John,⁶⁴⁰ whose will was proved in 1725, and Nathaniel,⁶⁴¹ whose will was proved in 1786. A study of the baptismal registers for the parish of Saffron Walden show that Catlins were resident in the town from before the year 1700 and that many of them followed the trade of cordwainer.

As early as 1716, John Catlin junior was taking an apprentice placed by Bromfield's Charity.⁶⁴² It seems likely that this was the John whose will was proved in 1725. He was a literate man who held properties in both Cuckingstool End Street and Gold Street. For a cordwainer to hold two properties at his decease suggests that John was something more than an ordinary shoemaker. It is possible that he had inherited the property. He took the freedom of the town in 1712/3, paying ten shillings, which suggests that either he was apprenticed in the town or his father was a freeman.⁶⁴³ The latter seems most likely. He appears in the 1715 Poll Book as a man entitled to vote for a knight of the shire in county elections meaning that he was in possession of at least a forty-shilling freehold.⁶⁴⁴

The other Catlin appearing in the sample of wills was Nathaniel. He also took apprentices placed by Bromfield's Charity in the course of his career. In the Parish Rate of 1757 his property in the High Street was valued at £3.⁶⁴⁵ A John Catlin, possibly a brother, is recorded as living in Cuckingstool End at this time.

⁶³⁹ Richard, Lord Braybrooke, *The History of Audley End* (London, 1836), pp316-7

⁶⁴⁰ ERO, 248 CR 13, will of John Catlin, 1725

⁶⁴¹ TNA, Prob11/1137, will of Nathaniel Catlin, 1786

⁶⁴² ERO, D/B 2/CHR1/5/80, apprenticeship of Matthew Harris to John Catlin, 1716

⁶⁴³ SW Museum 41507 Saffron Walden Freemen

⁶⁴⁴ ERO, D/DKw/O2/14, Poll Book for Uttlesford, 1715

⁶⁴⁵ ERO, D/B 2/PAR11/1, Parish Rate 1757

Although Nathaniel served as Overseer of the Poor in 1757,⁶⁴⁶ he does not seem to have held a higher office. Perhaps he was too busy making money! In the poll books for 1763⁶⁴⁷ and 1774⁶⁴⁸ Nathaniel Catlin's name appears as entitled to vote. He was in possession of the forty-shilling freehold. On his death he held property in Walden in Castle Street including a malting, in the High Street and in Market End. The possession of a malting suggests that Nathaniel had, perhaps, diversified in his business interests. By his death in 1785 it seems unlikely that he was practising the craft of a shoemaker but he may have managed an expanding business, perhaps one that contracted work out to shoemakers in a smaller way of business.

Other members of the Catlin dynasty of shoemakers were John and Hannah. Both John and Hannah took boys apprenticed by Bromfield's Charity, John in 1756 and Hannah in 1774. It seems likely that Hannah was the widow of John and took over his business on his death, although this cannot be proved from parish registers.

The most interesting of the Catlin dynasty, however, was Robert. He became an Alderman in 1799 and Mayor in 1800, having taken the freedom of the town in 1799, one of the few to be recorded at this late date.⁶⁴⁹ It seems likely that Robert Catlin was the possessor of the book of shoemaker's accounts which has come to light in the Saffron Walden town archive.⁶⁵⁰ The volume dates from 1786 to 1814 and lists accounts for sales and repairs of different kinds of footwear. The volume is arranged alphabetically by client and, although it covers a number of years, the volume of work suggests that more than one shoemaker was involved. It is possible that Robert Catlin was operating a system much like that of the clothiers of Bocking who put work out to other artisans working, on a smaller scale, in their own homes. The ledger certainly indicates that the area from which clients were drawn was quite extensive with references to customers in Finchingfield, Sawston and Linton. Woodward suggests that many master craftsmen were petty entrepreneurs who supplied not only their own

⁶⁴⁶ ERO, D/B 2/PAR8/24, Bastardy Bond of Zachariah Kirby shows Nathaniel Catlin, shoemaker, as an officer of the town

⁶⁴⁷ Saffron Walden Town Library, C225, E.324.241, The poll for a Knight of the Shire to represent the County of Essex taken at Chelmsford on Tuesday and Wednesday the 13th and 14th of December 1763 by William Sheldon, Esq., Sheriff.

⁶⁴⁸ ERO Library, uncatalogued, Poll for Knights of the Shire to represent the County of Essex, Taken at Chelmsford on Monday and Tuesday 17th and 18th October 1774 by Henry Lovibond Collins Esq Sheriff, (Chelmsford, 1774)

⁶⁴⁹ SW Museum 41507 Saffron Walden Freemen and ERO, D/B 2/BRE2/3, Register of freemen and officers

⁶⁵⁰ ERO, D/B 2/PAR9/2 Shoemaker's accounts.

labour, but also that of their apprentices and journeymen.⁶⁵¹ Catlin would appear to have been operating on a somewhat grander scale than most in his trade.

Robert Catlin was the last of the family to be involved in shoemaking. It seems that he was unmarried and had no children, dying in 1817. His brother Martin was a currier and maltster and Martin's sons: Thomas Archer Catlin and Nathaniel Catlin did not become shoemakers either. Thomas Archer Catlin followed in his father's footsteps as a currier⁶⁵² and died with the title of esquire and an estate in Littlebury Green.⁶⁵³ Nathaniel became a maltster and corn factor.⁶⁵⁴ Both Catlin brothers, like their father, became mayor of Saffron Walden, Thomas Archer in 1819 and 1826 and Nathaniel in 1825.⁶⁵⁵

Whilst the Catlin dynasty climbed to the apogee of Saffron Walden society, other cordwainers fared less well. Of those leaving a will John Westrop left a legacy of one shilling to his brother, but there is mention of property. Of course the really poor, unsuccessful cordwainers did not leave wills, they had nothing to leave! George Smith, for example, who was apprenticed in 1748 to Richard Pomfrett, cordwainer, by Bromfield's Charity,⁶⁵⁶ died of smallpox in 1784 and was recorded in the parish registers as a pauper.⁶⁵⁷

It would seem, then, that within the trade of cordwaining it was possible to climb to the top of Saffron Walden society, but it was also possible to plumb its depths. Those who did particularly well in the craft may have possessed considerable business acumen, but the Catlins, certainly, were part of a dynasty of successful men who appeared to become increasingly successful with each subsequent generation. Perhaps theirs was not only a case of good skill and business acumen, but also of being born to the correct family.

Since it appears that there was economic fractionalism not only between trades, but also within them in the case of the sample of cordwainers, it is now necessary to see if this outcome is replicated within other crafts. The crafts of cloth worker and maltster will be examined because these provide larger samples of wills than do the other trades mentioned above. (See Appendix 1.)

⁶⁵¹ Donald Woodward, *Men at Work* (Cambridge, 1995), p.209

⁶⁵² ERO, D/B 2/TDS1/2/29 Deed of sale of a copyhold messuage known first as the Bull and then as the Eight Bells in Hill Street, 1816

⁶⁵³ ERO, T/M 404/1 Photograph of map of Littlebury Estates at Littlebury Green the property of the late Thomas Archer Catlin, 1838.

⁶⁵⁴ Pigot's Directory of Essex, 1839, p.147

⁶⁵⁵ Braybrooke, *Audley End*, pp.316-7

⁶⁵⁶ ERO, D/B 2/CHR1/5/156 Apprenticeship of George Smith by Bromfield's Charity, 1748

⁶⁵⁷ ERO, D/P 192/1/5/4 Saffron Walden Burials, George Smith, pauper, of smallpox, 1784

Of the sample of fifteen cloth workers leaving wills, all made mention of some kind of property to be left and the vast majority also left specific legacies ranging from one shilling to some £600. These were men of some substance. The two members of the Allen family both served as churchwardens and Edward Allen was also an overseer of the poor. John Fuller may also have been a churchwarden. None of them, however, became an alderman or mayor.

As the century progressed, the cloth trade became of less importance in Saffron Walden. The latest date of a will within the sample of cloth makers is 1785. Because the cloth trade became of diminishing importance in Saffron Walden in the last third of the eighteenth century it is difficult to identify cloth workers who fell into absolute poverty since it is only towards the end of the century that the parish registers record parish or pauper burials and that records kept by the overseers to the poor are available. It is harder to identify economic fractionalism within cloth workers in Saffron Walden than it is within cordwainers, however it seems likely that it was the case, but no clear evidence exists to support the theory.

As cloth working declined in importance, malting, which had been taking place since before the beginning of the century, grew in importance. The sample of wills of maltsters, twenty-two in total, dates from 1703 to 1837. Twenty of them make reference to property, the two which do not, those of Edward Allcraft⁶⁵⁸ and Thomas Hills,⁶⁵⁹ both date from the first third of the century before malting became particularly important in the economy of the town. The majority left substantial legacies, although two of them—Thomas Goodwin, will proved 1711,⁶⁶⁰ and Uriah Skepp, will proved 1720,⁶⁶¹ left legacies of only £5 each. One man, Jabez Wyatt, left legacies totalling £4,350.⁶⁶² He was a maltster but he also described himself in his will as being a common brewer which meant that he was producing beer and ale commercially on a large scale.

A number of the maltsters leaving wills served as officials of the Corporation. Uriah Skepp, Richard Trott and Stephen Smith all served as church wardens, whilst Edward Allcraft, Thomas Ingrey and James Carter all served more than one term as mayor. Jabez Wyatt, seemingly the richest of the maltsters in the sample, was unable to take office since he was a Quaker. Other wealthy

⁶⁵⁸ ERO, 366 CR 14, will of Edward Allcraft, 1732

⁶⁵⁹ ERO, 249 CR 13, will of Thomas Hills, 1724

⁶⁶⁰ ERO, 214 CR 12, will of Thomas Goodwin, 1711

⁶⁶¹ ERO, 107 CR 13, will of Uriah Skepp, 1720

⁶⁶² TNA, Prob 11/1069, will of Jabez Wyatt, 1780. At 2008 rates £4350 was worth £464,203.29 using the retail price index or £5,602,680 using a measure of average earnings. Officer, "Purchasing Power of British Pounds from 1264 to 2007." Consulted 20.2.2010

maltsters who did not take civic office were probably also members of other nonconformist churches in Saffron Walden.

In all the trades considered, it would seem that personal ability and family background had an important role to play in the degree of financial success that a man might achieve in the course of his working life. It is also interesting to speculate on the importance of literacy, especially towards the end of the period. Of the seventy-seven wills included in the tables for the various trades, only twelve were made by functionally illiterate men, and of these only one dates from the late 18th century.⁶⁶³ The importance of literacy will be discussed at greater length below in Chapter 7.

Some men achieved very considerable success even within a lowly ranked trade, but others, not represented within the sample of will-writing men, fell into penury, reliant on handouts from local charities. Thomas Scrambler, for example, was woolcomber who apprenticed his son to a cordwainer thanks to the good offices of Bromfield's Charity.⁶⁶⁴ Thomas was also happy to receive a hand-out from the Tollesbury Dole of Cloth in 1750/1.⁶⁶⁵ Other artisans sank even further into destitution, ending their lives in the Saffron Walden workhouse.

III

What other factors influenced the existence of potential economic fractionalism within the artisan sector in eighteenth century Saffron Walden?

The importance of the trade that a man followed, of that man's family and of his own business acumen has been discussed above. It now remains to consider whether any other factors were influential in determining whether or not economic fractionalism existed in eighteenth century Saffron Walden within the artisan sector.

The stratum of society from which a man came influenced the trade to which he might be apprenticed as discussed above. Men who were grocers or drapers, or even members of the lesser gentry, were unlikely to apprentice their sons to humble trades such as those of the cordwainer or tailor. For example Robert Mapletoft, surgeon, apprenticed his son Robert to Maurice Pugh of Chelmsford,

⁶⁶³ William Shelford was an illiterate cordwainer whose will was made in 1786 and proved in 1789 (TNA Prob 11/1176). The existence of a Prerogative Court of Canterbury will suggests that his illiteracy had not been too much of an impediment to business success.

⁶⁶⁴ ERO, D/B 2/CHR1/5/120, Apprenticeship of James Scrambler, 1731/2

⁶⁶⁵ Saffron Walden Museum, uncatalogued

surgeon, in 1768. The premium paid was £100, a very considerable sum.⁶⁶⁶ The Catlin family, on the other hand, were happy to maintain the family dynasty of shoemakers for much of the eighteenth century. They had found their niche and, although it was a humble trade, they were making money at it as the property left in their wills indicates. The Index to Apprenticeship Indentures shows that in 1737 John Catlin, the son of John Catlin, shoemaker, was bound apprentice to Samuel Pilkington of Saint Saviour's, Southwark, shoemaker for the sum of £2.⁶⁶⁷ £2 was not a large sum, but the apprenticeship was properly registered, not one organised by a charity. Perhaps John Catlin senior thought there was a trading advantage to be gained by apprenticing his son to a London shoemaker. Campbell indicated in his 1747 *The London Tradesman* that many country shoemakers were involved in supplying shoes to the London market.⁶⁶⁸ Maybe Catlin senior was capitalising on such a link or hoping to establish one.

Children whose apprenticeship was paid for by either the parish or one of the town charities had little or no choice about the trade to which they were apprenticed. Premiums were kept to a minimum and favours were called in to find places for children who might otherwise become a drain on the town's resources.

Although the trade to which a boy was apprenticed might be influenced by his social background, it would seem that it was his personal qualities which decided whether or not he would make a success of his trade.

Another factor which had a degree of influence on a choice of trade was the religious persuasion of the family concerned. A boy from a nonconformist background could not enter any of the professions which required attendance at university such as physician, rather than surgeon, or barrister, nor could he aspire to a civil service post such as an excise man. Posts such as these required a man to show proof of attendance at a Eucharist service of the Church of England in the form of a Sacrament Certificate: conscience prevented nonconformists from doing this. Since they were barred from both attendance at university and entry to the professions, boys from Baptist and Quaker backgrounds, of whom there were many in Saffron Walden, were forced to look for a future in trade or in those professions which did not require a Sacrament Certificate. As noted above,⁶⁶⁹ nonconformity was also a bar to holding civic office.

⁶⁶⁶ ERO, T/Z 393/3 Index to Apprentices' Indentures

⁶⁶⁷ ERO, T/Z 393/3 Index to Apprenticeship Indentures

⁶⁶⁸ R. Campbell, *The London Tradesman* (London, 1747), p.219

⁶⁶⁹ See above, p.53

Boys from nonconformist families were apprenticed to a full range of trades. Boys from Quaker families were often apprenticed to other Quakers through the strong networks established through travelling in the ministry and attendance at the Yearly Meetings.⁶⁷⁰ Quakers took particular care of the members of their meetings. Advice was provided to young people seeking to set up in business and assistance was available to those who fell on hard times through misfortune. Those who failed through incompetence were, however, viewed less charitably.⁶⁷¹ In Saffron Walden, as will be seen below, the role of nonconformity in the development of trade and among the artisan segment of society was considerable.

Some nonconformists, particularly Quakers, developed very successful businesses in Saffron Walden. The leading Quaker families were closely linked by marriage and trading links and included the Wyatt and Gibson families. Zacharias Wyatt, whose will was one of those in the sample of men involved in cloth working, was a successful weaver. By his death he had considerably enhanced the status of his family since he mentioned property in his will having only inherited £20 and a share of a property in Castle Street in the will of his father, Thomas. The main property, Little Painters, having been left to his elder brother, Thomas.⁶⁷² His son, Jabez, described himself in his will as a common brewer, maltster and weaver. He who left over £4,000 worth of legacies. His first trade was that of his father, weaving, but as the cloth trade declined he moved into malting and brewing. This was a common tactic of Quakers. They spotted opportunities and capitalised on them.

It was certainly true of the Gibson family. George Gibson, a miller, came to Walden from Maldon and set up a business in the Market Place. The Gibson family moved into malting and then into brewing. Having developed a very successful brewing business three members of the Gibson family—Atkinson Francis, Wyatt George and Jabez Gibson—then moved into banking together with Thomas A. Catlin and Nathaniel Catlin. Their bank, Gibson and Company, Saffron Walden and North Essex Bank, became one of the forerunners of Barclays Bank.⁶⁷³

Not all nonconformists were as successful as the Wyatts and the Gibsons, but it would seem that religious persuasion may well have had an influence on the development of economic fractionalism within the artisan sector of Saffron

⁶⁷⁰ James Walvin, *The Quakers, money and morals* (London, 1997), p.81

⁶⁷¹ E.D. Bebb, *Nonconformity and economic and social life* (London, 1935, reprinted Philadelphia, 1980), p.59

⁶⁷² ERO, 265 CR 13, will of Thomas Wyatt, 1725

⁶⁷³ Anthony Tuke and P.W. Matthew, *The History of Barclays Bank Limited* (London, 1926), p.174

Walden society. This local study certainly confirms the broader picture of the economic role of dissent in the eighteenth century.

IV

Conclusion

On the basis of the material available in the Saffron Walden Town Archives and other associated archives it would seem that economic fractionalism did, indeed, exist among artisans in eighteenth century Saffron Walden. Some trades reaped higher rewards than others. A successful maltster or cloth worker was likely to earn more than a cordwainer, although there were always exceptions. The fate of the exceptions was influenced by other factors such as personal business acumen; family position, for example in the case of the cordwaining Catlins; or religious denomination: Church of England versus nonconformist denominations and Quakers in particular.

For the purposes of comparison a sample of wills from Bocking, today part of Braintree and Bocking, a settlement some twenty-five miles south east of Saffron Walden specialising in the production of cloth in the eighteenth century, for the period 1700 to 1800 was also considered. The total number of wills available was smaller than for Saffron Walden, about 130 wills of craftsmen and shopkeepers proved at the local level and thirty-seven at the Prerogative court of Canterbury. There was a smaller number of wills of cordwainers and maltsters because of the concentration on cloth making: a mere three cordwainers and five maltsters; but there were sixteen wills of weavers from the period. The wills of clothiers and wool factors have not been included because it is not always possible to determine the scale of their operations.

The wills of the cordwainers show that two mention specific properties and one properties in general. Francis Frank, whose will was proved in 1773, left a messuage and a legacy of £5.⁶⁷⁴ Henry Gentry left a messuage and shop in Church Street and five further freehold messuages in the same street. He also left a specific bequest of £10 in his will of 1784.⁶⁷⁵ No cordwainers from Bocking had their wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.

⁶⁷⁴ ERO, D/APb W3/191, will of Francis Frank of Bocking, 1773

⁶⁷⁵ ERO, D/APb W3/245, will of Henry Gentry of Bocking, 1784

Of the five wills of maltsters, three were proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. Nathaniel Boosey, Thomas Candler and Samuel Tabor were men of considerable property.⁶⁷⁶ John Beckwith and Thomas Beckwith both also left property.⁶⁷⁷ John (1755) also left pieces of silver and Thomas (1747) a bequest of £4.

Bocking was a settlement specialising in the production of cloth even towards the end of the eighteenth century. The sixteen weavers' wills show two were proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, those of Richard Betts and Joseph Potter. Betts' will was proved in 1720. He left four leasehold properties in Church Lane and one freehold messuage in Bocking Street. He also left legacies of £50.2s.⁶⁷⁸ Potter's will was proved in 1737 and mentions a property in Church Lane, Bocking and legacies totalling £200.⁶⁷⁹ Of the fourteen wills proved locally, ten made reference to property and eleven to legacies ranging from 10s to £40.

These three samples of Bocking wills confirm the picture of economic fractionalism among artisans found in Walden. All the men mentioned above had felt it necessary to leave a will because of the property they possessed, but there were differences not only between the various trades but also within them.

It would seem, then, that economic fractionalism was a fact of life within the artisan sector of society in two settlements in north-west Essex in the eighteenth century for the reasons discussed above: differentiation between trades and within trades as a result of the business acumen of the individual, the circumstances of their family and their religious persuasion.

⁶⁷⁶ TNA, Prob 11/1005, Nathaniel Boosey, 1775; Prob 11/1123, Thomas Candler 1784; Prob 11/1115, Samuel Tabor, 1784.

⁶⁷⁷ ERO, D/APb W3/100, will of John Beckwith, 1755; ERO, D/APb W3/53, will of Thomas Beckwith, 1747

⁶⁷⁸ TNA, Prob 11/577, Richard Betts, 1720

⁶⁷⁹ TNA, Prob 11/683, Joseph Potter, 1737

Chapter 7

The impact of religious fractionalism, literacy and gender on the artisan segment in Saffron Walden in the eighteenth century. Did religious persuasion matter?

The impact of religious persuasion on the economic circumstances of the artisan segment of Saffron Walden society in the eighteenth century has already been discussed.⁶⁸⁰ That strand will be further explored below, as will the extent to which religious persuasion impacted on other facets of the life of eighteenth century artisans.

I

The religious make-up of the town

As mentioned above in Chapter 2, the religious make-up of the population of Saffron Walden was by no means homogeneous. The town was dominated by the Anglican Church of St. Mary the Virgin—one of the largest parish churches in Essex. It is likely that the majority of the population subscribed, at least nominally, to the established church, because it was in their economic and political interest so to do. The possession of a sacrament certificate was necessary for election to the Corporation, for example, but the holding of such a certificate did not necessarily imply a firm belief in all the tenets of the established church so much as a willingness to be seen to subscribe when it was expedient to do so. No doubt a part of the population was devoutly Anglican but a very significant proportion of the population belonged to one of the several nonconformist churches to be found in the town. No evidence of members of the Roman Catholic or Jewish faiths has been found; although a few miles into Saffron Walden's rural hinterland old-established Catholic families were still to be found, such as the Wisemans at Broadoaks.⁶⁸¹

Within the eighteenth century town there were three different Independent Chapels and a Meeting House for the Society of Friends. In the 1690s an Independent Meeting House was built in Abbey Lane and burial ground was laid out for its members. William Paine was appointed pastor.⁶⁸² The first Baptist

⁶⁸⁰ See above, pp.179-181

⁶⁸¹ Broadoaks lies to the west of the road to Thaxted, just beyond the hamlet of Howlett End, Wimbish. The remaining wing of the house contains a fine priest hole which gave shelter to Father John Gerard, a Jesuit priest, in 1591. <http://www.tudorplace.com.ar/Bios/JohnGerard.htm> (consulted 2.3.2010). The occurrence of this priest hole is in keeping with John Bossy's picture of the retreat of Catholicism into the great country houses where families still adhered to the 'old faith'. See his *The English Catholic community, 1570-1850* (London, 1979).

⁶⁸² C.B. Rountree, *Saffron Walden – then and now*, p.49.

meeting place was established in Hill Street, left for that purpose in the will of Robert Cossens,⁶⁸³ Steward of Audley End. Cossens died in 1728 and the accounts of the trustee acting for Mr. Cossens' donation show that the meeting house was in operation by 1732.⁶⁸⁴ From around 1711 the meeting had been held in the house of John Catlin in Gold Street. A new meeting house was built in about 1792 on ground behind the house left by Mr Cossens. This congregation was part of the Free Will or General Baptist group.

A further Baptist Chapel was established at the junction of Cuckingstool End Street and Bailey's Lane in 1774 on land donated by the Fuller family. This chapel was the result of a schism which occurred at the Abbey Lane Meeting. The minister, Mr Gwennap, and a considerable part of the congregation departed to found a new congregation which became known as the Upper Meeting House.⁶⁸⁵

The Quaker Meeting was established in a house in Cuckingstool End Street in 1676 although such meetings were illegal at the time. Indeed in 1682, as mentioned above,⁶⁸⁶ the churchwardens' accounts record that 4d. was paid for 'nailing up the Quakers' door'.⁶⁸⁷ It was not until 1693, under the terms of the Toleration Act,⁶⁸⁸ that the meeting was granted a certificate officially licensing it.⁶⁸⁹

The emergence of such a wide range of nonconformist congregations was not unusual among local market towns of a similar size. Royston on the Cambridgeshire Hertfordshire border, for example, had a Quaker meeting dating from the mid-seventeenth century⁶⁹⁰ and an Independent congregation (1706) which, like Saffron Walden, underwent a secession resulting in an Old and a New Meeting.⁶⁹¹ Meanwhile in Linton there had been a Quaker meeting which had faded away by the late eighteenth century⁶⁹² whilst the Independent chapel flourished although it experienced numerous difficulties.⁶⁹³ Bishops Stortford

⁶⁸³ TNA, PROB11/629, will of Robert Cossens, 1729.

⁶⁸⁴ ERO, D/B 2/NCF 1/4, Accounts of the Acting Trustee for Mr. Cossens' Donation

⁶⁸⁵ See above Chapter 2, p.37.

⁶⁸⁶ See above Chapter 2, p.38.

⁶⁸⁷ Mary Whiteman, "The early days of the Saffron Walden meeting", (Unpublished, no date)

⁶⁸⁸ 1 Will. & Mar. c. 18, Act of Toleration, 1689,

⁶⁸⁹ Mary Whiteman, "Saffron Walden Meeting"

⁶⁹⁰ A Kingston, *A History of Royston* (Royston, 1906), p.155

⁶⁹¹ William Urwick, *Nonconformity in Hertfordshire* (London, 1884), p.814

⁶⁹² CRO, R59/14/11/10c, rentals of 1725 and 1793.

⁶⁹³ CUL, EDR B8/1

similarly had a Quaker Meeting⁶⁹⁴ and an Independent Chapel. Religious provision in Sudbury is discussed in greater detail below.⁶⁹⁵

It is clear that small market towns such as these were finding it necessary to make provision for sufficiently large numbers of nonconformists at this period to require the building of a range of meeting houses and that in Saffron Walden and Royston at least such building works continued into the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Non-conformity in these towns appears not to be on the wane. Indeed in Bocking in a survey of the inhabitants conducted in 1793 under the auspices of the Overseers of the Poor, 730 people were recorded as being dissenters.⁶⁹⁶ Since the total population of Bocking at this time was 2,923, this suggests that one in every four individuals was designated as a dissenter by the person, unknown, conducting the survey.⁶⁹⁷

II

Religion and the Economic Success of the Artisan Segment of Saffron Walden society

Much has already been said in the chapter on economic fractionalism about the relationship between nonconformity and the economic position of Saffron Walden's artisan segment. However it is important to examine the relationship between nonconformity and the economic success or failure of eighteenth century artisans in greater detail because of the light that a more detailed discussion can shed on the lives of artisan members of Saffron Walden society.

As has already been discussed, in eighteenth century Saffron Walden there were a number of factors which helped to influence whether or not an artisan was successful in his calling. Of these it is possible that religious persuasion had some effect. As we have seen, possession of a Sacrament Certificate was necessary to gain preferment within the Corporation. It is, of course, possible that amongst the nonconformist artisans there were men who were prepared to receive the sacrament once a year in order to qualify for civic office whilst normally attending nonconformist chapels.⁶⁹⁸ Otherwise the highest office open to a member of a nonconformist church was that of overseer of the poor. This

⁶⁹⁴ William Urwick, *Nonconformity in Hertfordshire* (London, 1884), p.706

⁶⁹⁵ See below, pp.237-8

⁶⁹⁶ ERO, D/P 268/18/2 Survey of the Inhabitants of Bocking, 1793. See below Appendix 6 for further information about the survey.

⁶⁹⁷ The accuracy of this count cannot be certain and nor is the reason why it was made, but at face value it suggests a strong presence of non-conformity in Bocking at this time.

⁶⁹⁸ See above, current chapter, p. 179

was a time-consuming office with less pomp and circumstance attached to it than the offices of churchwarden, alderman or mayor. Thus a nonconformist artisan was likely to have less civic calls on his time and was, perhaps, able to devote more of it to his craft. On the negative side, he did not have the chance to establish the connections in the upper echelons of Saffron Walden society that might be available to senior members of the Corporation.

The nonconformist artisans will be discussed in two groups: those who were members of the Independent and Baptist communities and those who belonged to the Society of Friends. The distinction is necessary because the Society of Friends operated a distinctly separate system of economic support and advice.

i. The Independents and Baptists

By the end of the eighteenth century the Independents and Baptists operated three meeting houses in the town: those in Abbey Lane, in Hill Street and at the top of Cuckingstool End Street. In 1774 the Baptist minister, Gwennap, was barred from his pulpit at Abbey Lane. He left to establish a new congregation, the Upper Meeting House, taking 69 members of his former congregation with him.

So who were the argumentative dissenters at Abbey Lane and the Upper Meeting Houses? The available records, in the form of information about the membership of the Abbey Lane Meeting comes primarily from a 'Church Book' of 1774 which includes a church roll and a covenant made by members⁶⁹⁹ and from an earlier similar volume which includes a roll of members from the 1740s and lists of admissions as well as accounts.⁷⁰⁰ Records for membership of the Upper Meeting are to be found in a Church Book dating from 1775, the year after the founding of the new meeting.⁷⁰¹ An examination of these records reveals that the Abbey Lane Meeting was attended by a cross section of Saffron Walden society. The list of names for the 1740s shows a group who are given the title of 'Mr', presumably placing them at least in that part of society known as the 'middling sort',⁷⁰² although their names are not familiar from other records of the town. It is possible that these 'gentlemen' travelled into Saffron Walden from the surrounding villages. There are also a substantial number of widows, thirteen out of a total of 69 members of the congregation, or 19%. Moreover a number of women are named in their own right rather than just as the wife of a church

⁶⁹⁹ ERO, D/NC/16/7/6 Abbey Lane 'Church Book' 1774

⁷⁰⁰ ERO, D/NC/16/1/1 Abbey Lane Church Book, 1743-1775

⁷⁰¹ ERO, D/NC/23/1/1 Church Book of the Upper Meeting House, 1775-1912

⁷⁰² On which see Margaret R. Hunt, *Middling sort: commerce, gender and family in England, 1680-1780* (Berkeley, California, 1996) and Jonathan Barry and Christopher Brooks, *Middling Sort of People* (London, 1994)

member. It has not been possible to identify with any degree of certainty the occupations of most of the men listed. Only six appeared in the list of tradesmen serving on Grand Juries at the Quarter Sessions,⁷⁰³ and of those the trades of only three can be ascertained: John Green who was a plumber and glazier, Job Shackley a yeoman and Abraham Cornell a baker.

A little further information about some of the early members of the Abbey Lane Meeting can be gleaned from an examination of the lists of the names of those men who took the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy to George I in 1715. The list is divided into three parts with the Mayor and the most powerful members of the Corporation heading the first part of the list.⁷⁰⁴ Seven names from the list of early members of the Abbey Lane Meeting appear in the Oath list of 1715. They fall neatly into two groups. Three are to be found in the first group, the group that took the oath on the first occasion. This group included the most powerful men of the town, and among them were three Independents/Baptists: John Reader, Thomas Fuller and Abraham Cornell, a baker, were part of this group. From the fact that they signed the oath at the same time as the Mayor, it seems likely that these were prominent citizens. It is possible that John Reader was a cordwainer, presumably one of some distinction, and that Thomas Fuller was a webster⁷⁰⁵ who later took the title of gentleman.⁷⁰⁶ His family owned a ‘mansion house’ at Bridge End and Thomas Fuller served as a trustee of various charities as well as overseer of the poor in 1708.⁷⁰⁷ The Fuller family was later involved in funding the building of the Upper Meeting House.

Abraham Cornell, the third member of the group, was a baker by trade. He served as overseer of the poor in 1741. In 1757 he was living in a house in the High Street rated at £9.⁷⁰⁸ This property was in the middle range of rates paid, where the lowest was non-payment and the highest £68, although the latter included substantial amounts of land. In his will he left two houses, the stock of goods in his daughter Rachel’s shop, his own stock-in-trade and sums of money.⁷⁰⁹

Both Abraham Cornell and Thomas Fuller were entitled to vote in the 1734 poll for a knight of the shire to represent Essex.⁷¹⁰ This meant that they held a freehold with a minimum value of forty-shillings. In fact the property they held

⁷⁰³ ERO, D/B 2/QSS1/8-214 Jury Lists

⁷⁰⁴ ERO, D/B 2 /QSS2/3 List of those taking the oath in 1715

⁷⁰⁵ ERO, D/B 2/3/264 Lease of Almshouse property, Thomas Fuller was one of the trustees.

⁷⁰⁶ ERO, D/P 15/25/57 Appointment of new trustees for Gaces Charity in nearby Newport.

⁷⁰⁷ ERO, T/A 327/1 Borough of Saffron Walden General Account Book, 1587-1792

⁷⁰⁸ ERO, D/B 2/PAR11/1 Parish rate 1757

⁷⁰⁹ ERO, 55 CR 17 Will of Abraham Cornell proved 1767

⁷¹⁰ ERO Library, uncatalogued. Poll for a knight of the shire 1734

was significantly more valuable than that. They were affluent men but were unable to hold a higher office than overseer because of their nonconformist religious persuasion.

The second set of men belongs to the third group of names in the list of oath takers. An examination of this group of men shows that they were predominantly artisans. Some were qualified to serve as members of grand juries at the Saffron Walden Quarter Sessions, others were not. The trades they practised ranged from wheelwright to woolcomber, from tailor to miller. The four members of the Abbey Lane Meeting who signed an oath in 1715 were Edward Bentley, Thomas Scrambler, John Warner and John Green. John Green can be definitely identified as a plumber and glazier, he took his freedom in 1723/4,⁷¹¹ while Edward Bentley⁷¹² and Thomas Scrambler⁷¹³ may have been a woolcombers. John Warner may have been the John Warner who took his freedom as a glover in 1709/10.⁷¹⁴

Of these four men, Thomas Scrambler is, perhaps, the most intriguing. In 1715 he was of sufficient status in the town to sign the Oath but by 1750/1 he was listed as receiving the Tollesbury Dole of cloth,⁷¹⁵ one of the charitable donations of the town, which suggests that he was either elderly or had fallen on hard times. In the same year he was elected to the Almshouse.⁷¹⁶ To be elected to the Almshouse meant that, although elderly or infirm, he still had either sufficient status or sufficiently powerful friends to be granted one of the coveted places.

It is interesting to note that in the same year, 1751, John Green was also elected to the Almshouse. It would appear that membership of a nonconformist church did not, in Saffron Walden at least, preclude an artisan from admission to one of the precious places in the Almshouse.

The rest of the membership of the Abbey Lane Meeting in the 1740s cannot be identified as following any specific trades. It is possible that many of them were day labourers rather than qualified artisans. Certainly at this time the Abbey Lane Meeting drew its membership from a cross section of Saffron Walden society rather than one social segment in particular, but regrettably there simply is not sufficient evidence to tell whether the profile of the membership of the meeting paralleled that of the town as a whole.

⁷¹¹ Saffron Walden Museum, 41507, Freemen

⁷¹² ERO, D/P192/1/4 Baptismal records

⁷¹³ ERO, D/Q 67/2/1-2 Male electees to the Almshouse

⁷¹⁴ SW Museum 41507

⁷¹⁵ Saffron Walden Museum, uncatalogued

⁷¹⁶ ERO, D/Q 67/2/1-2 Male electees

The list of members of the Abbey Lane Meeting who signed the Confession of Faith drawn up by Mr Gwennap in 1761 gives another snapshot of the membership of the meeting. The people who signed the confession were Baptists rather than Independents, and when the schism occurred a few years later, agreement to the Confession became a requirement for people wishing to join the Upper Meeting. It would also appear that they were among the most active members of the congregation because many of the same names appear in support of the registration of the houses of first Thomas Rankin and then James Ratcliff as places of worship for the Independent congregation.⁷¹⁷ Of the twelve men named in the original Confession of Faith, five were deacons of the church. The occupations of eight can be identified. All were of the artisan or yeoman segments of society. Their trades included a grocer and tallow chandler, perhaps the most affluent of them, two yeomen, a maltster, a baker, a jobber, a webster/woolcomber and a tailor.⁷¹⁸

Later records from Abbey Lane show a similar pattern. Where a trade can be identified, which, sadly, is not frequently, the members again are drawn from the artisan and yeoman segment. The inability to identify the trade of many of the members of the Abbey Lane congregation may not be chance. It is possible that the many of the male members of the congregation, particularly those not identified as deacons, were either drawn from those sectors of society who did not qualify to be chosen as part of the Grand Jury or were young men—journeymen and apprentices—rather than master craftsmen and shopkeepers, as well as husbandmen from the edges of the town. It is not possible to prove this hypothesis from the extant records but the idea that nonconformist congregations were drawn from the younger part of the population is an attractive one, especially when the enthusiasm with which the congregations had embraced literacy is considered. Perhaps the young people who had once attended the town's Charity School were attracted to the nonconformist congregations once their attendance at the services of the established church, required whilst still Charity School pupils, ended.

It is interesting to note that 69% of the members listed as having been admitted between 1775 and 1800⁷¹⁹ were women. Some are accompanied by their husbands, but many are listed on their own. Apart from one with the title of 'widow' it is not possible to say whether they were single women or not. It would seem that the Independent Church at Abbey Lane had a number of artisans

⁷¹⁷ ERO, D/B 2/QSS2/19/1-67 Session Books and Rolls 1767

⁷¹⁸ ERO, D/NC 16/7/6 Church Book, Abbey Lane, 1774, combined with evidence from other sources such as ERO, QSS1, Grand Jury Lists and other evidence of trades.

⁷¹⁹ ERO, D/NC 16/7/6 Church Book, Abbey Lane, 1774

amongst its members, but women were even more common. Evidence does not exist to be able to say definitively that these women were also drawn from the artisanal segment of society, but it is likely that this was so.

It now remains to be seen whether the pattern was the same for the two Baptist churches: the Upper Meeting and the Hill Street or General Baptists. Records for the Upper Meeting date from the schism under the pastorate of Rev. Gwennap in the 1770s. Those for the Hill Street Chapel date back further: lists of trustees start in 1728.⁷²⁰ The nature of the Hill Street Baptist Chapel—it was part of the General Baptist Movement and was linked with meetings in Melbourn and Fulbourn, Cambridgeshire—meant that the trustees were not all drawn from Saffron Walden. Three, however, can be definitely associated with Saffron Walden: Joseph Eedes a maltster, Scarlett Moody a weaver and Thomas Headland a substantial yeoman.

In addition to the other records for the Hill Street chapel there are accounts and lists of baptisms and of members joining after 1792. The baptisms and members' lists permit the occupations of a few of the members of the congregation to be identified: a carpenter, a glover, a currier, a victualler and a shoemaker. These are not trades likely to generate large incomes although Thomas Erswell, the victualler, had amassed sufficient wealth that his will required to be proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.⁷²¹ The accounts give a far longer list of names of artisans who provided goods or services to the Hill Street Chapel between 1732 and 1800.⁷²² It seems likely that the trustees of the chapel would have chosen to patronise men who were in sympathy with their particular brand of the Baptist faith but this cannot be proved unless there is some connection between a tradesman mentioned and a member of the chapel. This was the case with John Crussell, a carpenter, whose services were employed in 1800. The members' list shows that a Mary Crussel became a member of the Hill Street Baptists in 1795.⁷²³

Records for the Upper Meeting of the Baptists began after the schism of 1774. They include a church book showing the members of the church at its inception, a list of people joining the communion subsequently and a list of births associated with the meeting.⁷²⁴ Although it is not possible to associate occupations with the majority of the people on the lists, where this has been possible it shows that artisans and shopkeepers formed an important part of the

⁷²⁰ ERO, D/B 2/NCF1/26 Account of the proceedings of the trustees for the donation of Robert Cosens.

⁷²¹ TNA, Prob 11/1335 Will of Thomas Erswell, 1798

⁷²² ERO, D/B 2/NCF1/14 Accounts of Hill Street Chapel

⁷²³ ERO, D/NB/24/3/1 Hill Street Baptist Chapel, Register of births, baptisms and burials etc.

⁷²⁴ ERO, D/NC 23/1/1 Church Book belonging to the New Meeting 1775 and ERO, D/NC 23/3/1 Congregational Register of Births associated with the Upper Meeting, Saffron Walden, 1782 onwards.

congregation. Occupations included bakers, braziers, carpenters, millers, shoemakers and weavers, as well as a liquor merchant and a stationer. Other members of the congregation may well have been labourers and apprentices. It is interesting to note that in the original list of members of the church all appear to have had some level of literacy since all signed their names with greater or lesser degrees of fluency, including the women. The same is true of the people who signed the Confession of Faith in 1775 which later became a condition of being accepted into the congregation. It is interesting to speculate if nonconformity, whether Independent or Baptist, appealed particularly to people with a desire to better themselves, be it through acquiring the rudiments of an education or through hard work in a trade.⁷²⁵

ii. The Society of Friends or Quakers

The Quaker Meeting House lay in Cuckingstool End Street, as it does today, although Cuckingstool End Street is now the High Street. As mentioned above, it had been established in 1676 and was licensed as a place of religious worship in 1693. Unlike the Independents and Baptists, the Quakers had only one meeting house, but their influence spread throughout the town.

The Quaker meeting in Saffron Walden was part of the Thaxted Monthly Meeting, which, in turn, reported to the Annual Meeting held in London. The structure of the Society of Friends with its Quarterly and Annual meetings meant that members of the Saffron Walden meeting had access to a network of business contacts across the country that were not based on kinship alone.

A number of commentators on the social and economic role of the earlier members of the Society of Friends have remarked on a change in the social strata from which members were drawn as the eighteenth century progressed. Richard Vann argued in the 1960s that rather than a 'rise from lower-middle-class obscurity into upper-middle-class respectability'⁷²⁶ Quakerism saw a contraction in its originally broad social range, becoming 'bourgeois' in both the sense of middle class and concentrated in towns.⁷²⁷ Judith Hurwich, on the other hand, suggested that, based on her studies of Quakers and other Non-conformists in

⁷²⁵ For discussion of literacy amongst the artisan segment of Saffron Walden society in the eighteenth century, with specific reference to the link between nonconformity and literacy in this group, see below 'Literacy and the Artisan' p.192ff.

⁷²⁶ Frederick B. Tolles, writing in the introduction to William C. Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism* 2nd edn. prepared by Henry J. Cadbury (Cambridge, 1961), pp. xxx-xxxi

⁷²⁷ Richard T. Vann, 'Quakerism and the Social Structure in the Interregnum', *Past and Present*, 43 (1969), p.90

Warwickshire, the narrowing of the social range and the concentration in towns applied less to Quakers than to the older puritan denominations.⁷²⁸

It will be interesting to see whether the membership of the Society of Friends in eighteenth century Saffron Walden conforms to Vann's view derived from his work on Buckinghamshire or reflects that of Hurwich on Warwickshire where it had no gentry leadership and had difficulty in competing in the towns with well-established Baptists or whether a different configuration emerges.

The Quaker meeting in Saffron Walden retains the bulk of its own archive, and these records, combined with those held elsewhere, help to give a picture of the social composition of the Saffron Walden meeting over the course of the eighteenth century. If Vann is to be believed,

Quakerism in the eighteenth century was becoming, in both senses of the word, a somewhat more bourgeois religion. Besides the growing concentration of Friends in the towns, an increasing number were drawn from the ranks of traders and artisans, while the gentry and landed families and also the very poor had almost entirely ceased to be represented.⁷²⁹

Thus, if this were to hold true for Saffron Walden, the membership of the meeting should contain a large percentage of members of the artisan sector of the town.

The best sources of information about the composition of the Saffron Walden meeting are to be found in Quaker marriage certificates,⁷³⁰ Quaker certificates of removal⁷³¹ and listings of the membership of the meeting.⁷³² The Digest of Quaker Marriages contains records of twenty-one Walden weddings between 1675 and 1776. The weddings fall into four groups: before 1700, 1701 to 1725, 1751 to 1775 and 1776 onwards. Of the twenty-one grooms, the occupation can be identified for nineteen. Of these nineteen, two are recorded as husbandmen, the other seventeen are either artisans or shopkeepers. Indeed sixteen are artisans and one, Thomas Day, was a successful grocer in the latter part of the eighteenth

⁷²⁸ Judith Hurwich, 'The Social Origins of the Early Quakers', *Past and Present*, 48 (1970), p.158

⁷²⁹ R.T. Vann, *The social development of English Quakerism* (Harvard, 1969), p.164

⁷³⁰ Friends Meeting House Archive, Saffron Walden, Case J.2 Copies of Marriage Certificates and ERO, T/A 904/1 Quaker Marriage Digest. Quaker marriage certificates often contain material additional to the names of the bride and groom and their parents, e.g. trades, but also the names of the other members of the meeting who witnessed the marriage.

⁷³¹ Friends Meeting House Archive, Saffron Walden, Shelf 3, Case C.1, Certificates of Removal. Quakers issued their own certificates of removal to members wishing to move elsewhere in pursuit of trade or for other reasons. Such certificates were only granted to those in good standing with their home meetings and free from debt.

⁷³² Friends Meeting House Archive, Saffron Walden, H2, Membership of Saffron Walden from Thaxted Monthly Meeting Record and ERO, T/A 284/1/1 Membership of the Saffron Walden Preparative Meeting with notes.

century. The artisans divide into four groups: those involved in the cloth trade – fustian weavers and makers, woolcombers, weavers and a tailor; braziers; wheelwrights and a lime burner.⁷³³

Quaker wedding certificates contained a list of people attending the wedding since all were deemed to have been witnesses to the marriage. These listings provide further evidence of the membership of the meeting, although not all the guests were necessarily Quakers. The list of witnesses to the marriage of Jabez Wyatt, webster, and Mary Wyatt in 1766 includes men identifiable as grocers, shopkeepers and farmers.⁷³⁴ Although Jabez Wyatt is described as a webster in the list of marriage certificates, his will of 1780 shows him as a very wealthy man.⁷³⁵ In keeping with this, the guests at the Wyatt marriage do not seem to include many artisans.

A second marriage certificate from a Quaker wedding in Saffron Walden exists. It dates from 1770 and records the people witnessing the wedding of Timothy Bush and Mary Hopwood.⁷³⁶ Bush was a wheelwright and Mary the daughter of a cordwainer from the nearby village of Widdington. The witnesses included a miller, a grocer, a brazier and a wheelwright. Although this list showed a higher number of identifiable artisans than the Wyatt marriage, it seems likely that this was a wedding of people of a certain social status in the town since the attendees included Ann Crane, a relative of the late vicar of the town, and Maurice Mosely, a local Church of England cleric.

It would seem that marriage documents do not conclusively show that a high proportion of members of the Quakers in Saffron Walden were drawn from the artisan segment of eighteenth century society. It is now relevant to see if removal documents offer support for the thesis that Quakerism was a religion of artisans and shopkeepers.

As we have seen above in the chapter on fractionalism and geographic mobility,⁷³⁷ the civil parish provided a removal certificate for people wishing to move elsewhere to better their financial lot whereby the receiving parish was indemnified against any costs that their settlement might bring. Similarly Quaker

⁷³³ It is important to re-emphasize at this point that the reliability of contemporary categorisations of occupations is somewhat questionable since many men followed more than one trade in the course of their working lives, sometimes at the same time. Thus it was not uncommon for an artisan to also hold and work land in the common fields of the town or in enclosed patches whilst following his trade. Trades such as brickmaking were seasonal and might be combined with other occupations. For example, fire insurance records of 1778 give George Day's occupation as a brickmaker, but a will in the name of George Day (ERO, 237 CR 18) of 1778, proved 1785, gave his occupation as yeoman. Burial records show only one George Day dying in the relevant period.

⁷³⁴ ERO, D/Dgi/F8/11, Marriage certificate of Jabez Wyatt and Mary Wyatt of Saffron Walden, 1766

⁷³⁵ TNA, Prob 11/1069 Will of Jabez Wyatt, 1780

⁷³⁶ ERO, D/Gi/F8/12, Marriage certificate of Timothy Bush and Mary Hopwood, 1770

⁷³⁷ See above, chapter 5.

meetings issued certificates to members of their fellowship who wished to move elsewhere in the furtherance of their trade or to secure a post. Arnold Lloyd notes that Quakers were issued with certificates from their monthly meeting. These certificates stated the responsibility of the issuing meeting for their relief should this prove necessary.⁷³⁸ A poor Quaker furnished with such a certificate, who had arrived in a new location, could only become a member of the new meeting if he had contributed to collections for the poor for three years in his previous abode, the equivalent of paying the parish poor rate. Apprentices and servants who arrived with a certificate from their former meeting qualified for membership of the meeting after one year.

The Saffron Walden meeting retains a collection of removal certificates, both those issued and those received.⁷³⁹ The collection amounts to thirty-three certificates. First it is necessary to exclude the certificates that relate to surrounding villages. Of the remaining fourteen, five were issued by Saffron Walden and nine were received as the indicated intended location. Of the fourteen certificates relating to Saffron Walden, four concern women, three are single women and one a wife. Of the ten men, the occupations of five can be identified. The earliest, Thomas Ripsheer, left Saffron Walden in 1706 to become assistant to the Steward of the Friends' Workhouse in Clerkenwell. Robert Catlin also left Saffron Walden for London, although it seems likely that he returned later to be apprenticed to William Jennings.⁷⁴⁰ Unfortunately it is not possible to identify the trade that William Jennings followed.

Of the other three men, John Farmer was a woolcomber who had arrived in Saffron Walden from the West Country at the end of the seventeenth century to pursue his trade. Having settled and married Mary Fullbig, the widow of Samuel Fullbig, a fustian maker,⁷⁴¹ he applied to the Saffron Walden meeting for permission to move to Colchester for 'the better convenience of work'.⁷⁴² William Impey and Philip Pitsto were both braziers by trade. William Impey arrived from Northamptonshire in 1718 and established a business in Saffron Walden.⁷⁴³ In 1750 he requested a certificate for Philip Pitsto to join the meeting. Pitsto came from Luton in Bedfordshire. It seems likely that Pitsto came to join the Impey firm of braziers, perhaps as an apprentice or journeyman.

⁷³⁸ Arnold Lloyd, *Quaker Social History 1669-1738* (London, 1950), pp.43

⁷³⁹ Friends Meeting House Archive, Saffron Walden, Shelf 3, Case C.1, Certificates of Removal. It is not possible to be sure if the collection is complete or merely a fragment of the original set.

⁷⁴⁰ ERO, D/B 2/CHR 9/6, Edmund Turner's Charity, Apprenticeship Indentures, Robert Catlin, 1723

⁷⁴¹ ERO, T/A 904/1, Quaker Digest of Essex Marriages

⁷⁴² Friends Meeting House, Saffron Walden, Archive, Shelf 3, Case C.1.

⁷⁴³ Friends Meeting House Archive, Saffron Walden, Shelf 3, Case C.1, Certificates of Removal. The Impey family were braziers throughout most of the eighteenth century.

He settled in the area and in 1754 he married Mary Brown, a Saffron Walden girl.⁷⁴⁴

The role of the meeting was very strong in Quaker society. Individual meetings were grouped within monthly meetings which in turn sent representatives to report to the quarterly and annual meetings. These meetings provided opportunities for Quakers from different parts of the country to meet. As a consequence it was possible for wide-ranging business and social connections to be made and for networks to be formed. In the context of Saffron Walden this is reflected in the marriages made with people from far-flung parts of the country such as that contracted by a member of the Impey family in 1761. William, a brazier, married Sarah Atkinson who came from Thorne in Yorkshire.⁷⁴⁵ In 1778 George Gibson, a Quaker upholsterer of Saffron Walden, married Elizabeth Robinson who also came from Thorne in Yorkshire.⁷⁴⁶ Evidently a link between Thorne and Saffron Walden had been established. Given the social and economic constraints, particularly when combined with the religious restrictions, it is not surprising that the pool of partners was limited. The Quakers had to have more extended marriage horizons.

Further evidence of links between Saffron Walden and Yorkshire is to be found in the certificate of removal granted to a member of the Gibson family, Atkinson Francis, from the Balby Monthly Meeting⁷⁴⁷ in Yorkshire in 1785 to the Thaxted Monthly Meeting which covered the Saffron Walden area. Probably this was on the completion of his apprenticeship to the Quaker land surveyors William Fairbank and William Fairbank junior of Sheffield.⁷⁴⁸ The certificate indicated that its holder was free of any debt and romantic ties and was viewed as a good member of the Society of Friends. It also served as an invaluable reference as to creditworthiness in an age of personalised local credit.⁷⁴⁹ The possession of such a certificate may well have made it easier for Quakers to be accepted into a new community of local traders for it provided a reference in terms of the quality of their business ethics.

Further evidence of the links which Saffron Walden Quakers had forged between other areas of Britain and, indeed, abroad is to be found in the visitors' book kept

⁷⁴⁴ Friends Meeting House Archive, Saffron Walden, Case J.1. Marriages, Consent of Parents and Meeting.

⁷⁴⁵ ERO, D/DGi F8/9, marriage certificate of William Impey and Sarah Atkinson, 1761.

⁷⁴⁶ ERO, D/DGi F8/13, marriage certificate of George Gibson and Elizabeth Robinson, 1778.

⁷⁴⁷ ERO, D/DGi F8/19, removal certificate of Atkinson Francis Gibson, 1785

⁷⁴⁸ A. Stuart Mason, *Essex on the map* (Chelmsford, 1990), p.116

⁷⁴⁹ Ann Prior and Maurice Kirby, "The Society of Friends and the Family Firm, 1700-1830", *Business History*, 35 (1993), p.77

by Mary Fullbig, the step-daughter of John Farmer discussed above.⁷⁵⁰ Her journals were kept between 1731 and 1758.⁷⁵¹ They showed that, although the bulk of her visitors came from nearby—Hertfordshire, London and Essex—others came from as far afield as Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cumberland, Northumberland and Cornwall. Other visitors came from overseas, especially from America: Pennsylvania, New England and North Carolina as well as from Holland. Many of the visitors were travelling in the ministry, that is preaching, but others were family and business connections.⁷⁵²

Another source of evidence of the occupational structure of the Saffron Walden Quaker meeting is to be found in listings of the membership of the meeting. Lists of members of the meeting exist for 1775⁷⁵³ and 1786.⁷⁵⁴ When the membership of the meeting in 1775 is analysed, it is possible to identify the occupations of ten out of a total of twenty adult males. Of the ten two were grocers, three maltsters, two wheelwrights and there was also a brazier, a miller and a collarmaker.⁷⁵⁵ Two of the younger members of the meeting were listed as apprentices. From their placement in the list, it seems likely that they were apprenticed to one of the grocers, Thomas Day. Some of the other young males may have also been apprentices but this is not acknowledged in the list. Six of the identified men were listed in the Index to the Poll Book of 1763.⁷⁵⁶ This suggests that they were prosperous people, holding a sufficient freehold to entitle them to vote. Others of the ten might also have been of a similar level of affluence but were too young to have voted in 1763.

⁷⁵⁰ See chapter 5 above.

⁷⁵¹ Friends Meeting House Archive, Saffron Walden, Case L, Book kept by Mary Fulbigg (Farmer) 1731-1758 of Friends who visited her in Saffron Walden.

⁷⁵² For more details see the chapter 6 above.

⁷⁵³ Friends Meeting House Archive, Saffron Walden, Case H, Membership of Saffron Walden from Thaxted Monthly Meeting Record, 1775

⁷⁵⁴ Friends Meeting House Archive, Saffron Walden, Case H, Membership of Saffron Walden from Thaxted Monthly Meeting Record, 1786

⁷⁵⁵ ERO, D/B 2/BRE 8/7. In a survey of the town conducted in 1811 the heads of house are listed by street. Each head of house's occupation is given. 215 families (29%) are listed as being involved in trade, 307 (43%) in agriculture and 207 (28%) in neither, a total of 729 families. Thus approximately three tenths of the population was involved in trade, the majority of which would have been artisanal occupations. The date of the survey places it just outside the period of this study, but gives a clear indication of the way in which the town was structured. Thus a total of 10 out of 20 males in the Quaker membership of 1775 being identified as following artisanal occupations gives a higher percentage than the percentage for the town as a whole, 50% as opposed to 29%. For more details of the findings of the 1811 Census, see Appendix 3

⁷⁵⁶ T.Toft, *The poll for a Knight of the Shire to represent the County of Essex taken at Chelmsford on Tuesday and Wednesday the 13th and 14th of December 1763 by William Sheldon, Esq., Sheriff (London, 1764)*

The list of 1786 is more concerned with changes to the membership of the meeting, showing who had died since the previous listing, who had removed or been received by certificate and who had been disowned.⁷⁵⁷

One final source of information may add to a knowledge of the importance of artisans among the membership of Saffron Walden Quakers. Quakers refused to pay tithes and church rates and were frequently reported to the local justices of the peace by the churchwardens. The justices would give an order for distraint of goods to cover the unpaid rates. Surviving orders for goods to be distrained date from the 1740s to the 1830s. Some are against individuals, others against groups of Quakers. In most cases the order does not give the occupation of the individual concerned, but an exception was Thomas Day who was a shopkeeper.⁷⁵⁸ The names to be found on the orders which specify that the subject was a Quaker include George Gibson, William Impey, John Cranwell, Jabez Wyatt, Thomas Day, John and Thomas Pitstow, James Day and John Bush. Many of these names can be identified as prosperous artisans. George Gibson was either a miller or an upholsterer, William Impey was a brazier, Jabez Wyatt a webster and later a very affluent maltster, and John Bush was a wheelwright. Thomas Day was a grocer and James Day seems to have been a farmer.⁷⁵⁹ It has not been possible to identify with any degree of certainty the occupations of the Pitstows or John Cranwell, although it is known that Cranwell came from Earith, Cambridgeshire, and married Hannah Burgis. Although subject to distraint of goods to meet unpaid rates, Cranwell was still deemed a suitable candidate to serve as overseer of the poor in 1746.⁷⁶⁰

Although the sources set out above have their problems, when combined they do permit some fairly certain conclusions to be drawn. One such conclusion is that many Quakers were involved in either trade or artisanal occupations. This was certainly influenced by their brand of nonconformism which ruled them out of joining any profession which required a university education. Since attendance at university and access to the professions was restricted to members of the Anglican Church, Quakers established their own schools and academies offering a higher education. But the education that they offered was geared to vocational

⁷⁵⁷ Meetings could disown a member who did not adhere to the code of behaviour laid down or who married outside the membership of the Society of Friends.

⁷⁵⁸ ERO, D/B 2/PAR11/286/1 Order against Thomas day, shopkeeper, 1776. Thomas Day kept a fascinating Day Book (Saffron Walden Town Library collection).

⁷⁵⁹ ERO, D/B 2/QSS1 Quarter Sessions Grand Jury Lists

⁷⁶⁰ ERO, D/B 2/PAR5/213 Removal order for Elizabeth Gazy, 1746. The order states that John Cranwell made a solemn affirmation rather than an oath because he was 'one of the persons called Quakers'. Quakers viewed it as important that they fulfil posts of civic responsibility wherever possible. Overseers of the poor were not required to hold Sacrament Certificates.

occupations and entry to trade and the higher artisanal occupations.⁷⁶¹ Atkinson Francis Gibson, for example, was apprenticed as a land surveyor⁷⁶² although he later became a maltster and was involved in the family's banking interests in the early part of the nineteenth century.⁷⁶³

Attendance at Monthly, Quarterly and Annual Meetings enabled Quakers to develop distinctively wide-ranging business contacts as did their habit of 'travelling in the ministry', that is, undertaking preaching tours. As a result Quaker business networks were not limited to kinship links as was often the case with Anglicans. The Quaker ethic always encouraged the development of successful businesses. Young people wishing to set up in business were offered a form of mentoring, as were people at risk of business failure. Young journeymen were offered loans at low rates of interest; bankrupts were threatened with dismissal if they failed to repay their creditors.⁷⁶⁴ Probity in business was very important to Quakers and their reputation for honest dealings developed in the course of the eighteenth century as their business networks spread across the country and even reached the colonies.⁷⁶⁵ Vann and Eversley have commented that artisans set their sons up as tradesmen, and their grandsons as clerks and schoolmasters.⁷⁶⁶ In Saffron Walden it might be closer to the truth to say that Quaker artisans saw the opportunities that trade and malting offered as the eighteenth century progressed and—if they had the ability, funding and business acumen—seized the opportunities with both hands. By the beginning of the nineteenth century Quaker businessmen, and particularly the Gibson family, were very powerful. Within fifty years they were the dominant force in philanthropy and frequently held the most senior posts within the Corporation, the need for religious conformity having been abolished in 1828.⁷⁶⁷

⁷⁶¹ Herbert McLachlan, *English Education under the Test Acts* (Manchester, 1931), p.21

⁷⁶² A. Stuart Mason, *Essex on the Map* (Chelmsford, 1990), p.116

⁷⁶³ Anthony Tuke and P.W. Matthew, *A History of Barclays Bank Ltd.* (London, 1926), p.174

⁷⁶⁴ David H. Pratt, *English Quakers and the first industrial revolution* (New York, 1985), p.29

⁷⁶⁵ James Walvin, *The Quakers: money and morals* (London, 1997), p.82

⁷⁶⁶ R.T. Vann and David Eversley, *Friends in life and death* (Cambridge, 1992), p.74

⁷⁶⁷ The Test and Corporation Acts were repealed in 1828 allowing nonconformists to hold posts of civic responsibility.

iii. Conclusion

It will have been noted that the section above focussed on the link between nonconformity and the artisan segment of society, with little or no reference to the established church. Much has already been said above about the established church and its links with the Corporation and financial and social success,⁷⁶⁸ however it may prove useful to summarise the findings here for the purpose of comparison with nonconformist churches.

To gain one of the more exalted positions in the Corporation such as Alderman or Mayor it was necessary to be in possession of a Sacrament Certificate.⁷⁶⁹ To obtain such a certificate it was necessary to be witnessed taking communion according to the rites of the Church of England. Thus among nonconformists these positions were restricted to those whose conscience allowed them to take communion in the parish church. The town's collection of sacrament certificates shows not just local men, but also excise men and army officers in the vicinity, taking the necessary witnessed communion.⁷⁷⁰

It can be seen that membership of the established church, or at least the willingness to appear to conform, was necessary to gain a hold on the greasy pole that led to civic power. Even relatively lowly positions such as Clerk to the Markets required a sacrament certificate. Civic power and its attendant social and business connection were, therefore, limited to the members of the Anglican Church. Positions of authority within the parish were similarly restricted according to a man's religious persuasion. Nonconformists could hold the posts of parish constable and overseer of the poor and, indeed, many did. These posts were in many ways more a social obligation than a stepping-stone to future power. The more powerful position of churchwarden was necessarily restricted to communicant members of the Church of England.

It can, thus, be seen that membership of the Church of England was a pre-requisite for advancement in both the Corporation and Parish of Saffron Walden in the eighteenth century. However these were not the only routes to economic and social advancement open to a capable nonconformist artisan. It has been shown above that many members of the Independent and Baptist churches were men of substance who held the highest parish positions that their religious

⁷⁶⁸ See Chapters 3 and 4 above.

⁷⁶⁹ 'Sacramental certificate', *Middlesex county records: Volume 4: 1667-88* (1892), pp.351-352. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=6610> accessed:24 April 2010. Under the Test Act of 25 Car.II.c.2 (1662) it was a requirement that anyone bearing any office should take the Oath of Allegiance and receive the sacrament according to the usage of the Church of England within three months. A certificate was issued by the officiating cleric and churchwarden to that effect.

⁷⁷⁰ ERO, D/B 2/QSS7/14 Sacrament Certificates for Saffron Walden

affiliations would allow. Quakers, too, held the position of overseer of the poor, but, unlike Independents and Baptists, they had access to a nationwide network which allowed them to establish business connections across not only the whole of Britain, but also the colonies. Independents and Baptists had access to a more limited version of the same kind of network, with their networks largely limited to neighbouring counties.⁷⁷¹

From the detailed evidence I have been able to gather for Saffron Walden, I am inclined to agree with the long-established view that nonconformity did—given a level playing field in the other factors necessary for success in an artisanal trade—enhance the probability of commercial success. The business networks mentioned above, in conjunction with the nonconformist work ethic, meant that capable artisans from these communities were able to gain financial and social standing by hard work, business contacts and deeds of charity. These men did not need to expend time and expense on gathering the contacts necessary for preferment within the Corporation and the parish and so were able to devote themselves to developing their businesses once they had attained the status of master craftsmen. As has been described above in section II.ii of this chapter, members of the Society of Friends were even provided with business advice and mentoring by more established members of their meeting.

It can be seen, then, that artisans could be members of any of the religious groups within the town of Saffron Walden and could achieve business success irrespective of their religious persuasion. However, although personal business aptitude was, perhaps, the most important factor, nonconformity did seem to produce a greater number of successful artisans and shopkeepers than might be the case if religious allegiance had not had some influence on their success. Quaker businessmen, for example, had a reputation for probity in their dealings that was respected by the whole community. In Saffron Walden by the early nineteenth century it was certainly the case that the Gibson and Wyatt families, both Quaker families, were becoming increasingly dominant in the business dealings of the town.

The reasons for the success of the nonconformist, and in particular Quaker, businessmen in Saffron Walden might be explained as follows. The ethos of probity and the wider networks provided by nonconformity seem to have outstripped power in the Anglican Corporation as mechanisms for success. But

⁷⁷¹ The Hill Street Baptists had close links with Baptists in Melbourn and Fulbourn, both villages in Cambridgeshire at a distance of some fifteen miles from Saffron Walden. Indeed they even shared ministers at certain points in the eighteenth century as a tablet of the ministers of Melbourn Baptist Church reveals. This may have come about because Hill Street Baptist Chapel and the other chapels mentioned above were all members of the General Baptist Movement whilst chapels in the intervening villages belonged to the Particular Baptist Movement.

these different routes to success, the various differently configured networks, also contributed to the fractionalism of the population of Saffron Walden as a whole, and the fractionalism of artisans, in particular, within that community. Furthermore, the social mix of the different nonconformist groups created a number of parallel hierarchies of social integration, alongside that provided by the Anglican social grouping. Of itself, divergent religious affiliation contributed to the overall divisions within the town as a whole.

The religious identities of the various nonconformist sects were visible both to their members and the rest of the town not only in terms of the buildings used for worship and through routes taken to attend services; but also on the streets in conversational groups and in the observable interpersonal support provided within the various groups.⁷⁷²

So, as a final comment on the impact of religious fractionalism on the artisan segment in eighteenth century Saffron Walden, let us imagine what it would have been like to stand at the junctions of George Street, Cuckingstool End Street, Abbey Lane and the High Street⁷⁷³ at the time of morning service on a sunny late eighteenth century Sunday morning. The members of the Anglican Church would be heading towards to St. Mary the Virgin set on the prominence between Church and Castle Streets. Going in the opposite direction would be members of the Upper Baptist Meeting and the Quakers, both heading up Cuckingstool End Street. Meanwhile members of the Independent Baptist Church would be heading along George Street towards Hill Street and members of the Abbey Lane Meeting would be heading towards their meeting house near the back gate to the Audley End Estate. In addition to residents of the town, there would also be people coming from Audley End, North End, Little Walden and Sowards End to attend church and, in the case of the nonconformist churches, from further afield. Although no shops or businesses would be open,⁷⁷⁴ the centre of Saffron Walden would have been a bustling place as people from the lowliest labourer to the most affluent businessman, professional man or member of the gentry headed towards divine service of the type most in line with their personal beliefs. The various flows of individuals along the streets would have articulated to all concerned one

⁷⁷² See above references to the support network provided by the Quakers for members of their meeting. Evidence of a similar network of support for Independents and Baptists is more limited, although there are references to advice being given, and this was, perhaps, accompanied by more tangible support on occasion.

⁷⁷³ See Appendix 7: Map 9: 1758 Map of Saffron Walden by Edward Eyre (ERO, T/M 90/1) annotated to show places of worship.

⁷⁷⁴ Except, perhaps, some of the alehouses, if Quarter Session Records are to be believed. For example, ERO, D/B 2/QSS2/17/3, Edward Goodeve pleaded not guilty in 1753 to being a Sabbath breaker and allowing drinking to take place in his alehouse during the time of divine service. Obviously not everyone felt the need to attend a church service, no matter what the kind!

of the key sources of division within the town, and more particularly the fractionalism among the numerous artisans who constituted significant currents within these flows.

III

Literacy and the Artisan: did reading and writing matter? Did it increase fractionalism?

The link between religious persuasion and the degree of literacy attained by any given artisan has been touched on above. In the following section this topic will be dealt with in greater detail as will the notion that it was education and literacy that perhaps created a greater degree of *homogeneity* within the social segment rather than greater fractionalism. In other words, was this a facet of life in Saffron Walden that works against the conclusion drawn from the greater part of this thesis?

David Cressy, in his work on literacy in Tudor and Stuart England, commented that reading gave access not only to information and ideas but also to stimulation and entertainment of many kinds, and that a person who could write had even more advantages.⁷⁷⁵ However in his work on levels of illiteracy in Norwich he goes on to say that with regard to tradesmen and artisans, although levels of literacy did vary, they were roughly commensurate with the specific requirements of the occupation followed.⁷⁷⁶ The same was true in eighteenth century Saffron Walden. The artisan who could read and write was able to access opportunities denied to his illiterate brothers. However, given the growth in literacy generally and in Saffron Walden, particularly after the advent of the Charity School,⁷⁷⁷ it is interesting to ponder whether increased literacy led to greater coherence rather than greater fractionalism among the artisan segment of society in eighteenth century Saffron Walden.

Certainly progress in the social hierarchy of town governance was enhanced by the ability to read and write. If a survey is made of the mayors of Saffron Walden who worked either as an artisan or a maltster, it is to be seen that in the 43 years when the mayor had an identifiable trade, there is evidence that in 42 years the mayor could sign his name. It is likely that the mayor for whom no

⁷⁷⁵ David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1980), p.1

⁷⁷⁶ David Cressy, 'Levels of Illiteracy in England, 1530-1730' *The Historical Journal*, 20.1 (1977), p.8 Cressy suggests that by the 1720s illiteracy in Norwich among tradesmen was 34%.

⁷⁷⁷ See below p.203

evidence of a signature can be found, Edward Ball who was a maltster and who served as mayor in 1740, was also literate because Saffron Walden mayors also served as justices of the peace for the town. Justices of the Peace were generally literate because their duties required them to sign many documents and to have an understanding of the laws they were implementing although they were assisted in this duty by the Deputy Recorder, traditionally a qualified lawyer working in the town.

The men who went on to become mayor of Saffron Walden probably gained their education at the town's King Edward VI Grammar School before being apprenticed. Regrettably no records of eighteenth century pupils appear to have survived so it is impossible to be certain.⁷⁷⁸ Similarly no records from the period have survived from Newport Free Grammar School,⁷⁷⁹ the other grammar school in the immediate area. It was, however, probably the minority of the sons of artisans who could aspire to a grammar school education unless their fathers had been particularly successful for such an education would have carried quite substantial costs for boys who were not scholars of the foundation. It is likely that the same would have been the case in the Grammar School at Bishop's Stortford when it was functioning. Neither Linton nor Braintree and Bocking had a Grammar School, whilst the precise nature of the school alluded to in Royston in Salmon's *History of Hertfordshire* is unclear.⁷⁸⁰ The Grammar school in Sudbury is dealt with in greater detail below.⁷⁸¹

For other children a formal education might be provided by the town's charity school if they were lucky enough to be elected to a place. The town's charity school was founded in 1715. Fifteen boys and fifteen girls were to be put to school and taught to read and the principles of the Christian religion, according to the tenets of the Church of England.⁷⁸² Linton had a similar charity school⁷⁸³ but it had disappeared by the late eighteenth century. A school in Bocking also existed to provide a basic education and in 1749 a nonconformist foundation was also established. These schools later became the National and British schools respectively.⁷⁸⁴ Charity schools also existed in Sudbury.⁷⁸⁵ It would seem, then, that, as the Charity Schools movement gathered pace in the first part of the

⁷⁷⁸ The only surviving records for Saffron Walden Grammar School for the period are ERO, D/B 2/SCH1/2 an account of repairs to the Grammar School and master's house, 1683-1776, and ERO, D/B 2/SCH1/3 Receipts of John Dennis for Master's salary, 1795-6.

⁷⁷⁹ ERO, D/Q 25/41, Minute Book of Newport Free Grammar School, 1744-1818.

⁷⁸⁰ Nathaniel Salmon, *History of Hertfordshire* (London, 1728), p.358.

⁷⁸¹ See below p.238

⁷⁸² ERO, D/B 2/SCH2/1 Accounts of the Charity School, Saffron Walden, 1715-1745

⁷⁸³ M.G. Jones, *The Charity School Movement* (London, 1964 edition), p.365.

⁷⁸⁴ W.F. Quin, *A History of Braintree and Bocking* (Lavenham, 1981), pp.198-9.

⁷⁸⁵ See below, p.238

eighteenth century, Saffron Walden was entirely typical of market towns of its size in seizing the opportunity to found such a school.

The names of the first children to be elected to the Saffron Walden charity School are recorded. Of those thirty children it has been possible to identify the trades of the fathers of twenty-one pupils. Of these, thirteen had fathers who followed artisanal trades. Of the other eight identified occupations, one father was a husbandman. The other seven fathers were identified as labourers. It is possible that these were working as journeymen or they may have been day labourers. An examination of what became of the first fifteen male charity pupils shows that ten can be identified as having been later apprenticed by the major town charity, Bromfield's, which provided assistance with the payment of apprenticeship premiums.

However, when considering whether an artisan might be viewed as literate, what evidence is required and what sources might be available to provide such evidence? In Tudor and Stuart England Cressy points out that it was still possible for a literate felon to claim 'benefit of clergy'⁷⁸⁶ for a first offence and thus escape the full rigours of the law for the crime he had committed.⁷⁸⁷

In the eighteenth century a distinction was made between the arts of reading and writing. Victor Neuburg⁷⁸⁸ comments that the Reverend James Talbott believed that writing should only be taught once a child could read well⁷⁸⁹ whilst Isaac Watts believed that a rural child, whilst needing to be able to read, had no need to learn to write. Reading was considered important, as in Tudor and Stuart times, for religious reasons but also the amount of printed material available even in country areas had greatly increased in the form of newspapers, chapbooks and written advertisements. An inability to read could place a person at both economic and social disadvantage.

The ability to write was another matter, as suggested above. It is, however, of writing that more evidence is available. For reading the mention of books in a will is one form of evidence, but it is suggested that the evidence of ability to write in itself is evidence of an ability to read since reading was generally taught before writing. Schofield comments, however, that it is unclear whether the

⁷⁸⁶ The benefit of clergy test required the offender to read Psalm 51

⁷⁸⁷ Cressy, *Literacy and the social order*, p.17

⁷⁸⁸ Victor E. Neuburg, 'Literacy in Eighteenth Century England: A Caveat', *Local Population Studies*, 2 (1969), pp.44-46

⁷⁸⁹ Rev. James Talbot, *The Christian school-master* (London, 1707)

ability to write the few letters in one's own name was always accompanied by the ability to read, still less the ability to write anything else.⁷⁹⁰

However, those few letters which constitute a name have often been taken as a measure of literacy when signatures in parish registers and on wills are considered. For the purposes of the present consideration of literacy within the artisan segment of eighteenth century Saffron Walden society the following sources of evidence will be employed, most of which depend on the ability of the person in question to sign his or her own name:

- Signatures in parish registers
- Signatures on wills, either as testator or as a witness
- Signatures on apprenticeship indentures
- Signatures on other documents such as Oaths of Allegiance

Signatures in Parish Registers

The most usual reason for a signature or mark to appear in the parish registers was on the occasion of a marriage. A sample period of marriages between 1755 and 1775 was examined.⁷⁹¹ In this period 377 marriages were recorded as taking place by banns in Saffron Walden where the husband gave his place of residence as the town. Of these 377 marriages, in one case the husband affirmed because he was a Quaker, 211 made their mark and 165 signed their name. It has not been possible to identify the occupations of all 165 grooms, but it is likely that they did not come from the upper echelons of Saffron Walden society where marriages tended to be conducted by licence. Of the 165 grooms who signed their names, two were widowers, four were designated as gentlemen, one was a cleric, another a school master and 47 had no discernible trade, leaving a total of 110 for whom there is some evidence of occupation. Ten are identified as labourers, although one went on to become a victualler in later life. This left 100 men who were likely to have belonged to the artisanal or farming segment of Saffron Walden society. Of these men, eleven have been identified as farmers or yeomen and one was a husbandman. The remaining 88 literate men may well have been practising a range of artisanal trades. These 88 men constituted about 23% of the grooms who married between 1755 and 1775 and 53% of the men who signed their names. When the grooms who made their mark are considered,

⁷⁹⁰ Roger Schofield, 'The measurement of literacy in pre-industrial England' in *Literacy in traditional societies* ed. Jack Goody (Cambridge, 1968), pp.311-325

⁷⁹¹ ERO, D/P 192/1/7, Saffron Walden Marriage Banns 1755-1775

of 211 men, only twenty-four have been identified as following an artisanal trade. A further thirty-two are designated as labourers. Again it is possible that some of this group were journeymen and may have gone on to be independent craftsmen.

Therefore it can be seen that when marriage registers are considered as a source of evidence, they suggest that a man who followed an artisanal trade was more likely to be able to sign his name than not: nearly 79% of those identified as artisans were able to sign their name. This is, of course, only a snapshot of one part of the eighteenth century. It may be that a sample taken earlier would show a lower percentage of artisans able to sign their names, but resources have precluded this exercise.

It now remains to be seen if other sources of evidence suggest a similar level of basic literacy among the artisan segment of Saffron Walden.

Wills

Another common source for identifying levels of literacy is the wills that were made. Each will contains not only evidence about the literacy of the testator, his ability to sign his or her name or the need to make a mark, but also of the literacy of the people selected as witnesses. Wills were left by those people who felt that they had enough property to merit it or where disputes might arise after their demise about the allocation of property to the various heirs. Most wills were proved in the local ecclesiastical court, in the case of Saffron Walden the archdeaconry court of Colchester. Where a significant amount of property was left or where property fell under more than one jurisdiction, the will would be proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.

Since wills tended to be made only by those with property to leave, the sample necessarily precludes those artisans who had nothing much to leave and any results cannot, therefore, be taken to be representative of the entire artisanal segment of Saffron Walden society. Nevertheless, the wills of Saffron Walden artisans do provide interesting evidence about levels of literacy.

The nature of the witnesses to wills depends, to a certain extent, on the wealth and social standing of the testator. For example, it is evident that among the sort of men who held the higher offices within the community, it was common for them to either witness each other's wills or for a trained legal practitioner such as a solicitor's clerk to be employed. For example, John Good, a solicitor's clerk witnessed a number of wills at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the

nineteenth century.⁷⁹² For poorer people, friends and neighbours usually fulfilled this role. In the case of a will which needed to be made urgently, it was more a case of the nearest available witnesses. Both men and women served as witnesses to wills.

When the wills of artisans are analysed according to the testator's ability to sign his or her name, it would appear that three groups within the sample achieved 100% literacy. These were the watch and clockmakers, the cabinet makers and bakers. It is not surprising that literacy would be high amongst the first two groups since their crafts were high-value ones accepting only apprentices with the right kind of aptitude. In both cases at least a rudimentary education would be required. The reason for high levels of literacy amongst bakers is harder to determine, but a master baker needed to be able to measure quantities accurately and keep effective records of his stock. The group with the lowest percentage of literate testators was the cordwainers. As mentioned elsewhere, cordwaining was a craft to which parish apprentices were often placed, and these boys, even if they made good in later life, were the least likely to have received any kind of elementary education, even from the charity school, since admission was dependent on recommendation by the town's worthies.

Type of artisan	Percentage of sample able to sign their name
Clock and watchmakers	100%
Cabinet makers	100%
Bakers	100%
Maltsters	86%
Metal workers	75%
Cloth makers	73%
Cordwainers	72%

Table 12: Percentages of each sample group able to sign their name on their will.
(Based on locally proved wills and wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury)

⁷⁹² Good witnessed the wills of: Robert Bunten in 1798 (ERO, 176 CR 19); Thomas Havers also in 1798 (ERO, 260 CR 19). Both Bunten and Havers were themselves illiterate, but left legacies of property, goods and money.

Signatures on Apprenticeship Indentures

Since apprenticeship indentures often bear the signature of the receiving master, if literate, and sometimes that of the apprentice himself and his parent or guardian, an examination was made of the extant apprenticeship indentures of boys from Saffron Walden placed apprentice between 1700 and 1800.⁷⁹³ For each group of trades the whole sample was analysed and then this was compared with those boys who were apprenticed to a master in Saffron Walden.

	Whole Sample				Saffron Walden based			
	Total	Sign	Mark	Blank	Total	Sign	Mark	Blank
Building Trade	15	9 (60%)	2 (13%)	4 (27%)	11	7 (64%)	2 (18%)	2 (18%)
Cloth making	28	24 (86%)	3 (11%)	1 (3%)	13	11 (85%)	1 (7.5%)	1 (7.5%)
Clothing Trades	83	67 (81%)	12 (14%)	4 (5%)	53	46 (87%)	6 (11%)	1 (2%)
Woodworking Trades	13	7 (54%)	6 (46%)	0	3	1 (33%)	2 (67%)	0
Metalworking Trades	12	10 (83%)	1 (8.5%)	1 (8.5%)	5	3 (60%)	1 (20%)	1 (20%)
Food Trades	20	15 (75%)	4 (20%)	1 (5%)	4	3 (75%)	1 (25%)	0
Personal Services	22	20 (91%)	0	2 (9%)	9	7 (78%)	0	2 (22%)
Currier	6	4 (66%)	1 (17%)	1 (17%)	5	3 (60%)	1 (20%)	1 (20%)

Table 13: Percentages of Masters taking apprentices under Bromfield's Charity able to sign their names on Apprenticeship Indentures, making or mark or where there is no evidence.

⁷⁹³ ERO, D/B 2/CHR1/5, Apprenticeship indentures of boys placed under the auspices of Bromfield's Charity

Whole Sample of Bromfield's Apprentices, 1700-1800

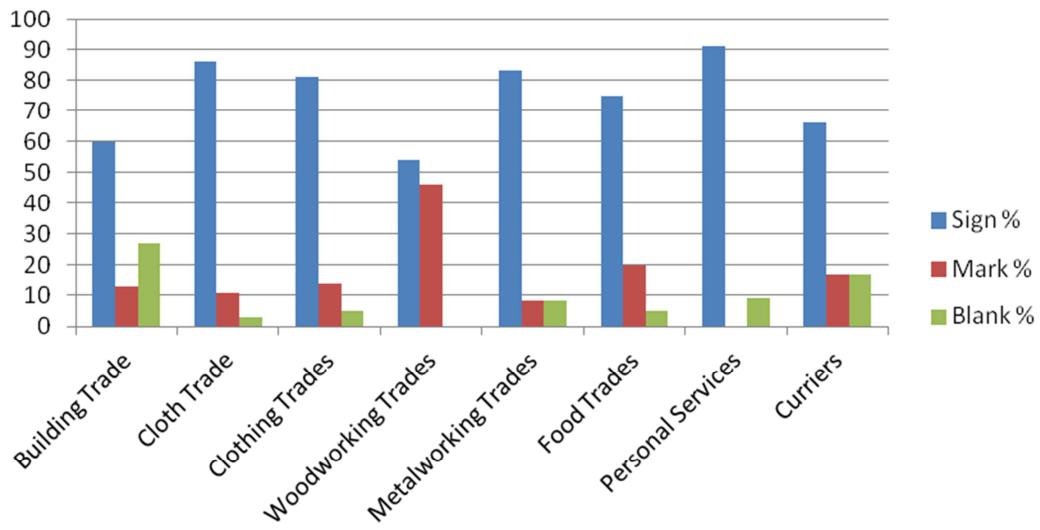


Chart 12: Percentages of Masters taking apprentices under Bromfield's Charity able to sign their names on Apprenticeship Indentures, making or mark or where there is no evidence.

Bromfield's Apprentices based in Saffron Walden, 1700-1800

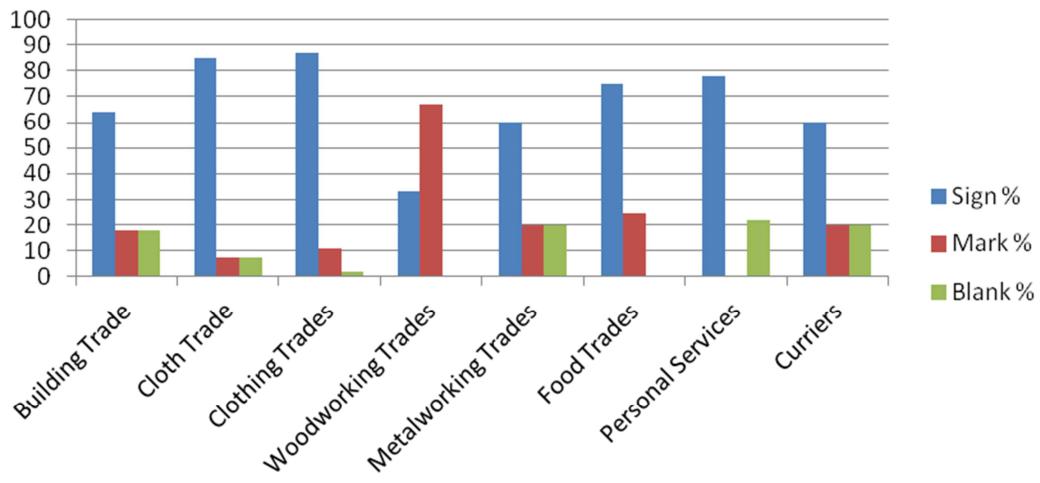


Chart 13: Percentages of Masters based in Saffron Walden taking apprentices under Bromfield's Charity able to sign their names on Apprenticeship Indentures, making or mark or where there is no evidence.

It can be seen that there is remarkably little difference between the two sets of data. Where the Saffron Walden data shows a lower percentages of masters able to sign their own names, there tends to be a higher number for whom no evidence

is available suggesting that were all the evidence to be available there would be even less discrepancy.

In the full dataset, the artisanal trades where 70% or more of the masters taking on an apprentice were able to sign their names were: cloth production and clothing trades, metalworking, food trades and personal services, i.e. barbers and wig makers. In the sample of Saffron Walden masters the same trades have a figure of over 70% literacy with the exception of metalworkers, however the percentage of masters for whom there is no evidence stands at 20% so it is possible that more metalworkers in Walden were in fact literate.

The least literate group of trades in the full dataset were the woodworkers (54%). In Walden the percentage of literate men was even lower at 33%. This was a very low figure but the sample was very small, only three men, all of whom were wheelwrights. Two of them were sufficiently affluent to feel it worthwhile to make a will: John Barrett and Thomas Bush. These men were likely to have been numerate since measurement was an important part of their daily work, badly measured components of a wheel would not have fitted together successfully. Perhaps they felt confident to write down figures but not words. In 1756 James Nelson, an apothecary by trade, suggested that the sons of artisans, whom he placed in the fourth of his five categories of society, the common trades,⁷⁹⁴ should be taught reading, writing, arithmetic and drawing, plus a knowledge of maps.⁷⁹⁵ Nelson goes on to comment that:

If a Bricklayer, or any other Workman, brings in a Bill, what a pitiful Figure It makes; nay it is sometimes so bad that none but the Writer himself can read it.

Such a comment suggests that Nelson viewed it as the norm that artisans should be able to write, at least after a fashion. It would be interesting to know, then, who wrote out the bills and kept the accounts for men like John Barrett and Thomas Bush. It could be suggested that perhaps their wives had attended the Charity School, but regrettably there is no evidence to back up this hypothesis. The mean percentage of men able to sign their names was 66% for the whole sample, while for Saffron Walden masters it was 59%. The mean percentage of masters in the whole sample making their mark was 11%. In Saffron Walden for the same period it was 17%. It can be seen then that levels of literacy in Saffron Walden were slightly lower than for the whole sample which included many other locations. The masters from London may have had a higher standard of literacy, of the 28 masters in the course of the eighteenth century only two made

⁷⁹⁴ James Nelson, *An Essay on the Government of Children* (London, 1756), p. 273.

⁷⁹⁵ Nelson, *Essay on Government*, p.337

their mark, evidence is lacking for a further two. This gives a rate of literacy of 86% and may have helped to raise the percentage for the whole sample.

In the course of the eighteenth century the level of literacy demonstrated by the ability of masters based in Saffron Walden to sign their names shows an increase:

	Sign	Percentage	Mark	Percentage	Blank	Percentage
1700-1725	25	71%	8	23%	2	6%
1726-1750	6	50%	4	33%	2	17%
1751-1775	28	82%	2	6%	4	12%
1776-1800	26	96%	1	4%	0	0

Table 14: Percentages of Saffron Walden based masters able to sign their names in the four quarters of the eighteenth century.

There is a clear upward trend which is only interrupted in the second quarter when the sample size is less than half that of all the other quarter centuries. The number of apprentices placed, irrespective of their location, is small in this quarter century suggesting that perhaps the charity's funds were depleted at this time.

The evidence of apprenticeship indentures shows that by the end of the century the very great majority of masters in a position to accept a charity apprentice in Saffron Walden were literate - they could sign their names. Whether this was due to the influence of the Charity School founded in 1715 is impossible to say, but the significance of such an institution, it seems, could well make a real difference to a community such as Saffron Walden. By the end of the eighteenth century it would seem that a degree of literacy had become the norm for most artisans.

Signatures on other documents such as the Oath of Allegiance of 1715

In 1715 holders of certain public offices were required to take an oath of allegiance, supremacy and abjuration.⁷⁹⁶ In Saffron Walden it is recorded that those swearing the oath signed their names in three separate lists, presumably according to their degree of importance in the community since the first list contains the names of the mayor and corporation. The list shows the ability of the men to sign their name. Some signatures are more fluent than others suggesting men well used to holding a pen. In other cases the signatures are extremely hesitant with poorly formed letters, an indication of a man whose level of literacy, particularly in so far as writing was concerned, was low. Margaret Spufford commented that most men who learned to write had learned by the age

⁷⁹⁶ 1 George 1, c13

of eight to nine years.⁷⁹⁷ This implied their attendance at school beyond the age at which many small boys were required to earn their living. Fluency in writing suggests that a man had enjoyed a reasonable standard of education. Those who learned their writing more painstakingly in later life because they needed it for their trade were less likely to write in a fluent hand. This latter group probably had little need of writing in their day-to-day lives and were not habitual writers. By the end of the century the situation was to be very different as the preceding discussion of literacy and apprenticeship indicates.

As well as the signatories to the 1715 Act of Supremacy there are various other lists of signatures of the inhabitants of Walden that occur from time to time in the course of the eighteenth century. They provide a window onto the degree of literacy possessed by different members of the town's population. These lists are interesting but are probably less informative with regard to the artisan sector than are the other sources of evidence discussed above.

Nonconformist materials

The records held by the various nonconformist churches of Saffron Walden can also throw light on the level of literacy of the eighteenth century population. For example, Adrian Davies has extracted figures concerning the literacy rates of Saffron Walden's Quaker population in the period 1697-1730 from the Monthly and Two Weeks Meetings held by Essex Quakers.⁷⁹⁸ Of a sample of seventy-five between 1700 and 1730, he suggests that the male literacy was between 66% and 86%. For women in the period in the same period based on a sample of seventy-five, the rates were 57% to 81%. It would be fascinating to compare these figures with a similar sized sample of Anglicans, but sadly no comparable evidence has come to light. However it could be posited that the figures in the case of Anglicans would be lower based on the evidence of the importance which members of the nonconformist churches placed on literacy.

It was not just members of the Society of Friends who attached a high importance to literacy. Members of other nonconformist churches showed equal zeal for education. This is evident, for example, in the records for the Upper Meeting of the Baptists dating from 1774.⁷⁹⁹ They include a church book showing the members of the church when it was set up, a list of people joining the communion subsequently and a list of births associated with the meeting.⁸⁰⁰ Although it is not possible to associate occupations with the majority of the

⁷⁹⁷ Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories* (London, 1981), p.26.

⁷⁹⁸ Adrian Davies, *The Quakers in English Society, 1655-1725* (Oxford, 2000), p.117

⁷⁹⁹ See above, Chapter 6, section on 'Religion and the Economic Success of the Artisan Segment of Saffron Walden society', p185

⁸⁰⁰ ERO, D/NC 23/1/1 Church Book belonging to the New Meeting 1775 and ERO, D/NC 23/3/1 Congregational Register of Births associated with the Upper Meeting, Saffron Walden, 1782 onwards.

people on these lists, where this has been possible it shows that artisans and shopkeepers formed an important part of the congregation. Occupations included bakers, braziers, carpenters, millers, shoemakers and weavers, as well as a liquor merchant and a stationer. Other members of the congregation may well have been labourers and apprentices. An interesting point to note is that in the list of members of the church when the trust was originally set up all appear to have had at least some level of literacy since all signed their names with greater or lesser degrees of fluency, including the women. The same is true of the people who signed the Confession of Faith in 1775⁸⁰¹ which later became a condition of being accepted into the congregation.

As speculated above, it could be that nonconformity, whether Independent, Baptist or Quaker in its nature, appealed particularly to people with a desire to better themselves, be it through acquiring at least the rudiments of an education or through hard work in a trade. Literacy was one means of such betterment.

From the preceding sources of information, it can be seen that during the eighteenth century there was a considerable increase in the general level of basic literacy in Saffron Walden and that this had an impact on the number of artisans who could read and write. At the beginning of the century some artisans were certainly able to read and write to some degree, possibly thanks to a brief period of education at the town's Edward VI Grammar School. The establishment of the Charity School in 1715 opened opportunities for education to the sons and daughters—for the foundation was for fifteen boys and fifteen girls—of those artisans who could not have aspired to send their sons to the grammar school, unless a particularly talented boy had been identified and sponsored by a leading citizen of the town. As result of the presence of the Charity School the number of people of the artisanal segment of society able to exhibit at least a basic standard of literacy grew. In turn, this suggests the central importance to communities of modest resources such as the charity school in their midst in enhancing the quality of life for individuals in the town through the crucial access that it provided to literacy.

Masters who could read and write were likely to pass this knowledge onto their own children and to their apprentices, supplementing the degree of literacy already possessed. As the century progressed, the evidence suggests that an increasing number of artisans were able to read and write, at least enough for their business needs. The considerable role of nonconformity in fostering literacy is suggested by the evidence cited above, and since Saffron Walden was a town with a strong nonconformist presence, it benefitted from this ethos.

⁸⁰¹ ERO, D/NB 23/1/1 Church Book of the New Meeting 1775

It might be suggested that the increased level of literacy was also a result of the changing proportions of the types of artisans, with an increase in the proportion of those for whom literacy mattered. Newspapers were now becoming common and would have been available at the larger inns of the town such as the Rose and Crown. They benefitted from regular stage coaches to and from London able to bring in the London papers as well as the provincial ones such as the *Chelmsford Chronicle* and the *Ipswich Journal*. Artisans may well have gathered to read the news, or to hear it read. In turn these informal gatherings might have given rise to more formal arrangements. It was at the Rose and Crown that the Rose Benefit Club met for at least the ten years between 1761 and 1771.⁸⁰²

Although by the end of the eighteenth century there were illiterate artisans working in Saffron Walden, their numbers were on the wane. Literacy was acknowledged by the vast majority of artisans as a skill that would benefit them in their business and thus was to be gained, developed in themselves and nurtured in their families and apprentices. There was a need for someone in an artisan family who could make appropriate calculations, keep effective records, write bills and exhibit the range of organisational skills necessary for a business to be a success. The possessor of these skills would normally have been the man of the house, but it is possible in some artisan families it was the wife who fulfilled these roles, having been, perhaps, the recipient of a basic education courtesy of the town's charity school.

Perhaps societal change among artisans was one of the factors driving the increase in the rates of literacy, but it would seem that the possession or lack of literacy had, for the greater part of the eighteenth century, the effect of increasing fractionalism within the sector along pre-existent lines of religious division rather than encouraging cohesiveness. The issue then becomes: did a shared literacy of itself enhance the cohesiveness of the artisanal segment? Of itself it probably did not. But literacy was also a means of creating shared norms and values, shared language and imagery. It was these that were likely to have created a wider circle of shared conversation and expectations. Previously, the combination of literacy with religious divisions is likely to have worked against coherence. It was only towards the turn of the century that a degree of literacy became increasingly important to all members of the artisan segment in Saffron Walden society.

⁸⁰² ERO, D/DU 66/12 Declared intent to sell property held by the Rose Benefit Club, Saffron Walden, 1771. In 1771 the 35 members of the Rose Benefit Society signed or put their mark to a declaration of intent to sell a property that the society owned in the Butter Market. Of the 35 members, 7 (20%) made their mark. The trades of 24 of the 35 men have been identified. The majority of members listed were artisans or shopkeepers, although 3 were listed as yeomen or farmers.

So it would seem that although literacy did begin to encourage a certain degree of coherence within the artisan segment of Saffron Walden society towards the end of the eighteenth century, in preceding years it had tended to increase fractionalism by virtue of the increased opportunities available to literate and numerate artisans. There were, of course, crafts where the need for a good level of literacy and numeracy was more important than it was in others, but all artisans benefitted from the ability to keep records of stock and orders, to complete simple calculations and to present legible and accurate estimates and bills and this is reflected in the number of books produced in the course of the eighteenth century to assist relatively poorly educated artisans to achieve these goals. For example Langley's *Practical Geometry Applied to the Useful arts of Building Surveying Gardening and Mensuration Calculated for the Service of Gentlemen as well as Artisans* published in 1726,⁸⁰³ *The Builder's Dictionary* of 1734⁸⁰⁴ or the better-known examples of pattern books for cabinet makers such as that by Chippendale in 1754.⁸⁰⁵ Perhaps it is true to say that the artisan segment of society was united by a desire for the literacy and numeracy that a reasonable education could give, but was equally fragmented by the ability to access such an education. Overall the weight of all circumstances bearing upon the ability to achieve decent standards of literacy and numeracy argues against coherence throughout the artisan segment for the greater part of the eighteenth century.

IV

The Female Artisan? Did she exist or was she just her husband's helpmeet?

There is no doubt that the women of a household had a role to fill in eighteenth century society. The precise nature of that role was conditioned by the social segment to which they belonged. For the wife of an artisan it has been suggested that she might have a crucial role as her husband's helpmeet. It is now relevant to enquire whether some women worked as artisans in their own right and to consider what level of literacy women in artisanal households might have had.

In the above section on literacy and the artisan, reference was made to the establishment of a Charity School in 1715 with places for fifteen male and fifteen female pupils. In that section, although it is stated that the names of the first

⁸⁰³ Batty Langley, *Practical Geometry Applied to the Useful arts of Building Surveying Gardening and Mensuration Calculated for the Service of Gentlemen as well as Artisans* (London, 1726)

⁸⁰⁴ Anon, *The Builder's Dictionary* (London, 1734)

⁸⁰⁵ Thomas Chippendale, *The gentleman and cabinet-maker's directory* (London, 1754)

pupils are known, the emphasis was placed on the trades of the fathers of the pupils and then on those ten of the first fifteen male pupils identified as being later apprenticed under the auspices of Bromfield's Charity. It is now time to consider the first fifteen female pupils and, indeed, other females who took their places among the artisanal sector of Saffron Walden society in the eighteenth century. Did issues of gender bring coherence or fractionalism to artisan society?

The first fifteen female pupils were divided into two groups: those placed in the care of Mrs Stubbing and those placed with Ann Brenes. From what has been discovered about these girls, it would seem that, like the male pupils, they were drawn from the lower part of the artisan sector or from the labouring class.⁸⁰⁶ The ages of the girls on admission to the Charity school seem to have varied between six and thirteen. The girls were to be taught to read and the principles of Christian religion according to the Anglican faith. Each girl was to be allowed a gown, shoes, stockings and a cap.⁸⁰⁷ The girls were also provided with either a Testament (New Testament), a Bible or a Primer. This was presumably based on their reading ability or otherwise on admission to the school. The accounts of the Charity School make it clear from which tradesman in the town the books or clothing was to be purchased. For example, books were to be bought from William Winstanley, who also provided gowns, but shoes could be bought from any one of five different cordwainers.⁸⁰⁸

It is far harder to follow the fortunes of the first fifteen female pupils of the Charity school than it is their male counterparts. However, by consulting marriage records it is possible that the weddings of three of the pupils can be identified, but even this cannot be guaranteed. Bromfield's charity did not apprentice girls so these records do not provide any information about what happened to the girls once they left the Charity School. It is to be hoped, however, that the education they received would have enabled them to support their husbands in trade through keeping accounts and the like.

Although it has not been possible to trace the life-paths of the first female pupils of the Charity School, there were women in Saffron Walden who were active in business. The Register of Duties paid for Apprentices' Indentures, 1710-1811⁸⁰⁹ shows that not only were there girls placed apprentice on whose indentures duty was paid, but that there were also female mistresses receiving apprentices.

⁸⁰⁶ It is important to reiterate at this point that the appellation 'labourer' at this time may have meant that the man was working as a journeyman employed by a master craftsman rather than necessarily a day labourer.

⁸⁰⁷ ERO, D/B2/SCH2/1 Accounts of the Charity School 1715

⁸⁰⁸ ERO, D/B2/SCH2/1 Accounts of the Charity School 1715

⁸⁰⁹ <http://search.ancestry.co.uk/search/db.aspx?dbid=1851> website interrogated 20/9/2011. This is based on TNA IR 1/1-79 (Register of Duties paid for Apprentices' Indentures, 1710-1811).

Year	Name of Master or Mistress	Name of Apprentice	Trade
1716	John Leverett	Susanna Swan	Mantua Maker
1733	Alice Leverett	Anne Killingback	Spinster
1741	Alice Leverett	Susanna Fairchild	Milliner
1760	Richard Pumfrett	Elizabeth Kidman	Cordwainer
1777	Hannah Catlin	William Nicholls	Cordwainer
1794	Mary Turner	Elizabeth Griggs	Cordwainer

Table 15: References to female apprentices or mistresses in Saffron Walden
From the Register of Duties paid for Apprentices' Indentures, 1710-1811

Since these were apprenticeships on which duty was paid, it must be assumed that these were apprenticeships that were taken seriously and were not of the same kind as the Parish Apprenticeships by which young people likely to become a burden to the parish were placed, preferably outside the parish so that a new parish would become responsible for their support under the Poor Law.⁸¹⁰ Girls placed apprentice by the parish were usually unpaid domestic servants by another name. Apprenticed in housewifery, they worked for their board and lodging for the term of the apprenticeship. The apprenticeships in Table 15 were different: they were to artisanal trades. Mantua making and millinery seem appropriate trades for girls, cordwaining is more unexpected.

For the purposes of comparison a survey has been made of the apprentice indentures of Bocking and Halstead, both towns in Essex retaining good runs of such indentures,⁸¹¹ although in both cases they were administered by the Overseers of the Poor rather than by a charity as was the case in Saffron Walden. At Bocking sixty of the 430 indentures refer to girls (14%). Of these 47% (28) showed no trade. Of the remaining 32, 27 showed the trade as 'weaver'. Whether the girl was actually apprenticed to the weaver or would have been expected to perform housewifery tasks in the household is unclear. Of the remaining five, three suggest housewifery of some kind as they were apprenticed, respectively, to dairying, housewifery and farming, but one was to a glover and the other to a mantua maker, both trades which a girl could have followed, particularly the latter. A number of the wills of women of Bocking are also available but they contain no references to the testators having carried out an artisanal trade. The Halstead sample shows 55 female apprenticeships out of a total of 387, again 14%. The overseers seem to have been more punctilious

⁸¹⁰ See above chapter 5.

⁸¹¹ ERO, D/P 268/14 and D/P 96/14, Apprenticeship records of Bocking and Halstead respectively.

about giving the name of the trade. Only six have been left blank. Of the other 49, 35 (64%) make reference to housewifery, occasionally in conjunction with weaving of some kind. There are also five references specifically to bay or say weaving, ten to cotton weaving⁸¹² and two to stay making which might be a trade suited to young women. So, in these towns, as in Saffron Walden, references to female apprenticeship to artisanal trades are not particularly common, and in the latter two parishes it is difficult to be certain whether the trade shown actually disguised a future as a household servant of some kind rather than training in a trade.

Christine Wiskin suggests that by the eighteenth century gild or borough ordinances could work for or against women. In favourable circumstances married women could trade as though they were single, widows could continue the trades of their late husbands, often supported by journeymen already involved in the business, and daughters of freemen could continue the trades of their late fathers. Elsewhere the ability to trade would be tolerated provided it did not encroach on male occupations. In other areas the reaction to women in business was far less favourable.⁸¹³

In Saffron Walden we have seen that a few girls were apprenticed to artisanal trades and that there were equally a few mistresses who took on apprentices, both male and female.⁸¹⁴ But is there other evidence of women trading in their own right in Saffron Walden? The accounts of the Charity School between 1715 and 1745⁸¹⁵ include the names of not only people who subscribed funds towards the setting up and running of the Charity School, but also the traders from whom supplies and uniforms for the school should be obtained. There is only one female in the list of subscribers, Mary Gorsuch, a widow. Mary was the widow of John Gorsuch who died in 1712. John is listed in the burial register with the title of 'Mr', suggesting that he was either a gentleman or a very successful trader. He was buried in the cross alley of the church which supports the idea that he was of relatively elevated social status.⁸¹⁶ Mary was the only woman to attend the meeting held to set up the school. She probably took on the role in the community that her husband had held. Between 1715 and 1725 she contributed five shillings a year to the costs of running the school. In 1715 Mary Gorsuch was not the only female contributing to the running costs of the school. Anne,

⁸¹² The references to cotton weaving all date from 1799 and are evidence of overseers sending parish or charity children north to the growing cotton industry to get them off the parish books. Mill owners were happy to accept cheap labour from southern parishes to increase their workforces at this time.

⁸¹³ Christine Wiskin, 'Urban Businesswomen in Eighteenth Century England' in *Women and Urban Life in Eighteenth Century England* ed. Rosemary Sweet and Penelope Lane (Aldershot, 2003) p.89.

⁸¹⁴ See Table 4 above.

⁸¹⁵ ERO, D/B2/SCH2/1 Accounts of the Charity School 1715.

⁸¹⁶ ERO, D/P192/1/4.7-8 Saffron Walden burials.

Countess of Suffolk, contributed £5, and there were contributions of £1 each from Mesdames Firmin, Dent and West, whilst Mistress Baker gave ten shillings. Of the six ladies, it seems likely that Mary Gorsuch was the only one actively involved in the running of the school since she had attended the initial meeting.

The accounts also make reference to female traders being involved in the supply of goods to the Charity School. In 1715, Ann Hopwood is listed as one of the five suppliers of shoes. She was a widow, her husband John having died that year; she was presumably continuing his business. In the same year Ann Goldsmith was supplying stockings, Widow Rankin fabric and Widow Agus caps and bands.

In 1719 the accounts show payments for the building and painting of a gallery in the church to accommodate the Charity School children. Mary Morgan was paid for supplying nails and other ironware. Mary Morgan was a spinster who died in 1752.⁸¹⁷ In the accounts for 1720-1, Mrs Blacklock was to provide caps and bands and Dame Breen thread. Dame Breen was the wife of Robert Breens, a fustian weaver who made a will in 1734.⁸¹⁸

It can be seen that women were accepted as traders in Saffron Walden in the eighteenth century, as Deborah Simonton suggests was the case in many towns at this time.⁸¹⁹ In most instances the evidence from Saffron Walden demonstrates that it was either widows carrying on their husbands' businesses or spinsters working in the businesses that their fathers had set up who were trading independently. Where the appellation 'Mistress' is used, it is not always possible to identify the marital status of the woman concerned because 'Mistress' tended to indicate status and the respect of the community for the woman rather than marital status.

Many more women were certainly working in partnership with their husbands in business, either supporting the husband by providing assistance in the shop, keeping accounts or by working with him to provide goods for the business. Other women may have worked in trades that were complementary to the main family business. For example the will of Frances Doughty, widow, proved in 1714, includes the legacy of a loom to her daughter Elizabeth Odell at which she says that she customarily wove swaddling bands and a pair of blades and a winding wheel to her son James.⁸²⁰ Frances' husband Thomas, who died in

⁸¹⁷ ERO, 42 CR 16, Will of Mary Morgan, 1752.

⁸¹⁸ ERO, 317CR15, Will of Robert Breens, 1734.

⁸¹⁹ Deborah Simonton, 'Claiming their place in the corporate community' in *The Invisible Woman* eds. Isabelle Baudino, Jacques Carré and Cécile Révauger (Aldershot, 2005), p.102.

⁸²⁰ ERO, 253 CR 12, will of Frances Doughty, proved 1714.

1710, was a swaddling band weaver,⁸²¹ so it is likely that Frances assisted him, perhaps with the necessary winding and then took over the actual weaving when he died.

If Mary Gorsuch and Mary Morgan are to be taken as examples of women working in Saffron Walden in the eighteenth century, women were hardly invisible as has been suggested in *The Invisible Woman*.⁸²² In 1768 the name 'Martha Adcock' appears in the list of names of people selected to serve on the Grand Jury.⁸²³ It is likely that this is an error since her husband's name was Matthew, but Martha would have been a person of some status in the town as the keeper of one of the larger ale houses. In 1786 in three out of seventeen alehouses in the town a woman was named as the licensee: Mary Pilgrim at the White Hart, Mary Smith at The Bull and Sibitha Adcock⁸²⁴ at The Bell.⁸²⁵ The White Hart was a large establishment near the Market Place, The Bull Inn was another fair-sized alehouse near the market, whilst The Bell was in Castle Street. In 1799 Ann Ersewell was licensee of the Cross Keys, a large establishment on the corner of the High street and King Street. In each case these were more than mere alehouses although they did not have the status of the Rose and Crown in the Market Place.

Although Mary Gorsuch was unusual in attending meetings which usually were the preserve of men, for example the meetings held at the time when the Charity School was being set up, patently women were involved in the commercial life of the town. Further evidence of this comes from the insurance policies that were taken out in the 1780s by inhabitants of Saffron Walden.⁸²⁶ Although the vast majority of the 125 policy holders were men, eleven were women. Of these eleven, nine were either spinsters or widows, women with property that they needed to protect, but two were tradeswomen. Sibitha Adcock appears again, taking out insurance in a sum of £200 in 1784 and describing herself as a victualler, whilst in 1777 Rebecca Rankin, who described herself as a grocer, draper and tallow chandler, took out insurance in the very large sum of £1,600.

Whilst neither Sibitha nor Rebecca was practising artisanal trades, their engagement in business is further evidence that women were involved in the business world of eighteenth century Saffron Walden.

⁸²¹ ERO, D/P 192/1/4/7-8, Burial records for Saffron Walden.

⁸²² See note 813 above.

⁸²³ ERO, D/B 2/QSS1 series 1768.

⁸²⁴ Sibitha Adcock was the daughter of Matthew Adcock mentioned above.

⁸²⁵ ERO, D/B 2/QSS6/2 Alehousekeepers Licensing Book, 1786-1815

⁸²⁶ UKDA, SN 1838, Fire Insurance records derived from fire insurance policy registers of the Sun and Royal Exchange Insurance Companies between 1775 and 1786.

One further possible source of evidence about the presence or absence of female artisans in eighteenth century Saffron Walden is legacies in wills. Although few and far between, there are occasional references in the wills of artisans concerning the disposition of the tools of their trade or their stock-in-trade to female relatives. For example, in the will of Abraham Cornell, a baker, written in 1753 and proved in 1767, he leaves to his daughter Rachel all the stock in what he describes as 'her shop'.⁸²⁷ Unfortunately it has not been possible to identify the nature or the location of Rachel's business. In the will of Ruth Rusted, herself the widow of a baker, made in 1782 and proved in 1790, she leaves to her daughter Ruth 'all my beams, seals, weights, flour bins and sacks to enable her to continue in the business I now follow, unmolested by any of my other children'.⁸²⁸ The legacy is on the proviso that Ruth is still single and living with her mother at the time of her mother's death. This will suggests that Ruth senior was practising the trade of a baker, having presumably inherited the business from her husband, James.⁸²⁹

It is interesting to note that as well as having a trade in common, both of these families were nonconformist. The Cornells attended the Abbey Lane Chapel whilst the Rusteds were members of the High Street Baptist Church. Although too small a number to be in any sense conclusive, it does suggest that maybe nonconformist artisan families were more open to the idea of a daughter following an artisan trade in her own right, particularly if she was single and would need to support herself in life.

The artisan wills of Saffron Walden do throw up a few more references to women following artisanal trades. There are another seven wills, all made by women, which make reference to trade in some form or another. Of the seven wills, six are those of widows and one of a spinster. They all make reference to either stock-in-trade or business premises: shops, stalls, malting office. The most informative is that of Frances Doughty proved in 1714⁸³⁰ which not only mentions equipment to be distributed, her son James was to have a pair of blades and a winding wheel, but also makes specific reference to her trade as a weaver of swaddling bands. The loom on which she wove them is part of the legacy to her daughter Elizabeth Odell, who presumably was also able to weave in order for the loom to be an appropriate legacy. Frances Doughty also left a not insignificant amount of property so her weaving was probably not a necessity for survival but rather a trade of which she was proud.

⁸²⁷ ERO, 55 CR 17, Will of Abraham Cornell, proved 1767

⁸²⁸ ERO, 347 CR 18, Will of Ruth Rusted, proved 1790

⁸²⁹ ERO, 289 CR 17, Will of James Rusted, proved 1774

⁸³⁰ ERO, 253 CR 12, Will of Frances Doughty, widow, proved in 1714.

The other six wills are less clear about whether the woman concerned was actively involved in an artisanal trade or not. It seems likely in most cases that they were simply continuing their deceased husband's business, probably supported by family, apprentices and journeymen who provided the skilled labour.⁸³¹

The nine women discussed above form only a very small part of the artisanal population of Saffron Walden, but it is entirely possible that other women were involved in trade to whom all reference has now been lost.

On the basis of such evidence as we have, it is interesting to note, though, the range of trades in which women were involved in eighteenth century Saffron Walden. There were shopkeepers and alehouse keepers as well as butchers, bakers, cordwainers, blacksmiths, mantua makers and milliners to name but a few. These do not necessarily accord well with the contemporary view of trades suitable for a woman. In *A general description of all trades, digested in alphabetical order*⁸³² published in 1747 the anonymous author is quite precise about the trades 'he' deems suitable for girls. Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace has analysed the book and lists trades to which girls can be apprenticed as: bodice making, button making, hatband making, hoop petticoat making, mantua making and millinery.⁸³³ As we have seen (above p.192) there are two examples of girls being apprenticed as mantua makers or milliners, but otherwise Saffron Walden does not seem to match up with what was happening in London.

The use of a range of different source materials not normally considered when discussing the role of women has suggested that in Saffron Walden, perhaps, the role of women in trade and artisan crafts was closer, although still not identical, to Christine Wiskin's suggestion that economically active women were to be found in a limited range of occupations, especially those involved in the provision of food and drink, textile and clothing production and shopkeeping.⁸³⁴ Some women ran businesses in their own right, others operated as the widows or spinster daughters of town artisans or tradesmen. The lack of a rigid gild structure in Saffron Walden perhaps made it easier for a competent woman to run a business and it is possible that the strength of nonconformity in the town led to a more open approach to women tradespeople than was to be found in other

⁸³¹ It is possible to identify Elizabeth Archer as being involved in a malting enterprise and Frances Harris had a number of butcher's shops and stalls. The other women make reference to shops or stock-in-trade without being more specific.

⁸³² Anon, *A general description of all trades, digested in alphabetical order: by which parents, guardians, and trustees, may, with greater ease and ...* (London for T. Waller, 1747).

⁸³³ Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping, and Business in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1997), p.117.

⁸³⁴ Wiskin, 'Urban Businesswomen in Eighteenth Century England' p.87.

towns where the established church was more dominant. It is also interesting to note that, of the eight female wills that make specific reference to stock-in-trade, tools of a trade, commercial premises or a business, five of the eight testators were literate. Perhaps the combination of literacy, nonconformity and the lack of a rigid gild structure allowed women in Saffron Walden with a degree of business acumen to make use of either a formal apprenticeship or a trade or craft learned alongside a husband and to develop their own businesses when circumstances either allowed or, indeed, forced it upon them.

V

Conclusion

The content of this chapter throws up some interesting questions about the nature of fractionalism within the artisan segment of the population of Saffron Walden in the course of the eighteenth century.

The evidence from the available records suggests that religion enhanced fractionalism within the artisan sector of society. As set out above⁸³⁵ success in the public life of the town—that is membership of the self-perpetuating oligarchy of the Corporation at the level of Alderman or above—required adherence to the tenets of the Anglican Church. In practice this took the form of sacrament certificates given for public participation in Holy Communion in an Anglican church. Membership of one of the nonconformist churches in the town automatically excluded a man from one of these civic positions unless he was prepared to compromise his principles—and it is very likely that some did! A lower position in the hierarchy of the town such as constable or overseer of the poor was open to a member of the nonconformist community. In this context common-sense dictated that talent should not be entirely overlooked because of religious persuasion!

For a nonconformist artisan the lack of a position in the higher echelons of the Corporation, although it deprived him of networking opportunities that mixing with the ‘Great and Good’ might have afforded, did not mean that such an artisan was deprived of networks which might aid him in his trade. As we have seen members of the Independent and Baptist communities had networks which

⁸³⁵ See Chapter 2, p52

spread over neighbouring counties because of the way that their churches were organised.⁸³⁶

As seen above, Quaker networks were much more extensive, again because of the way in which the Society of Friends was organised into Annual and Quarterly meetings which drew representatives from all over the country. In the case of the Quakers, at least, their extensive networks allowed not only for economic, but also social links, to be established in a way that was not open to an artisan member of the parish church unless he held a very elevated social position in the town.

It would seem, then, that membership of a nonconformist church did lead to fractionalism amongst the artisan sector of society in Saffron Walden since—given a level playing field in the other factors necessary for success in an artisanal trade—it seemed to enhance the probability of commercial success.

In addition, as shown above,⁸³⁷ the links between nonconformity and literacy also led to fractionalism amongst the artisan segment, particularly in the earlier part of the eighteenth century. It has been suggested that nonconformists placed a greater importance on literacy than did members of the established church. The lack of source materials means that it is not possible to compare the relatively high levels of basic literacy among artisan members of the Baptist and Abbey Lane congregations with their peers belonging to the Anglican church.⁸³⁸

As the century progressed, however, the effect of the fractionalism brought about by literacy decreased as general levels of literacy increased among the artisan segment of Saffron Walden. It seems likely that this was affected by the increasing influence of the Charity School in providing a basic level of education for the children, both sons and daughters, of deserving artisans. The importance of this single institution in decreasing the fractionalism caused by the possession or otherwise of a basic level of literacy amongst the artisan segment cannot be over emphasized. Nonconformist fathers were more than happy to allow their children to attend the services held in the parish church as required by the foundation of the Charity School if it allowed their children to gain the prize that was literacy.⁸³⁹

As concluded above, artisans were united by a desire to obtain basic standards of literacy and numeracy to allow them to take advantage of the opportunities that such skills afforded, but for the greater part of the eighteenth century access was

⁸³⁶ See above footnote 771 about Baptist links with Cambridgeshire.

⁸³⁷ See above Section III, current chapter, on Literacy and the Artisan

⁸³⁸ See above footnotes 734, 735, 736.

⁸³⁹ See above footnote 838.

not equally available to the families of all artisans. The factors which influenced this have been considered in detail but one of the most telling was, without doubt, religious persuasion.

Is it possible to use this case study of Saffron Walden to throw light on the wider implications of religious persuasion and literacy in causing fractionalism within the artisan population in general? In many ways the position in Saffron Walden could be said to reflect that of many small eighteenth century market towns. Many others possessed a Grammar School which was later supplemented by a Charity School before the later advent of the National and British schools movements in the nineteenth century it is true, but the religious makeup of the population of Saffron Walden means that there were factors at work that were particular to the town. Thus if any attempt should be made to generalise from this particular case study, it is important to consider the specific factors that gave Saffron Walden its precise character.

Nonetheless, this aspect of this case study may well have implications on a larger scale. It seems to indicate that the random availability of institutional provisions such as the Charity School in Saffron Walden had a very real effect on differentiating one locality from another and artisans in one place from artisans in another. This was increasingly the case across the eighteenth century as the benefits arising from literacy increased.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

There is no doubt, based on the evidence of the town archive and other surviving records, that the artisan segment formed a major part of Saffron Walden society and, indeed, that of other small market towns of a similar character.⁸⁴⁰ However, studies of the available source materials and the various case studies⁸⁴¹ carried out as part of this thesis indicate that there was a marked differentiation within this segment of society. Moreover, it was characterised by huge volatility. Two men born at around the same time, with roughly the same opportunities of birth and place in the sibling order, and carrying out very similar trades could find themselves in very different positions as they moved into old age. During the research process the description of and reasons for this fractionalism and this volatility became central to this thesis.

In drawing together the evidence, it has become clear that the fate of the artisan who lived in Saffron Walden in the eighteenth century, worshipped in one of its churches and took his refreshment in one of its inns or alehouses, was dependent on three main factors: fractionalism, personal good luck or misfortune, and the impact of charitable institutions. The importance of each of these factors will be reviewed here in the light of the available source materials and the various case studies within this thesis.

i. Fractionalism

It would seem that fractionalism pervaded all aspects of the life of an eighteenth century Saffron Walden artisan. On a purely personal front the life chances of any given artisan were heavily influenced by his business acumen. This, in turn, was affected by the circumstances of his birth, the education and training that he received and the support which his particular part of the social segment offered.⁸⁴² However, in the long run these factors could not overcome the mistakes made by a man who lacked the necessary personal business acumen. In the artisanal society, and in the eighteenth century in particular, this was a critical factor.

Nonetheless, personal circumstances alone did not govern the range of life chances experienced by members of the artisan segment of society. Firstly the

⁸⁴⁰ See above chapter 2.

⁸⁴¹ See the appendices 3 and 4 below, the Archer family and Thomas Scrambler.

⁸⁴² See above in the chapter 7 the support offered by the Society of Friends to its members who experienced problems with their businesses, pp. 191ff.

artisans and small tradesmen formed the backbone of their communities through their interaction with the civic, economic, social and religious life of the town. As such they represented a social type of which few remain today but in the eighteenth century their existence as a crucial part of the structure of the town was clearly evident to both their contemporaries and to more recent commentators. It was, however, equally clear that it was not a segment whose form was set in stone. Although central to the social structure of the town, it was not, in itself, an impervious social group. Men moved in and out of the segment and the vagaries of circumstance meant that the fortunes of its members could change markedly over the course of their lifetimes. In itself this contributed to a key characteristic of the segment that it was distinctly and markedly fragmented and fractionalised.

So, what was it that gave rise to these characteristics? In particular, what caused this fragmentation and fractionalism? The fractionalism was the result of the factors mentioned above combined with an element of geographical mobility.

For many artisans, theirs was a ‘public’ life and thus service as a civic or parochial officer was a significant facet of their existence. Moreover, the very form of their manufacture and commerce also contributed to this public existence. In terms of the civic and parish structure of the town, records show that artisans served in all the offices available from lowly parish constable to the Mayor who also served as a justice of the peace and was styled not only by himself but also by his peers as a ‘gentleman’. The artisan who rose to serve his community as its Mayor was a man of considerable standing in the town who might enter into correspondence with the local gentry as did Henry Archer, a maltster, during the ‘Bread Riots’ of the last decade of the century.⁸⁴³ A boy who started life as an apprentice might, thus, end his life as a respected ‘gentleman’ with all the privileges that such an appellation carried, but only if he was prepared to publicly espouse the rituals of the established church in order to gain the necessary sacrament certificates as mentioned above.⁸⁴⁴

Other men served the town as churchwardens. Once again these tended to be men of substance as well as members of the established church, as were the Mayors and Aldermen. Access to these positions was denied to members of the nonconformist community since a valid sacrament certificate was required to take on these offices.⁸⁴⁵ Overseers of the poor, however, were not required to be in possession of a valid sacrament certificate and so this post was open to

⁸⁴³ ERO, D/DBy O12, Copies of correspondence and some original letters in connection with the Saffron Walden bread riots, 1795-6.

⁸⁴⁴ See above p.52

⁸⁴⁵ ERO, D/D B2/QSS7/14 Sacrament certificates for Saffron Walden.

members of the various nonconformist churches of the town, opening up a pool of talent that would have otherwise gone unused.

The lowest parish official for whom some records exist in the Saffron Walden archive was the parish constable. This was a post for either a young man with ambition or steady older man with no ambition. For a young artisan with aspirations towards major civic office, and perhaps an influential patron, the acquisition of the post of parish constable was a stepping stone towards greater things.⁸⁴⁶ There were also other parish offices including Surveyor of the Highways, Scavenger and various market officials but the records do not provide sufficient references to enable us to see if these were posts taken up by artisans.

The artisan who rose in the civic and parish hierarchy was in a very different position to those who were the objects of attention of men such as the parish constable or the overseer of the poor, although they, too, might be artisans. The records show that men who practised artisanal trades were also to be found in the parish workhouse or in receipt of parish relief. Some artisans also experienced the ultimate indignity of being recorded in the parish records as 'paupers' on their burial. So holding parochial office, or, alternatively being the object of this work served to differentiate among artisans.

Economic circumstances as well as the achievement or lack of a position in the civic hierarchy also led to fractionalism in the artisan class as the chapter above on economic fractionalism explains.⁸⁴⁷ Some trades, when practised by a skilful artisan with his fair share of business acumen, reaped higher rewards than others. The successful maltster or cloth worker was likely to earn more than a humble cordwainer or carpenter, although there were always exceptions where business acumen allowed a lowly tradesman to make a healthy success of his business as did the Catlin dynasty of cordwainers.⁸⁴⁸

The economic success of an artisan was conditioned not only by his own business acumen, but also by the circumstances of his origins which determined the trade to which he might be apprenticed. The size of the premium demanded for the placing of an apprentice meant that only more affluent men could seek to apprentice a son to an apothecary, gold- or silversmith or cabinet maker. A boy dependent on charity for his apprenticeship premium had to set his sights considerably lower and accept a future as a cordwainer, tailor, barber or

⁸⁴⁶ He might have consulted books such as the *Complete Parish Officer* (published 1763) to help him ensure that his duties were carried out so satisfactorily that they might come to the notice of the ruling oligarchy of the town.

⁸⁴⁷ See above Chapter 6.

⁸⁴⁸ See above pp. 174ff.

woodworker.⁸⁴⁹ At the very bottom of the pile, the parish apprentice had to be grateful for whatever place could be found for him. Anything to stop him from being a charge on the parish would do! So, the marked differences in what apprenticeship meant for different boys also contributed to the differentiation of the segment.

Macro-economic conditions also had a marked effect on the economic fractionalism of Saffron Walden's artisan segment. This was the case both in terms of structural changes within the larger economy and in terms of cyclical fluctuations in the health of the economy as a whole. In the early part of the century the cloth trade was the backbone of Saffron Walden's prosperity. Wool was spun, combed and woven before being dyed—sometimes using the saffron crocus which grew in profusion around the town and which gave the town its name. Wills show that weavers and woolcombers were men of property.⁸⁵⁰ But it is evident that changes in economic circumstances in the middle of the century when European wars meant that overseas markets for the 'New Draperies' contracted, led to a decline in the cloth trade. Only three of seventeen wills of cloth workers discussed above are dated in the last three decades of the century. The rapid decline of the cloth trade meant that many of Saffron Walden's cloth workers fell on hard times in the middle years of the century and it became necessary to find alternative ways of earning, or at least supplementing, a declining living. The arrival of a new owner at Audley End with plans for many changes, including landscaping of the estate and the highway diversions that this required, must have proved a God-send to the hard-pressed parish officials faced with a high demand for parish support.

Fortunately for the town the enparking of Audley End was not the only new economic opportunity to present itself. The growing demand for malt to serve the London market offered an opportunity for the entrepreneurially minded artisan and many seized it, working either full-time in their new trade or using it to supplement declining income from the cloth trade. In the latter years of the century large-scale maltsters replaced clothiers as the dominant force in the town. The consequences of these macro-economic circumstances serve to remind us that towns like Saffron Walden were, indeed, part of a larger and more impersonal economic system that radically affected the lives of the inhabitants.

⁸⁴⁹ Chart 4 above shows trades to which Bromfield's children were apprenticed.

⁸⁵⁰ Wills of Saffron Walden weavers and woolcombers show 10 proved in the local church courts and 7 in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury in the eighteenth century. Of these 14 were proved before 1765. Of course there were many more clothworkers for whom no will exists and who may have had much smaller estates.

And how did these changes affect fractionalism within the artisan segment of Saffron Walden society? Those with skill, wit and entrepreneurial knowhow rose above the problems that the decline of the cloth trade had presented, others, as a consequence, fell into poverty. An example of this decline is to be seen in the case of Thomas Scrambler⁸⁵¹ who had been of sufficient status in 1715 to sign the Oath of Allegiance to George I⁸⁵² but who, by 1751, was in receipt of a charitable handout, the Tollesbury Dole of Cloth.⁸⁵³

Economic fractionalism was, undoubtedly, a fact of life within the artisan segment of Saffron Walden society, influenced as it was by differentiation not only between but also within trades. This differentiation was a result of the business acumen of the individual, family circumstances, their ability to cope with macro-economic events and their religious persuasion.

As we have seen above,⁸⁵⁴ it would seem from the evidence available that the religious persuasions of the artisan segment of Saffron Walden society further enhanced the degree of fractionalism within this sector. Whilst membership of the established church might permit a man to climb the greasy pole of civic and parochial office holding, attendance at one of the town's nonconformist churches might bar this particular path even to an ambitious man. But nonconformity also carried with it certain advantages that might aid a young artisan.

In the process of research it has become evident that members of the Baptist and Independent communities had networks which embraced neighbouring counties, whilst Quaker networks were even more extensive. The nature of the Quaker networks in particular offered not only economic but also social links in a way not open to an ordinary artisan member of the congregation of the Anglican church. Given a level playing field in terms of the other factors necessary for success in an artisanal trade, it would appear that membership of one of the town's nonconformist churches did enhance the probability of commercial success and thus led to further fractionalism within the segment. In Saffron Walden, at least, during the eighteenth century non-conformity was strong with no less than three different churches attracting congregations in the latter part of the century as well as those attending the Quaker Meeting.

The nature of the nonconformist networks meant that Quaker artisans, in particular, were able to travel the country in search of enhanced employment opportunities certain of a welcome and support at the Meeting wherever they

⁸⁵¹ See below Appendix 4 'Thomas Scrambler, a man whose aspirations exceeded his fate.'

⁸⁵² ERO, D/B 2/QSS2/3, list of those taking the oath in 1715.

⁸⁵³ Saffron Walden Museum, uncatalogued, see above p.186

⁸⁵⁴ See Chapter 7 above.

settled provided they were of good character. However, they were not alone in practising mobility in the pursuit of better opportunities and it would seem that mobility, in all its guises, was one of the factors which contributed to fractionalism within the artisanal segment of eighteenth century Saffron Walden society.⁸⁵⁵

The social status of a boy, as has been discussed, influenced where and to what trade he might be apprenticed. Boys from more affluent artisanal backgrounds were more likely to be apprenticed to masters in the larger provincial towns and in London where their training was more likely to be at the cutting edge of innovation. The placement of charity apprentices, on the other hand, was more likely to be influenced by the links that the men well placed in the town's hierarchy had established and so might be at a distance or much closer to home, even within the town itself. Parish apprentices were placed as far as possible away from the home parish to enable them to secure settlement elsewhere and thus be less of a drain on parish funds.

The laws of settlement, combined with a desire for social improvement, also had an effect on fractionalism within the artisan segment in the eighteenth century. Those armed with a settlement certificate from their home parish or welcomed by relatives or employers willing to enter into a bond on their behalf were more likely to settle successfully into a new parish than were those whose fortunes were on the wane and who might be returned by the parish authorities to their original place of settlement.⁸⁵⁶ Of course those who could afford to buy or rent property subject to parish rates could circumvent the laws of settlement altogether.⁸⁵⁷ These were normally professional men or the most highly skilled artisans: again, this contributed to fractionalism!

Mobility was, of course, not merely geographic in its nature. Within any artisan's life course,⁸⁵⁸ the stage reached might affect his social position. This was particularly so in his more mature years. In the middle years of his career an artisan might hope to be secure in his standing in the community, an independent master with a position of some kind in its organisational hierarchy. As mentioned above, some artisans rose to be aldermen and mayor,⁸⁵⁹ but others,

⁸⁵⁵ See above, the chapter 5, section iv on the impact of religious fractionalism on the artisan segment of the population of eighteenth century Saffron Walden.

⁸⁵⁶ For example Leonard Alderson whose efforts to improve his lot met with little success, see above p.150

⁸⁵⁷ Release and conveyance of a property in Market End, Saffron Walden, between Mr. William Mapletoft, gentleman, and Richard Burrows, cabinet maker, 3rd July, 1787 and a mortgage between Richard Burrows and Samuel Cole, maltster, in the sum of £300, 4th July, 1787. MSS *penes me*.

⁸⁵⁸ See above Chapter 5

⁸⁵⁹ See above p.227

less fortunate, began to slide towards pauperdom as illness struck and businesses failed.⁸⁶⁰

In old age this fractionalism continued. Some men had become wealthy; others were dependent for their survival on their families or on charity. Even within the group in receipt of charity fractionalism is clear. Those in receipt of patronage from the town's ruling oligarchy might find themselves housed in relative comfort for the rest of their lives in the town's Almshouse, others, less fortunate, were forced to accept parish relief or the ignominy of the workhouse in their failing years.

Thus it can be seen that divisions existed within the artisan segment of society: between those who had and those who had not; between those who accrued wealth and those who lost both financially and in terms of social connections; between those who belonged to a particular religious denomination and those who did not. Fractionalism was rife in the society of artisans in eighteenth century Saffron Walden. Each sub-group had different expectations of what life might bring and of what status they might attain. It might be said that each sub-group experienced a different way of life and that the difference between those at the top and those at the bottom of the artisan segment may have gaped as wide for members of that social sector as the difference between gentleman and labourer. Further, in some degree the system must have been reflexive, feeding back on itself. This was because of the limited physical space that such a town encompassed and because the community was so familiar with its members and the various facets of their lives. The differentiation in fluctuating fortunes that we can reconstruct from the archives must also have been clearly evident to contemporaries. Quite possibly, it was a matter of discussion when observing the fate of individuals and their families in the course of social gatherings and at vestry meetings.⁸⁶¹ These observations of others must have shaped the fears and expectations of the observant artisan.

An investigation of fractionalism within the artisan segment was not the original aim of this research, but an examination of the sources indicated it to be the salient feature in eighteenth century Saffron Walden. Two other major conclusions have also arisen from this study: the role of misfortune in the lives of artisans and the importance of the presence or absence of charitable institutions to those artisans. Both of these also had a marked effect on the fractionalism which has been found to exist within the artisan segment of eighteenth century Saffron Walden.

⁸⁶⁰ See above Chapter 5, iii.

⁸⁶¹ ERO, D/B 2/PAR10/1 Parish Committee Book, 1793-9

ii. Misfortune

As has been become evident in a number of preceding chapters, misfortune could have a very marked effect on the life of an eighteenth century artisan. The type of misfortune which might befall an artisan could include: illness, family tragedy, natural disaster and fire. Chance meant that all artisans, no matter their status in the community, level of skill or business acumen, could fall victim to such misfortunes. However there was a further misfortune that could beset some artisans – ineptitude in business matters, and this immediately led to fractionalism within the segment. Let us return to a consideration of those extraneous misfortunes and reflect on whether these, too, could lead to fractionalism within the sector. Random misfortune played a far greater part in the lives of individuals because of the limited availability of institutional cushioning to which modern British society is accustomed.

Illness could strike at any time. Wealthier artisans might have recourse to the services of one of Saffron Walden's medical practitioners, but the majority were forced to look to friends and families and, where this was lacking, to the parish. The overseers' records⁸⁶² show many examples of small sums of money handed out to help in times of sickness, be it of the artisan himself or his wife or child.

Family tragedies also had an influence on the life course of an artisan. A striking example is that of Thomas Archer.⁸⁶³ Thomas was a member of a successful dynasty who might have been expected to play as significant a role in the affairs of the town as two of his brothers. However the records show no evidence of this. This may well be because of the suicide of his wife after the birth of their only child.⁸⁶⁴ It would seem that fractionalism could occur even within a set of brothers! Personal disasters could be one reason for these differentiations.

Natural disaster could also have an immense impact on the fortunes of an artisan. In 1792 the Bridge End area of Saffron Walden experienced a devastating flood on a rare occasion when the River Slade flowing through that area became a raging torrent. All strata of society would have been affected by this disaster, but some were more able to cope than others. An artisan who had lost not only his home, but also his place of work, the tools of his trade and any stock-in-trade, would have been in a very poor position. On this occasion the town rallied to help those who could not help themselves and a subscription was raised to help those most in need.⁸⁶⁵ We may speculate that one reason for contributing on the

⁸⁶² ERO, D/D B2/PAR3/1 Saffron Walden Overseers' accounts book, 1781-1797

⁸⁶³ See Appendix 5 'The Fortunes of the Archer Family'.

⁸⁶⁴ ERO, D/B 2/OFF3/11, Inquest on Mary Archer, 1762.

⁸⁶⁵ ERO, D/B 2/PAR9/23, List of subscribers to a fund to help those affected by the flood of 1792.

part of the fortunate was a sense of ‘there but for the grace...’ Such disasters may have differentiated fortunes, but they also encouraged social coherence.

Fortunately floods were a rare event in Saffron Walden. Shortage of water was a far more common problem. Fire, on the other hand, was an ever-present threat to the livelihood of an artisan and it is here that fractionalism amongst the artisan segment of society is particularly clear as the century drew towards its close.

In the last quarter of the century the arrival of fire insurance in the town meant that those who could afford the premium were able to insure their property against the disaster that a fire could be. Records show that 124 premiums were taken out in the 1770s and 1780s. Research has identified 39 names of artisans in this group; approximately 27% of the artisans then entitled to serve on the Grand Jury.⁸⁶⁶ Since not all artisans met the property qualification to serve on the Grand Jury, this suggests that only some artisans had sufficient disposable income to be able to afford to take out an insurance premium. The majority were forced to trust to luck and turned to friends and neighbours for help if and when misfortune struck—as in the case of Thomas Loveday and Samuel Missen when Samuel’s house was destroyed by fire.⁸⁶⁷

The issue of fire insurance clearly illustrates that not only were some artisans in a position to take advantage of the security that it offered whilst others were forced to rely on the vagaries of chance, but also the impact on artisans of the institutional changes that were taking place in Britain as a whole as the eighteenth century drew to a close. At the beginning of the century, artisans throughout the country had had to rely on care and good fortune to guard their properties against fire, by its close insurance was available to those with the funds to purchase it. This ensured that any damage by fire could be made good allowing an artisan to continue his trade and provide for his family without resorting to support from his fellows or the parish. Times were a changing!

iii. Institutional Impact

One of the main causes of change in the lives of some artisans in Saffron Walden in the eighteenth century was the arrival of the Charity School. Saffron Walden had been well served with charities providing funds to put poor children apprentice (Bromfields and Suffolk and Turners), giving hand-outs of bread and

⁸⁶⁶ See below, Appendix 2 ‘Fire Insurance in Saffron Walden’ for more detail..

⁸⁶⁷ ERO, QSS2/14/24, Petition of Thomas Loveday and Samuel Missen, between 1729 and 1743.

cloth (the Tollesbury Dole for example) and caring for the more fortunate aged in the Almshouse for many years. Its Grammar School had served those who could secure a place through patronage or paying, but education for the rest of Saffron Walden society had been a hit-and-miss affair. Thus it was that in the early years of the century literacy among the artisan segment was the preserve of those whose fathers had been able to send them, even if only for a short time, to the Grammar School. In this earlier period, literacy was a clear source of fragmentation within the artisan sector.

However, in 1715 the town's Charity School was founded, making provision for the education of fifteen boys and fifteen girls in reading and the principles of Christian religion according to the tenets of the Church of England.⁸⁶⁸ Of those first 30 children it has been possible to identify the occupations of the parents of 21. Of these, 13 followed artisanal trades. It is possible that some of the remaining eight were also artisans, perhaps working as journeymen since they were designated as labourers.

Records do not exist for other cohorts of children entering the Charity School, but it seems very likely that many other artisanal families would have sought admission for their children. Those who had a patron with a position in the Corporation stood a much better chance of securing admission not only to the Charity School but also of getting help from one of the town's charities in placing them apprentice. Although the Charity School was administered accords to the tenets of the established church, it seems highly likely that nonconformist parents would have also sought to secure coveted places for their children given the enthusiasm of these denominations for literacy. Indeed, it seems likely that literacy levels were higher than the norm amongst artisans of nonconformist persuasions if the evidence of records such as the ability to sign their name on admission to the fellowship of the church is to be believed.⁸⁶⁹

The Charity School and the town's other charities provide clear evidence of the importance of institutions not only to the overall well-being of the town. But they also helped to create differentiation within the artisan sector. Attendance at the Charity School ensured literacy. This alone meant that, given an otherwise level playing field, a child of artisan stock stood a better chance of running a successful enterprise since he, or his wife, could record orders efficiently, communicate with customers and keep accounts. The town's charities meant that a boy of humble origins could be placed apprentice thus giving him the chance to learn the skills that in time would equip him to become an independent master

⁸⁶⁸ ERO, D/B 2/SCH2/1 Accounts of the Charity School, Saffron Walden, 1715-1745, above p.55ff.

⁸⁶⁹ D/NC 23/1/1/ Membership of the Upper Meeting 1775 from the Church Book

craftsman and contribute to the community through his parish dues and by, perhaps, holding a civic or parish office.

The institutions of Saffron Walden clearly had an impact on the town. They provided access to literacy for a lucky group from amongst those unable to afford the Grammar school. Similarly they provided access to funds for placing children apprentice for those fortunate enough to secure the patronage of powerful men within the town. Later in life the Almshouse allowed another lucky few, again the recipients of patronage from 'the great and the good' of the town, to live out their days in relative comfort and security.

Furthermore, the informal institution of patronage is clearly evident in relation to the town's formal institutions and suggests that fractionalism within the artisan sector of society was not simply limited to the range between the putative gentleman and the pauper, but even occurred within groups within that range. Thus the son of one cordwainer, for example, might gain admission to the Charity School and secure an apprenticeship courtesy of Bromfields Charity, whilst the son of his neighbour received neither of these benefits. Clearly patronage played an enormous role in allowing an artisan access to the benefits that the town's charitable institutions could bring. The recipient of patronage would expect to repay the favour received by offering support, in a variety of ways, to their kind patron. A vote might be cast in a Parliamentary election in a particular way,⁸⁷⁰ or support offered on a matter of discussion at a meeting of the Corporation, where the client might have some influence. For those recipients of patronage in the lower tier of artisans, it is harder to find evidence of reciprocity, perhaps it was more a case of words spoken in support in a local alehouse or dedicated service as a member of an extended family network. Thus the role of patronage provided a means of cutting across the horizontal strata of social segments and creating links of a more vertical nature.

It is also important to consider the role that patronage had had in providing the very institutions to which it would later provide access. It was the presence of men and women of good will and influence in the town that led to the establishment of the Charity School in 1715 as the early accounts demonstrate, listing the first trustees as the mayor, the minister of the parish church, Robert Cossens, gent., Edward Allcraft, Thomas Ingrey and John Wale, the treasurer. All of these men were of significant influence in the community, being either members of the Corporation or, in the case of Robert Cossens, the steward to the

⁸⁷⁰ The various available Poll Books in the ERO and Saffron Walden Town Library show how forty-shilling freeholders voted. The voting persuasion of the local aristocracy, in the case of Saffron Walden Sir John Griffin Griffin and later Lord Howard, was often very influential.

Earls of Suffolk at Audley End.⁸⁷¹ Later lists of trustees also exist as do lists of subscribers. Without the patronage that saw to the establishment of the Charity school and later to the selection of its pupils, the lives of many artisans in Saffron Walden would have been significantly different. The impact that such charitable institutions had on the lives of individuals was of considerable importance and could further increase differentiation within the segment into the 'haves' and the 'have nots'.

* * *

The perennial question of the 'typicality' of a local study such as the subject of this thesis makes it appropriate to consider, albeit briefly, whether the factors which had such an influence on Saffron Walden were important purely because of the place that Saffron Walden happened to be in the eighteenth century or whether the same factors might have had a similar effect on other small market towns. To this end, a brief examination of a comparable small market town has been undertaken. Two towns presented themselves as suitable candidates: Royston on the Hertfordshire/Cambridgeshire borders and Sudbury just over the Essex border into Suffolk.

Neither of these towns had the status of county town nor was either a major provincial centre like Cambridge or Bury St. Edmunds, but both had, like Saffron Walden, a similar function as a service centre for a significant rural hinterland. Both also had a significant nonconformist population including a Quaker meeting. However, while there are both good archival and secondary sources for Sudbury, Royston has archival sources but very little supporting secondary material. For this reason Sudbury has been selected as the comparative location.

Sudbury was also a chartered town with a powerful corporation⁸⁷² and a substantial artisan segment. Records of the artisan population are to be found in the Sudbury Cocket Books⁸⁷³ which contain lists of freemen and records of apprenticeship. One of the main industries of the town was the production of cloth, at first woollens but later silk.

In terms of its religious persuasion, Sudbury had an Independent Chapel in Friars Street founded in 1710 which experienced a number of schisms in the course of

⁸⁷¹ ERO, D/B 2/SCH2/1 The accounts of the Charity School 1715 to 1745.

⁸⁷² SRO, (Bury St. Edmunds), EE 501/1/11, Borough charter (letters patent of James II) 1685, by which Sudbury was created a free, incorporated borough.

⁸⁷³ SRO, (Bury St. Edmunds), EE 501/4, Sudbury Cocket Books.

the eighteenth century,⁸⁷⁴ and a Quaker meeting house established in 1676 which included many tradesmen amongst its members. It also had three parish churches: St. Gregory's, St. Peter's and All Saints. Unlike Saffron Walden however, Sudbury did not have any Baptist congregations.

The institutional framework of Sudbury in the eighteenth century also had certain similarities with that of Saffron Walden. The Grammar School's foundation predated that of Saffron Walden by some twenty years and predominately served the sons of flourishing clothiers, gentry and the more affluent local farmers. According to Carlyle,⁸⁷⁵ it was open to boys of the Borough of Sudbury free of charge. It used the Eton Grammars.⁸⁷⁶ It would appear that the parishes of St Gregory and St Peter combined to run a charity school under the terms of Mrs Gurling's charity. Eighteen boys and eighteen girls were to be educated. From 1748 this took place in a building in North Street.⁸⁷⁷ Various subscriptions were collected, as was the case in Saffron Walden.⁸⁷⁸ By 1779 fifty children, twenty-seven boys and twenty-three girls were being educated. There was also a charity school in All Saints parish from about 1728 but no records appear to have survived.

Thus in terms of religious make up and the educational facilities available, the institutional structure of Sudbury and Saffron Walden exhibited certain similarities in the eighteenth century although Sudbury, with its three parishes, would have probably had a larger population. Sudbury also had a number of charities providing support for the poor of the town, for example John Corder's charity provided bread.⁸⁷⁹ One marked difference, however, was in the provision of support for the elderly. Whilst Saffron Walden, as described above,⁸⁸⁰ had a flourishing almshouse, Sudbury had St Leonard and St John's Hospitals. These were very small-scale institutions and in no way comparable to Saffron Walden Almshouse. In 1702 a workhouse was established in the former buildings of Sudbury College in St Gregory's parish. The proposal and draft bill to establish a workhouse in Saffron Walden dates from 1709.⁸⁸¹ There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal was carried out at this point, although by 1769 a

⁸⁷⁴ C.G. Grimwood and S.A. Kay, *History of Sudbury* (Sudbury, 1952), pp. 64-5

⁸⁷⁵ Nicholas Carlyle, *A Concise Description of the Endowed Grammar Schools of England and Wales* (London, 1818), ii, p.533

⁸⁷⁶ Carlyle, *Endowed Grammar Schools*, ii, p.533

⁸⁷⁷ C.G. Grimwood and S.A. Kay, *History of Sudbury* (Sudbury, 1952), pp. 77-8

⁸⁷⁸ ERO, D/B 2/SCH2/1, Subscribers to the Charity School, 1715-1745.

⁸⁷⁹ SRO, (Bury St Edmunds), EE 501/18/9, John Corder's charity.

⁸⁸⁰ See above, chapters 2 and 4.

⁸⁸¹ ERO, D/B 2/PAR3/11, Proposal to establish parish workhouse, with draft bill and observations.

workhouse was definitely operating in Saffron Walden⁸⁸² and by 1797 its location at the top of the High Street is clearly established.⁸⁸³

iv. Summary

From this cursory sortie elsewhere it would seem that Saffron Walden was not the only small town to benefit from institutional provision in the form of charities, charity schools and almshouses. However an assessment of the importance of charitable institutions as revealed in this case-study of Saffron Walden may indicate the significance of their role in differentiating not only one person from another, but also one place from another: an early version, perhaps, of the phenomenon known today as ‘the postcode lottery’. The evidence suggests that the endowment of charitable provision had an incalculable but evident and substantial impact on the life chances of those who benefitted from these provisions. As a result, access, or denial of such access, to institutional provision within the town resulted in considerable fragmentation within the artisan sector.

In the same way the ability of an artisan to protect his livelihood through the payment of insurance premiums in the latter part of the eighteenth century also contributed to fragmentation amongst artisans. It also had an impact on the psychological conditions of life for different groups within the segment. For a minority it removed much of the fear of misfortune. And, as has been discussed above,⁸⁸⁴ misfortune was one of the major determinants of volatility within the artisan segment of society.

In summary then, it is important to emphasize the remarkable breadth and volatility of the artisan segment in eighteenth century Saffron Walden. As we have seen, the breadth of the segment was very considerable at this period. In terms of the social structure of society, an artisan might claim the title of ‘gentleman’ as did any artisan who had served as Mayor and thus became one of the town’s Justices of the Peace. But equally in the parish records an artisan might be buried under the appellation of ‘pauper’.

Not only was there a hierarchy among trades as mentioned above,⁸⁸⁵ but also within trades. Thus, while many poor boys were placed apprentice to

⁸⁸² ERO, D/B 2/PAR9/19 Letter re. an inhabitant of Saffron Walden Workhouse, 1769

⁸⁸³ ERO, D/B 2/PAR3/19 Account for purchase of cottage adjoining the workhouse, 1797

⁸⁸⁴ See above, p.233

⁸⁸⁵ See above, p.228.

shoemakers or cordwainers under the auspices of Bromfield's Charity,⁸⁸⁶ Nathaniel and Robert Catlin both described themselves as cordwainers but both served as mayor of the town and Nathaniel's will suggests the possession of considerable property.⁸⁸⁷ A shoemaker's account book survives which is thought to have been compiled by Robert Catlin.⁸⁸⁸ It shows that he was running a substantial business which probably necessitated the putting out of work to other shoemakers, much in the way that the large London shops had footwear made in the country in order to reduce costs. It might be said that he was, in some ways, operating as a capitalist entrepreneur, overseeing the work of others and arranging for the accepting of orders and the sale of the finished goods. It is, therefore, misleading to categorise an artisan purely by virtue of the trade he followed since there was very considerable fractionalism *within* trades as well as between them and in what individuals actually did day-by-day. The breadth of the artisan segment of society in the eighteenth century meant that there was considerable scope for movement within it, both up and down.

These movements were affected by major considerations such as misfortune and access to the opportunities offered by the institutional structure of the town.⁸⁸⁹ Many artisans, however, were neither at the head or the tail of their social segment, nevertheless over time wider societal transformations took place which saw changes in the character of the segment as a whole resulting from changes in the circumstances which affected its nature. Notable among these was the growth of literacy.

These factors might be termed internal ones, but the nature of the artisan segment of society—artisan is a contemporary term which brooks no equivocation at its core, it was a functional reality in the eyes of the eighteenth century—its volatility and its tendency towards fractionalism were also affected by external factors. E.P. Thompson and John Rule have both written of the range of conditions covered by the term 'artisan'. E. P. Thompson commented that "There were great differences of degree concealed within the term 'artisan', from the prosperous master-craftsmen, employing labour on his own account and independent of any masters, to the sweated garret labourers."⁸⁹⁰ They have also discussed the development of proletarianisation through the putting-out of work system, a form of proto-industrialisation, whereby the artisan became a mere wage labourer with no hope of becoming a master, remaining a permanent journeyman. In Saffron Walden it was this that was, perhaps, illustrated by the

⁸⁸⁶ ERO, D/D B2/CHR1/5, Bromfield's charity apprenticeship indentures.

⁸⁸⁷ TNA, PROB 11/1137, Will of Nathaniel Catlin, proved 1786.

⁸⁸⁸ ERO, D/D B2/PAR9/2, Shoemaker's Account Book.

⁸⁸⁹ See sections on misfortune p.231 and institutions p.232.

⁸⁹⁰ E. P. Thompson, *The making of the English working class* (London, 1963), p.259

book of accounts kept by Robert Catlin.⁸⁹¹ The nature of the economy in north-west Essex precluded the development of many factories of the kind normally associated with the Industrial Revolution and the rise of a proletariat.

Nevertheless changes did occur in the area around Saffron Walden which had a profound effect on its social structure.

One might hypothesize that it was not an area conducive to the development of many factories, but it was, nevertheless, influenced by the world of the factory and the forms of economic relationships that the factory both represented and fostered. A scaling up occurred, but without the buildings that are normally associated with such a change. Small workshops, some linked together through the putting-out system, and a change in the scale of certain enterprises, re-wrote the nature of eighteenth century Saffron Walden as an example of a pre-modern industrial town.

The change of scale of enterprises in Saffron Walden did not, however, mirror the changes taking place in the later part of the eighteenth century in other parts of Britain because the prevailing conditions in the area did not encourage it. The nature of the dominant industries—the declining textiles production⁸⁹² and the growing production of malt for the London market, as well as the production of consumer goods to service the needs of the surrounding hinterland—did not lead to the development of factories. Indeed Griffin argues that in the East Anglian area in general agriculture and the declining industrial sector led to outward migration.⁸⁹³

Saffron Walden did not suffer from net outward migration in the way that other towns of the main East Anglian cloth belt did, but the conditions were not conducive to industrialisation on a large scale. Rather, in Saffron Walden the period saw an extension of relationships of the kind found in factories but without the presence of the buildings. Many men, on the completion of their term of apprenticeship, were fated to become perpetual journeymen with little or no control over what they produced or the means of production. In a factory scenario this might have presented the ideal conditions for the growth of a self-conscious proletariat, but in Saffron Walden it merely enhanced the fractionalism among artisans which was historically already present in so many different ways. In a group of men practising the same trade or craft, some were condemned to wage labour whilst others controlled the route to the market for the goods

⁸⁹¹ See above p.175, note 650

⁸⁹² Emma Griffin, *A Short History of the British Industrial Revolution* (Basingstoke, 2010), p.71.

⁸⁹³ Griffin, *British Industrial Revolution*, p.71.

produced and thus turned a bigger profit by using the work of others, a co-option of the old putting-out system to meet the needs of new conditions of business.⁸⁹⁴

For any artisan there was a crunch point – especially towards the end of the eighteenth century. On the completion of his apprenticeship a decision had to be made. Were sufficient funds likely to become available to allow him to set up in business as a master craftsman after he had spent a period as a wage-earning journeyman allowing monies to be saved? At the same time he needed to consider marriage and the ability to run a household with all the financial liabilities that that entailed. Wrigley suggests that creation of a new, viable household was an expensive business which involved the investment of a substantial sum of money.⁸⁹⁵ Our artisan also needed to consider the advantages of an entry into the arena of the ‘public’ world, perhaps securing a post as a parish constable by presenting the correct persona to the parish meeting that elected men to such offices. The artisan who could answer in the affirmative to all three questions was set on the way to independence, often supported by a wider family which could offer the advantage of financial assistance and an established network of business connections. He might also enjoy a degree of literacy that allowed him to move forward in life towards his goal of a prosperous business and a secure future, provided the many pitfalls and misfortunes mentioned above could be avoided.

His fellow apprentice, unable to answer in the affirmative to the questions set out above was faced with the possibility of a long period as a journeyman, and that only if he was lucky. By the time he had secured enough funds to enter into business he would be late entering the marriage market and his entry into the public arena would also be delayed. Tightness of funds might mean that he was unable to insure his premises and had no safety net in case of illness. For him good fortune was essential. One or two misfortunes could undo everything.

A third apprentice, probably one placed by a charity or by the parish, had no hope of giving affirmative answers to these questions. For him a lifetime as a journeyman working for a good master or as an employee of a manufacturer who would put work his way was his best hope. Misfortune would see him sink into poverty and the uncertain future of a labourer, picking up work as and when he could to help support his family and dependent on hand-outs from the parish when times were hard.

⁸⁹⁴ See references to Robert Catlin’s shoemaking business and his notebook above, p.240.

⁸⁹⁵ E.A. Wrigley, ‘The Growth of Population in Eighteenth Century England’, *Past and Present*, 98 (1983), p.135.

Hilary Walker
Differentiating the artisan

Fractionalism within the artisan segment of eighteenth century Saffron Walden society was, indeed, a reality.

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D/B 2/TDS5/14/23 Will of Jabez Wyatt, common brewer, malster and
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iv) Saffron Walden Museum

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Saffron Walden Museum MS41507 Register of Freemen

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Saffron Walden Museum, uncatalogued List of recipients of the
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v) Saffron Walden Friends' Meeting House Archive

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Deposited with History Data Service, UK Data Archive by Floud, R., University of London. Birkbeck College. Department of History,
Supple, B.E., University of Cambridge. Faculty of History.

Name	Will type	Date Written	Date Proved	Property	Money	Other goods	Literate
Abraham Cornell ERO 55 CR 17	QS Local	1753	1767	x2 houses, 1 fh, 1 in Gold St	Money, bond to wife of at least £90	Stock in trade Goods in daughter Rachel's shop Household goods	Literate
Benjamin Catlin ERO 403 CR 14	QS Local	1733	1733/4	House in Gold St	£80 to be paid to daughters by son		Literate
James Hodson sen. ERO 634 CR 21	QS Local	1832	1837			Everything to be shared by 2 children James and Esther, wife of James Adams	Literate
John White ERO 270 CR 18	QS Local	1786	1786	Messuage, baking office and premises in Cuckingstool End Messuage and water mill Messuage in Castle St	£100 to daughter Mary	Wife all household gds and furniture in Cuckingstool End All stock in trade	Literate
Ruth Rusted ERO 347 CR 18	Non QS Local	1782	1790	Property unspecified	Specific legacies of £31.1s	Baking equipment etc to single daughter, furnishings apportioned, clothing	Literate

Hilary Walker
Differentiating the artisan

Philip Pitstow ERO 183 CR 16	Non QS Local	1759	1759		£100 in legacies		Literate
John Edwards TNA Prob 11/1232	PRO	1787	1791	Messuage and baking office Messuage and malting office 2 acres arable	Legacies of £210	References to household gds, residue, farming goods	Literate
John Button TNA Prob 11/791	PRO	1751	1751	Property in Walden, Hadstock, Gt Chesterford, Haverhill and Shudy Camps	Mention of money owed to Elizabeth Maurice		Literate
William Pamplin TNA Prob 11/747	PRO	1745	1746	Property in Fordham and Soham, Cambs		Wearing apparel and watch	Literate

Table 16: Wills of Bakers (based on locally proved wills and wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury)

Name	Will type	Date Written	Date Proved	Property	Money	Other goods	Literate
Samuel Burgis TNA Prob 11/651	PRO	1731	1732	Lh property in Spitalfields London	Legacies £120		Literate
John Barham TNA Prob 11/1328	PRO	1799	1799	Property in Holt, Norfolk plus other potentially in SW			Literate
Richard Burrows Now gentleman TNA Prob 11/1817	PRO	1832	1833	Mention of property		Household effects, plate, silver, pictures, china, beer and liquor	Literate

Table 17: Wills of Cabinet Makers (based on locally proved wills and wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury)

Hilary Walker
Differentiating the artisan

Name	Will type	Date Written	Date Proved	Property	Money	Other goods	Literate
Daniel Kent ERO 643 CR 21	QS Local	1835	1838	Property mentioned			Literate
William Tarry ERO 266 CR 14	Non QS Local	1729	1730		6 guineas		Literate
John Barton TNA Prob 11/1317	PRO	1798	1799	Property to be sold	Legacy of £100	Household goods and tools of trade, brewing utensils	Literate
William Rogers Now gent TNA Prob 11/1841	PRO	1834	1835	Property in Ashdon	Legacy of £25 and other legacies in stock	Bequest to Abbey Lane Sunday School	Literate
David Rogers TNA Prob 11/1728	PRO	1824	1827		Legacies of £56	Stock in trade, tools etc, household goods, linen, furniture	Literate
Owen Swan TNA Prob 11/1558	PRO	1790	1814	Property in Holborn London	Legacies of £30		Literate

Table 18: Wills of Clock and Watch Makers (based on locally proved wills and wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury)

Hilary Walker
Differentiating the artisan

Name	Will type	Date Written	Date Proved	Property	Money	Other goods	Literate
George Pomfrett Woolcomber ERO 277 CR 15	QS Local	1731	1748	2 tenements and 1 shop in Castle St. Another property in Castle St. 1 acre land		Household goods Stock in trade	Literate
Henry Barron Woolcomber ERO 200 CR 14	QS Local	1728	1729	Ch lands in Littlebury	£30 4 guineas		Illiterate
Robert Breens Fustian weaver ERO 317 CR 15	QS Local	1734	1749	3 properties in Castle St	1s		Illiterate
Thomas Archer Woolcomber ERO 360 CR 14	QS Local	1732	1732	Fh tenement in Castle St. Shops and wool chambers used in way of trade	Legacies of £60	Household goods	Literate
Thomas Whiskin Webster ERO 187 CR 13	QS Local	1721	1723	House and 1 acre of land	Legacies of £600		Literate
Frances Doughty Swaddling band weaver ERO 253 CR 12	Non QS local	1711	1714	Property called Pinnacles	Legacies of £18	Pair of blades, winding wheel, loom, warping bars, skillet Household goods	Illiterate
Edward Allen Weaver ERO 149 CR 17	Non QS Local	1759	1770	4 messuages and malthouse Black Swan Another property and close of land 11 acres		Goods, chattels, stock in trade, money, plate and personal estate	Literate
George Brown AE Weaver ERO 312 CR 14	Non QS Local	1728	1734	Property in Audley End 1 acre ch land			Literate
Thomas Hantler AE Weaver ERO 283 CR 12	Non QS Local	1715	1715	Fh property in Duck St Ch property in Duck St	Legacies of £9.10s	Household goods, 2 looms, working tools and implements of a weaver	Illiterate
William Dabney Weaver ERO 388 CR 14	Non QS Local	1732	1733	Fh property nr Butter Market Ch tenement and yard adjoining	Legacies £5.10s	Wearing apparel	Literate
James Allen Fustian weaver	PRO	1784	1785	Black Swan plus 2 other premises Property near Long Lane + 2 acres	Annuity of £16.13.4 £500 Bank of	Household goods	Literate

Hilary Walker
Differentiating the artisan

TNA Prob 11/1128				Property in Newport	England stock		
Arnold Nash AE Boulting cloth weaver TNA Prob 11/1087	PRO	1781	1782	Property mentioned	Legacies of £950	Household goods, furniture, plate and wearing apparel, books	Literate
John Fuller TNA Prob 11/1067 Woolstapler	PRO	1778	1780	Mention of property			Literate
Edmund Harris TNA Prob 11/880 Weaver	PRO	1726	1762	House in Cuckingstool End 33 ¹ / ₂ acres land Ch property in Sewers End	£4 annuity		Literate
John Bunyard TNA Prob 11/871 Woolcomber	PRO	1749	1761	Property in Basseterre in the Island of St. Christopher's	Legacies of £1200 plus	£2100 South Sea shares	Literate
John Pitstow TNA Prob 11/824 Weaver	PRO	1755	1756	Property on High Street 2 acres of land Property in Littlebury	Legacies of £220 plus	Stock in trade, household goods	Literate
Zacharias Wyatt TNA Prob 11/657 Weaver	PRO	1731	1732	Property mentioned	Legacies to be paid, 1/3 of estate, total not known		Literate
John Morgan TNA Prob 11/653 Weaver	PRO	1723	1722?	Property in Walden		Plate and rings	Literate

Table 19: Wills of Cloth Makers (based on locally proved wills and wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury)

Hilary Walker
Differentiating the artisan

Name	Will type	Date Written	Date Proved	Property	Money	Other goods	Literate
Charles Baron sen. ERO 187 CR 18	QS Local	1794	1799	Property mentioned	£10 legacy		Literate
George Pettitt ERO 201 CR 15	QS Local	1736	1745	Property mentioned	Legacy of £50	Enclosed land – Lt Readings 6 ¹ / ₂ acres land plus 12 roods plus 3 pieces	Illiterate
Henry Dalliston ERO 29 CR 16	QS Local	1752	1752	Fh property in Cuckingstool End	Legacies of £50	2 brass kettles	Illiterate
John Catlin ERO 248 CR 13	QS Local	1724	1725	Property in Cuckingstool End Property in Gold St	Legacies of £73 plus one of 20s a yr in lieu of property		Literate
John Westrop ERO 409 CR 18	QS Local	1778	1792	Property mentioned	Legacy of 1s		Literate
Joseph Baron ERO 396 CR 20	QS Local	1826	1829	Property mentioned			Literate
William Jeffery	QS Local	1820	1830	Ch property in Castle St		Tools of shoemaker, other working tools and benches	Literate

Hilary Walker
Differentiating the artisan

ERO 413 CR 20						etc., wearing apparel, household gds and furnishings	
Thomas Partridge ERO 148 CR 15	Non QS Local	1743	1743	Ch messuage	Legacies of £30.2s	2 closes of land Wearing apparel and cordwainer's tools	Literate
William Charlick ERO 41 CR 20	Non QS Local	1818	1818	Property in Bridge End	Legacies of £125 plus debts owed forgiven		Literate
William Shelford TNA Prob 11/1176	PRO	1786	1789		Mention of money in trust	Household goods and furniture	Illiterate
Nathaniel Catlin TNA Prob 11/1137	PRO	1783	1786	Property in Walden including in Castle St, malting etc Property in High St near the bridge, property in Market End	Legacy of £50	Many acres of land	Literate

Table 20: Wills of Cordwainers (based on locally proved wills and wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury)

Hilary Walker
Differentiating the artisan

Name	Will type	Date Written	Date Proved	Property	Money	Other goods	Literate
Richard Trott ERO 195 Cr 15	QS Local	1744	1745	Messuage in Gold St	Legacies of £120	Feather bed and furniture from 1 chamber	Illiterate
Stephen Smith ERO 353 CR 18	QS Local	1790	1790	Property and malting office in Castle St			Literate
William Rowning ERO 239 CR 15	QS Local	1747	1747	Property in Gt Chesterford Messuage, cottage and malting office in SW	Legacies of £212	Best bed, its furnishings, chest of drawers and 1 large trunk Wearing apparel Books	Literate
Edward Allcraft ERO 366 CR 14	Non QS Local	1731	1732		Legacies of £261	2 gold rings and wearing apparel 20 doz bread to poor of Walden	Literate
George Dockrell ERO 302 CR 11	Non QS Local	1702	1703	Ch properties in SW	Legacies of £17		Illiterate
Thomas Goodwin ERO 214 CR 12	Non QS Local	1711	1711	Property in Rochford	Legacy of £5	Furnishings, pewter, 10 quarters of malt	Literate
Thomas Hills	Non QS Local	1724	1724		Legacies of £110.1s	Household goods	Literate

Hilary Walker
 Differentiating the artisan

ERO 249 CR 13							
Thomas Ingrey ERO 455 CR 14	Non QS Local	1730	1735	Property in Essex including Cuckingstool End, Gold St, 3 acres in Sowards End Lane			Literate
Uriah Skepp ERO 107 CR 13	Non QS Local	1720	1720	Property in Walden	Legacy of £5		Literate
William Leverett ERO 265 CR 18	Non QS Local	1780	1786	Several tenements and cottage in Market Place Gold St malting office, Cottages in Bayley's Lane, 12 acres	Legacies of £690	Household goods, furniture and linen Stock in trade to be sold	Literate
William Allen TNA Prob 11/1282	PRO	1793	1796	Property in SW	Legacies of £786.3.4	Household goods, stock in trade	Literate
Jabez Wyatt TNA Prob 11/1069	PRO	1780	1780	Property in SW and elsewhere in England	Legacies of £4350 and other smaller sums	Household goods, furniture, linen Stock in brewing trade	Literate
Edmund Taylor TNA Prob 11/460	PRO	1768	1769	Property in Cambridge, Wenden, Littlebury, Walden	Legacies of more than £2500		Literate
John Burr	PRO	1762	1762	Property in Anstey, Herts, Reed, Herts, Royston, Cambs, farm and	Legacies of £600 and more		Literate

Hilary Walker
 Differentiating the artisan

TNA Prob 11/471				lands in Sandon etc			
James Carter	PRO	1728	1738	Property in Walden and Littlebury		Household goods, plate, stock etc	Literate
TNA Prob 11/690							
Edward Briggs	PRO	1734	1735	Property in Carlton, Cambs, W. Wratting, Cambs, Dullingham, Cambs	Legacies of £55		Illiterate
TNA Prob 11/671							
Nathaniel Catlin	PRO	1703	1704	Property in Cuckingstool End	Legacies of £140		Literate
TNA Prob 11/1137							
John Clark	PRO	1749	1749	Land in SW area Property in Gold St	Numerous legacies		Literate
TNA Prob 11/2094							
Thomas Archer Catlin	PRO	1837	1837	Property mentioned	Legacies of over £1200	Detail of possessions: books, carriages, pictures etc.	Literate
TNA Prob 11/1882							
John Archer	PRO	1834	1834	Dwelling house in Cuckinstool End Street, property in Gold St including malting, tenements in Castle St, malting and other property in Cuckingstool End St, property in Market End St, also considerable areas of land	Substantial legacies	Personal property including pictures, chap books etc	Literate
TNA Prob 11/1838							
John Smith	PRO	1802	1812	Property wheresoever			Literate

Hilary Walker
 Differentiating the artisan

TNA Prob 11/1534							
Thomas Edwards	PRO	1787	1812	Property, malting office and land in SW, Debden, Widdington and Newport			Literate
TNA Prob 11/1531							

Table 21: Wills of Maltsters (based on locally proved wills and wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury)

Hilary Walker
 Differentiating the artisan

Name	Will type	Date Written	Date Proved	Property	Money	Other goods	Literate
Richard Webb ERO 267 CR 14	QS Local	1723	1730	4 houses in Hill St and Abbey Lane	Legacy of 40s		Illiterate
Richard Wright ERO 256 CR 13	QS Local	1722	1725	Property in Walden and Debden			Illiterate
William Peachey ERO 699 CR 21	QS Local	1827	1839	Property in Langley, Duddenhoe End and Wethersfield; fh and lh property in Butter Market, SW	Legacies £25	Tools of trade	Literate
Richard Trott sen ERO 232 CR 12	Non QS Local	1712	1713		Legacies of 50	Silver bowl	Literate
William Impey ERO 312 CR 16	Non QS Local	1755	1761	Fh property in StirbitchFair Field, Cambridge Property called the Bell 2 fields and a pightle Other land, several acres Property, shop and chamber in Walden Lt Walden property	Legacies of £1060		Literate
William Impey	PRO	1785	1785	Complex legal			Literate

Hilary Walker
 Differentiating the artisan

TNA Prob 11/1134							
Thomas Grigg	PRO	1770	1776	Fh estate in SW and lh in the Minories			Literate
TNA Prob 11/1024							
James Barrett	PRO	1813	1815	Property in Hill St, next to nail warehouse Ironmonger's and smith's workshops White Horse in SW 3 cottages in Hill St Land behind yards, garden and foundry	Legacy of £20 Legacy of £400	Stock in trade £100 furniture to wife	Literate
TNA Prob 11/1571							

Table 22: Wills of Metalworkers (based on locally proved wills and wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury)

Appendix 2

Fire Insurance in Saffron Walden

This discussion is based on the Economic and Social Data Service SN 1838 “Index to Eighteenth Century Fire Insurance Policy Registers”. This, in turn, is based on the fire insurance policy registers of the Sun and Royal Exchange Insurance Companies between 1775 and 1786. For this period 124 records for Saffron Walden have been found. It is possible that some policies were held with other insurance companies but the only fire insurance marks to be found on properties in Saffron Walden are those of the Sun or the Royal Exchange Insurance Companies.

It will be evident that these records only give an insight into the lives of some of the more affluent members of the artisan segment of Saffron Walden society in the 1770s and 1780s. When compared with the list of men serving on the Grand Jury between 1775 and 1780, (there is no data extant for the period 1781 to 1786,) 145 names are listed where an artisanal trade can be allocated. The thirty-nine named policy holders represent only 27% of this group who, as freeholders in the parish, were entitled to serve on the Grand Jury. There were many other artisans who were not sufficiently affluent to be included on the lists of those entitled to serve on Grand Juries. It is clear therefore that this sample represents the more affluent members of the artisan segment and is not representative of all eighteenth century artisans in Saffron Walden. Nonetheless, the source does provide some insights into the world of this subgroup.

From the perspective of the social order in Saffron Walden it is possible to divide these records into seven broad groups: artisans, professional men, shopkeepers, malsters, yeomen, innholders and victuallers plus a general group covering widows, spinsters, gentlemen, those who styled themselves esquires, minors and others not fitting into any other category.

Category	Number of records	Highest value insured	Lowest value insured	Mean insured value (to nearest £)	Range of values insured
Victuallers	17	£500	£100	£271	£100-£500
Artisans	39	£1350	£100	£399 ⁸⁹⁶	£100-£1350
Yeomen	15	£1300	£150	£503	£150-£1300
Malsters	15	£1950	£100	£523	£100-£600
Shopkeepers	18	£3000	£100	£568	£100-£3000
Others	17	£4800	£100	£624	£100-£4800
Professionals	3	£1200	£200	£733	£1200

Table 23: Analysis of Eighteenth Century Insurance records in Saffron Walden based on UKDA Study SN 1838

The data reveals that the average insured value for artisans was the second lowest among the occupational groups, with a range of values from £100 to £1,350. However, artisans formed the largest group of policy holders, nearly 32% of the total.

⁸⁹⁶ It is interesting to note that the mean sum insured by Saffron Walden artisans was £399, whilst that insured by artisans in towns in the South East and Home Counties, the zone including Essex, for the same period was £213 to the nearest pound (derived from UKDA Study 1023: **Sample of Insurance Policies, 1750- 1850**).

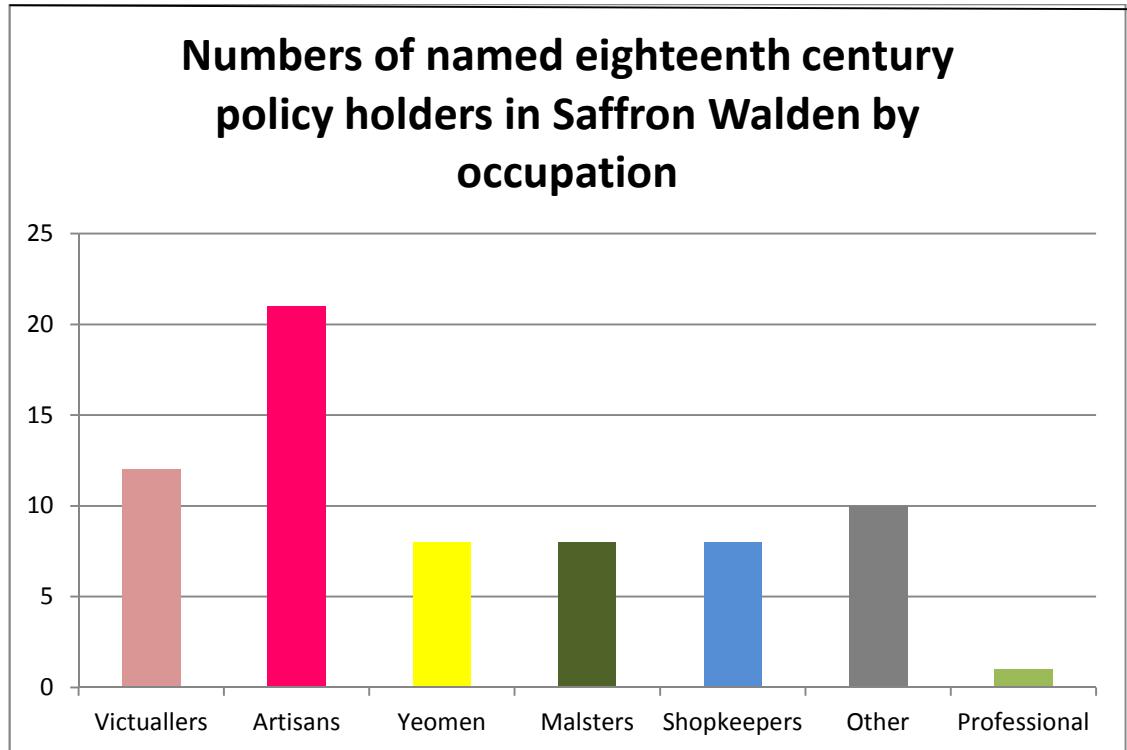


Chart 14: Numbers of policy holders by occupation

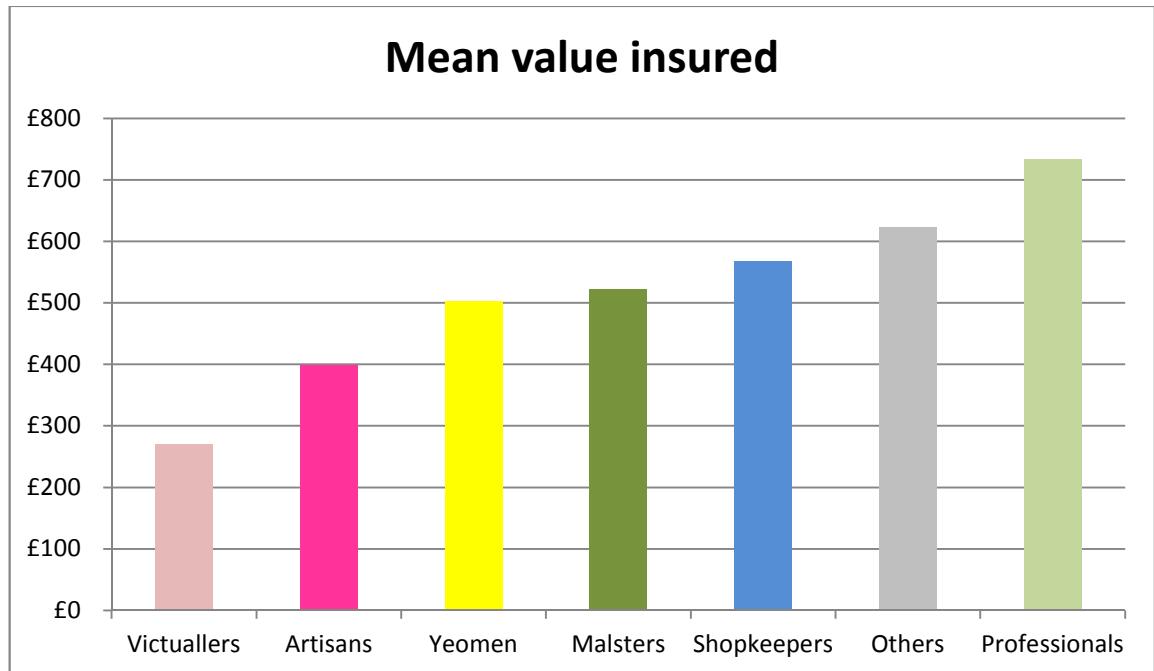


Chart 15: Mean value of property insured by each occupational group

Here the main concern will be whether differentiation with regard to the sum insured occurs between types of artisan policy holders. Thirty-nine artisan policy holders are listed but the names of some occur more than once since they paid premiums in more than one year. There was a total of twenty-eight different

artisans holding premiums in this period. Only twelve of the thirty-nine artisan policy holders insured property and goods to a sum of £100. The trades of these policy holders ranged from cloth workers and millers to carpenters and collar makers. Interestingly this group included two of the artisans who produced luxury goods: John Kent⁸⁹⁷ who was a clockmaker and John Saggus,⁸⁹⁸ a cabinet maker.⁸⁹⁹

The highest sum insured was £1,350. There were two policies for this sum. Both were held by William Impey who was a brazier.⁹⁰⁰ £1,350 was a very considerable sum in the 1780s. Using the Retail Price Index £1,350 in 1783 is worth about £130,000 today.⁹⁰¹ Unfortunately the premium paid is not available so it is not possible to say whether there was relationship between the level of risk of the trade and the premium the insurance company required. It should be noted that being a brazier was a distinctly risky trade from the insurance company's point of view because the danger of fire was significant. William Impey was a leading member of the town's Quaker community who had inherited a successful business from his father. His will, proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury in 1785, left, amongst other legacies, the sum of five hundred pounds to each of his five children and a range of property: regrettably the latter is not specified in detail.⁹⁰²

Thomas Wellbey, another brazier also held a policy insuring against fire. Wellbey was described in his policy of 1783 held from the Royal Exchange Company as a brazier and tinman.⁹⁰³ His policy insured goods and property to a sum of £500. Thomas Wellbey or Wellby had arrived in Saffron Walden with his wife Mary in 1776 from the parish of All Saints in Northampton.⁹⁰⁴ It is interesting to speculate whether Wellby was attracted to Saffron Walden because of the presence of the Impey family who also had their origins in Northamptonshire. Perhaps Thomas came to work as a journeyman for the Impeys. If that was the case, he was sufficiently successful to be in business on his own behalf only seven years after arriving in Walden, a business which was

⁸⁹⁷ UKDA, SN 1838, John Kent's policy with The Royal Exchange, number 87888

⁸⁹⁸ UKDA, SN 1838, John Saggus' policy with The Sun, number 412906

⁸⁹⁹ The name of John Saggus or Sagers appears twice giving the trade of cabinet maker, in 1778 and 1779. In 1781 he has changed his occupation to victualler. As a cabinet maker he insured goods and property to the sums of £100 and £300. As a victualler the sum insured was £300.

⁹⁰⁰ UKDA, SN 1838, William Impey, brazier. Two policies with the Royal Exchange, 1783 policy 88167, 1784 policy 88167

⁹⁰¹ Lawrence H. Officer, "Purchasing Power of British Pounds from 1264 to 2006." MeasuringWorth.com, 2007, Consulted 25/9/2010.

Using the average earnings index the sum of £1350 in 1783 is worth £1,710,000.

⁹⁰² TNA, PROB 11/1134, the will of William Impey, 1785

⁹⁰³ UKDA, SN 1838, Thomas Wellbey's policy with Royal Exchange in 1783, number 88015

⁹⁰⁴ ERO, D/B 2/PAR4/180, Settlement certificate of Thomas Wellby, 1776

insured in the sum of £500 (£48,100 using the retail price index calculator). Both Impey and Wellbey were insured by the Royal Exchange Company.

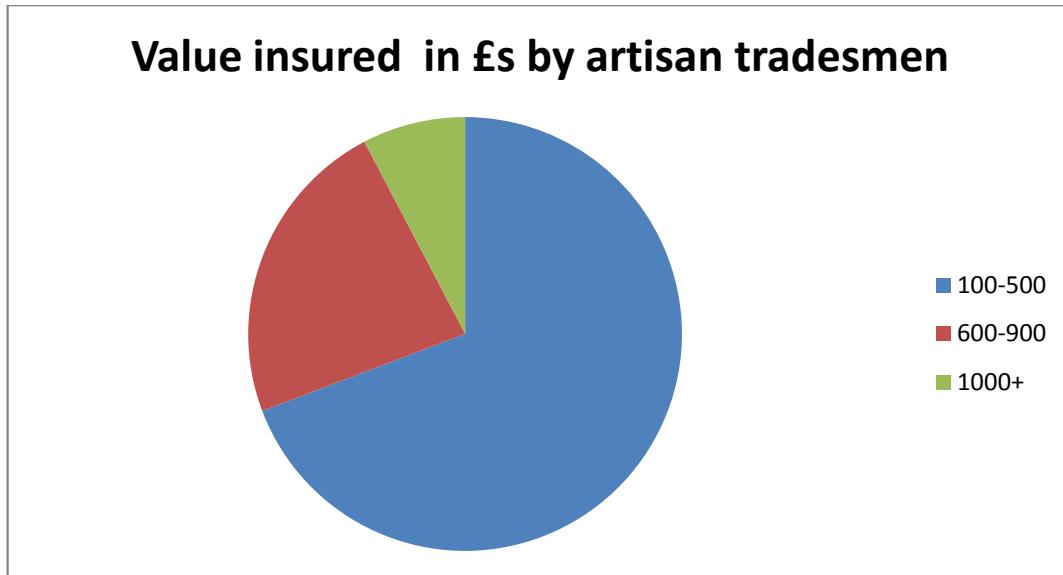


Chart 16: Values of goods and property insured by members of the artisan sector

In the middle range of policies, those where the sum insured was between £600 and £900, a single family dominated. This was the Archer family, a family who appeared in all aspects of town life in the eighteenth century. They served at all levels in town government, some even attaining the post of mayor.⁹⁰⁵ Nine policies were issued for sums between six and nine hundred pounds. Six of these were held by artisan members of the Archer family. The Archers worked in a variety of trades. Different branches of the family tended to specialize in different types of trade and with varying degrees of success. The six policy holders all belonged to the dominant branch of the family in the latter part of the eighteenth century, the branch which dealt with trades relating to butchery and leather. William (insured in the sum of £600 in 1778 and again in 1779)⁹⁰⁶ and John Archer (£700 in 1785)⁹⁰⁷ were both butchers. George (£600 in 1782)⁹⁰⁸ was a fellmonger, whilst Thomas (£600 in 1780 and £900 in 1787)⁹⁰⁹ was a tanner who was also listed as a farmer in the second policy. One other policy was held

⁹⁰⁵ In the eighteenth century members of the Archer family served as mayor for eighteen years.

⁹⁰⁶ UKDA, SN 1838, William Archer, policies with the Sun, 1778 policy number 403960 and 1779 policy number 420329.

⁹⁰⁷ UKDA, SN 1838, John Archer, policy with the Sun, 1785 policy number 506783.

⁹⁰⁸ UKDA, SN 1838, George Archer, policy with the Sun, 1782 policy number 459154.

⁹⁰⁹ UKDA, SN 1838, Thomas Archer, policies with both companies, 1780 policy with the Sun number 422932 and 1787 policy with the Royal Exchange number 100285.

by an artisan member of the Archer family, William, a glover, in 1779 in the sum of £400.⁹¹⁰ William was a member of a different branch of the family. The other three policy holders insuring sums between £600 and £900 were John Bush, wheelwright (two policies both in the sum of £600 in 1779 and 1786)⁹¹¹ and Richard Ward, a bricklayer (£600 in 1780).⁹¹² None of these trades were particularly dangerous, although fellmongering and tanning were fairly noxious so it would appear that these were canny businessmen rather than those, like braziers for example, who ran the risk of losing everything in a serious trade-related fire.

As well as providing a vignette into the world of those artisans in the 1770s and 1780s who had property and goods which they deemed worthy of insuring against fire with the Sun and Royal Exchange companies⁹¹³, the data set of policies also offers opportunities to trace the fortunes of some of this group, those who held more than one policy over the period.

John Bush, as mentioned above, was a wheelwright. He held four policies in the period 1779 to 1786. Three of these policies were with the Royal Exchange and one with the Sun. In 1779 Bush took out a policy with the Sun in the sum of £600. In 1786 he had a policy with the Royal Exchange for £600. The more unusual year was 1784 when he held two policies with the Royal Exchange, adding up to £600. Why he held two policies that year is unclear. The consistency of the sum insured in the period 1779 to 1786 suggests that Bush was a successful master wheelwright. The Land Tax records for 1780 show that a man of his name owned six properties in the Walden area, four in the High Street, one in the Market Place and one in Little Walden.⁹¹⁴ The record shows that John Bush lived in a property in the High Street. He was a member of the Society of Friends in Saffron Walden⁹¹⁵ and served as overseer of the poor in 1781.⁹¹⁶ As a Quaker, this was the highest civic office that Bush could hold. The fact that he was elected by the town to the post of overseer indicates that he

⁹¹⁰ UKDA SN 1838, William Archer, policy with the Sun in 1779, policy number 408677.

⁹¹¹ UKDA, SN 1838, John Bush, three policies with the Royal Exchange: 1783 policy number 88425, 1784 policy number 91475 and 1786 policy number 99039; and one with the Sun: 1779 policy number 408674.

⁹¹² UKDA, SN 1838, Richard Ward, policy with the Sun in 1780, number 422934.

⁹¹³ Sadly it is not possible to tell from the data available whether the policies refer solely to domestic goods and property or whether business premises and goods are also insured. It seems reasonable to make the assumption that artisans would have been concerned to safeguard their livelihoods by insuring their business premises and goods as well as their domestic premises, where these were separate.

⁹¹⁴ ERO, Q/RPI 896, Land Tax 1780 for Saffron Walden. This suggests that men whose successful business dealings left them with surplus capital were investing in property to bring in a ‘sleeping’ income.

⁹¹⁵ Friends’ Meeting House Archives, H2, Membership of the Saffron Walden Meeting from the Thaxted Meeting Monthly Record, 1775

⁹¹⁶ ERO, D/B 2/PAR3/1 Overseers of the Poor account book, 1781-1797

was held in good ‘credit’ or esteem by the population in general.⁹¹⁷ In this, as in other ways, John Bush would seem to have been a fairly typical successful artisan of the period who took both his business, as indicated by the insurance policies, and his civic responsibilities seriously. It would also seem that the area of woodworking was not prominently represented among the policy holders. The only other holders of policies were carpenters, Joseph Wright insuring property and goods to the value of £300 and John Crussell to the value of £100. Bush with policies to a value of £600 would seem to have been more successful than either of the carpenters. It may have been that he had branched out into the production of carts as well. He was certainly deemed to be sufficiently skilled to be regularly employed by the Audley End estate.⁹¹⁸

William Gibbs also held two policies in the period under consideration. Gibbs was a plumber and glazier, although in the first policy dated 1777 he also described himself as a painter. He was patently involved in a variety of aspects of the building trade, an area not strongly represented in the group of thirty-nine artisanal policies available. In both policies, the second dated 1784, the sum insured was £200.⁹¹⁹ This would seem to suggest that Gibbs was not quite as successful as John Bush in his business although, like Bush, he was sufficiently affluent to be entitled to vote in the poll of 1763.⁹²⁰ According to the Land Tax record for 1780 Gibbs owned a single property in the Market Place.⁹²¹ On his death in 1809 Gibbs left property in both Saffron Walden and in Linton, Cambridgeshire.⁹²²

Richard Ward, mentioned above, also held two policies, one dated 1780 and the other 1785. In the first policy the sum insured was £600 and Ward described himself as a bricklayer. In the second policy the sum insured had dropped to £450 and Ward then listed his occupations as bricklayer and farmer.⁹²³ What does this decline in the value of the insurance policy indicate? Perhaps his business as a bricklayer was less successful at that point—nonetheless by 1802 when the walls of the walled garden were built at Audley End a plaque was

⁹¹⁷ For more on this topic see Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: the culture of credit and social relations in early modern England* (Basingstoke, 1998)

⁹¹⁸ ERO, D/Dby A26 Monthly housekeeping vouchers for Audley End estate 1768.

⁹¹⁹ UKDA, SN 1838, William Gibbs, policy with the Sun, 1777 policy number 385822, and policy with the Royal Exchange 1784 number 89786.

⁹²⁰ T. Toft, *The poll for a Knight of the Shire to represent the County of Essex taken at Chelmsford on Tuesday and Wednesday the 13th and 14th of December 1763 by William Sheldon, Esq., Sheriff*. (London, 1764).

⁹²¹ ERO, Q/RPI 896, Land Tax 1780 for Saffron Walden.

⁹²² ERO, 511 CR 19, Will of William Gibbs, 1809.

⁹²³ UKDA, SN 1838, Richard Ward, policy with the Royal Exchange in 1785, policy number 91682.

placed in the wall stating that Richard Ward had built them.⁹²⁴ Whether this was the Richard Ward of the insurance policies or his son is unclear.

Equally intriguing is the pair of policies held by James Allen which shows an even more significant decline in the value of the goods and property insured. Allen gives his occupation as fustian weaver in the first policy and as fustian weaver and brick maker in the second. The policies date from 1780 and 1784, the latter being the year that Allen died.⁹²⁵ In 1780 Allen's policy insured a sum of £1,300, but by 1784 the sum insured was only £100. It is possible that this is due to a transcription error since in his will proved in 1784 at the Prerogative Court of Canterbury⁹²⁶ mentions numerous properties in Walden and the surrounding area as well as closes of land. Allen had served as a church warden in 1781 and 1782, a more senior office in the governance of the town than overseer of the poor, but one which could only be held by a member of the Church of England. Had Allen lived longer—he died at the relatively early age of 44—it is possible that he might have become an alderman or even mayor of Walden.

It can be seen, then, that the fire insurance policy records data set SN 1838 provides some fascinating insights into the lives of some of the more affluent of the artisan segment of Saffron Walden in the 1770s and 1780s. When the data provided by the data set is combined with other records about the economic, social and religious life of the town in the eighteenth century, the picture of the life of a Saffron Walden artisan becomes fuller. Of course, only the more affluent members of the artisan segment would have been able to afford to take out an insurance policy with either the Sun or Royal Exchange companies. Only such people would have had anything worth insuring! Thus it provides further evidence of fragmentation since only some artisans could purchase this assurance against the vagaries of life.

When this data is combined with information drawn from the 1780 Land Tax for Saffron Walden,⁹²⁷ 1780 being roughly the midpoint of the fire insurance data set, it is possible to get some idea of the areas of the town which were the most heavily insured. It appears that some of the holders of policies owned more than one property: in the case of William Archer, butcher, a total of fourteen different properties including buildings, land and a malting, located in a number of streets. Others had only one. The locations of the properties of three of the artisans: John

⁹²⁴ <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/country--garden-heaven-in-a-walled-garden-1083299.html>

Consulted 26.9.10

⁹²⁵ UKDA, SN 1838, James Allen, policies with the Sun, 1780 number 426711 and 1784 number 494854.

⁹²⁶ TNA, PROB 11/1128, will of James Allen, 1784.

⁹²⁷ ERO, Q/RPI 896, Land Tax 1780 for Saffron Walden.

Crussell, Thomas Wellbey and Thomas Barnard have not been identified. Some of the policy holders rented their properties, others owned them and some held a mixture of both types. Some of the property was beyond the boundaries of Walden in the neighbouring hamlets of Little Walden and Audley End and so data for these properties is not always included.

It would seem that the High Street was the most highly insured area of the town, mostly thanks to William Archer, butcher, and his portfolio of properties, followed by Church Street, the Market Place including Market End Street and then Castle Street. It is not possible to tell which property a particular policy refers to and so it must be surmised that some properties were deemed worthy of insurance whilst others were not.

Location	Number of Properties	Properties Owned	Properties Rented
Abbey Lane	1	1	0
Bridge End	3	3	0
Castle Street	10	10	0
Church Street	14	12	2
Cuckingstool End	2	2	0
Gold Street	1	1	0
High Street	18	12	6
Hill Street	1	1	0
Market Place	11	10	1
Other location outside SW	3	3	0

Table 24: Locations of properties held by policy holders showing whether owned or rented based on the 1780 Land Tax ERO, Q/RPI 896

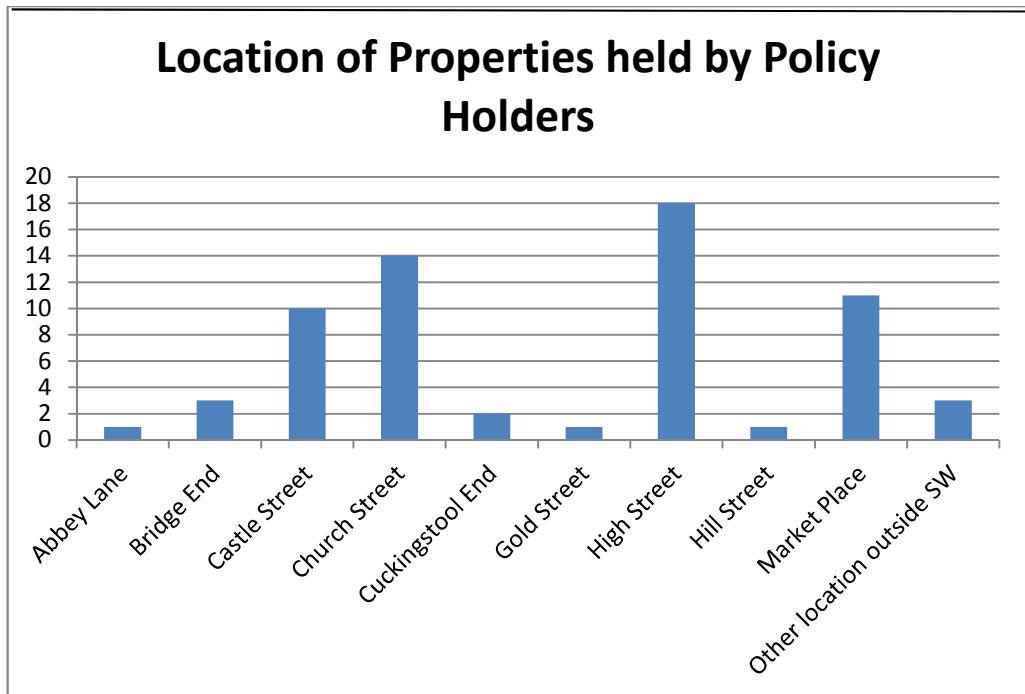


Chart 17: Locations of Properties held by Policy Holders

Hilary Walker
Differentiating the artisan

Name	Trade	Property owned (street)	Property rented (street)
William Impey	Brazier	Market Place x2	
		Little Walden	
Thomas Wellbey	Brazier and tinman		
Richard Ward	Bricklayer and farmer	Castle Street x5	
George Day	Brickmaker	Church Street	
William Archer	Butcher	High Street x8, land and a malting included	High Street x2
		Cuckingstool End	
		Market Place x3	
John Archer	Butcher	Church Street x2	
John Saggers	Cabinet maker, upholsterer and brazier		High Street
Joseph Wright	Carpenter	Castle Street x4	
John Crussell	Carpenter		
John Kent	Clockmaker		High Street
Thomas Erswell	Clothmaker	Hill Street	
Francis Diggon	Collar maker		High Street
William Symonds	Collar maker		Market Place
James Archer	Fellmonger	Bridge End x2 (1 land)	
George Archer	Fellmonger and glover	Church Street	Church Street x2
			High Street
James Allen	Fustian weaver	Church Street x5	

Name	Trade	Property owned (street)	Property rented (street)
William Archer	Glover	Church Street x2	
		Abbey Lane	
		Market Place	
James Camp	Miller	Cuckingstool End	
Thomas Frankham	Miller	Gold Street	
William Grylls	Peruke maker	Market Place	
William Gibbs	Plumber, glazier, painter	Market Place	
Thomas Archer	Tanner	Church Street	
Jonathan Bowtell	Tanner	Probably based at Audley End	
Thomas Barnard	Tailor		
Richard Freeman	Tailor	Bridge End	
John Bush	Wheelwright	High Street x4 (2 land)	
		Market Place	
		Little Walden	
Thomas Barrett	Wheelwright	Market Place	
Robert Bunten	Woolcomber	Castle Street	

Table 25: Locations of Properties of Insurance Policy Holders (Based on 1780 Land Tax details ERO, Q/RPI 896)

This data set allows us to address questions pertinent to the main argument here. Firstly, in itself the existence of insurance for some artisans but not for others indicates a significant difference within the segment as a whole. Second, the differences to be detected among the artisans who were insured reinforce the conclusion drawn from other sources of fragmentation within the segment. Third, the fluctuations in the amount insured may indicate the volatility of a man's standing within the group. The evidence is thin here but from this we might conclude that artisans as a whole were markedly differentiated at any point

over time. However, this very volatility in personal circumstances meant that many within the segment had experienced different ‘positions’ within the segment at different points in their life courses. Thus, the volatility that was characteristic of the segment as a whole also imparted a degree of homogeneity to the experience of those within it.

Appendix 3

The 1811 Saffron Walden Census⁹²⁸

On May 29th 1811 a census of the inhabitants of Saffron Walden was begun. It was conducted by R. Browne and survives in manuscript form. Returns for Saffron Walden would have been included in the 1801 census but the 1811 census provided data that was germane only to Saffron Walden and in far greater detail than that required by the 1801 census. The 1801 census was held as a result of the 1800 Population Act (41.Geo.III.c.15) brought about by a growing concern about the population of Britain and its demand for food which was highlighted by the publication in 1798 of Malthus's *An Essay on the Principle of Population*.⁹²⁹ The first census under the terms of this act was concerned with the number of people, their occupations and the number of families and houses but only statistical summaries were submitted by the census enumerators. Edward Higgs argues that all the Census Acts between 1801 and 1831 had titles that indicated that they were to measure the 'increase or diminution' in the population, thus referring back to the population controversy of the previous century as mentioned above.⁹³⁰ Sadly in most cases the detailed information was destroyed.⁹³¹

The Observations and Enumeration Abstract for the 1811 census⁹³² gives the following information about Saffron Walden:

⁹²⁸ ERO, D/B 2/BRE8/7 1811 Census

⁹²⁹ Local evidence of the concern about food was illustrated by the Saffron Walden bread riots of a few years earlier described in detail above p.61ff.

⁹³⁰ Edward Higgs, *Pre 1801—population estimates*, (University of Essex, Online Historical Population Reports (histpop), 2004-7), [http://www.histpop.org/ohpr/servlet/View?path=Browse/Essays\(by kind\)&active=yes&mno=2123](http://www.histpop.org/ohpr/servlet/View?path=Browse/Essays(by kind)&active=yes&mno=2123)

⁹³¹ http://www.bookrags.com/wiki/Census_Act_1800 consulted 19.1.11

⁹³² <http://www.histpop.org> consulted 1.3.11

Houses	
Inhabited	669
By how many families	729
Building	10
Uninhabited	7
Occupations	
Families chiefly employed in Agriculture	307
Families chiefly employed in Trade, Manufactures, or Handicraft	215
All other Families not comprised in the Two preceding Classes	207
Persons	
Males	1,617
Females	1,786
Total	3,403

Table 26: Information drawn from 1811 Census

The 1811 Saffron Walden census retained the detailed information, recording the inhabitants of the town street by street, giving the fore-and surname of each head of house and the trade that person followed. There were three main categories in terms of occupation: agriculture, trade and other. Where trade was the category the particular craft was given. The category of other covered gentlemen, shopkeepers, innkeepers and some professional men. People too poor to be credited with an occupation had the category 'Families chiefly employed in' left blank. The census also showed whether a house was inhabited by more than one family and the number of males and females in each family.

Although the census shows the trade followed by the head of the family, where applicable, it should be noted that following a particular craft did not mean that a man did not also practise agriculture to some extent. As craftsmen's wills reveal, many families held strips in the communal fields of the town or small plots of enclosed land elsewhere. For example, in his will made in 1745, George Pettitt, a cordwainer, lists no less than twelve different parcels of land of sizes varying,

where identified, from half an acre to four acres.⁹³³ Whether he farmed them himself or leased them out to neighbouring land holders is not clear from his will. Edward Allen, a weaver, who made his will in 1759,⁹³⁴ left at least eleven acres of land in a variety of parcels in different parts of the town.

There are further problems relating to the categorisation of trades followed by the heads of house in the survey. For example, people following the semi-professional occupation of surgeon could be classified in different ways. George Eachus, a surgeon living in Church Street, was classified as being in trade, whereas the Fiskes (Charles, John and Samuel) living in Market End, Cuckingstool End Street and the High Street respectively, were categorised as gentlemen. George Eachus⁹³⁵ and the three Fiskes⁹³⁶ all left wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury—evidence in itself that they were all men of a reasonable degree of wealth and property. In their wills, however, whilst George Eachus described himself as a surgeon and apothecary, the three Fiskes all described themselves as having the rank of Esquire. There was a distinct variation in the ways that social designations were applied, depending not only on a man's perception of his social status but also on that of their fellow townsmen.

Although the census does present certain difficulties in interpreting the exact nature of some of the trades followed by the town's artisans, it does allow a certain amount of analysis of the distribution of occupations throughout the town and the placing of artisans in a wider context at a point towards the end of this study. The occupations to be found in each street have been examined and, where possible, have been attributed to one of five different categories: agriculture, trade, shopkeeper, innkeeper or surgeon. In each case the occupation has been taken to be that which provided the main income. People who were identified as gentlemen or for whom no occupation was given have been excluded from the analysis.

However it is interesting to note that out of the entire population of 3,403 people in 1811, only eight people were listed as either gentleman or gentlewoman. There were six gentlewomen: Mrs Hayward in Cuckingstool End Street, Mrs Hancock, Mrs Smith and Mrs Wolfe in the High Street, Mrs Hall in Bridge End and Mrs Westrope in Castle Street. It seems likely that these were all either

⁹³³ERO, 201 CR 15, Will of George Pettitt, cordwainer, 1745

⁹³⁴ERO, 149 CR 17, Will of Edward Allen, weaver, 1759

⁹³⁵TNA, Prob 11/1840, Will of George Eachus

⁹³⁶TNA, Prob 11/1677, Will of John Fiske

TNA, Prob 11/2008, Will of Charles Fiske

TNA, Prob 11/2247, Will of Samuel Fiske

wealthy widows or unmarried ladies living in comfortable retirement.⁹³⁷ It is not possible to distinguish between the two categories since the appellation of Mistress was applied to both married and single ladies of a certain class. The two men to whom the appellation of gentleman was applied were: Thomas Martin who lived in Hill Street and whose will shows that he was a man of considerable property, both real and monetary,⁹³⁸ and William Archer, one of the large clan of Archers.⁹³⁹ William lived in the High Street and had served as Mayor of Walden and as a Justice of the Peace, whereas Thomas Martin does not seem to have concerned himself with the affairs of the corporation. It would appear then that the appellation of 'gentle' was applied to less than a quarter of one per cent of the population of the town listed in the 1811 census. However it is likely that the designations were chosen by the census enumerator. Had the population of the town made the choices it seems very likely that a far higher number of gentlefolk would have been recorded.

The analysis shows that men who gave agriculture as their primary occupation were concentrated in Castle Street: 36% or 70 out of 194. Of those who said that they were chiefly engaged in trade, the largest number, 42 out of 207 or 20%, were also based in Castle Street but there were also substantial concentrations elsewhere in the town—in Market End, Cuckingstool End Street, the High Street and Hill Street. Shopkeepers were very heavily concentrated in Market End: 52% or 8 out of 15. This is not surprising because Market End was the street leading to the Market Place. Innkeepers, on the other hand, were much more evenly distributed throughout the town although there was still a preponderance in Market End: 38% or 5 out of 13. This, again, is not surprising since the market would have been a good source of custom. The major inn of the town, the Rose and Crown, was located in the Market Place itself. The five surgeons were scattered around the town but all lived in streets where houses were of a decent standard. No surgeons were to be found living in Castle Street or Roast Lane!

The data from the 1801 Census provides only the most basic of information about the town, permitting no more than a basic comparison of the categories given in the two Enumeration Abstracts. For example it can be seen that in both censuses women out numbered men in the town and that between the two censuses the population grew by nearly 7%. It is harder to compare the occupational structure of the town because of the change in the way data was

⁹³⁷It is possible that the wills of three of these ladies are held in the National Archive: Judith Westrope, spinster, (TNA, Prob 11/1558); Elizabeth Wolfe, spinster, (TNA, Prob 11/1664) and Sarah Hall, widow, (TNA, Prob 11/1546).

⁹³⁸ TNA, Prob 11/1555, the will of Thomas Martin

⁹³⁹ TNA, Prob 11/1589, the will of William Archer

gathered. In the earlier census the number of persons engaged in a type of work was given whereas in the latter census it is the number of families so employed.

Houses	
Inhabited	657
By how many families occupied	683
Uninhabited	25
Occupations	
Persons chiefly employed in agriculture	456
Persons chiefly employed in Trade, Manufactures or Handicraft	367
All other Persons not comprised in the Two preceding Classes	2,358
Persons	
Male	1,491
Female	1,690
Total	3,181

Table 27: The Enumeration Abstract for the 1801 Census provides the above information about Saffron Walden.⁹⁴⁰

Thus it is the later census where the original data has been retained that provides the greater amount of information about Saffron Walden. Although the census dates from 1811 and is, therefore, slightly outside the time boundaries of this study with its focus on the eighteenth century, it is, nevertheless, of considerable interest since it provides much information about the location of people who were working in the artisan sector in the eighteenth century. Many of the artisans listed had begun their working lives in the eighteenth century and, although some of them might have moved house, the majority probably remained in the same house for the whole of their working lives unless they experienced a marked change in economic circumstances. Thus, with some reservations, the 1811 census provides a useful tool for identifying the probable residences of artisans working in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

⁹⁴⁰ [http://www.histpop.org/ohpr/servlet/PageBrowser?path=Browse/Census \(by date\)&active=yes&mno=2&tocstate=expandnew&display=sections&display=tables&display=pagetitles&pageseq=122](http://www.histpop.org/ohpr/servlet/PageBrowser?path=Browse/Census (by date)&active=yes&mno=2&tocstate=expandnew&display=sections&display=tables&display=pagetitles&pageseq=122). Consulted 1.3.11.

Appendix 4

Thomas Scrambler: A man whose aspirations exceeded his fate

Thomas Scrambler was a woolcomber by trade. No records have been found of his birth, marriage or burial, although Almshouse records⁹⁴¹ indicate that he died in 1761. In 1715 he was of sufficient importance to be one of the third tranche of signatories to the Oath of Allegiance to George I⁹⁴² as had been John Archer. This third tranche of signatories appears to have been constituted of the more significant artisans of the town, but generally those who did not hold an important civic office.

In 1744 he was a signatory to the list of members of the Abbey Lane Meeting.⁹⁴³ It would seem that he was one of only seven members of the meeting who had signed the Oath of Allegiance.⁹⁴⁴ Although he was of sufficient status within the town to sign the oath, Thomas Scrambler does not appear on the lists of men who served on the town's grand juries. This may indicate that he did not own the necessary amount of freehold property to qualify but rather lived in copyhold or rented accommodation. This premise is supported by the lack of his name in the Poll Books of 1715⁹⁴⁵ and 1734⁹⁴⁶ which contained the names of those men entitled to vote in elections for a knight of the shire by virtue of their holding of freehold land to the value of forty shillings or greater.

The only reference to Thomas's family life is an entry in the ledgers of Bromfield's Charity. In the spring of 1731/2 Thomas applied to Bromfield's Charity for help in placing his son James apprentice. The charity provided the premium to place James as an apprentice with James Lyon, a cordwainer living in the parish of St. Mary's, Bedford.⁹⁴⁷ No baptismal records exist for James or any siblings, but it would appear that Thomas was unable to afford the cost of placing his son apprentice but was fully cognisant of the importance of so doing and so appealed to the charity for help. He wanted his son to have the chance to become a master craftsman, albeit in a lowly trade of cordwaining. One of the signatories supporting his application was that of William Rankin, a grocer and fellow member of the Abbey Lane Meeting. William Rankin was a man of some substance in the town who served as overseer of the poor on three occasions; his

⁹⁴¹ D/Q 67/2/1, Walden Almshouse and Terrier of Estate, 1749-1772

⁹⁴² ERO, D/B 2/QSS2/3, list of those taking the oath in 1715.

⁹⁴³ ERO, D/NC/16/1/1 References to Abbey Lane Meeting, 1744

⁹⁴⁴ Four of the signatories were in the third tranche, the other three were in the first tranche.

⁹⁴⁵ ERO, D/DKw/O2/14, a copy of the poll book for Uttlesford, 1715.

⁹⁴⁶ ERO, Library uncatalogued, *Poll for a Knight of the Shire to represent the County of Essex taken at Chelmsford on Tuesday 7th March 1734 by Champion Bramfill, Esq., Sheriff (London, 1734)*

⁹⁴⁷ ERO, D/B 2/CHR1/5/120, Bromfield's Charity Indenture of James Scrambler, 1731/2

non-conformity precluding him from a higher position within the civic governance of the town.

By 1751 Thomas Scrambler appears to have fallen on hard times since he was listed as one of the recipients of the Tollesbury Dole of Cloth, a charity which gave lengths of cloth to the 'deserving poor'.⁹⁴⁸ The term deserving poor suggests that Thomas was viewed as having fallen on hard times through no fault of his own. Perhaps sickness or old age had reduced him to this state. In the same year he was elected to the Saffron Walden Almshouse.⁹⁴⁹ People were able to put themselves forward as candidates for the Almshouse but the selection was made by the Mayor and Aldermen on the advice of the Master and Part-Brother of the Almshouse. It is not possible to say whether Thomas was elected the first time he applied.

Election to the Almshouse was a meal ticket for life for the successful applicant who received accommodation and board for the rest of their lives unless they transgressed the rules of the Almshouse in which case they could be ejected. To secure election to the Almshouse required a candidate to have led a relatively blameless life and to have been reduced to the need to apply through misfortune, illness or incapacity. Since the same misfortunes led other people to an uncomfortable old age supported by meagre parish relief in their own homes or in the parish workhouse, election to the Almshouse suggests that Thomas Scrambler had influential friends who could canvass the electing panel of Mayor and aldermen on his behalf. Perhaps William Rankin, mentioned above, was able to use his influence on Thomas's behalf. Whatever the case, Thomas lived out his remaining days in the Almshouse, a period of nearly ten years, in the relative comfort of Saffron Walden Almshouse.

⁹⁴⁸ Saffron Walden Museum, uncatalogued

⁹⁴⁹ D/Q 67/2/1, Walden Almshouse and Terrier of Estate, 1749-1772

Appendix 5

The Fortunes of the Archer Family

The subject of differentiation within the artisan sector of the eighteenth century town of Saffron Walden has been viewed from a variety of perspectives above. What follows is a case study of one of the artisan families of Saffron Walden at this time – the Archers. The case study will seek to use the Archer family to demonstrate the existence of economic and social differentiation within the artisan sector at this time. It is not possible to make much reference to the effect of religion on differentiation among artisans at this time because the vast majority of Archers for whom information exists were, at least nominally, members of the established church and, as such, would have worshipped at the parish church of St. Mary the Virgin.

The Archers were one of the major artisan families in Saffron Walden throughout the eighteenth century. There appear to have been several strands of the family and it has not yet been possible to discover how the various strands are related. One reason for this difficulty is the limited number of forenames given to male children in the family: ‘George’, ‘Henry’, ‘James’, ‘John’, ‘Richard’, ‘Thomas’ and ‘William’. In some years two boys were baptised with the same forename, distinguished only in the baptismal records by the name of the father, where given.⁹⁵⁰

In order to consider the way in which life chances could affect the life an artisan led, particularly towards the end of his life, it may be informative to follow the fortunes of some artisan members of the Archer family, with the caveat that it is not always possible to be entirely sure which member of the family sharing the same forename is, in fact, the subject of the reference!

Sons of John Archer, butcher

John Archer (II), the father, was born in 1699, the son of John (I), also a butcher, and Ann his wife. In his will dated 1732 and proved in 1737 the latter left a total of six properties as well as three acres of land at Homercross Lane and another parcel of land at Mile Stile,⁹⁵¹ potentially because as a butcher he would need land for the grazing of beasts prior to slaughter. Due to a lack of rate books in this period it is not possible to locate the six properties even though the tenants are given. It seems likely that the properties were freehold since no mention is

⁹⁵⁰ ERO, D/P 192/1/4.3-4, Saffron Walden baptismal register. In August 1734 Thomas Archer baptised his second son John. In October of the same year John Archer, a butcher, baptised his first born child John as well.

⁹⁵¹ ERO, 498 CR 14, the will of John Archer, butcher. 1732

made of any formalities related to copyhold property. He, John I, served as Churchwarden in 1715 and was listed in the Poll Book of 1715 as entitled to vote for a Knight of the Shire at the elections,⁹⁵² as well as signing the Oath of Allegiance and Supremacy to George I in 1715.⁹⁵³ The above three references indicate that John Archer I was a man of some status in the town, but not of the highest rank. Although he held at least a forty shilling freehold to entitle him to vote for a Knight of the Shire, he did not progress beyond the rank of Churchwarden and only signed the oath in the third tranche of signatories, the more significant members of the town hierarchy having signed some days before. This John Archer was literate, probably a pupil of the Grammar School, and had subscribed five shillings to the setting up of the Charity School in 1715,⁹⁵⁴ an indication that he was thoroughly involved in the life of the town, but at this stage of his career without the means to make a significant contribution to a new civic undertaking.

The second John Archer, born 1699, was also to become a butcher, but he progressed significantly further in the civic hierarchy than his father. He served as overseer of the poor in 1737 and in the same year took the freedom of the town by patrimony in the sum of 10s.6d.⁹⁵⁵ By the birth of his last child, Henry, in 1749 the baptismal record listed him as Alderman. The list of mayors of Saffron Walden given in Richard, Lord Braybrooke's *History of Audley End*⁹⁵⁶ suggests that this John Archer may have served as mayor of the town in 1745 and again in 1754, and possibly also in 1765. His name appeared in the 1763⁹⁵⁷ and 1768⁹⁵⁸ poll books indicating his possession of sufficient property to entitle him to a vote. His will made in 1775 and proved in the same year shows a man of considerable property. Each of his five sons received property, either buildings or farmland. Thomas and James, sons three and four, also received sums of money taking into account any debts they owed him at his death and the eldest son John III was to receive any rents owed on the properties he inherited. John II also left sums of money to his married daughters, whilst his unmarried daughter Ann inherited a considerable amount of property in Great Chesterford, a nearby

⁹⁵² ERO, D/DKw/O2/14, a copy of the poll book for Uttlesford, 1715.

⁹⁵³ ERO, D/B 2/QSS2/3, list of those taking the oath in 1715.

⁹⁵⁴ ERO, D/B 2/ SCH2/1 Subscribers to the Charity School, 1715. John Archer's subscription of 5s a year continued until at least 1730.

⁹⁵⁵ Saffron Walden Museum 41507, List of Freemen of the Town

⁹⁵⁶ Richard, Lord Braybrooke, *The History of Audley End* (London, 1836), pp.316-7.

⁹⁵⁷ Saffron Walden Town Library, T.Tofts, *The poll for a Knight of the Shire to represent the County of Essex taken at Chelmsford on Tuesday and Wednesday the 13th and 14th of December 1763 by William Sheldon, Esq., Sheriff* (Chelmsford, 1763)

⁹⁵⁸ ERO, Library, uncatalogued, *Poll for Knights of the Shire to represent the County of Essex taken at Chelmsford on Tuesday 29th March 1768 by Richard Lomax Clay Esq. Sheriff* (Chelmsford, 1768)

large village on the turnpike road to Cambridge, as well as £300.⁹⁵⁹ At his death, John Archer was clearly a man of considerable wealth and status in the community.

The John Archer who died in 1775 was the father of five sons and three daughters. The sons were John III, Thomas, William, James and Henry born between 1734 and 1749. He also had three daughters: Elizabeth, Ann and Sarah. Elizabeth married James Sell, a yarnmaker, and Sarah married Thomas Edwards, a miller from the nearby village of Littlebury. Ann was unmarried at the time the will was made and, since she was already in her thirties, an increased provision was made for her since she was quite likely to remain unmarried.

It is the subsequent fortunes of the five sons of John Archer which provide some evidence of fractionalism within the artisan segment of Saffron Walden society in the second half of the eighteenth century, indeed even within one family. There are no records providing early evidence of the fortunes of the five boys. Since their father was a man of status and not inconsiderable means in the community it seems likely that the boys attended the grammar school. It is evident from documentary evidence all were literate, and that after attendance at the Grammar School all were then privately apprenticed rather than relying for their apprenticeship premiums on one of the town charities.⁹⁶⁰

Later town records suggest that the five boys entered trades related to their father's trade of butcher. The eldest, John, became a fellmonger, gloves and breeches maker. The second son, Thomas, probably became a tanner and was later in business with his younger brother James. The third son, William, followed his father into the butchery business but later probably diversified into malting. Son number four, James, also became a fellmonger and glover based at Bridge End in Saffron Walden. The youngest son, Henry, became a successful maltster in later life but there is no evidence as to any earlier trade followed. Henry's entry into the malting trade was at a time when malting was of increasing importance in the Saffron Walden area. The opening of the Stort Navigation in 1769⁹⁶¹ meant that malt from the Saffron Walden area could be transported to the thirsty markets of London by water after a relatively brief trip by road to Bishops Stortford. Henry would have been able to exploit the opportunities that the malt trade offered. He made a sufficiently good income from the malting trade to allow him to build a large new house in Cuckingstool

⁹⁵⁹ ERO, 208 CR 17, will of John Archer the elder, butcher, 1775

⁹⁶⁰ None of their names appear in the ledgers of either Bromfield's or Suffolk and Turner's charities, the two town charities most concerned with the apprenticeship of poorer boys.

⁹⁶¹ <http://www.jim-shead.com/waterways/History.php?wpage=STRT> consulted 24.2.2009

End Street called Hill House according to a Saffron Walden contemporary John Player.⁹⁶²

It would seem that all five sons prospered in their various lines of business. Between 1778 and 1780 all five brothers held insurance policies with the Sun Insurance Company, insuring property ranging in value from £100 to £600.⁹⁶³ The four eldest left wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, an indication of a substantial sum to be left. The youngest, Henry, seems somewhat surprisingly, to have died intestate if an annotation on his brother Thomas's will is to be believed.⁹⁶⁴ In their wills they all describe themselves as 'gentlemen'. Whether this a self-allocated title or the opinion of their peers is hard to gauge, but the 1792 Rate for the Repair of the Parish Church,⁹⁶⁵ which gives titles to some of the rate payers, accords only William and Henry the appellation of 'Mister'.

All five of the brothers seem to have made a reasonable success of their business lives, but only William and Henry climbed to the top of the greasy pole of civic power and became mayors of Saffron Walden. John and James both served as Overseers of the Poor in 1784 and 1786 respectively, but William and Henry both served more than one term as mayor and were thus also Justices of the Peace for the town. Serving as a Justice would have secured the appellation of 'Mister' and the right to describe themselves as 'gentlemen'.

Perhaps John and James were too busy with their trades to climb higher up the ranks of the Corporation or perhaps they were deemed by their fellow townsmen to have reached a position commensurate with their perceived administrative abilities as overseers. Thomas appears to have held no civic posts, but this may have been due to the fact that he was bringing up his daughter alone, his wife having died not long after her birth.⁹⁶⁶ Neither John nor James took the freedom of the town, but William and Henry did; William in 1776 and Henry in 1783.⁹⁶⁷ This was, by this date, an indication not of a young master craftsman keen to make a success of his business, but of a politically ambitious man keen to make his mark on the civic stage in Saffron Walden.

William and Henry both served more than one term as mayor of Saffron Walden. Henry was mayor at the time of the Bread Riots in 1795 and was responsible for

⁹⁶² John Player, *Sketches of Saffron Walden and its vicinity* (Saffron Walden, 1845), p.68

⁹⁶³ UKDA 1838, Fire policies issued by the Sun and Royal Exchange insurance companies. Sun Insurance Policies 1778-1780

⁹⁶⁴ TNA, Prob 11/1639, will of Thomas Archer

⁹⁶⁵ ERO, D/B 2/PAR11/257, 1792 Rate for the Repair of the Parish Church

⁹⁶⁶ ERO, D/P 192/1/5.3 Saffron Walden burial register lists Thomas's wife Mary as a lunatic.

⁹⁶⁷ Saffron Walden Museum 41507, Saffron Walden Freemen

negotiating with the major local landowner, Lord Howard of Audley End, for the sending of troops to quell the riot.

It can be seen, then, that although the five Archer brothers all achieved a degree of success in their business life, their success in the civic sphere was much more variable. It may be assumed that all five boys were given a similar start in life in terms of education and initial financial support in their business lives by their father, but only two of them followed in their father's civic footsteps. It would seem, then, that even where a level playing field obtained, fractionalism could occur among a set of brothers in terms of the rank that they could reach in the civic sphere where political acumen as well as financial success and the avoidance of unforeseen personal distractions was necessary to achieve the pinnacle of the civic organisation, the post of mayor.

Other artisans with the same surname—and over the course of the eighteenth century there were many Archers involved in a range of artisanal occupations including bottle maker, pattern maker, cooper, glover, innkeeper, fellmonger and breeches maker, butcher, maltster and tanner—were less successful than the five sons of John Archer. It is often difficult to be absolutely sure which Archer is which. A John Archer, possibly the one who was granted a settlement certificate which indemnified the parish of Newport against any costs incurred by him, his wife Mary and son John when he moved there to join another John Archer to follow his trade of glover in 1764,⁹⁶⁸ became an inmate of the Almshouse in 1793.⁹⁶⁹ On his death his wife Mary was elected in his stead.

If John Archer, glover, was less fortunate in his life chances than the five Archer brothers, he, at least, secured a relatively comfortable old age in the Almshouse. Other members of the Archer clan were less fortunate. The overseer of the poor's account book kept by William Mynott in 1781⁹⁷⁰ shows that relief was provided weekly to the widows of a Richard Archer and a James Archer as well as incidental payments to Lydia Archer and Richard Archer who were unwell. An additional incidental payment was also made to the widow of James Archer who was ill. Clearly these members of the Archer clan had fallen on very hard times.

The many strands of the Archer family show the range of fortunes which might face a member of the artisan segment of society in the course of the eighteenth century. Some were successful; occasionally this success was tied in with the macro economic situation. Henry Archer, as mentioned above, became a

⁹⁶⁸ ERO, D/B 2/PAR4/159, Indemnity bond issued to John Archer, glover, in 1764.

⁹⁶⁹ ERO, DQ67/2/1-2, Almshouse Minute Books, 1749-1850

⁹⁷⁰ ERO, D/B 2/PAR3/1, Overseers of the Poor Account Book, 1781-1797

maltster at a time when the production of malt in the Saffron Walden area was very much a growth industry because of the improved transport links to London with the building of the extension of the Lea Navigation to Bishops Stortford. Others were less successful, ending either in the parish workhouse or on parish relief. Sadly it is this less successful group of Archers that it is far more difficult to document.

Appendix 6

The 1793 Survey of the Inhabitants of Bocking⁹⁷¹

As has been mentioned above,⁹⁷² the reason why this survey was conducted is not clear and the survey taker is identified only by initials. However, the information collected enables a picture to be given of the religious persuasions of a small Essex town occupied mostly by the wool trade at the end of the eighteenth century. Although by this time Saffron Walden had moved away from the production of woollen cloth and was more occupied by the production of malt, comparisons can be drawn between the two places as has been shown above in the main body of this thesis.

The Bocking survey includes the whole parish, not just the town itself, and gives a total population of 2,923. The nearest comparable survey for Saffron Walden is the 1811 Census⁹⁷³ which gives a population of 3,403 and focuses on the town itself rather than including the surrounding ‘ends’ which were part of the parish. Another difference is that the Walden Census does not show religious persuasion. However, as luck would have it, the Bocking survey does shed some light on the religious persuasions of the different social groups within the parish and this may in turn inform our view of the religious make-up of the town of Saffron Walden.

The survey shows that of the heads of house, some 65% followed an artisanal trade and a further 17% were categorized as labourers. The term ‘labourer’, as has been discussed above, presents certain problems since it is not possible to distinguish between young men recently out of their apprenticeship and serving as journeymen and those who were day labourers, possibly working on the land, and never likely to climb higher. However the total of these categories (82%) shows that Bocking was a town with its roots firmly established in artisanal occupations.

A study of those designated by an artisanal occupation shows that 65% of the population fell under this heading. When the religious persuasions are considered, 62% of dissenters—be they categorized as Baptist Dissenters or just Dissenters—followed artisanal trades; whereas 66% of conformists were designated as artisans. However when certain trades are scrutinised more closely, the picture is somewhat different. The wool combers present the clearest difference. Fifty-one families are shown with a wool comber as the head of

⁹⁷¹ ERO, D/P 268/18/2 Survey of the Inhabitants of Bocking, 1793.

⁹⁷² See above p.185

⁹⁷³ See above Appendix 3

house, of these thirty-one families are designated as dissenters, over 60%. There are, on the other hand, 172 families headed by a weaver of whom only fifteen were headed by dissenters, a mere nine percent. There is, however, a difference in the geographical locations of the two trades: the predominantly conformist weavers are clustered in Bocking Church Street and Church Lane, whereas the dissenting wool combers are to be found more commonly in Bradford Street and Bocking End, although there are a few in Church Lane. It is interesting to note that the Independent Meeting House was located in Bocking End, so perhaps this explains the preponderance of dissenting wool combers in this area, whereas the conformist weavers are clustered nearer to the church. Just why wool combers had such a tendency towards dissent in Bocking is harder to explain, although E.P. Thompson does suggest that wool combers were among the elite of the woollen trade and had been inclined to trade union organisation from the 1740s onward.⁹⁷⁴ Perhaps the Bocking wool combers were disinclined to accept the tenets of the established church?

The other group where there was a higher than expected number of dissenters was the woollen manufacturers or clothiers themselves. These were men who were operating on a much larger scale, putting out wool to spinners and then placing the spun wool with weavers. Like Robert Catlin of Saffron Walden with his shoemaking business, they appear to have been operating on a proto-industrial scale.⁹⁷⁵ Of the seven men categorised in this way, five were dissenters. It may be that these are examples of very capable men whose religious persuasion denied them the opportunity for advancement through the parish structure. So threw themselves into their business ventures. The Savills⁹⁷⁶ are an example of men of this type.

The other information that this survey throws light on is of the women employed in artisanal industries at this time. The survey shows three schoolmistresses living in Bocking as well as one female farmer and four victuallers. One of the victuallers is recorded as a widow who probably inherited the business from her husband, but the other three have no such designation. However working as a victualler was not an uncommon job for a woman at this time. One female grocer is also listed with the title of 'mistress'. The other women recorded were all involved in artisanal trades. The vast majority were involved in either spinning or weaving. Spinning was a job by which an elderly widow could earn a small income, and a considerable number of female spinners are recorded as

⁹⁷⁴ E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1963), p. 282

⁹⁷⁵ See above pp.163 and 175, where previous mention is made of these woollen manufacturers or clothiers.

⁹⁷⁶ ERO, D/DCd Z7, Diary of Joseph and John Savill, Bocking Baymakers, 1754-1827

being widows. Some were still spinning when resident in the Almshouses. Three women were listed as mantua makers. This was a trade in which many women worked and girls are recorded as being apprenticed to mantua makers in Saffron Walden in the eighteenth century.⁹⁷⁷ Slightly more unusual trades for a woman to be involved in were baking, carpentry and card making. In Saffron Walden female members of the Rusted family were involved in baking at this time,⁹⁷⁸ so perhaps it was viewed as appropriate employment for an unmarried woman in a family already involved in the trade. The women involved in carpentry and card making are both given the title of 'mistress' so they had a certain social standing in the community. It is possible that their involvement in trade was as a result of inheriting the business from a husband or other relative. If this was the case, it is likely that the actual artisanal work was carried on by journeymen and apprentices. In Saffron Walden, Mistress Mary Morgan was a spinster involved in the ironmongery trade, so such involvement did occur.⁹⁷⁹

It can be seen that the survey of the inhabitants of Bocking does provide an interesting insight into not only the religious persuasions of the inhabitants of the parish, but also into the involvement of women in artisanal work. As a document it would repay a far more intensive scrutiny than the scope of this thesis allows, but it does show that Saffron Walden was not a place apart with regard to the strength of its non-conformity and the involvement of women in artisan production.

⁹⁷⁷ See above, p.214

⁹⁷⁸ See above, pp.166-167

⁹⁷⁹ See above, p.219-220 .

Hilary Walker
Differentiating the artisan
Appendix 7: Places of worship



Map 9: 1758 Map of Saffron Walden by Edward Eyre (ERO, T/M 90/1) annotated to show places of religious worship in the last quarter of the eighteenth century