The Distribution of Wealth in the Vale of Berkeley, Gloucestershire, 1660 – 1700

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Gregory King considered that 'to be well apprized of the true state, and condition of a nation' one needed two fundamental pieces of information: the number of its people, and its wealth. These, 'of all others, and at all times, [were] the most useful and necessary.'[1] During recent years the study of population in past societies has become one of the most important developments in historical research. Historical demography has firmly established itself as a discipline related to, but nevertheless quite distinct from the mainstream of social and economic history.[2] In contrast, the second of King's 'two main articles,' wealth, has received comparatively little attention. Where it has been studied at all it has usually taken the form of general analyses for the country as a whole over long periods of time, or descriptions of particular social groups.[3] It certainly has not produced in this country anything like the canon of work currently available for population history.[4]

The cause of this backwardness can be partly attributed to King himself. His 'Scheme of the Income and Expense of the Several Famillies of England,' produced in 1696, has for years provided historians with a convenient short-cut to describing wealth and social structure throughout the nation.[5] G.S. Holmes has found it used in at least a dozen text books, from G.N. Clark's *The Wealth of England,* published in 1946, to J.D. Chamber's *Population, Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial England,* published in 1972.[6] And yet the statistical basis of King's table in Holmes's opinion 'is patently far more the product of strained deduction, of mathematical juggling, or even plain guesswork, than of firmly-grounded information.'[7] In his view, it 'has been responsible for much complacency and confusion about the pre-industrial social structure . . .'[8]

Rather than attempting a general account of the distribution of wealth in England, which considering the present state of knowledge would inevitably be full of errors, it is here suggested that local studies in aggregate may provide more satisfactory results.[9] Just as demographers have relied upon data from hundreds of parish registers to construct a broad outline of population change in England during the past four centuries, so historians studying wealth must base general conclusions on analyses of as many different parts of the country as possible.

The aim of this article is to describe the distribution of wealth in one part of Gloucestershire, the Vale of Berkeley, between 1660 and 1700. Probate inventories are the main source supplemented by wills, administrations, hearth tax returns, Overseers of the Poor accounts, parish registers, and manorial records. Part one discusses the problems involved in using inventories to measure wealth. Part two attempts to ascertain the representativeness of inventoried decedents compared to all decedents. Part three provides the results of an analysis of the distribution of wealth in the Vale of Berkeley, and part four considers the relationship between real estate and personal wealth.

I

There are a number of problems involved in using probate inventories to measure wealth distribution which fall into two broad categories: the omission of goods and the accuracy of the appraiser's valuations.[10] According to Henry Swinburne, 'the things that are to be put into the Inventory, are all the goods and chattels and rights which were the Testator's, or did belong, or were due unto him at the time of his death . . .'[11] These usually included clothes, household furniture, crockery, cutlery, kitchen implements, plate, money, tools, raw materials, crops, livestock, stored produce, credits, and investments.[12]

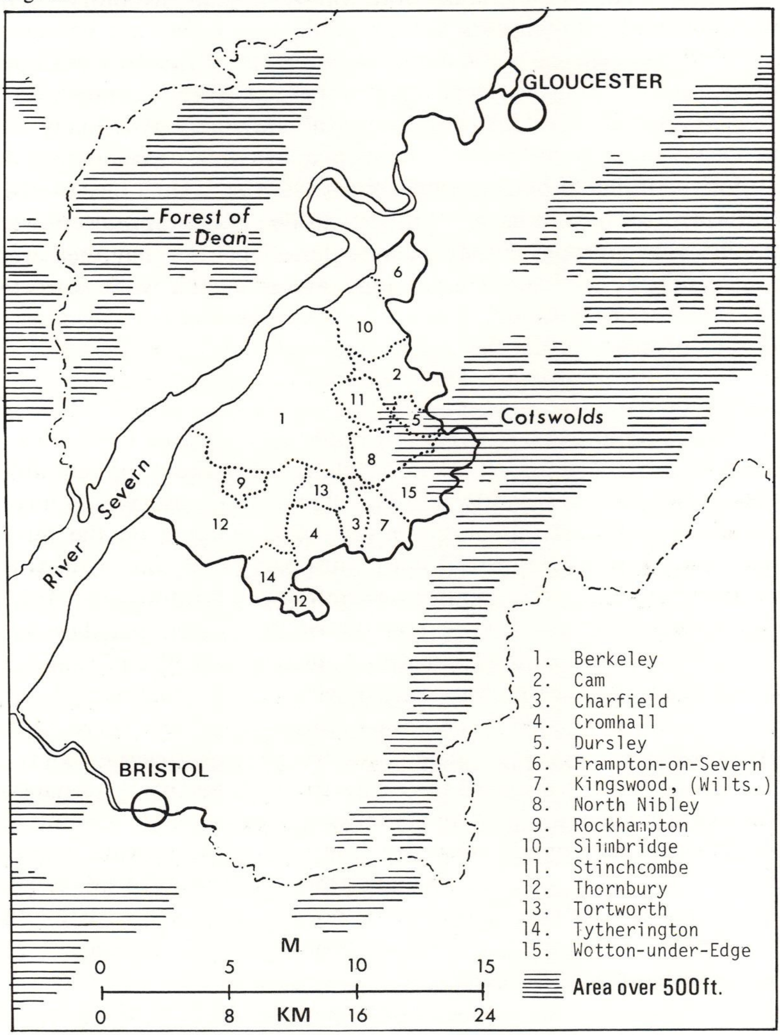
Conversely, certain items, by law or custom, were not entered. From the historian's point of view, the most serious of these is real estate. Since inventories are lists of a decedent's movable property, freehold land and long-term leases (which were accorded similar status to freehold) do not appear in them.[13] Things that were an integral part of a freehold were also considered the property of the heir rather than the testator and were not appraised, for example: grass, trees, fish, doves in a dovecot; and in the dwelling house, window panes, wainscot, and fixed furniture. Strictly speaking, debts owed by a decedent should not have been listed because technically they were other men's property, although in practice they frequently appear. Finally, although by law a wife's possessions, *bona paraphenalia,* belonged to her husband and hence should have been valued in his inventory, it was customary to except her 'convenient apparell, agreeable to her degree.'[14]

Another drawback is the unofficial omission of goods. Perishable foods such as butter, eggs, and milk are rarely mentioned.[15] Householdstuff, livestock, and money already bequeathed may not be included in an inventory; or an inventory may have been only partially completed before going through probate. The season of the year when the inventory was taken will also affect its contents. At various times crops, livestock, dairy products, or manufactured articles may be sold and will not appear in an inventory. In so far as the distribution of wealth is concerned, this should not represent a serious problem since the goods sold off should be replaced in another form, as money, debts receivable, or investments. If one is measuring the incidence of certain items such as crops, however, these seasonal fluctuations must be taken into account.

Whether or not goods were accurately appraised is of some consequence when using inventories to study wealth. Despite the official requirement that appraisers make 'true and perfect' valuations, it is clear they did not always do so.[16] Prices assigned to livestock, for example, should reflect their market value, but in practice they can vary a great deal and often cannot be attributed to differences in the age or quality of the stock. In a study of Cumbrian inventories, 1660–1750, J.D. Marshall found that the valuations placed on cattle and sheep were sometimes considerably lower than market prices[17] On the other hand, C. Howell and J.S. Moore commenting on Leicestershire and Gloucestershire inventories respectively have found that crop and livestock prices reflect the market price.[18] Evidence from the Vale of Berkeley confirms their view.[19] The important point is that where possible prices given in inventories should be compared to external evidence such as farm accounts, diaries, or prices in local markets. It cannot be taken for granted that inventory valuations are reliable.

The valuation of secondhand furniture and clothing must necessarily have been rather arbitrary. Different men might have appraised the same items at different prices. Is there any way of checking the consistency of valuations of household goods? One method is to compare two different appraisals of the same estate which follow each other within a few years. For example, Edward

Fig. 1: The Vale of Berkeley, Gloucestershire.



Huntley of Berkeley, died in 1686 and his widow, Mary, a year later. The household goods of his estate were valued at £47.05, while those in the inventory of Mary, £45.49.[20] John Clutterbuck, also from Berkeley, died in 1681 and had his householdstuff valued at £38.69. The same goods were valued in the inventory of his widow, Sarah, three years later, at £38.93.[21] It may not be always possible to compare all household goods as in the two examples above, but individual items might appear in both inventories and can be checked against each other. In sum, while it is likely that now and again goods were incorrectly appraised it appears that the majority of inventories provide fairly reliable valuations of their contents. As Moore says, 'Without assuming that appraisers were infallibly accurate, we may nevertheless conclude that they were reasonably honest and conscientious, and that their work is worthy of serious consideration.'[22]

II

Situated between the river Severn in the west and the Cotswolds in the east, the Vale of Berkeley extends for about fifteen miles between Gloucester and Bristol (see figure 1). It displayed a mixed economy in the seventeenth century, with dairying on the fertile clay lowlands, sheep and corn husbandry on the Cotswolds escarpment, and cloth production centred on Wotton-under-Edge, Dursley, and Cam. The population of the fifteen parishes here studied was approximately twelve thousand in 1650 and remained steady until the end of the century when it rose slightly.[23]

Seven hundred and seventy-three inventories have survived for the period 1660–1700, including those from the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, and combined with a further 210 inventory valuations found on wills, in Will Act Books, on letters and accounts of administration, and in Consistory Court Journals provide a grand total of 983 estates.[24] The first question, and most crucial, is how representative is the inventoried population compared to the population as a whole? What proportion of decedents are represented by inventories?

One method of assessing inventory coverage is to compare the number of adult males who died in the region each year to the number of those leaving inventories.[25] Ideally, this should be accomplished by linking each inventory to the decedent's entry in the burial register, but this may only be possible where the area being studied is comparatively small. For the Vale, nominal linkage would have been too time-consuming and therefore it was necessary to use ratios, that is, simply counting all the adult male decedents and comparing the annual totals to the number of extant inventories. Nominal linkage was undertaken for Berkeley, the largest parish in the region, and produced a coverage of 34.3 percent between 1678 and 1699. In other words, 34 out of every 100 males who died in that period left an inventory. This figure is very close to that achieved by ratios (approximately 32 percent) suggesting that although not as accurate as nominal linkage, ratios are nevertheless fairly reliable.[26]

Using burial registers to compute the annual number of adult male dead raises a number of problems.[27] One must be sure that registers are reasonably comprehensive and do not badly under-report deaths because of inefficient record-keeping, civil disturbances, or nonconformity. In the Vale, nonconformity was gaining strength in the market towns of Dursley, Wotton-under-Edge, and Thornbury after 1660.[28] Cloth-producing areas such as Cam and Stinchcombe also attracted large numbers of dissenters, especially Quakers.[29] For the most part, however, the registers seem reliable up to 1700, and where possible have been checked alongside records of nonconformist burial grounds.[30] Even if the registers are complete there are bound to be errors in identifying adult males or because some decedents were not buried in their home parishes.[31] Yet no claim is being made that this method will give absolutely precise results, rather it seeks to provide an indication or rough estimate of inventory coverage.

Between 1678 and 1699 coverage throughout the Vale ranged from a low of 17 percent to a high of 40 percent with an average of about 30 percent. This is the best coverage the region provides for the pre-industrial period.[32] How does it compare to other areas? J.D. Marshall found that in Hawkshead, Cumbria, 32 percent of adult males are represented by inventories between 1660 and 1700.[33] Much higher rates have been found in colonial Maryland and Massachusetts. In the latter, Daniel Scott Smith estimated that 42 percent of decedents from Hingham left inventories between 1726 and 1786,[34] while in Maryland coverage was well over 60 percent during the second half of the seventeenth century;[35] the highest rate likely to be found anywhere in the English-speaking world in the early-modern period. Although this is pure speculation, I would expect coverage in most English communities to be around 20 percent.[36] Towns, with large numbers of poor and where the ecclesiastical machinery was possibly less successful in ensuring that decedents' estates were inventoried for probate, are likely to have even lower rates. Rural parishes which were centres of nonconformity, or which attracted many poor people, or were in dioceses where the church courts were especially inefficient might also have low coverage.

Assuming that three men in ten from the Vale of Berkeley went through probate, who were those who did not? One group grossly under-represented by inventories is the poor. Only 69 men and women worth less than £10 in personalty left inventories, comprising just 7 percent of the total sample. How can this be explained? Possibly fees exacted by the church courts for proving a will or administration dissuaded some from going through the process.[37] These fees, however, were not particularly onerous, except for the destitute. Richard Burn's comment of the mid-eighteenth century could equally well apply to the end of the seventeenth century: 'it is agreed on all hands, that the fees . . . are become much too small, by the great alteration in the value of money and the prices of things.'[38] More probable is the common sense view that the poor were unlikely to make wills because they had little to bequeath. Verbal arrangements made before death may have settled what property there was on the next of kin, and since the value of the goods was so low there would have been little risk of embezzlement.[39]

One of the main difficulties in trying to establish why some people went through probate and others did not is that there is very little information on the procedure immediately after a person's death. If a person died intestate the local church courts were empowered to appoint an administrator, usually the widow or next of kin. In theory, apparitors in each rural deanery were to cite any executor or administrator to prove a will or undertake an administration provided two weeks had elapsed since the person's death.[39] In the Vale there is little evidence of people being presented for failing in this duty.[40] Perhaps the courts turned a blind eye as far as the poor were concerned because there was small recompense for them in the form of fees. They may have encouraged the making of wills but could not, or did not wish to enforce it. Indeed, this may have been their attitude towards most people because fully 70 percent of decedents failed to go through probate.

Considering the poor formed a large proportion of those from the Vale who did not leave inventories, it is important to ascertain the extent of poverty in the area. One of the best sources for this purpose is the hearth tax, especially the return of 1664.[41]

Householders who did not contribute to the parish poor rate or who had less than twenty shillings income per year from land or £10 in goods were officially exempt from the tax and listed as non-chargeables. In 1664 non-chargeables accounted for nearly 50 percent of all householders in eleven of the fifteen parishes.[42] The figure for 1672 is 36 percent but these returns are less reliable.[43] Using these levels as upper and lower bounds, between a third and a half of the Vale's entire population was deemed as poor in the 1660s and 1670s.

Was this level maintained for the remainder of the century? Evidence from Overseer of the Poor accounts for five parishes suggests that it was.[44] Annual disbursements to the poor in Thornbury, Slimbridge and Stinchcombe rose gradually after 1672, while in Berkeley and Kingswood there was a sharp increase during the 1690s. Although the data are fragmentary, it is clear that the level of poverty did not decline in the last two decades of the century, and may have even increased.

It may be objected that hearth tax returns with half their population listed as non-chargeable are somewhat suspicious. But there are good reasons for believing these levels to be fairly accurate. According to the militia muster of 1608, 40 percent of the able-bodied men in the Vale were engaged in the textile industry (see table 1).[45] During the second half of the seventeenth century, as the industry's fortunes fluctuated many workers became temporarily or permanently unemployed.[46] John Barnsdale, minister of Cam, lamented in 1666, that 'the generality of the poore and meane people of our Parish (wch are many) [who] have . . . their dependence uppon the trade of cloathing . . . are now almost wholly out of imployment . . .'[47] Eleven years later, John Smyth commented on the Kingswood district, 'It formerly depended much upon clotheing, but is now decayed with the trade . . .'[48] The Gloucestershire justices of the peace wrote to the Privy Council in 1691 informing them of the starving condition of unemployed workmen 'as their faces (to our griefs) do manifest.'[49] Comparing the Vale to other areas, in Kent the proportion of exemptions was between 26 and 38 percent during the 1660s, and in Leicestershire and Devon, approximately a third in the early 1670s. For the nation as a whole, Gregory King estimated that 55 percent of the population was excused or insolvent when the poll tax was collected in 1691.[50]

Establishing the extent of poverty is an important part of this method because it goes a long way to explaining why inventory coverage is relatively low or high. In the Vale those parishes with low coverage tended to have high proportions of non-chargeables. Dursley, Stinchcombe, and Wotton-under-Edge, for example, have low coverage at well under 25 percent, but they all have large numbers of poor. On the other hand, Charfield and Rockhampton were comparatively free of poverty and both have high coverage. Thus there is a strong correlation between inventory coverage and levels of poverty.

Allowing that between a third and a half of the Vale's adult population was too poor to be likely to leave inventories (none of those described as non-chargeables went through probate), this suggests that the proportion of wealth holders (decedents above the poor) who left inventories was between 45 and 60 percent. Quite clearly, a substantial number of wealth holders also failed to go through probate. Yet if the wealth holders who left inventories can be shown to be a representative cross-section of all those people above the poor who should have left them, then the inventoried population can be used as a sample of the whole group. The wealth of those who made inventories can be construed as representative of those above the poor who did not.

One method of assessing the representativeness of inventoried wealth holders is to compare their occupational structure to that of a group of males also skewed in favour of the upper ranks of society.[51] The occupations of prospective bridegrooms seeking marriage licences from The Diocesan Chancellor provides one such source.[52] Brian Frith states that 'the practice of marriage by licence was not limited to any particular social class,' but it is apparent that poorer groups, such as labourers and manual textile workers, are very much under-represented.[53] Table 2 shows the similarity in occupational structure between persons leaving inventories and those seeking marriage licences. Half of inventoried decedents were described as yeomen and husbandmen compared to 45.7 percent of the bridegrooms, while 23.8 percent of the former were involved in the textile industry compared to 29.2 percent of the latter. The discrepancy between the two groups in category I, 'Gentry and Professions,' can be partly explained by the tendency of bridegrooms to call themselves gentlemen whereas their less charitable neighbours described them as yeomen in their inventories.[54]

The above figures are in contrast to those for all social and economic groups. The 1608 muster shows that only 25.9 percent of men in the Vale were engaged in agriculture as opposed to 41.9 percent in the textile industry (see table 1). Nor was this a matter of

Fig. 2: Personal Wealth in the Vale of Berkeley 1678 – 1699

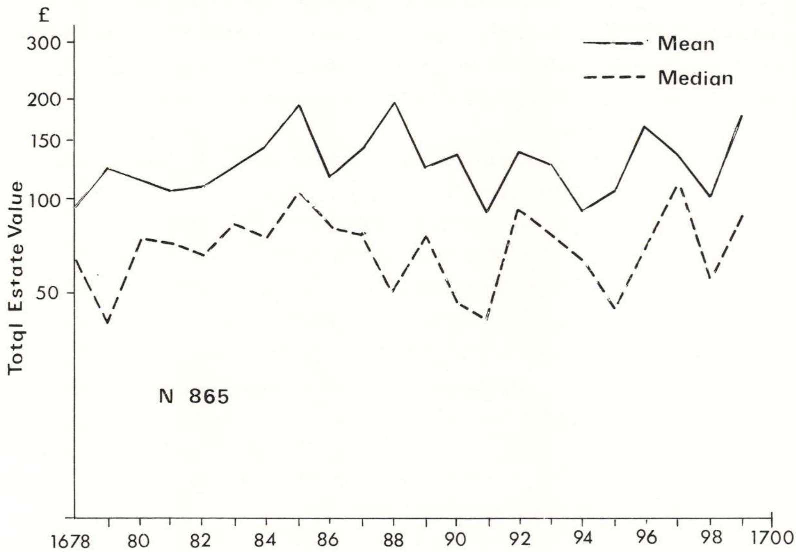
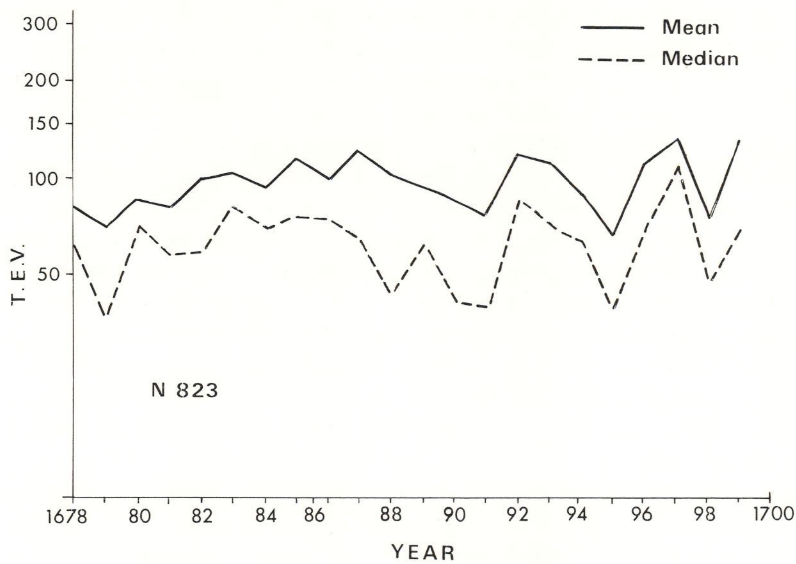


Fig. 3: Personal Wealth in the Vale of Berkeley 1678 – 1699, Trimmed of Estates over £500



changing occupational structure during the course of the seventeenth century. The occupations of males given in a sample of parish registers at the end of the century are remarkably similar to those of 1608.[55] These results not only confirm that inventoried wealthholders are a representative cross-section of all wealthholders, but also illustrate that the majority of poor who failed to go through probate were the lower paid workers in the textile industry — besides other unskilled men such as labourers, weavers, clothworkers, drawers, and scriblers —

III

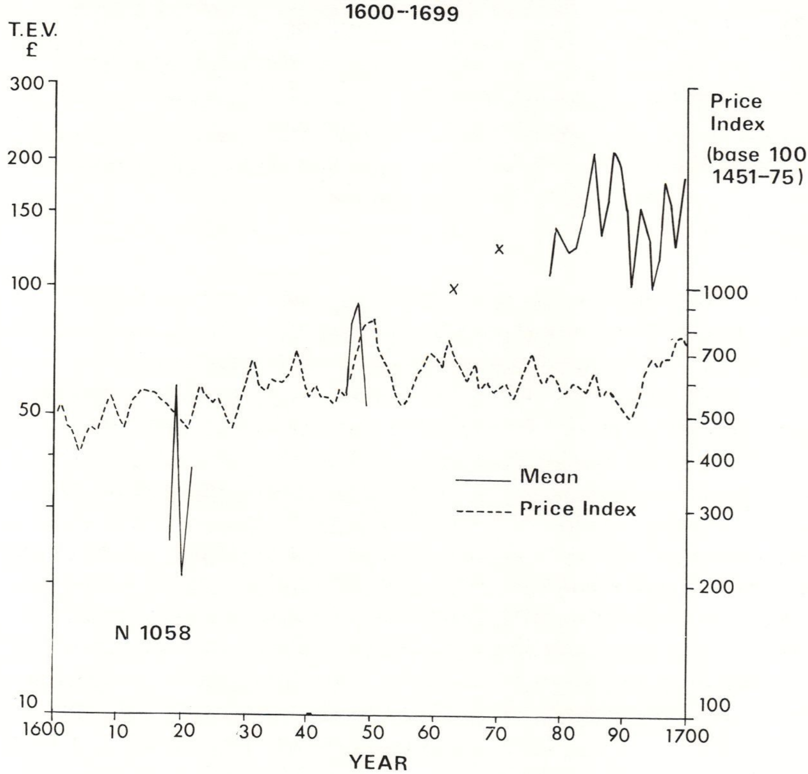
Two methods of analysis were adopted for measuring the distribution of wealth in the Vale of Berkeley: first, an annual series of means and medians; and second, a percentage distribution.[56]

It was possible to compute means and medians for a twenty-two-year period between 1678 and 1699. As one would expect, there was a good deal of secular fluctuation — more wealthy people dying in one year than another — but there was no clear trend of increasing or decreasing wealth (see figures 2 and 3). Similarly, the median remained steady and except between 1686 and 1690 followed the mean closely, suggesting that the distribution of wealth of those above the poor was constant over this period.[57]

Although it is impossible to say with any certainty, it appears that wealth rose considerably between 1620 and 1680 (see figure 4). Forty-one inventories or valuations have survived for the period 1618–1621, and 152 between 1645 and 1649. Annual mean wealth ranged from £20 to £60 in the earlier period; £50 to £99 during the 1640s; and £100 to £200 after 1678. Inflation was partly responsible for this increase. During the first three decades of the seventeenth century the price of consumables varied between 400 and 600, according to the index compiled by Phelps Brown and Hopkins (base 100, 1451–1475), but rose steeply to over 800 by 1650.[58] Prices then declined only to rise sharply again after 1655. Yet whereas there was a long term fall in prices after 1662, generally ranging from 550 to 700, wealth described in inventories continued to increase. It should be stressed that these conclusions are tentative because it was not possible to ascertain inventory coverage for the 1640s, while for the earlier period coverage was low.[59] However, it is unlikely that differences in the sorts of people going through probate account for the whole of the disparity between wealth levels in the 1620s and 1680s. Among inventoried decedents, therefore,

Fig. 4: Personal Wealth in the Vale of Berkeley

1600–1699



there seems to have been a major increase in personal wealth as the century progressed.[60]

The most serious drawback of using means and medians to represent the distribution of wealth is that, at best, they include only half the total population. While wealth distribution remained constant after 1678 among inventoried decedents, poverty may well have been increasing among those persons too poor to go through probate. Secondly, means do not provide an indication of the relative proportions of the population who enjoyed certain levels of wealth. For this reason a percentage distribution analysis was undertaken.

Inventoried decedents were divided into five categories:

1)	£10	Very poor. Includes paupers, labourers, and widows.
2)	£10–£49	Poor to Lower-Middling. Includes poor textile workers such as tailors, weavers, and clothworkers.
3)	£50–£99	Lower-Middling. Includes artisans, food and drink suppliers, and husbandmen.
4)	£100–£249	Middling-Rich. Includes yeomen, butchers, and bakers.
5)	£250 plus	Rich. Includes mercers, clothiers, gentry, and clergy.

Cut-off points were determined by the mean wealth of the different occupational groups (see appendix). The results are given in table 3. Seven percent of estates were worth less than £10; nearly a third were between £10 and £49; slightly over a fifth were between £50 and £99; a similar proportion were between £100 and £249; and finally, 15 percent were worth over £250. There were changes in the proportions over the forty-year period studied, 1660 to 1699, but no trend towards greater or lesser wealth in one group than another.

These figures represent the personal wealth of the top 50 or 60 percent of decedents who were wealth holders. How would the inclusion of the poor alter these results? Taking the number of poor to have been between 33 and 50 percent of the total population and placing them in a £0 to £49 category,[61] the following proportions are obtained (see table 4): 60 to 70 percent of the entire adult population had less than £50; 11 to 15 percent had between £50 and £99; 12 to 16 percent had between £100 and £249; and 7.5 to 10 percent had over £250. Thus the overwhelming impression is that the vast majority of people in the Vale were poor. Approximately, two thirds had less than £50, and probably many of these had a good deal less. In contrast, the number of middling and rich persons was much smaller, comprising about a quarter and 10 percent of the population respectively.

Admittedly, these results are fairly crude. It is assumed that the proportion of poor was stable between a third and a half for the whole period 1660–1699, whereas in the 1690s it may have increased. Persons described in the hearth tax returns as non--chargeable are assumed to have had less than £50, but it is impossible to determine their precise level of wealth. Neither does the above distribution take account of the variations from parish to parish which were probably considerable. Nevertheless, it does serve to illustrate one of the salient features of seventeenth-century society: wide-spread and deep-rooted poverty. Such 'was the price of industrial innocence in pre-industrial England.'[62]

The distribution of wealth in the Vale of Berkeley between 1660 and 1700 was extremely inequitable, but whether it was more or less so than other areas remains to be seen. Marshall's figures for Cumbria, 1661–1690, show that between 81 and 86 percent of his sample had less than £100; and these results do not include the poor who failed to leave inventories.[63] 'Cumbrian living standards,' Marshall comments, '. . . were evidently bare, not to say primitive. There is no doubt at all, allowing for whatever omissions appraisers of peasant property may have made, that Cumbrians did not have as many and varied goods as peasants in Midland and Southern counties.'[64] Inventories for mid-Essex and the Frampton Cotterell area in Gloucestershire display a greater similarity to those of the Vale of Berkeley. Sixty-three percent of the mid-Essex sample, and 58 percent of the Frampton Cotterell inventories were valued at less than £100 compared to 61 percent for the Vale.[65] Again, these figures do not include the poor, and there is no indication of whether inventory coverage was good or bad. The Vale certainly had greater numbers of poor than the Frampton Cotterell district where only 11 percent of householders were non-chargeable in 1672.[66] It is quite likely, therefore, that although the Vale was fortunate in its natural resources — fertile soils and good pasturage for dairying, and the swift-flowing streams of the Cotswolds providing water-power for the clothing industry — these very resources attracted a relatively large proportion of poor people.[67] Thus the Vale's mixed economy supported not only a small group of middling to wealthy farmers, clothiers, shopkeepers, and artisans, but also a large body of poor textile workers and labourers.

IV

Perhaps the most intractable problem involved in using inventories to study wealth is that they contain little information on real estate. The inclusion of landed property might substantially alter the percentage distribution given above.

At an early stage in this research it became apparent that it would be impossible to trace the exact amount of land owned by each individual. The pattern of landholding in the Vale was complex. No less than twenty-eight manors criss-crossed the fifteen parishes here studied, owned at any one time by seventeen lords.[68] Rentals and surveys from sixteen manors have survived but only eleven proved of use in this analysis.[69] Nor was manorial tenure the overwhelmingly dominant form of landholding in the area, freehold was also important.[70] Examining hundreds or thousands of deeds would have been immensely time-consuming, with no guarantee of tracing all inventoried decedents. There is also a strong likelihood that land attributed to an individual from manorial records or deeds might be relevant to one stage in his life but bear no relation to the property he owned in old age or at death. Where a sample is small it might be feasible to trace landholding over an individual's lifetime, but where samples approach a thousand persons other methods must be found.

The basic question is this: Would the inclusion of landed property invalidate the results obtained from estimating the distribution of wealth from personal estates? Is there a correlation between personal and real wealth?

The principal sources used in this investigation were rentals and surveys from ten Berekeley manors, land transfer records from the Berkeley Court Baron, and wills.[71] Wherever possible landed property was linked to the sample of inventoried decedents to ascertain whether real estate increased in proportion to personal wealth. If acreages were not given it was nevertheless noted that an individual owned unspecified amounts of copyhold or freehold land. In this way it was possible to determine whether some wealth groups were more likely than others to have land mentioned in wills and rentals.

First, some general comments about landholding on the Berkeley manors. Over four hundred persons residing in five parishes rented property from George Lord Berkeley in 1667.[72] Of these, 31 percent rented a house, cottage, shop, or less than 4 acres; 27 percent had between 5 and 19 acres; 20 percent had between 20 and 49 acres; 14 percent had between 50 and 99 acres; and just 4 percent had 100 acres or more. Thus three-fifths of tenants had less than 20 acres and four-fifths less than 50 acres (see table 5). No figures are available for the 1660s but according to a rental of 1634 which lists individuals paying chief rent, only about a third of freeholders owned in excess of twenty acres, while 13 percent had over fifty acres.[73] These figures suggest that whether freeholder or copyholder the amount of land owned by each individual was usually small.

Tenants made up just over 30 percent of all householders living on the Berkeley manors, while freeholders comprised less than 20 percent.[74] Even assuming that there was no overlap between these two groups it is clear that at least one-half of the population was landless. Little is known about these people but many of them probably rented dwellings or land on short term leases from large freeholders in the area or were sub-tenants of copyholders. In sum, approximately half the population had no land at all, and the majority who did had less than twenty acres. The distribution of real estate, like personal wealth, was very unequal.[75]

Data from the Berkeley manors indicate that there is a correlation between personal and landed wealth. No evidence on land was forthcoming for nearly half the decedents worth less than £10, and of the remaining half the vast majority owned either a single tenement or less than ten acres. The proportion of decedents owning in excess of twenty acres and, or, several tenements steadily increased in relation to personal wealth: from 12.6 percent of decedents in the £10 to £49 category to 52.5 percent in the £250 plus category (see table 6). Only three decedents in the £50 to £99 group owned over fifty acres compared to nine in the £100 to £249 category and twenty-five in the £250 plus category. Seven of the eight persons who owned over one hundred acres were worth more than £250. As an individual's personal wealth increased so did the likelihood that land would be mentioned in one source or another. It was impossible to trace any land for 20 percent of persons worth over £250 compared to double that proportion for decedents in lower wealth groups.

So much for the Berkeley manors; what of the other ten parishes in the Vale? Manorial records were of no use for these parishes and wills proved of limited value.[76] Of 448 decedents, 28.6 per cent were intestate, and over 30 percent of those who did make wills did not mention any land whatsoever. Conclusions based on this sample must therefore be tentative. Where property was itemized it most frequently took the form of dwelling houses. Wills mentioning one dwelling usually belonged to persons worth less than £50, while decedents leaving more than one property generally had over £100. There was a strong correlation between wealth and the probability that a will would mention land. Under 10 percent of estates worth less than £50 had wills giving details of land compared to 20 percent for the £50 to £99 group, 28 percent for the £100 to £249 group, and 43 percent for the £250 plus group.

A study of chattel leases valued in inventories confirmed that the rich were more likely to own land than the poor (see table 7). The great majority of leases found in the estates of the poor and lower-middling groups were valued at under £20 and most commonly refer to a house, tenement, or garden. By comparison, 43 percent of the middling estates (those worth between £100 to £249) and 73 percent of the rich had leases worth over £50. Half the chattel leases mentioned in the inventories of rich persons were valued at over £100.[77]

The most important conclusion of this investigation is that real wealth and personal wealth do seem related. Common sense suggests that this should be the case. Big yeomen required more land for their livestock and crops than their smaller neighbours, while rich clothiers, mercers, and gentlemen were likely to have more capital to spare for investing in real estate than less wealthy men. Of course, this does not mean that personal wealth can be used as a surrogate for total wealth, but what it does indicate is that the distribution of wealth estimated from inventories is reliable. The relative proportions of poor, middling, and rich are reasonably accurate. If real estate were added the range of wealth would increase and the differentials become larger, but it would not alter greatly the proportions of the component groups. Thus inventories can provide a means of stratifying society into wealth groups and also suggest minima for the differentials between those groups.

Conclusion

The aim of this essay has been to outline a method for measuring the distribution of wealth in local society by using probate records in conjunction with a variety of other sources. It is recognized that not all areas of England are as fortunate as Gloucestershire in having a seventeenth-century occupational census, but where there are good series of inventories, wills, reliable parish registers, and extant hearth tax returns this method should be possible. Considering the time and energy expended what are its advantages? Estimating inventory coverage provides a degree of control over the data. Two samples of inventories, from different periods or areas, may produce very different wealth distributions, but this might simply be the result of more, or less, rich decedents being represented in one sample than the other. An area with few poor people going through probate may seemingly have a high level of wealth, whereas a neighbouring area with more poor leaving inventories may appear less prosperous. The results obtained from an analysis of the distribution of wealth are obviously dependent on the sorts of people leaving inventories. Therefore it is important to check how representative they are of the whole population and whether the proportion of rich and poor changes over time.

The principal advantage of using inventories to study wealth distribution, however, is that they contain a mass of information which can be of value in other related analyses. 'Where else,' concludes Francis Steer, 'could we get such evidence for the development of, and changes in, household furniture, the improvement of living conditions, the incidence of particular trades, the names and values of a multitude of objects and goods which reflect the day-to-day needs of all types of society?'[78] Moreover, used with caution, inventories provide historians with an unparalleled opportunity to compare these aspects of everyday life across time and space.[79]

As G.S. Holmes points out, 'The social structure of pre-industrial England was a thing of infinite subtlety. It deserves to be studied intensively . . . and in its own right.'[80] Much the same can be said of the distribution of wealth. Local studies, such as this of the Vale of Berkeley, may provide the key to a greater awareness of the relationship between wealth and social structure, and to a better understanding of wealth distribution throughout seventeenth-century England as a whole.

Table 1

Occupations of Militiamen compared to those of Male Decedents leaving Probate Records, Vale of Berkeley, 1608 - 99

Occupational Category	Militiamen, 1608[a]		Decedents Leaving Probate Records, 1660–99[b]	
	N	%	N	%
I. Gentry and Professions	45	2.2	58	8.9
II. Agriculture	529	25.9	328	50.5
III. Food and Drink Trades	95	4.7	36	5.5
IV. Textile Industry	856	41.9	155	23.8
V. Building/Woodwork Trades	103	5.0	30	4.6
VI. Metalwork	44	2.2	14	2.2
VII. Leather Trades	105	5.1	16	2.5
VIII. Semi-skilled and Unskilled Labour	254	12.4	9	1.4
IX. Miscellaneous	10	0.5	4	0.6
Total	2041	99.9	650	100.0

Sources: a) John Smyth, *Men and Armour for Gloucestershire in 1608,* (London, 1902). John W. Wyatt, unpublished research.

b) Gloucestershire Record Office, Probate Inventories, 1660–99; Consistory Court Journal, 1668–1676; Will Act Book, 1678–1681; Wills, 1660–99; Register of Administrations, 1677–1683; Register of Wills and Administrations, 1683–1704; Accounts of Administration, 1684–99.

Public Record Office, P.C.C. Inventories, PROB 4 and 5.

Table 2

Occupations of Male Decedents leaving Probate Records compared to those of Prospective Bridegrooms seeking Marriage Licences, Vale of Berkeley, 1660 - 1699

Occupational Category	Decedents leaving Probate Records, 1660–99 [a] N	%	Prospective Bridegrooms, 1661–84 [b] N	%
I. Gentry and Professions	58	8.9	54	13.0
II. Agriculture	328	50.5	189	45.7
III. Food and Drink Trades	36	5.5	16	3.9
IV. Textile Industry	155	23.8	121	29.2
V. Building and Woodwork Trades	30	4.6	9	2.2
VI. Metalwork Trades	14	2.2	7	1.7
VII. Leather Trades	16	2.5	18	4.3
VIII. Semi- and Unskilled Labour	9	1.4	–	–
IX. Miscellaneous	4	0.5	–	–
Total	650	100.0	414	100.0

Sources: a) See Table 1, source (b).
b) Brian Frith, ed., *Gloucestershire Marriage Allegations, 1637–1700*, 2 vols., (Records Section of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, 2 and 9).

Table 3

Unadjusted Percentage Distribution of Personal Wealth, Vale of Berkeley, 1660 – 99

Decade	£<£9.99 %	£10–£49.99 %	£50–£99.99 %	£100–£249.99 %	£250 plus %
1660–9	5.0	32.5	23.8	22.5	16.3
1670–9	9.2	34.8	24.1	20.6	11.3
1680–9	4.8	30.3	23.6	24.7	16.6
1690–9	9.9	32.6	18.8	24.7	14.1
1660–99	7.0	31.8	22.2	23.9	15.1
N 983					

Source: See Table 1, source (b).

Table 4

Wealth Distribution Adjusted to Include the Poor

Assumption A: 50% Poor (1664 Hearth Tax indicates that 50% of households were non-chargeable)

£<£50	£50–£99	£100–£249	£250 plus
69.4%	11.1%	12.0%	7.5%

Assumption B: 33.3% Poor (1672 Hearth Tax)

£<£50	£50–£99	£100–£249	£250 plus
59.2%	14.8%	15.9%	10.0%

Source: See Table 1, source (b).
P.R.O., E179/247/16; E179/247/13; E179/247/14.

Table 5

Distribution of Rented Land on the Berkeley Manors, 1667

Holding (Acres)	N	%	Cumulative %
House/Cottage/Shop or less than 4 acres	126	30.7	30.7
4 – 9	54	13.1	43.8
10 – 19	57	13.9	57.7
20 – 49	82	20.0	77.7
50 – 99	56	13.6	91.3
100 – 199	13	3.2	94.5
200 – 499	2	0.5	95.0
500 plus	1	0.2	95.2
Others	2	0.5	95.7
Unknown	18	4.4	100.1
Total	411	100.1	

Source: 'Rentals of Different Manors, 1667,' Berkeley MSS, Unbound books, 50, Berkeley Castle.

Table 6 **Landownership and Personal Wealth, Berkeley Manors, 1660-1699**

Wealth Group	No Land	<19 Acres	20-49 Acres	50-99 Acres	100+ Acres	Tene'ts, Houses, Etc.	Land (no acreage)
<£ 10	47.2	38.9	2.8	—	—	8.3	2.8
10-49	48.0	30.3	4.0	2.9	—	5.7	9.1
50-99	46.8	15.3	6.3	2.7	—	11.7	17.1
100-249	31.2	13.9	11.5	6.6	0.8	9.8	26.2
250 plus	20.7	—	15.9	22.0	8.5	6.1	26.8
N 526							

Note: All figures percentages.

Sources:
Probate records, see Table 1, source (b). 'Rentals of Different Manors, 1667,'

Berkeley MSS, Unbound books, 50, Berkeley Castle; Berkeley Manor Court Books, 1656-1661, 1666-1671, 1676-1682, 1680-1688, 1688-1693, 1694-1702, General Series Nos. 50, 52, 55, 56, 57, 60, Berkeley Castle; 'Manor of Hill *als* Hull in County of Gloucester, [1650], G.R.O., D 908; 'An Estimate of E[dward] F[ust] his Estate in the County of Gloucester, taken June 1660,' G.R.O., D 908; 'Rental for the Manor of Hill for the year 1674,' G.R.O, D 908; 'The halfe yeares Rentall of the old Rents of the mannor of Worteley, 10 April 1678,' G.R.O., D 1086, M15.

Table 7 **Personal Wealth and Chattel Leases, Vale of Berkeley, 1660-1699**

Wealth Group £	Value of Chattel Leases £<19	£20-49	£50-99	£100-200	£200 plus
<10	70.8	20.8	4.2	4.2	—
10-49	53.8	30.8	9.6	5.8	—
50-99	26.7	20.0	23.3	26.7	3.3
100-249	29.5	27.3	13.6	15.9	13.6
250 plus	9.8	17.1	22.0	29.3	22.0
N 191					

Note: All figures percentages.

Source: Probate inventories, 1660-1699, G.R.O.; Public Record Office, P.C.C. Inventories, PROB 4 and 5.

Appendix

Mean and Median Personal Wealth of Males by Occupation or Status, Vale of Berkeley, 1660-1699

Occupation or Status	Mean £	Median £	N
Mercers	563.01	440.60	12
Clothiers	369.57	213.95	35
Clergy	327.42	210.56	10
Tanners	307.19	348.50	7
Gentry	280.80	163.00	39
Butchers	219.03	126.41	7
Yeomen	172.23	137.80	223
Bakers	128.26	137.54	7
Blacksmiths	93.07	92.09	14
Husbandmen	86.29	58.78	49
Innholders/Victuallers	72.02	73.98	18
Carpenters	70.43	46.28	12
Shoemakers/Cordwainers	54.34	44.29	6
Clothworkers/Drawers	50.51	38.18	21
Tailors	49.63	24.31	10
Weavers	46.86	40.08	58
N 528			

Sources: See Table 1, source (b).

Notes

I would like to thank Dr J.D. Marshall for his help and advice in preparing this article.

[1] Gregory King, 'Natural and Political Observations and Conclusions upon the State and Condition of England, 1696,' in *An Estimate of the Comparative Strength of Great Britain* . . ., ed. George Chalmers (London, 1804), Appendix, p.31.

[2] See, for example, Michel Fleury and Louis Henry, *Des registres paroissiaux a l'histoire de la population: manuel de dépouillement et d'exploitation de l'état civil ancien* (Paris, 1956); *idem, Nouveau manuel de dépouillement et d'exploitation de l'état civil ancien* (Paris, 1965); Pierre Goubert, 'Registres paroissiaux et demographie dans la France du XVIe siècle,' *Annales de Demographie Historique*, (1965), pp. 43-48; *idem*, 'Recent Theories and Research in French Population Between 1500 and 1700,' in *Population in History, Essays in Historical Demography*, ed. D.V. Glass and D.E.C. Eversley, (London, 1965), pp. 457-473. Thomas H. Hollingsworth, *Historical Demography* (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 160-166. For a description of the methods employed by the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure, see *An Introduction to English Historical Demography: From the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century*, ed. E.A. Wrigley, (London, 1966).
(London, 1966).

[3] E.J. Buckatzsch, 'The Geographical Distribution of Wealth in England, 1086-1843. An Experimental Study of Certain Tax Assessments,' *Economic History Review*, (hereafter *EcHR*), 2nd ser., III (1950), pp. 180-202; R.S. Schofield, 'The Geographical Distribution of Wealth in England, 1334-1649,' *EcHR*, 2nd ser., XVIII (1965), pp. 483-510; J.P. Cooper, 'The Social Distribution of Land and Men in England, 1436-1700,' *EcHR*, 2nd ser., XX (1967), pp. 419-440; Richard Grassby, 'The Personal Wealth of the Business Community in Seventeenth-Century England,' *EcHR*, 2nd ser., XXIII (1970), pp. 220-234; Mildred Campbell, *The English Yeoman under Elizabeth and the Early Stuarts*, (London, 1967. Orig. publ. 1942), pp. 217-220; A. Simpson, *The Wealth of the Gentry, 1540-1660*, (East Anglian Studies, 1961); M.E. Finch, *The Wealth of Five Northamptonshire Families* (Northants Record Society, XIX, 1956). Useful local studies of wealth distribution include Margaret Spufford, 'The Significance of the Cambridgeshire Hearth Tax,' *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, LV (1962), pp. 53-64; R. Fieldhouse, 'Social Structure from Tudor Lay Subsidies and Probate Inventories. A Case Study: Richmondshire (Yorkshire),' *Local Population Studies*, No. 12 (Spring, 1974), pp. 9-24; W.G. Hoskins, *Industry, Trade and People in Exeter, 1688-1800* (University College of the South-West of England, Monograph No. 6, 1935), pp. 111-122; J.D. Marshall, 'Social Structure and Wealth in Pre-Industrial England.' (Paper presented to the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Sept, 1977).

[4] This situation is in contrast to the numerous articles on wealth distribution undertaken by scholars of colonial American society, for example: Alice Hanson Jones, 'Wealth Estimates for the American Middle Colonies, 1774,' *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, XVIII, no.4, pt.2 (July, 1970), pp. 1-172; *idem*, 'Wealth Estimates for the New England Colonies about 1770,' *Journal of Economic History*, XXXII (1972), pp. 98-127; Gloria L. Main, 'Personal Wealth in Colonial America: Explorations in the Use of Probate Records from Maryland and Massachusetts, 1650-1720,' (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1972); *idem*, 'Probate Records as a Source for Early American History,' *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., XXXIII (1975), pp. 89-99; Russell R. Menard, P.M.G. Harris, and Lois Green Carr, 'Opportunity and Inequality: The Distribution of Wealth on the Lower Western Shore of Maryland, 1638-1705,' *Maryland Historical Magazine*, LXIX, (1974), pp. 169-184; T.L. Anderson, 'Wealth Estimates for the New England Colonies, 1650-1709,' *Explorations in Economic History*, XII (1975), pp. 151-176.

[5] Gregory King, *op.cit.*

[6] G.S. Holmes, 'Gregory King and the Social Structure of Pre-Industrial England,' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., XXVII (1977), p. 41*n*.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 63.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 65*n*.

[10] For considerations of the problems of using inventories, see Marshall, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3; Grassby, *op.cit.*, p. 220. John S. Moore, ed., *The Goods and Chattels of Our Forefathers; Frampton Cotterell and District Probate Inventories, 1539-1804* (Chichester, 1976), pp. 2-4.

[11] Henry Swinburne *A Treatise of Testaments and Last Wills* (1677, Orig. publ. 1590), p. 345.

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 345, 349.

[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 345-346. David Hey states that leases held for less than 100 years were considered chattels and were therefore to be entered in an inventory, *An English Rural Community: Myddle under the Tudors and Stuarts* (Leicester, 1974), p. 73.

[14] Swinburne, *op.cit.*, p. 346.

[15] None of these items appeared in a sample of over 800 inventories from the Vale of Berkeley, 1587-1700.

[16] Swinburne, *op.cit.*, p. 349.

[17] Marshall, *op.cit.*, pp. 10, 52, 53.

[18] Cicely A.H. Howell, 'The Economic and Social Condition of the Peasantry in South East Leicestershire, A.D. 1300-1700,' (unpubl. D. Phil. diss., Oxford University, 1974), pp. 179-180; John S. Moore, private correspondence with the author.

[19] Data on the price of crops and livestock in the Vale of Berkeley were obtained from the following: 'The Farm Accounts of Nathaniel Clutterbuck of Eastington', [Gloucestershire, c. 1650-1673], 'Gloucestershire Record Office, (hereafter G.R.O.), D149/F13; 'John Thurston's Accounts. [1705-1706],' G.R.O., D866/E3; 'Accounts of Coz. John Harding, [1680],' G.R.O., D149/A4; Nathaniel Thurston's Account Book, 1680,' G.R.O., D866/E1.

[20] G.R.O., Inventories, 1686/115 and 1687/14.

[21] G.R.O., Inventories, 1682/2 and 1684/122.

[22] Moore, *op.cit.*, p.4.

[23] Population figures for the 17th century were derived from the following: 1603, Gloucester diocese parishes, number of communicants: British Library, Harleian MS. 594, ff. 224-255; 1650, all parishes, number of families: C.R. Elrington, 'The Survey of Church Livings in Gloucestershire, 1650,' *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, (hereafter *B.G.A.S.*), LXXXIII (1964), pp. 93, 95, 96, 97; 1664, Hearth tax, all parishes, numbers of households: P.R.O., E179/247/16; 1672, Hearth tax, all parishes, numbers of households: P.R.O., E179/247/13, E179/247/14; 1676, Compton Census, Gloucester diocese parishes, number of communicants and dissenters: William Salt Library, Stafford MS. 33.

[24] G.R.O.: Inventories, 1660-1699; Consistory Court Journal, 1668-1676; Will Act Book, 1678-1681; Wills, 1660-1699; Register of Administrations, 1677-1683; Register of Wills and Administrations, 1683-1704; Accounts of Administrations, 1684-1699; P.R.O., Prerogative Court of Canterbury Inventories, PROB 4 and 5.

[25] Marshall, *op.cit.*, pp. 37-39. An alternative method using model life tables is discussed in Carole Shammas, 'The Determinants of Personal Wealth in Seventeenth-Century England and America,' *Journal of Economic History*, XXXVII (1977), pp. 675-689.

[26] A survey of extant parish registers is given in *Guide to Parish Records of the City of Bristol and the County of Gloucester*, ed. Irvine Gray and Elizabeth Ralph, (Records Section of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, vol. 5, 1963).

[27] Hollingsworth, *op.cit.*, pp. 139-145, 187-195; Thomas H. Hollingsworth, 'The Importance of the Quality of the Data in Historical Demography,' *Daedalus*, (Spring, 1968), pp. 415-432; John T. Krause, 'The Changing Adequacy of English Registration, 1690-1837,' in Glass and Eversley, *op.cit.*, pp. 379-393.

[28] G.R.O., D2052.

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] The problem of decedents being buried outside of their home parishes was mitigated by studying a fifteen-parish region. If a decedent was from another parish it was usually recorded in the burial register. On the basis of this information it appears that only a small fraction of the dead were buried outside of their native parishes.

[32] Coverage before 1678 is poor. Only 55 inventories have survived for the period 1587-1650, and none between 1651 and 1659. After 1660 coverage improves but is not consistently high until after 1677. This peak lasts for abut 20 years before declining after 1697.

[33] Marshall, *op.cit.*, p. 38.

[34] Daniel Scott Smith, 'Underregistration and Bias in Probate Records: An Analysis of Data from Eighteenth-Century Hingham, Massachusetts,' *William and Mary Quarterly,* 3d ser., XXXII (1975), p. 104.

[35] See Menard, Harris, and Carr, *op.cit.*, pp. 174-176; Russell R. Menard, 'The

Comprehensiveness of Probate Inventories in St. Mary's County, Maryland, 1658 to 1777: A Preliminary Report,' (MS., Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland, 1976); Main, 'Personal Wealth in Colonial America,' pp. 28-37.

[36] This estimate is based on conversations with John S. Moore and J.D. Marshall, and the research of Carole Shammas, *op.cit.* I should like to stress that this opinion is entirely my own and refers to limited periods of high coverage only.

[37] According to the Statute 21 H.8.c.5.ff.2-7, persons leaving less than £5 worth of personal goods were exempt from fees except 6d for the scribe. Persons worth between £5 and £40 paid 3s 6d, and persons worth over £40 paid 5s. These provisions were revised by Archbishop Stratford as follows: persons worth less than 30s paid 6d; persons worth between 30s and £5 paid 1s; between £5 and £20, 3s; between £20 and £60, 5s; between £60 and £100, 10s; between £100 and £150, 20s; and for every £50 above this limit, 10s more. See Richard Burn, *Ecclesiastical Law*, II, (London, 1763), pp. 625-626, 642.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 628.

[39] Ronald A. Marchant, *The Church Under Law: Justice, Administration, and Discipline in the Diocese of York, 1560-1640* (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 31-32.

[40] This statement is based on an examination of causes brought before the consistory court of the diocese of Gloucester, 1639-1683. I am obliged to Dr. Andrew Foster for his help and advice concerning this material. G.R.O., GDR volumes 205, 211, 219, 221, 232.

[41] P.R.O., E179/247/16.

[42] There were no returns for Frampton-on-Severn, Kingswood, Thornbury, and Tytherington.

[43] P.R.O., E179/247/13, E179/247/14.

[44] Berkeley Borough and Alkington, 1683-1713, Berkeley MSS., 173, Berkeley Castle; Kingswood, 1674-1698, G.R.O., P193, OV 2/1; Slimbridge, 1635-1693, G.R.O., P298a, OV 2/1, 2/2; Stinchcombe, 1667-1700, G.R.O., P312, OV 2/1; Thornbury, 1655-1690, G.R.O., D688/1, P330, OV 2/1.

[45] John Smyth, *Men and Armour for Gloucestershire in 1608* (London, 1902); John W. Wyatt, unpublished research. I would like to thank Mr. Wyatt for generously allowing me to use his data.

[46] J. de L. Mann, *The Cloth Industry in the West of England from 1640-1880* (Oxford, 1971); R. Perry, 'The Gloucestershire Woollen Industry, 1100-1690,' *B.G.A.S.,* LXVI (1945), pp. 49-137; Jennifer Tann, *Gloucestershire Woollen Mills* (Newton Abbot, 1967); Peter J. Bowden, *The Wool Trade in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1962).

[47] 'A Booke of actes, rates, and monuments of the parish of Cam in the County of Gloucestershire . . . [c.1625-1730],' Berkeley MSS., General Series, 95, p. 50.

[48] Cited by Tann, *op.cit.*, p. 38.

[49] *Ibid.*

[50] L.A. Clarkson, *The Pre-Industrial Economy in England, 1500-1750* (London, 1971), pp. 233-234.

[51] It is recognized that there may be differences between the occupational structure of living males and that represented by decedents. However, these differences should not invalidate the general conclusions presented here.

[52] Brian Frith, *Gloucestershire Marriage Allegations, 1637-1700* (Records Section of the B.G.A.S., vols. 2 and 9, 1954, 1970).

[53] *Ibid.*, p. xviii; Appendix C, pp. 213-214.

[54] It is not uncommon for persons to describe themselves differently in their will compared to their neighbours' opinion of them in their inventory. For the purposes of this study, the description of occupation or status in the inventory was given precedence over that in the will.

[55] See burial registers of Berkeley, 1696-1706; Cromhall, 1697-1705; Dursley, 1680-1699; and Wotton-under-Edge, 1688-1707.

[56] Chattel leases were not included in the totals in order to remove land entirely

from the calculations. Personal wealth is therefore defined in this study as all movables except leases. This procedure raises problems about the interpretation of the wealth of those estates where only inventory valuations survive. It is obviously impossible to ascertain whether they include chattel leases or not. However, the great majority of inventories (75%) do not show any evidence of leases and it is likely that a similar proportion applies to inventory valuations. Almost all the valuations refer to the period 1677-1683 and do not influence the results after 1684. Considering their value in supplementing the inventory sample it was decided not to leave them out.

[57] The relationship between the mean and median provides a crude indication of whether wealth was becoming more, or less, equally distributed. See, for example, Menard, Harris, and Carr, *op.cit.*, pp. 171-174. It was considered unadvisable to attempt to adjust the data to the age structure of the living population for the following reasons: 1) the inventory sample is representative of only about half the total number of adult decedents from the region and is biased towards the wealthier members of society; 2) the age structure of both the living and the dead is unknown; 3) age-specific mortality rates are unknown. An analysis of the relationship between age and wealth will be reserved for a subsequent study.

[58] E.H. Phelps Brown and Seila V. Hopkins, 'Seven Centuries of the Prices of Consumables, Compared with Builders' Wage Rates,' *Economica*, XXIII (1956), Appendix B.

[59] During the 1640s burial registers are generally less reliable because of the disruption caused by the Civil Wars, while for the 1618-1621 period only 41 estates have survived for a 4-year period. Assuming that the population was not significantly higher in the 1680s than in 1618-1621, an average of 10 inventories per year is well below the 30 to 40 average for the later period.

[60] For similar conclusions, see Hey, *op.cit.*, p. 55; Marshall, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

[61] The official requirement was that persons with less than £10 in personal goods should be exempted from the hearth tax but it is possible that persons described as non-chargeable had more than this or had acquired more by the time they died. Although £50 is an arbitrary limit, it is considered unlikely that the poor who failed to go through probate had more than this.

[62] Clarkson, *op.cit.*, p. 238.

[63] Marshall, *op.cit.*, p. 13.

[64] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[65] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

[66] Moore, *op.cit.*, pp. 24-25.

[67] For the attraction of forest-pasture regions, see Thirsk, ed., *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, p. 80; P.A. Slack, 'Vagrants and Vagrancy in England, 1598-1664,' *EcHR*, 2nd ser., XXVII (1974), pp. 374-376.

[68] See John Smyth, *op.cit.*, *passim*, and Robert Atkyns, *The Ancient and Present State of Gloucestershire* (London, 1712), *passim*.

[69] Ten manors located in the parishes of Berkeley, Cam, North Nibley, Slimbridge, and Wotton-under-Edge were owned by the Lords Berkeley, and the manor of Hill, in Berkeley, was owned by Edward Fust: 'Rentals of Different Manors, 1667,' Berkeley MSS., Unbound books, 50; 'Manor of Hill *als* Hull in County of Gloucester, [1650],' G.R.O., D908; 'Rental for the Manor of Hill for the year 1674,' G.R.O., D908. Other rentals are extant for Frampton-on-Severn, Dursley, Kingswood, Thornbury, and Wotton-under-Edge but do not give acreages or only refer to one or two years.

[70] Atkyns, *op.cit.*

[71] 'Rentals of Different Manors, 1667,' Berkeley MSS., Unbound books, 50; Berkeley Manor Court Books, 1656-1661, 1666-1671, 1676-1682, 1680-1688, 1688-1693, 1694-1702, General Series, 50, 52, 55-57, 60, Berkeley Castle; G.R.O., Wills, 1660-1699. I would like to thank the Trustees of the Berkeley Estate for allowing me to use the records held in the muniment room of Berkeley Castle.

[72] 'Rentals of Different Manors, 1667'.

[73] 'A booke of rentalls of all the Lord Berkeleys lands, [1634], MS., Gloucestershire Collection, 16066, Gloucester City Library.

[74] Atkyns, *op.cit.*

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

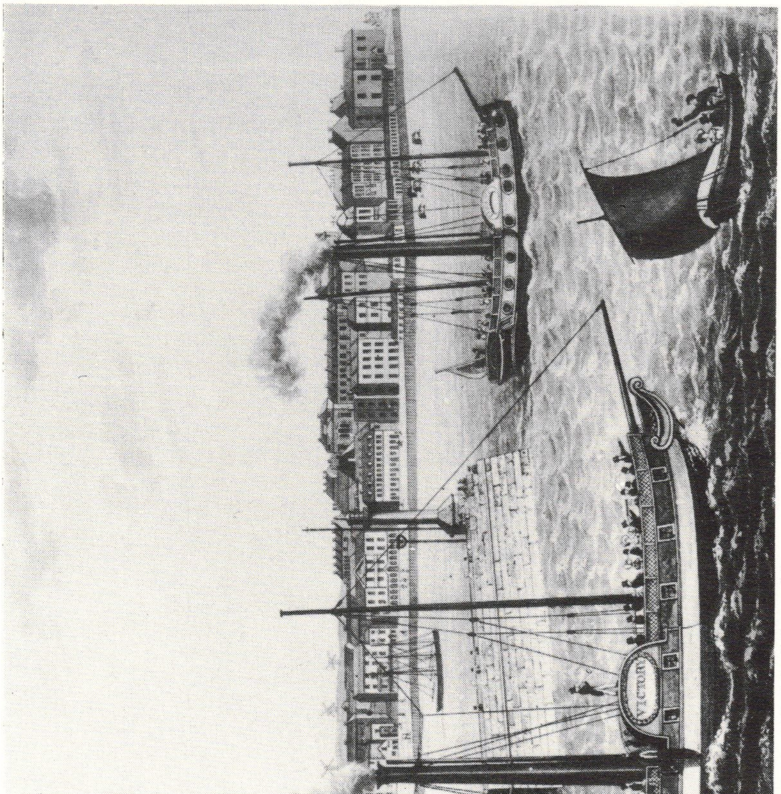
[76] In particular, wills were disappointingly silent on acreages of land bequeathed and on the total amount of land owned by the testator.

[77] G.R.O., Inventories, 1660-1699; P.R.O., P.C.C. Inventories, PROB 4 and 5.

[78] Francis W. Steer, 'Probate Inventories,' *Short Guides to Records*, no. 3 (The Historical Association, n.d.), p. 290.

[79] See Main, 'Personal Wealth in Colonial America;' Shammas, *op.cit.*

[80] Holmes, *op.cit.*, p. 65.



Two 1820 steam vessels entering Margate Harbour. (Margate Public Library).