

Decay and Regeneration in Seventeenth Century Reading: A study in a changing economy

N. R. GOOSE

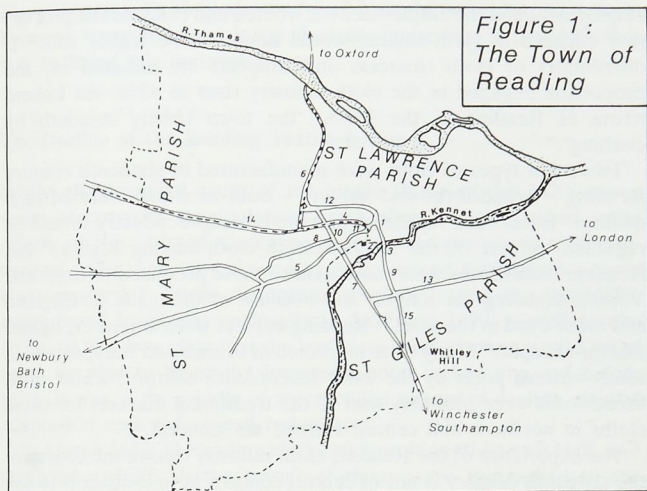
Early modern Reading has attracted surprisingly little attention from urban historians, despite the existence of a substantial quantity of published and unpublished documentation.¹ In the earlier sixteenth century the town lay sixteenth in terms of size amongst English provincial towns,² and – according to the Clark and Slack hierarchy – could be characterised as one of the 100 or so ‘second-rank’ provincial centres of the day.³ If it did not have the regional impact of towns such as Norwich or Bristol, Reading was undoubtedly the capital of its county, with a population of roughly 2,500,⁴ and was important as a centre of both trade and industry.

Reading straddles the river Kennet, providing water communication with Wallingford and Oxford, with London via the Thames, and with the nearby towns of Hungerford and Newbury. It also stood on important highways in the sixteenth century, and besides its position on the route running westwards from London was well situated to act as a centre for trade flowing between the regions to the north and south of the town.⁵ Its agricultural hinterland was a truly mixed one, a pastoral region in the western half of the Vale of Berkshire being complemented by a larger area devoted to arable farming in the eastern half. Much of the corn grown here was destined for the market, with barley the predominant crop.⁶ On the clay plains around Oxford nearly half the land sown in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was under barley for malting and a further quarter under wheat, and Reading was well situated to act as a corn market for this region.⁷ Cattle, sheep, horses, pigs and timber also featured prominently in the town’s trading life, and Reading was able to draw – via the river Kennet – upon the rich wool-producing area which extended westward towards Newbury and the Downs.⁸ Much of the wool used in the town’s textile industry was obtained locally, although towards the end of the sixteenth century Reading had to look further afield, to its neighbouring counties, to the London market and also to Dorsetshire.⁹ In 1617 Reading was

appointed one of the twenty-three staple towns in England for trade in wool.¹⁰

Reading comprised just three large parishes which met towards the town centre, as shown in Figure 1. St Giles, with its out-hamlet of Whitley, was the most clearly suburban of the three, and much of it had not been built upon by the early seventeenth century. The most densely settled area was the northern section of the triangle formed by New Street, St Mary Butts and St Giles Street, and London and Sivier Steets. St Lawrence was perhaps the most strictly central of the three parishes, and was certainly the most populous by the start of the seventeenth century despite its smaller area. The central built-up zone extended into St Mary, although this parish also contained a large area that could only be described as suburban. The town's wharf was situated at High Bridge, one of the more important of the town's nineteen bridges which crossed and recrossed the river Kennet and its maze of brooks. The market place was situated in St Lawrence, though close to the point where the three parishes met. The site of the Gildhall, or Town Hall as it became known in the seventeenth century, was on the edge of St Giles, though once again very near to the junction of the town's three parishes.¹¹

The larger provincial towns in this period performed a variety of economic functions. They had to feed, clothe and house their own inhabitants, provided a range of manufactures and services for their resident populations and their hinterlands, acted as centres of exchange and distribution, and often also served as centres of administration. But the key to Reading's economy in the early sixteenth century was its cloth industry. If both the leather and textile trades had been important enough to warrant gild organisation since the fourteenth century, the rise of the town from a position of relative obscurity during the later Middle Ages was largely due to its development as a textile centre, the evolution of which can only have benefited from the proximity of abundant supplies of raw wool and ready access to the London market.¹² During a period in which, for the most part, the English economy and many towns were undergoing prolonged depression, Reading was emerging as a leading manufacturing centre, and might be regarded as one of the relatively few urban success stories of the later Middle Ages.¹³ Although sixteenth in terms of size in the 1520s, Reading stood tenth in terms of taxable wealth, and mercers, clothiers and drapers dominated the upper reaches of its social pyramid.¹⁴ These occupations, together with weavers, were the four leading trades in 1500–79, at which time cloth production accounted for almost 30% of full-time male occupations in the town, and were it possible to take account of part-time



Key and Notes to Figure 1

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Market Place | 9. London Street |
| 2. Guildhall (Town Hall) | 10. St. Mary Butts |
| 3. High Bridge | 11. Minster Street |
| 4. Broad Street | 12. New Street (Friar Street) |
| 5. Castle Street | 13. Ort Lane |
| 6. Caversham Road | 14. Pangbourne Lane |
| 7. St. Giles' Street (Southampton Street) | 15. Sivial Street (Silver Street) |
| 8. Hosier Lane | |

This map is adapted from those in M.D. Lobel (ed.), *Historic towns atlas*, Vol. 1 and a map drawn in 1610 (reproduced in M. Hinton, *A History of the town of Reading*, p. 105). Only the main roads as shown in the plan of 1610 are included, and only the main course of the Kennet, which did in fact split up into numerous brooks as it passed through the town. The precise position of the town boundaries is unclear. Before 1560 they certainly did not encompass the whole area covered by the three parishes shown in Figure 1. The boundaries were extended by Elizabeth's charter of that year (*Calendar of Patent Rolls 1558-60*, pp. 283-7) but uncertainty remains as to their exact position.

employment and the employment of women and children the proportion engaged in cloth-making would doubtless be higher still.¹⁵ If distributors of cloth (merciers and drapers) are counted in, the proportion engaged in the cloth industry rises to 43%. As Leland wrote of Reading in the 1530s, 'the town chiefly standeth by clothing'.¹⁶

Two main types of cloth were manufactured in sixteenth century Reading – broadcloths and kerseys – both of which were of high quality.¹⁷ It has been suggested that the Berkshire industry should be regarded as part of the south-western cloth-making region,¹⁸ but Reading broadcloths were more akin to those produced in Kent and Yorkshire, being the longest and heaviest cloths made in England and often dyed in the wool.¹⁹ Reading kerseys were narrower, lighter and far cheaper.²⁰ Many were marketed in France and Italy, some via south-western ports by the early seventeenth century, whilst most broadcloths were probably sent to the traditional markets for these cloths in northern and central Europe via London.²¹

The experience of the Reading cloth industry during the course of the sixteenth century is not of central concern here. Suffice it to say that there is some evidence to suggest that Reading shared in the troubles which afflicted the industry in general, and the urban industry in particular, towards the middle of this century.²² But if the progress of the town's cloth industry during the sixteenth century may have had something in common with that of Colchester or Norwich, here too a distinct revival is evident by the start of the seventeenth. As Table 1 reveals, textile production and distribution again accounted for 40% of full-time male occupations, the case of Reading lending support to those who argue for a general resurgence of urban industry during the later sixteenth century.²³ Reading's recovery, however, was not built upon a firm foundation. The export trade in traditional English woollens stagnated during the later sixteenth century, though Blackwell Hall receipts suggest that some compensation may have come from the home market, and despite renewed export growth in the early seventeenth century it is clear that by now the trend was moving steadily in favour of the lighter, cheaper new draperies.²⁴ Whilst the industry in areas such as East Anglia had solved problems through diversification of its product, no such shift occurred in Reading. Through the sudden slumps in demand of the 1520s and 1550s, caused by over-production, disruption of foreign markets due to currency manipulation or political policy, and decreased spending power consequent upon bad harvests, Reading textiles had been able to survive. But in the long-run, changes in taste, in incomes and the rise of new types of cloth were all

conspiring against the industry,²⁵ and it might be said to have been living on borrowed time. It was the trade depression of the 1620s that was to bring this message home.

The Decline of the Reading Textile Industry

Whilst the principal cause of the textile slump of the 1620s was a series of currency manipulations, a number of other factors – the effects of the ill-fated Cockayne project, the growth of rival continental industries, disturbance to trade caused by warfare – were also involved.²⁶ Trade disruption continued through the 1620s, exacerbated by plague outbreaks in 1625 and 1630–1, until by the 1630s, 'it was now clear that the traditional manufacture would never again be able to boast the long-term boom it had enjoyed before 1614. It was in the middle of an extended history of decline, painful adaptation and widespread redundancy'.²⁷

In March 1622 30 Reading cloths lay unsold in Blackwell Hall, and in October 1623 all the town's clothiers were summoned to the Gildhall to explain their failure to employ the poor clothworkers of the town.²⁸ The increasing scarcity of work was noted in the following month when it was ordered that every clothier should have his wool spun in the town rather than putting it out to the countryside.²⁹ The poor sale of coloured cloth was particularly emphasised, whilst complaint was also made against northern imitations of Reading cloths and the lower customs they paid.³⁰ The difficulty in selling coloured cloth was crucial, and it was agreed to petition that for every ten white cloths shipped merchants should also be required to export one coloured cloth, 'for every coloured cloth setteth four times more' on work.³¹ In 1624 two Reading clothiers were granted expenses for travelling to the West Country to discover how they made their white cloth, so desperate had the situation become.³² Plague interrupted trade with London in 1625,³³ and despite some apparent relief from the depths of depression in the later 1620s the year 1630 saw a renewed slump. In March of that year further complaint was voiced about the lack of work in spinning and carding, whilst in November it was again ordered that all clothiers should 'henceforth put all the weaving, burling, shearing and dressing of all and every their woollen cloth to and amongst the poor weavers, burlers and workfolk inhabiting within this town' and not into the countryside.³⁴ Similar injunctions followed in December 1630 and January 1631, and the mayors of Reading and Newbury joined to petition the Privy Council for freedom to market their cloths outside

of the newly established mart towns of Delft and Embden.³⁵ The depression, reported to be worse than that of 1622, lasted throughout 1631, producing acute distress in Berkshire, Hampshire and Wiltshire.³⁶ An undated certificate, probably of the same year, states that weekly cloth production in Reading had fallen from 100 to 40, and in April the Berkshire Justices reported that through the decay of the cloth trade in the towns 'thousands of those poor formerly relieved by work live in much want and could hardly subsist this dear year did not many extend their charity even beyond their means'.³⁷

The insular outlook of the town authorities in the face of this situation is reflected in their attempts to keep all available employment within the town itself; that of the inhabitants in general in the numerous complaints against 'foreigners' that fill the pages of the Corporation Diary.³⁸ But poverty and unemployment was nothing new to Reading. The town's population, partly through natural increase and partly through immigration, had grown relatively rapidly during the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, reaching a peak of around 7,000 by the 1630s.³⁹ As in so many towns, the growing tide of immigrants was a cause for concern, particularly when these immigrants were poor.⁴⁰ As early as 1590 it was ordered that the greater part of the town's hospital be converted to a house of correction 'for the setting of poor people to work . . . as also for the punishing and correcting of idle and vagrant persons, whilst a similar order of 1614 particularly mentions 'rogues, vagabonds, sturdy and unruly persons'.⁴¹ But it was in the 1620s, when the textile depression struck, that concern escalated. In 1622 a piece of void ground on Pangbourne Lane was leased to Edward Starke, but only on the understanding that it would not be used to house the poor.⁴² In the following year expenses were paid to the mayor for travelling to the Lords about the poor, and special relief payments were made to each parish out of the charitable uses fund.⁴³ Two special taxes were raised for the same purpose in 1625, the second specifically for the provision of materials necessary for the employment of poor children whose parents were unable to support them and for the placing of some as apprentices.⁴⁴ Three years later it was agreed to lease the town's meadow at Burghfield for the benefit of the poor, whilst in 1630, when the trade crisis was renewed, the corporation noted 'the great clamour of divers poor people lacking work in spinning and carding in this town'.⁴⁵

The problem remained after the crisis year had passed: Reading's difficulties were long-term ones, not short-term. In 1634 the churchwardens and overseers were again ordered to seek out poor children whose parents could not support them, and references to the

need to 'employ the poor' feature periodically in the Corporation Diary during the remainder of the seventeenth century.⁴⁶ Serious further problems resulted from the occupation of Reading by Royalist and Parliamentarian forces in the early 1640s – forced loans, inability to collect rents, the expense of quartering soldiers⁴⁷ – but the decline of Reading textiles was already well underway. As William Kendrick noted in 1632 in response to enquiries into the disposal of Thomas Kendrick's £7,500 charitable bequest to the town, 'we have seen a great failing in our town within 20 years last past', and with foresight 'we are not sure the trade of clothing will continue'.⁴⁸ The occupational data presented in Table 1 shows that in the long-run his fears were not groundless. Remembering that the use of will evidence produces a slightly lagged effect,⁴⁹ the proportion of the occupied population involved in textile production and trade fell from 40% to 28% between the early and mid-later seventeenth century. Comparison between successive twenty year periods reveals a gradual decline from the second quarter of this century becoming more pronounced by the third quarter, by which time only 21% of the sample were involved in textile *production*, whilst if rugmakers are excluded the percentage falls to 18%.⁵⁰ Indeed, the introduction of rugmaking can be taken as a further indication of the decline of the traditional cloth industry, and examples have been found of broadweavers giving over their trade in favour of making rugs.⁵¹ As early as 1654 two of the £25 sums from Thomas White's endowment, designed to be lent to clothiers, went to a grocer and an apothecary, 'there not being clothiers enough that have made any suit for these sums', and this practice continued through the century.⁵² By 1681 the town was said to have only 12 clothiers left where previously there had been 160, and in 1686–8 Berkshire paid only *c.* one-twelfth of the Aulnage duties paid by Devon and by Yorkshire and Lancashire.⁵³

The decline of the Reading industry was, therefore, an extended process. The Royal Commission of 1640 named Reading and Newbury as the 'chief towns which at this present do use the trade of clothing and making of stuffs' in Berkshire, and it was interruption to the cloth trade that was still of prime concern to the town in the 1640s.⁵⁴ But although clothiers still head the list of leading occupations in the sample for 1660–99, with weavers third and mercers fifth (see Table 2), decline was by now well underway, only to be further aggravated by trade disruptions during the 1690s.⁵⁵ Failure to innovate in response to changing demand is the central explanation of the industry's demise. In the seventeenth century a few feltmakers, flaxdressers, linenweavers, silkweavers and sergemakers do feature

Table 1: Reading Occupational Structure

	1620-59		1660-99	
	No.	%	No.	%
Textiles	117	40.2	123	27.8
Clothing	25	8.6	30	6.8
Leather (raw)	9	3.1	14	3.2
Household	16	5.5	48	10.9
Tools and arms	3	1.0	2	0.5
Housing	11	3.8	9	2.0
Food and drink	36	12.4	90	20.4
Transport	9	3.1	26	5.9
Service	18	6.2	25	5.7
Education	—	—	4	0.9
Medicine	10	3.4	9	2.0
Misc./unattrib.	37	12.7	62	14.0
Total	291	100.0	442	100.1

Notes to Table 1

This categorisation of occupations is based upon the criterion of the type of good being produced, rather than upon type of raw material or type of activity. Patten has divided schemes of analysis into just two types: those based upon the nature of the activity involved ('wholesale', 'artisan-retail' etc.), and those based upon the type of raw material involved and subsequent product manufactured – see J. Patten, 'Urban occupations in pre-industrial England', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, n.s., II, 3 (1977), pp. 296–313. But this second scheme is a combination of two slightly different criteria, one or other of which must be chosen as the basis for the organisation of any classification. Obviously, the definition of 'type of good' has to be extended to allow the inclusion of service trades. In using this scheme, it is not always possible to place certain trades, such as gentlemen, labourers, merchants and other general distributors, and hence the 'miscellaneous' category tends to be rather large. Where such a trade assumes significant proportions, as in the case of producers of raw leather – which could eventually end up as any one of a number of different goods – a separate category has been provided. This scheme was deemed the most suitable for the purposes of this article, particularly if used in conjunction with Table 2.

The occupational evidence has been drawn from wills proved in ecclesiastical courts at all levels, and includes the occupations of testators and anyone else mentioned in these wills. For further discussion of the use of will evidence as opposed to freemen lists or apprenticeship indentures, see Patten, 'Urban occupations'. Each individual was placed by date according to the last mention he received in the evidence, which was often upon death. Because of this, indications of a changing occupational structure are likely to be delayed a little – hence the figures for 1620–59 probably relate more correctly to the period c. 1600–40, and those for 1660–99 to c. 1640–80.

The sample sizes are rather small, which is why forty year periods have been used. But the analysis of a much larger sample (1,178 for 1620–59 and 1,278 for 1660–99) drawn from a wide variety of borough documents and built into a card index provides proportions very similar to those in Table 1. The will evidence has been presented in preference in the interest of using a consistent source.

in the occupational evidence, but in very small numbers, whilst rugmaking never grew to a scale sufficient to offset the decline of broadcloth production.⁵⁶ A few 'Spanish cloths' were made in Reading as early as the 1630s and 1640s, but their production failed to develop as it did in certain centres further west, and western cloths offered competition in foreign markets and gradually superseded the heavier broadcloth as the general wear of the wealthier social groups at home.⁵⁷ In 1714 Thomas Hearne described Reading as 'nothing near so famous now for clothing as it was formerly', whilst Defoe referred to the town's cloth industry in the following terms: 'There is, however, still a remnant of the woollen manufacture here; I say a remnant because this was once a very considerable clothing town, much greater than it is now'.⁵⁸ No longer, it would seem, did the town 'stand chiefly by clothing'.

Table 2: Leading occupations in seventeenth century Reading.

	1620-59	1660-99
1.	Clothier	Clothier
2.	Weaver	Maltster
3.	Clothworker	Weaver
4.	Mercer	Butcher
5.	Shoemaker	Mercer
6.	Tanner	Clothworker
7.	[Butcher	[Bargemaster
8.	[Draper	[Innholder
9.	[Chandler	[Shoemaker
10.	[Tailor	[Tailor
11.	[Carpenter	[Chandler
12.	[Maltster	[Tanner

[denotes a tied position.

The Later Seventeenth Century: a New Orientation

Reading's advantageous geographical location could only favour its development as a centre of trade, and the town had long played a part in the distribution of the agricultural produce of its region. Although an important corn market existed at nearby Newbury, Reading was better situated to draw the custom of the farmers of Oxfordshire.⁵⁹ At least two fairs were held in the town as early as 1548, whilst Elizabeth's charter of 1560 granted four annual fairs besides a weekly Saturday market.⁶⁰ Three of these were important enough to feature in the lists of Harrison and Smith, but although

they were allowed by charter to run for three days two at least appear to have been held on one day only.⁶¹ Livestock featured prominently at Reading fairs – sheep, cattle and horses – whilst by the end of the seventeenth century cheese and hops were important items sold on St Mathew's Day, and fair days were also the appointed occasions for the sealing of 'foreign' leather brought to the town for sale.⁶² The town had possessed its own beam for the weighing of wool and yarn since at least the late fifteenth century, and if the 'common beam' leased in 1550 is comparable with the 'woolhall' leased in 1633, its annual rental had risen dramatically between these dates from 13s. 4d. to £17. 4s. 0d.⁶³ The woolhall continued to function into the later seventeenth century, despite complaints that wool was weighed and sold in private houses, and despite the development of Master Child's Inn as an important alternative mart in the town for Midland's woolmen.⁶⁴

Reading can only have benefited from the tendency towards concentration that was a feature of trade in agricultural produce in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. As Everitt has written, 'everywhere agricultural traffic tended to be drawn away from the smaller markets, ports and fairs, and centred in the larger provincial centres, like Maidstone, Canterbury, Reading, Newcastle or King's Lynn'.⁶⁵ Reading's proximity and ready access to London, in view of the expansive appetite of the capital city, must have been a strong advantage.⁶⁶ Extant seventeenth century carrying schedules testify to the existence of a complex network of overland services, centred particularly upon London.⁶⁷ Deloney's testimony suggests that cloth was carried to the capital by road in the later sixteenth century, whilst a regular carrying service certainly existed by the early seventeenth, and a daily coach service by 1661.⁶⁸ But for bulky goods transportation by water was far cheaper,⁶⁹ and from this point of view Reading's riverside location was a blessing. Allowed to decay during the depressed fifteenth century, the Thames was open well beyond Reading by 1562, and by at least the 1630s (and no doubt earlier) a regular service ran to London for both passengers and goods.⁷⁰

Internal trade in this period is invariably difficult to quantify, for so often the comings and goings of tradesmen and their clients, and their numerous individual transactions, fail to be recorded. For Reading, however, a rough index of trading activity is provided by the annual rental of the town's market tolls which survive for odd years between 1606 and 1699. The sum paid in 1606/1608 was £33, in 1631/1638 £67, and from the 1650s through to the end of the seventeenth century £100.⁷¹ The expansion of Reading's trading activity by the early seventeenth century is also indicated by the

increased woolhall rental mentioned above and by John Blagrave's bequest of £200 in 1613 for the enlargement of the town's market place, perhaps suggesting that the old market could not cope with the growing volume of traffic.⁷² The stagnation of the rental of Reading market tolls from the 1650s may well be due to increasing evasion of the open market, for the occupational data presented in Tables 1 and 2 clearly testify to considerable further expansion of the town's trading role during the middle to later seventeenth century. The transport category of Table 1 grows considerably in the sample for 1660–99, largely due to an increase in the number of bargemasters included here, this occupation achieving joint seventh place amongst the leading trades. Inns were always numerous in thriving marketing centres, reflecting the need to accommodate and victual visiting tradesmen besides providing a place where business could be conducted privately, away from the watchful eyes of urban authorities.⁷³ Again this occupation finds a place amongst the leading trades by 1660–99. But the most significant change in these tables is the growth of the 'food and drink' category, which is mainly due to the growing number of maltsters, an occupation which rises to second position in Table 2 by the later seventeenth century. Malt-making and dealing – one of the more common by-employments in Reading and other towns during the sixteenth century⁷⁴ – had fully developed into a specialised occupation by the later seventeenth. Proximity and access to the London market was crucial: if it was not until the 1720s that London's brewing industry developed its celebrated 'porter', and not until the 1740s that the great Whitbread brewery began production, there had undoubtedly been considerable prior expansion, and Reading was not the only town to respond to the growing demands of the capital.⁷⁵ But the response in Reading was particularly strong: it had ready access to the necessary raw material, an ideal means of transporting this bulky commodity and a growing need to find a new *raison d'être* as its cloth industry gradually waned. By 1673 Richard Blome was already able to write of two specialist items that entered into the trade of the town – cloth and malt.⁷⁶ Some fifty years later, Defoe regarded Reading's cloth industry as merely a remnant, but the town was still 'driving a very great trade', chiefly via the water navigation to London.⁷⁷

They send hence by these barges, very great quantities of malt, and meal, and these are the two principal items of their loadings, of which, so large are those barges, that some of them, as I was told, bring a thousand or twelve hundred quarters of malt at a time, which, according to the ordinary computation of tonnage

in the freight of other vessels, is from a hundred, to an hundred and twenty ton, dead weight.

In 1638 a wharf near High Bridge in Reading had been leased to Simon Dye for three lives: the fine was £80, but the rent just £6 *per annum*. By 1715 Reading wharves were being let at, and were producing, £150 *per annum* – striking evidence of the growing importance of river trade with London.⁷⁸ It is little wonder that the corporation objected so strongly to the proposed improvement of the river Kennet beyond Reading in the early eighteenth century, so fearful were they that other towns would thereafter be able to encroach upon the trade that had become the keystone of the town's economy.⁷⁹

The transformation from a cloth producing to a grain trading centre, so clear to Defoe by the 1720s, was still underway in the later seventeenth century, but Reading maltsters were already able to amass considerable wealth. The highest probate inventory valuation for a Reading tradesman exhibited in the Archdeaconry Court of Berkshire in the last twenty years of the seventeenth century was that of Jonathan Clack, maltster, whose movable goods were valued at £360, including £300 worth of malt.⁸⁰ Analysis of cash bequests in Reading wills proved in Prerogative, Consistory and Archdeaconry Courts provides confirmation, the top twelve for the period 1660–99 being listed in Table 3. Four maltsters feature in this list, besides three mercers, two clothiers, a draper, a grocer and a cooper. Apart from their urban property, three of these four were also landowners: George Lamboll owned four and a half acres in Odiham field, Hampshire; Edward Clarke held a yardland at Caversham, Oxfordshire; and William Monke bequeathed 'all my free estate' in Berkshire and Wiltshire. William Noake, although apparently owning no land, possessed tenements and a brewhouse in Castle Street, besides a tenement, a dwelling house and a malthouse in London Street. James Cowdrey, maltster, who does not feature in this list, provides an even better example of the extension of a maltster's activities back towards the land and forwards to the market. His will, proved in 1667, mentions no land, but does include a stock of malt, barley and oats 'and all other grain and hay and cattle', besides revealing a part share in no less than five barges.⁸¹

The Reading Hearth Tax of 1664 provides further evidence of the shift that was taking place, even by this early date.⁸² Cloth producers and distributors had dominated the higher echelons of the town's social pyramid in the early sixteenth century,⁸³ and they still figure prominently by the 1660s. Of the thirty-one assessed on six or more hearths who could be identified by occupation, seven were clothiers

and five mercers. A variety of tradesmen, ranging from a miller to a doctor, make up the balance; but the third largest occupation, with three representatives, was that of maltster. One of these, Samuel Jemmatt, achieved the ultimate expression of wealth and respectability in 1661 when he was elected as mayor, and in the later seventeenth century maltsters feature regularly amongst those deemed by the burgesses to be of sufficient standing to fill this exalted position.⁸⁴ The transformation and reorientation of the town's economy, therefore, finds clear reflection in the wealth and status of its various occupational groups, even if this process remained incomplete by the end of the seventeenth century.

Table 3: Cash bequests in Reading wills, 1660-99

<i>Name</i>	<i>Trade</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Amount (£)</i>
John Silvester	mercier	1682	2,370
Stephen Atwater	clothier	1698	2,000
John Bacon	draper	1681	1,600
William Noake	maltster	1691	1,233
William Monke	maltster	1675	1,100
George Lamboll	maltster	1682	1,033
Richard Collins	cooper	1673	870
Peter Horne	clothier	1692	850
Edward Clarke	maltster	1691	800
John Wilder	grocer	1673	800
William Knight	mercier	1664	750
John Beesley	mercier	1692	735

Notes to table 3

Bequests of under £10 have been ignored in these calculations. Bequests of so much *per annum* have been converted to their capital value on the assumption of an annual interest rate of 6% – a figure commonly mentioned in Reading wills in the later seventeenth century.

It has been necessary to ignore all those described simply by status, 'gentleman', 'esquire' etc., some of whom left sufficient cash to find inclusion in this table.

One or two problematic cases have also been omitted: Thomas Kenton, clothier/gent., bequeathed several sums to the children of his brothers and sisters in 1673, without specifying how many children there were, making it impossible to calculate the total value of these bequests: it is quite possible that he would otherwise have been included amongst this top twelve. Robert Terroll, described in his will of 1679 as a gentleman, left cash in excess of £1,400: this may have been the Robert Terroll mentioned in the town's freemen book in 1655 as a clothier, or it may have been the one who acted as overseer for a P.C.C. will in 1662, maltster. Although the will mentions a malthouse, exclusion seemed safest.

It must be remembered that landed property, which is usually impossible to value, is not taken into account in this table.

All extant Reading wills, proved in the Archdeaconry and Consistory courts as well as in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, have been examined.

Conclusion: a Changing Economy

Historians of this period have characterised early modern urban economies in distinctly different ways. Some, such as Hoskins and Patten, stress the features that were common to them all, contrasting the variegated nature of their economic structures with the more specialised towns of a later age.⁸⁵ Others, whilst accepting that most large towns performed more than one function, have emphasised the importance of their individual specialisms, in industry, internal or external trade or as social and administrative centres, particularly when it comes to explaining their relative growth or decay.⁸⁶ It has been argued that *absolute* urban decline was uncommon in the seventeenth century, at least in terms of size, though there is clearly room for more research here.⁸⁷ Reading provides an example of a town that did decline in absolute terms, its population falling from about 7,000 in the 1630s to under 5,500 by the 1670s.⁸⁸ Here the importance of an urban specialism, in this case textile manufacture, is quite clear: as its staple industry declined, its population fell also. But towns could be affected in other ways by the decline of the key elements of their economies. Many experienced growing social problems during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, often as a result of relatively rapid expansion and particularly as a result of the part played in that expansion by poor immigrants.⁸⁹ But the recurring references in the town's Corporation Diary suggest that in Reading these problems persisted throughout the seventeenth century, despite the relaxation of national population pressure from the middle of this century, the slowing of immigration that is suggested by the trend in the town's population and the end of the great inflation of the Tudor and early Stuart period.⁹⁰ Textile production in this period was, of course, highly labour intensive,⁹¹ and its decline in a particular town or region was bound to enhance the problems of under- or unemployment and poverty. Accounts of the overseers of the poor in the parishes of St Giles and St Lawrence suggest that in the 1660s 6.8% of the population were dependent upon regular poor relief, or 13.8% of all householders,⁹² but this was only the tip of the iceberg of poverty. Whilst in the year 1666 (St Lawrence) and 1668 (St Giles) weekly payments were made to 134 paupers in these two parishes, in 1671 (St Giles) and 1672 (St Lawrence) doles were paid from Kendrick's charitable endowment to 420 'poor', over and above the regular payments set down in the collection books.⁹³ Confirmation of the extent of poverty in Reading is provided by the Hearth Tax. There is no extant return for the town that lists those exempt from taxation, but comparison between the

numbers taxed in 1664 and an estimated population total calculated from parish registers suggests that the proportion was as high as two-thirds.⁹⁴ The parish of St Giles contained rather more than its share of the town's clothworkers and weavers, and the fact that a particularly high proportion were exempt in this parish only serves to underline the connexion between the decline of cloth production and poverty.⁹⁵

Despite the gradual decay of its textile industry, however, Reading had by no means faded into obscurity by the later seventeenth century. If it had slipped somewhat in the urban rankings since the 1520s, it still stood amongst the top thirty provincial towns in terms of size.⁹⁶ One explanation is simply the slow pace of economic change that was generally characteristic of pre-industrial England, despite signs of a quickening of economic activity as the eighteenth century approached.⁹⁷ A degree of economic growth and change there had been, particularly in comparison with the doldrums of the later Middle Ages,⁹⁸ but the heart of the English urban economy was London, which had benefited far more than any other town from this growth.⁹⁹ Many provincial centres had also expanded – Bristol, Cambridge, Colchester, Chester, Exeter, Newcastle and Norwich, to name but a few: but rarely did they exhibit a long-term growth rate *substantially* faster than the national population.¹⁰⁰ In the eighteenth century, if a town stood still for a few decades, it was in danger of becoming quickly overshadowed by other rapidly expanding centres. But the growth rates achieved by some eighteenth century provincial towns were simply not known in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹⁰¹ In this climate towns had time to adapt to changing economic and social conditions, even to the extent of altering the main thrust of their economic activity, and hence were better able to maintain their relative standing.

This brings us back to the development of Reading as a processing and distributing centre for its agricultural hinterland, and to the question of the nature of pre-industrial urban economies. For, once again, if the larger provincial towns of the seventeenth century usually possessed a specialist function, most commonly in industry or trade, this was by no means their only economic role. It may well have been the key to their growth and prosperity, and many examples could be cited to show how the decay of such specialisms could result in relative decline.¹⁰² But whilst the general pace of economic change remained slow, towns could rely upon the other activities they performed to cushion them against eclipse by more thriving urban centres. In some cases the result might simply be stagnation, as occurred in Lincoln once its importance as a wool town had passed.¹⁰³ But in other cases this cushioning effect served to

provide a breathing space which allowed the development of a new specialist role. York provides an example of a town which suffered the decay of its staple textile industry, but it re-emerged in the late sixteenth century as a trading and administrative centre.¹⁰⁴ Towards the middle of the sixteenth century the Norwich textile industry fell on hard times, as did that in Colchester, but both towns revived on the basis of production of a very different type of cloth following the arrival of 'Dutch' immigrants.¹⁰⁵ And as the Reading textile industry gradually waned from the second quarter of the seventeenth century the town's economy was steadily re-oriented towards trade in agricultural produce, testifying to the adaptability of the larger provincial towns in this period, until by the early eighteenth century it could be described as 'a very large and wealthy town, handsomely built, the inhabitants rich and driving a very great trade'.¹⁰⁶ In response to the decline of its cloth industry, Reading had fallen back upon another, formerly subsidiary, activity in which it had long been involved, its geographical location favouring the further development of this activity until it became of central importance to the town's economy. It may not have been the type of role that promoted growth on the scale of that achieved by Liverpool or Manchester during the eighteenth century, but in the pre-industrial context, as Defoe's remarks show, it was enough to ensure that the town weathered the decay of its staple industry, and even prospered once more.

Notes

The most useful set of published documentation is J.M. Guilding (ed.), *Reading Records. Diary of the Corporation* (4 vols., Reading, 1892-6). But see also C. Fleetwood-Pritchard (ed.), *Reading charters, acts and ordinances 1253-1911* (London, 1913); F.N.A. and A.G. Garry (transcr.), *The churchwardens' accounts of the parish of St Mary, Reading* (Reading, 1893); W.L. Nash (transcr.), *The church-wardens' account book for the parish of St Giles, Reading* (Reading 1881); G.P. Crawford (ed.), *The registers of the parish of St Mary, Reading, 1583-1812* (Reading, 1892). Unpublished material held at the Berkshire C.R.O. relating to the 16th and 17th centuries includes the Corporation Diary 1654-99 (15 Vols., R/ACa 1/5-19); Freeman's Register 1604-74 (R/RF/1 - almost certainly incomplete); parish registers of St Giles and St Lawrence (D/P 96/1/1-4, 97/1/1-2); accounts of overseers of the poor, 17th century (D/P 96/12/1-16, 97/12/1-6); misc. material which can be traced via *HMC 11th report*, pt. 7 (London, 1888). Archdeaconry of Berkshire wills and inventories are now also at the B.R.O. (MS wills Berks.), Consistory Ct. Wills and inventories are at Wiltshire C.R.O., Trowbridge, and Prerogative Ct. of Canterbury wills at the P.R.O., Chancery Lane. Also at the P.R.O. are the Exchequer lay subsidies and Hearth Taxes used in this article.

² From an adaptation of Patten's ranking from the lay subsidies of the 1520s: J. Patten, *English towns 1500-1700* (Folkestone, 1978).

³ P. Clark and P. Slack, *English towns in transition 1500–1700* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 8–9.

⁴ Calculated from the lay subsidies of 1524–5: P.R.O., E179/73/133, 73/135, 73/139.

⁵ H.G. Fordham, 'The earliest tables of the highways of England and Wales, 1541–61', *Transactions of the Bibliographical Society*, 8 (1928), pp. 347–54; G.S. Thompson, 'Roads in England and Wales in 1603', *English Historical Review*, 33 (1918), p. 242; C.F. Slade, 'Reading', in M.D. Lobel (ed.), *Historic towns atlas*, Vol. 1 (London, 1969), p. 1.

⁶ J. Thirsk (ed.), *The agrarian history of England and Wales*, Vol. 4 (Cambridge, 1967), p. 66; R. Blome, *Britannia* (London, 1673), p. 38; V.C.H. *Berkshire*, Vol. 2, p. 213.

⁷ F.V. Emery, 'England circa 1600', in H.C. Darby (ed.), *A new historical geography of England* (Cambridge, 1973), p. 266; A. Everitt, 'The market towns', in P. Clark (ed.), *The early modern town* (London, 1976), p. 194.

⁸ *Reading records*, Vol. 1, p. 405; Vol. 2, pp. 182–3, 239; Vol. 3, pp. 77, 180; B.R.O., R/ACa 1/9, fo. 13 (Corporation Diary – hereafter C.D. – 6 July 1659); *Calendar of State Papers Domestic* (hereafter C.S.P.D.), 1649–50, p. 548, 1666–7, p. 98, 1668–9, p. 494, 1670 and addenda, p. 2; Slade, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

⁹ P.J. Bowden, *The wool trade in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1971), p. 63; J. Cooper and J. Thirsk (eds.), *17th century economic documents* (Oxford, 1972), p. 192.

¹⁰ R. Steele (ed.), *Tudor and Stuart proclamations 1485–1714*, Vol. 1 (Oxford, 1910), no. 1197.

¹¹ Slade, *op. cit.*, p. 6; M. Hinton, *A history of the town of Reading* (London, 1954), pp. 74, 83, 105.

¹² Slade, *op. cit.*, pp. 4–5; Hinton, *op. cit.*, p. 51; A.R. Bridbury, *Economic growth* (London, 1962), pp. 91–2. Reading may have been insulated to some extent against rural competition due to its ability to power fulling mills within its boundaries: E.M. Carus-Wilson, 'An industrial revolution of the thirteenth century', in Carus-Wilson (ed.), *Essays in economic history*, Vol. 1, p. 50; *Letters and papers, foreign and domestic, of the reign of Henry VIII*, Vol. 17, no. g.1154(47), Vol. 20, pt. 1, no. 846(51); *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1547–8*, pp. 223–4.

¹³ J. Hatcher, *Plague, population and the English economy 1348–1530* (London, 1977), *passim*; C. Phythian-Adams, 'Urban decay in late medieval England', in P. Abrams and E.A. Wrigley (eds.), *Towns in societies* (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 159–69; R.B. Dobson, 'Urban decline in late medieval England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 27 (1977), pp. 1–22; A.F. Butcher, 'Rent, population and economic change in late-medieval Newcastle', *Northern History*, Vol. 14(1978), pp. 67–77; *item*, 'Rent and the urban economy: Oxford and Canterbury in the later middle ages', *Southern History*, Vol. 1 (1979), pp. 11–43. Cf. Bridbury, *op. cit.* and *item*, 'English provincial towns in the later Middle Ages', *Economic History Review*, Vol. 34 (1981), pp. 1–24.

¹⁴ From an analysis of the subsidies of 1524–5 (see fn. 4) linked to an occupational card index compiled from wills, inventories, administrations, the Corporation Diary and other subsidiary borough documentation.

¹⁵ From an occupational analysis similar to that presented in Table 1, compiled as described in the notes to this table. For female and part-time employment in textiles see, for instance, C. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a city* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 88; D. Palliser, *Tudor York* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 132, 150, 164, 177; G.D. Ramsay, *The English woollen industry 1500–1750* (London, 1982), p. 27; J. Patten, 'Urban

occupations in pre-industrial England', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, n.s., Vol. 2 (1977), p. 299; A. Clark, *Working life of women in the seventeenth century* (repr. London 1982), Ch. 4.

¹⁶ L. Toulmin-Smith (ed.), *Leland's itinerary in England* (c. 1535–43), (London, 1907), Vol. 1, p. 111.

¹⁷ Bowden, *op. cit.*, pp. 50–1; C.S.P.D. 1649–50, p. 343.

¹⁸ K.G. Ponting, *The woollen industry of south-west England* (Bath, 1971), p. 21.

¹⁹ *Statutes of the Realm*, 4 James I, c.2; P.R.O., State Papers Domestic (hereafter S.P.D.) 12/240/132; J. de L. Mann, *The cloth industry in the west of England, 1640–1880* (Oxford, 1971), p. xv; A. Friis, *Alderman Cockayne's project and the cloth trade* (Copenhagen & London, 1927), p. 438; B.R.O., MS wills Berks. inventories of John Wilson, clothier, 1568, Richard Dawson, clothier, 1582, Mathew Lewington, clothier, 1643.

²⁰ 6 kerseys were valued at £12 in 1555, another 6 at £11. 5s. in 1558, 8 at £10 in 1564; 2 broadcloths in 1564 were valued at £16, 3 at £31 in 1599: B.R.O., MS wills Berks, inventories of John Forman, Simon Drewe, Thomas Earles and William Marshall jnr. respectively.

²¹ F. Edler, 'Winchcombe kerseys in Antwerp (1538–44)', *Economic History Review*, 1st series, Vol. 7 (1936), p. 61; Friis, *op. cit.*, pp. 66–7; G.D. Ramsay, *The city of London in international politics at the accession of Elizabeth Tudor* (Manchester, 1975), pp. 39, 272; C.S.P.D. 1634–5, p. 594; *Acts of the Privy Council* (hereafter A.P.C.) 1625–6, pp. 161–2.

²² See, for instance, F.J. Fisher, 'Commercial trends and policy in sixteenth century England', in Carus-Wilson (ed.), *Essays, op. cit.*; C. Phythian-Adams 'The economic and social structure', in *idem et al.*, *The fabric of the traditional community*, pp. 15–16; *idem*, *Desolation, op. cit.*, esp. p. 61; Palliser, *op. cit.*, p. 162; J. Pound, 'The social and trade structure of Norwich 1525–75', *Past and Present*, Vol. 34 (1966); N. Goose, 'The "Dutch" in Colchester: the economic influence of an immigrant community in the 16th and 17th centuries', *Immigrants and minorities*, Vol. 1 (1982), pp. 264–5.

²³ Phythian-Adams, 'The economic and social structure', *op. cit.*, pp. 20–1.

²⁴ Fisher, *op. cit.*; *idem*, 'London's export trade in the early seventeenth century', *Economic History Review*, Vol. 3 (1950–1); D.W. Jones, 'The "Hallage" receipts of the London cloth markets, 1562–c. 1720', *Economic History Review*, Vol. 25 (1972), esp. pp. 579, 586; B.E. Supple, *Commercial crisis and change in England 1600–42* (Cambridge, 1970), pp. 23–162; H. Taylor, 'Trade, neutrality and the "English road", 1630–1648', *Economic History Review*, Vol. 25 (1972), p. 237 and fn. 3; J.D. Gould, 'Cloth exports, 1600–40', *Economic History Review*, Vol. 24 (1971).

²⁵ See esp. D.C. Coleman, 'An innovation and its diffusion: the "new draperies"', *Economic History Review*, Vol. 22 (1969), pp. 423–5; C. Wilson, 'Cloth production and international competition in the seventeenth century', *Economic History Review*, Vol. 13 (1960), pp. 209–21. All of this background material is nicely summarised in D.C. Coleman, *The economy of England 1450–1750* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 61–5.

²⁶ Supple, *op. cit.*, pp. 52–98; Friis, *op. cit.*, esp. pp. 236–61; Wilson, *op. cit.*, *passim*; J.D. Gould, 'The trade depression of the early 1620s', *Economic History Review*, Vol. 7 (1954), pp. 88–90.

²⁷ Supple, *op. cit.*, pp. 99–108, 119.

²⁸ P.R.O., S.P.D. 14/128/73; *Reading records*, Vol. 2, p. 153.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

³⁰ B.R.O., R/HMC LI no. 24.

³¹ *Reading records*, Vol. 2, p. 160.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 188.

³³ *A.P.C. 1625-6*, pp. 161-2, 198-9.

³⁴ *Reading records*, Vol. 3, pp. 7, 37.

³⁵ P.R.O., S.P.D. 16/177/60; *A.P.C. 1630-1*, pp. 170, 174; *Reading records*, Vol. 3, p. 44.

³⁶ P.R.O., S.P.D. 16/204/37; *Reading records*, Vol. 3, pp. 47-8; Supple. *op. cit.*, pp. 115-17.

³⁷ P.R.O., S.P.D. 16/180/172, 16/190/40ii. The depression in 1631 was apparently exacerbated by a ban on the import of flax procured by the Eastland Company, concerning which the flax and hempdressers of the town petitioned the Privy Council: P.R.O., S.P.D. 16/192/93; *A.P.C. 1630-1*, pp. 265-6. In 1632 it was claimed that weekly cloth production had fallen from 150 to 40: P.R.O., S.P.D. 16/122/45.

³⁸ *Reading records*, Vols. 2 & 3, *passim*.

³⁹ This figure is derived from a count of baptisms (parish registers refs. in fn. 1), assuming a baptismal rate of 33/1,000, and must be regarded as only a rough approximation.

⁴⁰ For instance, J.W. Horrocks (ed.), *Assembly Books of Southampton* (Southampton, 1924), Vol. 3, pp. 30, 41, 45, 49; A.D. Dyer, *The city of Worcester in the 16th century* (Leicester, 1973), pp. 180-3; P. Clark, 'The migrant in Kentish towns 1580-1640', in Clark and Slack (eds.), *Crisis and order in English towns 1500-1700* (London, 1972), pp. 141-5; P. Slack, 'Poverty and politics in Salisbury 1597-1666', in *item*, pp. 166-70; N. Goose, 'Household size and structure in early-Stuart Cambridge', *Social History*, Vol. 5 (1980), pp. 356-7.

⁴¹ *Reading records*, Vol. 1, p. 403, Vol. 2, p. 59.

⁴² *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 108.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 162, 165.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 226, 228.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 7. See also *A.P.C. 1630-1*, p. 304.

⁴⁶ *Reading records*, Vol. 3, p. 234; Vol. 4, p. 277; B.R.O., R/ACa, 1/6 p. 30 (C.D. 1 Feb. 1656), 1/11 fos. 3, 19-20, 37 (C.D. 21 Dec. 1660, 27 May 1661, 17 June 1661, 21 March 1662), 1/14 fo. 27 (C.D. 28 March 1670), 1/15 pp. 65, 70, 77, 81 (C.D. 18 Sept. 1674, 9 Nov. 1674, 19 March 1675, 16 April 1675), 1/18 p. 115 (C.D. 23 August 1693), 1/19 fo. 3 (C.D. 5 June 1695).

⁴⁷ P.R.O., Privy Council Registers, 2/53 p. 226; *Historical MSS Commission 11th report*, pt. 7, pp. 215-16; B.R.O. R/HMC LI no. 52; *Reading records*, Vol. 4, pp. 61-8, 79, 104, 110-11, 156.

⁴⁸ P.R.O., S.P.D. 16/222/45.

⁴⁹ See notes to Table 1.

⁵⁰ Using sub-samples of 143, 191 and 251 for the periods 1640-59, 1660-79 and 1680-99 respectively.

⁵¹ E.g. Samuel Cleere and William May are both recorded in the Freeman's Book as serving apprenticeships as broadweavers, but are described as rugmakers in their wills.

⁵² *Reading records*, Vol. 4, p. 544; B.R.O., R/ACa, 1/15 pp. 72, 74, 80, 134, 154, 157 (C.D. 21 Dec. 1674, 8 Jan. 1675, 21 May 1675, 13 April 1677, 21 March 1678), 1/17 p. 52 (C.D. 23 Nov. 1687), 1/18 p. 111 (C.D. 27 Feb. 1693).

⁵³ J.R. McCulloch (ed.), *Early English tracts on commerce* (Cambridge, 1952), p. 403; calc. from *Historical MSS Commission 14th report*, pt. 6 (Hs. Lords MSS), p. 42.

⁵⁴ Thirsk and Cooper (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 249; P.R.O., Privy Council Register 2/53, p. 226; *Reading records*, Vol. 4, pp. 75, 104.

⁵⁵ P.R.O., Privy Council Register, 2/75, p. 173; *Journals of the House of Commons*, Vol. 11, p. 750, Vol. 12, pp. 516, 553. Camden noted that Reading textile workers were reduced to "a very small number" by 1695: E. Gibson (ed.), *Camden's Britannia* (London, 1965), p. 152.

⁵⁶ A small manufacture of druggets (half wool, half silk or linen) existed in Reading by the early 18th century: Bowden, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

⁵⁷ Spanish cloths are occasionally mentioned in Reading inventories: B.R.O., MS wills Berks, inventories of John Bateman, mayor, 1630, William Horne, clothier, 1647; de L. Mann, *op. cit.*, pp. xvii-xviii, 26; G.D. Ramsay, *The Wiltshire woollen industry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries* (Oxford, 1943), pp. 116-17.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Slade, *op. cit.*, p. 8; D. Defoe, *A tour through the whole island of Great Britain* (Penguin edn., Harmondsworth, 1971 - 1st publ. 1724-6), p. 270. See also the remarks of T. Cox, *Magna Britannia et Hibernia, antiqua et nova* (London, 1720), Vol. 1, pp. 167, 190.

⁵⁹ Everitt, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

⁶⁰ *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1548-9*, p. 28; Pritchard (ed.), *Reading charters*, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

⁶¹ G. Edelen (ed.), *The description of England by William Harrison* (Cornell university, 1968), pp. 393-5; H.B. Wheatlye and E.W. Ashbee (eds.), *The particular description of England* (London, 1879), pp. 65-8; Pritchard, *op. cit.*, p. 31; *Reading records*, Vol. 2, pp. 231, 367, Vol. 3, pp. 132, 429. Slade ascribes a national reputation to Reading fairs, but they clearly could not compete with St Bartholomew's Fair in London or Stourbridge Fair near Cambridge in reputation or duration, and none were specifically prohibited by name during the plague of 1665-6: Slade, *op. cit.*, p. 6; Steele (ed.), *op. cit.*, no. 3435.

⁶² *Reading records*, Vol. 1, p. 405, Vol. 2, pp. 168, 239, Vol. 3, pp. 36, 77, 180; *C.S.P.D. 1666-7*, p. 98; B.R.O., R/ACa, 1/9 fo. 13 (C.D. 6 July 1659), 1/19 fo. 25 (C.D. 18 Sept. 1697). A regular sheep market was also held by at least the 1620s: *Reading records*, Vol. 2, p. 182.

⁶³ *Historical MSS Commission 11th report*, pt. 7, p. 208; *Reading records*, Vol. 3, p. 178.

⁶⁴ *Reading records*, Vol. 1, p. 247, Vol. 3, p. 400; B.R.O., R/ACa, 1/15 p. 22 (C.D. 19 May 1673); A. Everitt, 'The marketing of agricultural produce', in Thirsk (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 560.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 500.

⁶⁶ See F.J. Fisher, 'The development of the London food market 1580-1640', *Economic History Review*, 1st series, Vol. 5 (1935), pp. 46-64.

⁶⁷ J.A. Chartres, 'Road carrying in England in the seventeenth century: myth and reality', *Economic History Review*, Vol. 30 (1977), pp. 73-94.

⁶⁸ F.O. Mann, *The works of Thomas Deloney* (Oxford, 1912), pp. 214-15; J. Taylor, *The carrier's cosmographie* (London, 1637, repr. Amsterdam, 1974), no pagination; *C.S.P.D. 1660-1*, p. 542; Thirsk and Cooper (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 385.

⁶⁹ T.S. Willan, *The inland trade* (Manchester, 1976), p. 1.

⁷⁰ M. Prior, *Fisher Row: fishermen, bargemen and canal boatmen in Oxford, 1500-1900* (Oxford, 1982), p. 110 and fig. 3.1; Taylor, *op. cit.*; *C.S.P.D. 1636-7*, pp. 130-1, 349.

⁷¹ *Reading records*, Vol. 2, pp. 14, 24, Vol. 3, pp. 94, 430; B.R.O., R/ACa, 1/6 p. 14 (C.D. 24 Sept. 1655), 1/8 fo. 106 (C.D. 22 June 1658), 1/13 fo. 2 (C.D. 5 July 1665), 1/15 pp. 6, 225 (C.D. 30 Sept. 1672, 24 Sept. 1680), 1/19 fos. 6, 39 (C.D. 30 Sept. 1695, 3 July 1699). Only figures representative of the long-term trend are presented here.

⁷² *Reading records*, Vol. 2, p. 56.

⁷³ See Everitt, in Thirsk (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 559–61; *idem*, 'The English urban inn', being pp. 91–137 of *idem* (ed.), *Perspectives in English urban history* (London, 1973); *idem*, 'The food market of the English town, 1660–1760', *Proc. 3rd international conference in economic history* (Paris, 1968), pp. 70–1; Palliser, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

⁷⁴ Palliser, *op. cit.*, p. 167; Reading evidence from analysis of 876 probate inventories.

⁷⁵ P. Mathias, *The brewing industry in England 1700–1830* (Cambridge, 1959), esp. p. 437–9; Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 170; D. Defoe, *The complete English tradesman* (Scott ed., 2 Vols., Oxford, 1841), Vol. 2, pp. 187–92; Everitt, 'The food market', *op. cit.*, pp. 66–8.

⁷⁶ R. Blome, *Britannia* (London, 1673), p. 39.

⁷⁷ Defoe, *Tour*, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

⁷⁸ *Reading records*, Vol. 3, p. 434; *Journals of the House of Commons*, Vol. 18, pp. 116–17. The wharf next the High Bridge had been leased for just £3. 6s. 8d. in 1608; *Reading records*, Vol. 2, p. 21. It was also reported in 1715 that Reading corn mills were let at £300 *per annum*, and ground 90 loads of wheat weekly for the London market; *Journals of the House of Commons*, Vol. 18, p. 126.

⁷⁹ *Journals of the House of Commons*, Vol. 16, p. 53, Vol. 18, pp. 116–17, 126. The new Kennet navigation went ahead, and produced £10,000 in tolls between 1714 and 1730: T.S. Willan, *River navigation in England, 1600–1750* (Oxford, 1936), p. 126. London merchants were prominent amongst the undertakers: J.R. Ward, *The finance of canal-building in eighteenth century England* (Oxford, 1974), p. 12.

⁸⁰ B.R.O., MS wills Berks., inv. of Jonathan Clack, 1687.

⁸¹ All of these are Prerogative Court of Canterbury wills, held at the P.R.O., Chancery Lane.

⁸² P.R.O., E179/76/460.

⁸³ See above, pp. 54–7.

⁸⁴ For example, George Goswell, 1687–8, Samuel Watlington, 1695–6. Information on mayors from C.D. (ref. as in fn. 1), occupations from multi-source card index. The exact frequency with which maltsters achieved the mayoralty has not been calculated as not all mayors could be identified by occupation.

⁸⁵ W.G. Hoskins, *Provincial England* (London 1965), p. 88; Patten, *English towns*, *op. cit.*, pp. 148, 163, 165; see also Emery, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

⁸⁶ P. Corfield, 'Urban development in England and Wales', in D.C. Coleman and A.H. John (eds.), *Trade, government and economy in pre-industrial England* (London 1976), *idem*, 'Economic growth and change in seventeenth-century English towns', in C. Phythian-Adams *et al.*, *The traditional community under stress* (Milton Keynes, 1977), pp. 35–71; N. Goose, 'English pre-industrial urban economies', *Urban History Yearbook 1982* (Leicester, 1982), pp. 24–30.

⁸⁷ Corfield, 'Economic growth and change', *op. cit.*, pp. 57–8.

⁸⁸ 1670s calculation again based upon decadal count of baptisms – see fn. 39.

⁸⁹ J.F. Pound, *The Norwich census of the poor, 1570*, Norfolk Record Society, Vol. 40 (1971), p. 12 and *passim*; W. MacCaffrey, *Exeter 1540–1640* (2nd edn. London, 1975), pp. 93–8; T.S. Willan, *Elizabethan Manchester* (Manchester, 1980), p. 82; A.L. Beier, 'The social problems of an Elizabethan country town: Warwick, 1580–90', in P. Clark (ed.), *Country towns in pre-industrial England* (Leicester, 1981), pp. 53–60; M. Reed, 'Economic structure and change in seventeenth century Ipswich', in *idem*, pp. 120–1; Palliser, *op. cit.*, pp. 212–14, 269–70, 174–7; and see refs. in fn. 40, above.

⁹⁰ E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, *The population history of England 1541–1871: a reconstruction* (London, 1981), Table 7.8, pp. 208–9; P. Clark, 'Migration in England

during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries', *Past and Present*, Vol. 83 (1979), pp. 73, 81; E.H. Phelps-Brown and S. Hopkins, 'Wage-rates and prices: evidence for population pressure in the sixteenth century', *Economica*, Vol. 24 (1957), p. 306; P. Bowden, 'Agricultural prices, farm profits and rents', in Thirsk (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 594-616.

⁹¹ See, for instance, D.C. Coleman, 'Textile growth', in N.B. Harte and K.G. Ponting (eds.), *Textile history and economic history* (Manchester, 1973), p. 3 Supple, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-14.

⁹² B.R.O., D/P 96/12/9, 97/12/2. Parish populations calc. from baptisms. Numbers receiving relief were multiplied by 2.2 to include dependants, a figure suggested by the Salisbury evidence: Slack, 'Poverty and politics', *op. cit.*, p. 177. A mean household size of 4.5 is assumed. These calculations are, of course, very approximate.

⁹³ B.R.O. D/P 96/12/9, 96/12/10, 97/12/2, 97/12/5.

⁹⁴ P.R.O., E179/76/460.

⁹⁵ Based upon an occupational analysis of the town's three parishes.

⁹⁶ Reading stood in roughly 26th position in the later seventeenth century: rankings adapted from Corfield, 'Economic growth and change', *op. cit.*, Table 2; Patten, *English towns*, *op. cit.*, Table 12, p. 251; C.W. Chalklin, *The provincial towns of Georgian England. A study of the building process, 1740-1820* (London, 1974), Table 1, p. 18; and supplemented by my own research.

⁹⁷ The clearest statement on this is in Coleman, *The economy of England*, *op. cit.*, esp. pp. 197-9.

⁹⁸ Hatcher, *op. cit.*, *passim*; M.M. Postan, 'The age of contraction', in *The Cambridge economic history of Europe*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1952).

⁹⁹ P. Clark and P. Slack, *English towns in transition 1500-1700* (Oxford, 1976), Chapter 5; E.A. Wrigley, 'A simple model of London's importance in changing English society and economy 1650-1750', *Past and Present*, Vol. 37 (1967), pp. 44-70.

¹⁰⁰ Corfield, 'Urban development', *op. cit.*, p. 220.

¹⁰¹ Again there are signs of a quickening rate of urban growth from c. 1670: Chalklin, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-25.

¹⁰² Goose, 'English pre-industrial urban economies', *op. cit.*, p. 28.

¹⁰³ Corfield, 'Urban development', *op. cit.*, pp. 225, 227.

¹⁰⁴ Palliser, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

¹⁰⁵ Pound, 'The social and trade structure', *op. cit.*; P. Corfield, 'A provincial capital in the late seventeenth century: the case of Norwich', in Clark and Slack (eds.), *op. cit.*, Table 17, p. 275; J.E. Pilgrim, 'The rise of the "new draperies" in Essex', *Univ. Birmingham Historical Journal*, Vol. 7 (1959-60); Goose, 'The "Dutch" in Colchester'.

¹⁰⁶ Defoe, *Tour*, *op. cit.*, p. 269.