

# **Introduction: The West Riding in the Late Seventeenth Century**

*by David Hey*

Not only was Yorkshire by far the largest of the ancient counties of England, at 1,709,307 acres, but the West Riding alone exceeded in size every other county except Lincolnshire. The word riding is derived from the late Old English ‘thrithing’ or ‘thridding’, itself adapted from an Old Norse loan word, meaning a third part. Wapentake, similarly derived, was the equivalent of the Anglo-Saxon hundred, and came from the symbolic flourishing of weapons to signify agreement when decisions were made in open-air assemblies at convenient sites, such as a river crossing or by a stone cross.<sup>1</sup> The wapentakes continued to see to the levying of taxes, the raising of the militia and the maintenance of law and order and did not finally disappear until the reorganisation of local government in 1974. The West Riding was divided into eleven wapentakes: Ainsty, Agbrigg, Barkston Ash, Claro, Ewcross, Morley, Osgoldcross, Skeyrack, Staincliffe, Staincross and Strafforth. The Ainsty, bounded by the rivers Ure, Ouse and Wharfe, had been annexed by Henry VI (d. 1471), king of England, to the city of York, as the county of the city, which was independent of all three ridings, but it was still considered to be a West Riding wapentake.

The wapentakes were divided into townships, the villis of medieval documents. In the eastern parts of the West Riding many townships were coterminous with the ecclesiastical parishes and were referred to as parishes in the hearth tax returns, but the large moorland parishes in the west contained numerous townships. Penistone parish had eight townships, Bradford parish had thirteen, and the huge parish of Halifax was divided into twenty-three. At the local level, the township, or ‘constabulary’, was the unit that mattered until urban and rural district councils were created in 1894.

It is a difficult task to define the precise boundaries of all the townships at the time of the hearth tax returns. Those that followed watercourses as far as possible are the easiest to perambulate, but in most cases we have no maps on a sufficiently large scale to plot boundaries accurately before the nineteenth century, by which time some

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<sup>1</sup> K. Cameron, *English Place-Names* (London, 1996), 61.

new townships had been formed and some names had changed. Fortunately, for present purposes, small-scale maps with approximate boundaries suffice, but defining township boundaries is an important task for local historians. Farming systems were organised at township level and it was not unusual to find that one township had a different character from that of its neighbours. In the parish of Sheffield, for example, Attercliffe township was farmed on a three-field system, with a common, around a planned village, with hardly a tree in sight, yet immediately across the river Don the township of Brightside Bierlow consisted of scattered farmsteads and hamlets with irregular-shaped closes, no open fields, and several, well-defined coppice woods.

The divisions of the large moorland parishes are sometimes recorded in the hearth tax returns as 'quarters' rather than townships. Haworth had two 'quarters', Ecclesfield had four, and to the west of the urban township of Huddersfield stretched the five 'quarters' of Quarmby - Lindley, Longwood, Golcar, North Crosland and Scammonden - each of which lay in the parish of Huddersfield. Further south, that part of the manor of Wakefield that was known as the Graveship of Holme lay partly within the parish of Almondbury, partly within Kirkburton. At the time of Domesday Book the graveship was already divided into units named Cartworth, Holme (two), Austonley, Thong, Wooldale, Hepworth and Fulstone, each of which was a township in the nineteenth century, but the collectors of the hearth tax placed all the inhabitants of the graveship under the heading of Holmfirth, the alternative name for the Graveship of Holme. In the far north-west of the riding the returns for the parish of Dent were gathered together under seven separate 'bills', but no district names were given.

Townships varied enormously in size. The largest were frequently sub-divided into hamlets, a term that was used not in the present sense but to mean a defined small district, often with its communal townfields, common pastures and moorland. Some units in the hearth tax returns, such as Dikesmarsh in the parish of Thorne, were probably hamlets, for they were never recorded as townships. These hamlets have left few, if any, records, yet surprisingly some of them were fixed firmly enough in local memory for their names and boundaries to be plotted on the first edition of the six-inch Ordnance Survey maps of the mid-nineteenth century.

Most of the West Riding's market towns were uncomplicated administratively. The returns for Halifax, Huddersfield and Rotherham, for example, are straightforward lists of the names of householders, like those of rural townships, and

Sheffield was recorded in just two parts. Bradford was divided into Kirkgate and Westgate, and Wakefield into Kirkgate, Northgate and Westgate. All these towns had extensive parishes that included many rural townships; none was divided into numerous parishes like York. Away from the Pennines, the medieval town of Tickhill was in decline, but its former status was hinted at by its subdivisions: Westgate, Northgate and Sunderland. Its fellow Norman new town, Pontefract, continued to flourish and the tax collectors distinguished between Micklegate, Neat Market, New Market, Ropergate, Castle & Park and Baileygate. Two other important medieval towns still dominated their surrounding districts. In the north of the riding, Ripon's four divisions consisted of All Hallow Gate, Crossgate, Westgate and Skelgate (though exemption certificates also mention Horse Fair and Stammergate), and in the south Doncaster's tax payers were placed in Market Place (twice), French Gate (twice), St George's Gate, Marsh Gate, Fisher Gate, Baxter Gate, Hall Gate, High Street & Scot Lane, St Sepulchre, and St Sepulchre without the Bar, names that are redolent of the Middle Ages. By 1672, however, the riding's leading town was Leeds, which was divided into North, East and South Parts, and into Kirkgate, Briggate, Headrow and Mill Hill or Boars Lane.

### **Collecting the tax**

The hearth tax return used in this volume is mostly the exchequer duplicate for Lady Day 1672, which appears to be the most comprehensive return to survive amongst those for the West Riding in the National Archives.<sup>2</sup> There are, however, two exceptions to this; namely for Ainsty and Osgoldcross wapentakes.

By good fortune, the sheriff's copy of the same return also survives at Wakefield Metropolitan District Council Library, as the *Nomina Villarum*.<sup>3</sup> As the exchequer copy of the return for Ainsty wapentake is in poor condition, the sheriff's copy has been preferred for transcription. The whole of the sheriff's copy has been published elsewhere in a series of booklets covering each wapentake.<sup>4</sup> A comparison

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<sup>2</sup> TNA, E179/210/400 (Claro), 210/410 (Staincross), 210/413 (Agbrigg & Morley), 210/415 (Osgoldcross), 210/417 (Skyrack), 210/418 (Staincliffe & Ewcross), 262/14 (Barkston Ash), and 262/15 (Strafforth). J. D. Purdy, *Yorkshire Hearth Tax Returns*, Centre for Regional and Local History, University of Hull, Studies in Regional and Local History 7 (Hull, 1991) includes a descriptive list of the county's returns to the Exchequer for Michaelmas 1662 - Lady Day 1666 and Michaelmas 1669 - Lady Day 1674. These returns are plentiful and in most part are in good condition.

<sup>3</sup> WMDL, Wakefield Hearth Tax Return for 1672.

<sup>4</sup> The returns for Skyrack wapentake are published by in *Miscellanea*, ed. J. Stansfield (Thoresby Society Publications, II, 180-204, Leeds, 1891) and *ibid.*, (IV, 17-36, 1895). The Ripon Historical Society and the Ripon, Harrogate & District Family History Society have published booklets covering Claro (1992), York City & Ainsty

of the two copies reveals numerous minor discrepancies, with the omission of some details in the exchequer copy, but no major changes. The sheriff's copy is likely to be the most reliable as far as the spellings of surnames is concerned, because of local knowledge. Variations in the spellings of the same name in the two copies suggest that exchequer clerks called out the names to the transcriber. It is clear that many errors were made, but normal transcription practice has been followed in leaving the names as they were written even when it is clear that the clerk had misheard a name or had made a careless error. Family historians need to be aware that an ancestor might be there in the return under an unfamiliar phonetic form of the name or under a clerk's misspelling.

In relation to Osgoldcross neither the *Nomina Villarum* return nor the 1672 Lady Day return are adequate.<sup>5</sup> The *Nomina Villarum* return is incomplete and the National Archives return for Lady Day 1672 is in a poor condition.<sup>6</sup> In order to provide comprehensive coverage in relation to names of people and data on hearth tax obligations, the return from Lady Day 1674 has been used.<sup>7</sup>

As with all taxation documents, we need to consider whether some people managed to avoid payment of the tax. Local studies suggest that the returns are reasonably comprehensive. Dr Denis Ashurst found that four long-established Worsbrough families that were recorded in the baptism register at the time do not appear in the list of taxpayers or in the exemption certificates, but these formed a small minority amongst 100 householders.<sup>8</sup> The tax collectors and constables were authorised to enter houses in order to check the number of hearths, and it is unlikely that they missed many households. It is noticeable, however, that in some townships the constable who attested the accuracy of the return did not appear in the list of taxpayers.

In a study of the Hallamshire cutlers, Dr Joan Unwin noted the names of all the fathers in the Sheffield baptism register between January and December 1672 and compared these with the Lady Day 1672 hearth tax return.<sup>9</sup> She found 65 per cent of

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(1992), Agbrigg & Morley (1992), Staincliffe & Ewcross (1992) and Barkston Ash & Osgoldcross (1994).  
Strafforth & Staincross wapentakes are covered in *The Hearth Tax Returns for South Yorkshire, Lady Day 1672*, ed. D. Hey (Division of Continuing Education, University of Sheffield, 1991).

<sup>5</sup> TNA, E179/210/415; WMDL, Wakefield Hearth Tax Return for 1672.

<sup>6</sup> TNA, E179/262/17.

<sup>7</sup> TNA, E179/262/13.

<sup>8</sup> Personal communication; D. Ashurst, 'Worsbrough: Change and Continuity in the Society, Economy and Buildings of a South Yorkshire Township, 1600-1851' (unpublished PhD, University of Sheffield, 1994).

<sup>9</sup> M. J. Unwin, 'The Hallamshire Cutlery Trades in the late seventeenth century: a study of the hearth tax returns and the records of the Cutlers' Company' (unpublished PhD, University of Sheffield, 2002).

the 216 fathers. The majority of the other 35 per cent had distinctive Hallamshire surnames, so it is unlikely that they were itinerant craftsmen. Were they lodgers, or were they living with parents? Of the 71 Cutlers' Company masters who took apprentices in 1671 and 1672 only nine did not appear in the Lady Day 1672 return, where they were easy to spot because their smithies were recorded. But when Dr Unwin looked at the names of the 176 men who completed an apprenticeship in 1671 or 1672, she found that only 110 became freemen immediately and another 23 became freemen several years later. In other words, 43 never became freemen but presumably worked as journeymen or at another job. It is unlikely that many of these left Hallamshire, for there were few opportunities to practise their craft elsewhere, but only three were householders in the Lady Day 1672 return. This pattern is unlikely to have been confined to Hallamshire. It may help to explain why Sheffield had large numbers of households with more than one domestic hearth. The great majority of the metalworkers of rural Hallamshire had only one or two domestic hearths and a single industrial hearth, but in Sheffield township, where the skilled work was carried out, three-quarters of the craftsmen had more than one domestic hearth and 38 had four or more.

### **The Exempt**

The poorest section of society were exempt from payment of the hearth tax. In the sheriff's copy they are noted either as 'poor' or as 'ced', meaning that they had an exemption certificate. Large numbers of these certificates are held in the National Archives and have been transcribed for the present study. The householders who were exempt from paying tax were not just those in receipt of parish poor relief. They also included those who paid less than 20 shillings rent per annum on their properties. A clear distinction between the two groups was made in the township of Hutton Wandesley, alias Long Marston, on 7 October 1672, when five people were said to 'receive relief out of the poor mans boxe' and another five were listed as paying rents under £1 but 'do not receive relief'.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, at Rawcliffe 39 in 1671 householders were 'discharged by certificate' and another 18 were 'omitted by reason of poverty'.<sup>11</sup>

Unfortunately, however, the distinction between the two groups is not usually made in the returns. Exemption certificates often state that they are for poor people,

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<sup>10</sup> TNA, E179/350/327.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., E179/350/3/344.

without explaining what is meant by 'poor'. At Acomb the five exempted householders were 'poore folks all',<sup>12</sup> at Rufforth the 'names of the poore' amounted to five,<sup>13</sup> and at Sykehouse 'poore persons' numbered twelve.<sup>14</sup> There is no way of arriving at overall figures to distinguish paupers from those who were exempt because of the low rents that they paid, but it is clear that all the exempt were considered to be poor by the standards of the time, even if they were not paupers in receipt of parish relief. In some places, such as Attercliffe with Darnall, marginal comments show that care was taken to decide whether or not a person claiming exemption was legally entitled to do so.

A petition from the churchwardens and other leading figures in Tadcaster to the Lord Mayor of York supported the case of 'a poore man' who should not have been taxed because of the low rent that he paid. It reads:

'Att the request of the bearrer hearof Anthony Wisse of the East Part of Tadcaster for certefying the true vallue of what he farmeth: we do humbly certefy that he is a poore man and that the poore cottadge he lives in which is all that ever he farmes in all the world is but six shillings eight pence per annum; and being of lait charged with the duty of Harth mony: contrary to the Actt in that behalph he humbly beggs your lordships best help and assistance for acquitinge him heareof and he will as in duty bound ever to pray for you: to the truth hearof we set to our hands this sixth of Decemr 71'.<sup>15</sup>

It seems reasonable to conclude from cases such as this that we may speak of 'the exempted poor in the hearth tax returns' as long as we do not equate them with parish paupers. Even so, the figures are difficult to interpret. In the first place, the surviving lists do not coincide neatly with the returns for Lady Day 1672, but are often a year or two out. Secondly, lots of townships have no surviving certificates, so we are left with the problem of whether there truly were few or no exempted poor in these places or whether large numbers are missing. Thirdly, the sheriff's copy, which has marginal annotations that identify the exempt, in some cases matches exactly the number of exemption certificates in TNA, but in other cases has discrepancies, some of them huge.

The township of Worsbrough (Staincross wapentake) illustrates the difficulties of interpretation. The sheriff's copy has five 'ced' but no 'poore' amongst its 100 householders. TNA exemption certificates for 2 November 1671 (which would still be

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., E179/349/322.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., E179/350/325.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., E179/350/264.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., E179/350/336.

in force at Lady Day 1672)<sup>16</sup> number 26, including the five in the sheriff's copy. Dr Ashurst found most of these 26 names in the Worsbrough chapelry register. They include many long-established families; five of them paid poll tax in 1660 and many appeared in the burial register for the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. They were decidedly not transient poor.

The neighbouring township of Barnsley had only one 'ced' and two 'poor' householders listed among the 132 householders in the sheriff's copy of the return. The exemption certificates for 7 December 1672<sup>17</sup> name just six 'inhabitants of the cottages'. Yet in 1670 the West Riding justices of the peace heard that Barnsley people had wandered into neighbouring parishes to beg, for 531 inhabitants needed relief and only 'a few able persons' in Barnsley were able to support them.<sup>18</sup> Of course, petitions often exaggerated their case and this desperate situation might have improved by Lady Day 1672, but our suspicions are that the hearth tax returns did not list all the exempt. These suspicions increase when we find that in the whole of Staincross wapentake only 56 householders were listed as 'poor' or 'ced', that is only 3.46 per cent, a much lower figure than in other wapentakes.

In the case of Halifax, the discrepancies between the number of exempt in the final return and those listed by name in the bundles of exemption certificates are glaring. In the return which we print, Halifax has 313 payers and 39 exempt, plus 17 empty houses and 111 poor.<sup>19</sup> This gives the impression of a town of around 370 households including houses temporarily empty. However, the Halifax exemption certificates dated 10-13 October 1670, also printed here, name 179 people, suggesting a huge number of extra households. A later bundle of exemption certificates, dated 3 March 1672/3, record 143 individuals, of whom only 49 were listed as exempt in 1670. Even if we add a few others who may have been members of the same family, the high turnover of names amongst those who were exempt from payment is striking. The sheriff's copy of the return for Ladyday 1672 confirms a high number of exempt, with 71 names recorded as 'poor' and a further 37 with a certificate.

Exemption certificates were usually signed by the minister, churchwardens, or overseers of the poor and ratified by Justices of the Peace (JPs), or in the case of the Ainsty by the Lord Mayor of York. Sometimes, it was necessary to petition the

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., E179/350/372.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., E179/350/78.

<sup>18</sup> West Yorkshire Archives, Wakefield, quarter sessions records.

<sup>19</sup> 'Omitted by reason of poverty iii' to be read as 111; see below, 00.

authorities on behalf of poor people who were being harassed by the tax collectors. A petition to the JPs on 22 November 1672 on behalf of William Machin of South Kirkby noted that he 'hath a wife and six children, being a very poore man, lives in a roome of Kirkby Hall upon the charity of Sir John Digby and others without paying any rent'.<sup>20</sup> A petition to the Lord Mayor of York from Tadcaster on 6 December 1671 reads:

'We whose names are hear subscribed out of bowell of compassion in the behalph of one widdow Langton within that part of Tadcaster within your lordships libertee being a very poore woman having eight small children: seaven whearof not caipable of releveing themselves: but laime and distempered in boddy so that we are forst to releve them by a weekly allowance out of the poore mans box: yet not with standing the Act for payment of harth mony do acquitt such from paying: yet of laitt in her husbands time the collectors forst him to pay allthough the cottadge she lives in is but eight shillings yearly rent and being all that ever she farmes in all the world: we humbly begg in her behalph: for she is not able to came her selfe ...'.<sup>21</sup>

Surviving accounts of the parish overseers of the poor show that the old, the infirm, the sick and orphans were on the whole treated sympathetically by their neighbours, though the 1662 Act of Settlement had encouraged hard-hearted attitudes to paupers who were legally settled elsewhere. At meetings of the quarter sessions JPs found that their time was increasingly taken up with resolving settlement disputes.

## **Population**

The number of householders in a township's hearth tax returns has often been used as a basis for estimating population levels by using a multiplier of between 4.25 and 4.75, as a notional average size for a household. The accuracy of the figures that are arrived at by this method depends on the comprehensive recording of the exempted poor. Unfortunately, the West Riding has many populous townships with no recorded poor. For example, a group of moorland townships in Agbrigg wapentake, comprising Cumberworth Half, Farnley Tyas, Shelley, Slaithwaite and Thurstonland, have no lists of the exempt, nor have Dales townships such as Barden Forest, Bentham, Cawton, Cracoe, Grassington, Hanleth, Hartlington and many others in Ewcross and Staincliffe wapentakes, while in neighbouring townships the figures are suspiciously low, often only one or two. Nowhere are the numbers of exempted poor as high as in many other parts of England. This is undoubtedly partly due to under-recording in numerous townships, yet it might also reflect the modest prosperity of ordinary families in the

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<sup>20</sup> TNA, E179/350/205.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., E179/350/337.

emerging industrial districts. The West Riding had been overshadowed by the East Riding during the Middle Ages but by the later seventeenth century it had become the most populous and enterprising part of Yorkshire, with about half the county's estimated 350,000 to 430,000 inhabitants.

The difficulties of estimating population levels are illustrated by the example of the six townships of the huge parish of Sheffield. In 1616 the population of the urban township was counted at 2,207 and in 1736 at 10,121.<sup>22</sup> Judging by the recorded annual numbers of baptisms and burials in the parish register, most of this marked increase occurred during the early eighteenth century. What level had been achieved by 1672? The sheriff's copy of the hearth tax returns names 27 people with certificates and 37 who were receiving poor relief, a total of 64. TNA exemption certificates include 50 that were issued for the urban township in February 1672/3 and 61 on 31 March 1674.<sup>23</sup> The names of 42 of the 61 can be identified in the sheriff's copy of the returns for Lady Day 1672, when 13.3 per cent of the householders of Sheffield township (and 15 per cent of the whole parish) were listed as exempt. Do we accept these figures at their face value, on the grounds that the cutlery industry was booming, or do we inflate the figures to allow for omissions, say perhaps by 30 or 40 per cent, which has been suggested as a national average? The Compton ecclesiastical census of 1676<sup>24</sup> gives the round figure of 3,000 people who were old enough to receive communion in the whole of the parish and an analysis of the parish register suggests that population growth, in line with national trends, was sluggish at the time. It seems likely that the whole of the parish contained some 4-5,000 people in the 1670s and that about half of these lived in the central township, but we cannot be more precise than this.

In the late seventeenth century the national population was overwhelmingly rural. Three out of four people lived in the countryside and many urban families dwelt in small market towns which were essentially rural in nature except on market day. The county town, York, had only about 12,000 inhabitants in the 1670s, but it remained by far the largest town in Yorkshire. The dramatic increase in the West Riding's urban population lay in the future. Nevertheless, the drift from the countryside to the towns and the industrial rural parishes had already begun. By the

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<sup>22</sup> D. Hey, *The Fiery Blades of Hallamshire: Sheffield and its neighbourhood, 1660-1740* (Leicester, 1991), 62-5.

<sup>23</sup> TNA, E179/350/394; E179/350/2/292.

<sup>24</sup> *The Compton Census of 1676: A Critical Edition*, ed. A. Whiteman, British Academy: Records of Social and Economic History, N.S. 10 (London, 1986).

middle of the eighteenth century those parishes that relied entirely on agriculture were in decline. It has been estimated that between 1664 and 1743 some 3,000 people moved away from the rural parishes of mid-Wharfedale.<sup>25</sup> Lowland farming villages further east fared no better, for this was a time when villages that had shrunk in the Middle Ages were finally deserted. Wharfedale parish registers consistently reveal a surplus of baptisms over burials, so the loss of population can be explained only by emigration. People were moving in search of better economic opportunities.

Most of the immigrants into the industrial districts travelled short distances. We have the evidence of the apprenticeship registers of the Cutlers' Company of Hallamshire from 1624 to 1799 which reveal that two out of every three boys came from within 21 miles of the centre of Sheffield and that less than one in ten came from places more than 41 miles away.<sup>26</sup> Here, as elsewhere, the labour force was overwhelmingly local in origin. Men and women chose their marriage partners from within the neighbourhood with which they were familiar, and poor law settlement papers show that after the Act of Settlement (1662) paupers were reluctant to move far from the place where they were legally settled and if they tried they were liable to be sent back. London was the great exception to the rule that most mobility occurred over short distances, for the capital city attracted young people from all over England. In 1680 Sir John Reresby, who was taxed at Thrybergh on 22 hearths, observed that London 'drained all England of its people'.<sup>27</sup>

The hearth tax returns come halfway between the period of surname formation and the present day and so are an invaluable source for the study of the distribution of names and thus of population movement. A large number of distinctive names have been analysed in David Hey and George Redmonds, *Yorkshire Surnames and the Hearth Tax Returns of 1672-73*,<sup>28</sup> so only a few brief comments are necessary here. The West Riding is particularly rich in the number and variety of its distinctive surnames, many of which were derived from Pennine farmsteads and hamlets, names such as Ackroyd, Barraclough, Gaukroger and Murgatroyd, which originated high in the Calder Valley, or Hallamshire names such as Broomhead, Creswick, Dungworth and Staniforth. But all classes of surnames are represented; those derived from

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<sup>25</sup> M. F. Pickles, 'Labour migration: Yorkshire, c. 1670-1743', *Local Population Studies*, 57 (1996), 29-49.

<sup>26</sup> E. J. Buckhartzsch, 'Places of Origin of a Group of Immigrants into Sheffield, 1625-1799', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 2 (1950), 303-6; Hey, *Fiery Blades*, 75-9.

<sup>27</sup> A. Browning, ed., *The Memoirs of Sir John Reresby* (Glasgow, 1936), 376.

<sup>28</sup> D. Hey and G. Redmonds, *Yorkshire Surnames and the Hearth Tax Returns of 1672-73*, University of York Borthwick Paper 102 (2002).

personal names such as Oddy (which has a single-family origin in the Ribblesdale township of Rimington), from nicknames such as Shillitoe or Sillitoe (from Featherstone), and from occupations such as Frobisher (a polisher of armour, from Altofts). Each seem to have had a single ancestor and had remained close to their points of origin.

Many of these intensely local names had ramified during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and had become more characteristic of their native districts than ever before. The hearth tax returns illustrate this time and time again. Distinctive surnames were concentrated in neighbourhoods, close to their point of origin, neighbourhoods that were bounded by the nearest market towns and which local people referred to as their 'country'. The sense of belonging to both a particular place - a town or a rural parish or township - and to a wider district or 'country' was stronger in the seventeenth century than it is now and most families inhabited a world of limited horizons. The cutlers of Hallamshire had little in common with the weavers of the Calder and Colne valleys and they knew nothing about the farmers of the dales or the Vale of York. The whole way of life for ordinary Yorkshire men and women was peculiar to their particular 'countries'. The gentry families were sometimes linked by marriage at the county level, but ordinary families were not. The sense of being Yorkshire folk came much later.

## **Towns**

Yorkshire's towns can be ranked in importance as market and communications centres in the decade after the hearth tax returns of Lady Day 1672 by returns to the War Office in 1686 which recorded the number of guest beds and stabling facilities that were available in each place throughout the land.<sup>29</sup> The county town was still by far the most important urban centre in Yorkshire with 483 guest beds and 800 stables; then came Leeds with 294 and 454 respectively; Wakefield with 242 and 543 respectively; and Doncaster with 206 and 453 respectively, before the leading East Riding towns of Malton, Hull and Beverley. A less important group was formed by Halifax with 130 guest beds and 306 stables; Sheffield with 119 and 270 respectively; Ripon with 118 and 422 respectively, and the North Riding towns of Thirsk and Richmond. The West Riding towns that had between 50 and 100 guest beds were

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<sup>29</sup> TNA, WO 30/48.

Pontefract (92 guest beds and 235 stables); Barnsley (64 and 109 respectively), Rotherham (63 and 72 respectively); Selby (58 and 89 respectively); Bawtry (57 and 69 respectively) and Tadcaster (50 and 72 respectively). In each of these towns, many of the people who were taxed on a large number of hearths were inn-holders. The inns provided opportunities for social and economic advancement that were largely absent in the countryside. This difference is evident from the hearth tax returns, which reveal relatively few rural houses with numerous hearths below the level of the gentry, whereas the central streets of the most prosperous towns had buildings with large numbers of hearths, many of which were inns.

In 1698 Celia Fiennes wrote, 'Leeds is a large town, severall large streets clean and well pitch'd and good houses all built of stone, some have good gardens and steps up to their houses and walls before them; this is esteemed the wealthiest town of its bigness in the Country ... they have provisions so plentiful that they may live with very little expense and get much variety'.<sup>30</sup> The borough extended over the 21,000 acres of the parish, yet two out of every three of the 9-10,000 inhabitants lived in the urban township that was no more than half a square mile in size. The finest houses were in Briggate, but in all parts of the town the rich lived alongside the poor and the craftsmen's workshops. The poorest part was the eastern district from Mabgate to Marsh Lane, where the dyehouses and fulling mills were situated. If the hearth tax returns are to be believed, Leeds had relatively few paupers. About two in five of the inhabitants had one hearth, a similar proportion had two or three hearths, and one in five had more.<sup>31</sup>

The market place was the hub of any town. At Wakefield it lay by the churchyard and was surrounded by inns and filled with booths and stalls on market days. Old names such as Shambles, The Cross, Bull Ring and Hog Market defined the central area. Doncaster was largely confined within its medieval limits and the tax collector wound his way in and out of the central streets and into the market place. Doncaster could be reached by river as well as by the Great North Road and it remained a great regional market centre. Ripon, too, was famous for its horse fair, two great cloth fairs, wool fair and leather market. Celia Fiennes thought it had 'the finest and most beautiful [market] square that is to be seen of its kind in England'.<sup>32</sup> Selby

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<sup>30</sup> *The Illustrated Journeys of Celia Fiennes, c.1682-c.1712*, ed. C. Morris (London, 1984), 182.

<sup>31</sup> *A History of Modern Leeds*, ed. D. Fraser (Manchester, 1980), 18.

<sup>32</sup> *Celia Fiennes*, 95-7.

and Bawtry were flourishing river ports and Tadcaster was 'a very good little town for travellers, mostly Inns and little tradesmens houses'.<sup>33</sup>

The other thriving town in the textile district was Halifax, which was described by a visitor in 1639 as 'a pretty well built town of stone'.<sup>34</sup> Judging by the number of householders recorded in the hearth tax returns, its population reached well over 2,000 and the rural townships of its enormous parish were growing quickly as the weaving trade became one of the wonders of the age. Bradford, however, was still a small market town, its population no more than 1,000-1,200, within a vast and thinly populated parish, and Huddersfield's Tuesday market had been established only in 1671 by John Ramsden, lord of the manor, 'for the buying and selling of all sorts of Cattle, Goods and Merchandise'.<sup>35</sup> By the following year Huddersfield had a mere 600-700 inhabitants.

Sheffield was the leading provincial centre of cutlery manufacture, but London excelled in the production of high-class wares. Sheffield's central streets were arranged around its medieval market place, but the townsmen were no longer dominated by their feudal lords, for the castle had been demolished at the end of the Civil War and the dukes of Norfolk were non-resident landlords. Since 1624 the cutlers had organised their trade through their own company rather than the manor court. About 60 per cent of the workforce were involved in the cutlery trade and beyond the Market Place and the High Street many a house had a cutler's smithy attached to it or one in a back yard.

It is usual to find in the returns that market towns, however small, had more houses with two or more hearths than did townships in the countryside. In Skyrack wapentake, for example, Otley held a Tuesday market for corn and provisions and two annual fairs. Of its 118 recorded householders, 37.2 per cent had only one hearth, whereas in the rural parts of the parish the figure was 62.6 per cent. The townsmen had a much higher proportion of households with three to five hearths.<sup>36</sup> The division between town and countryside was far from obvious, however. Towards the end of the seventeenth century the village of Hatfield was said to be 'not dignify'd either with a market or fair, yet it stands so conveniently that it is not far off of any', having

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>34</sup> John Aston, quoted by J. Hargreaves, *Halifax* (Lancaster, 1999), 64-5.

<sup>35</sup> G. Redmonds, *The Making of Huddersfield* (Barnsley, 2003), 12.

<sup>36</sup> D. E. Smith, 'Otley: a study of a market town during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 52 (1980), 153-6.

Doncaster, Bawtry and (since 1659) Thorne nearby, but indeed it was itself ‘so well furnished with one or two of almost every trade, as butchers, mercers, chandlers, joiners, cutlers, chirurgians, etc, that other places stands in more need of them than the latter of the former’.<sup>37</sup>

Much of the trade of the West Riding was via the river ports and down the Humber to Hull, but improvements to the navigable rivers still lay in the future. The Aire and Calder Navigation was the first, in 1699.<sup>38</sup> Only two of the important national highways that were marked on John Ogilby’s road maps of 1675 came through the West Riding.<sup>39</sup> In the east, the Great North Road entered the county at Bawtry (which could be reached from London in three days), and proceeded via Doncaster on its way north through the Vale of York. The alternative route from London came via Mansfield and Rotherham and then veered north-west to Barnsley, Huddersfield, Halifax and on to Richmond. Weekly carrying services connected the West Riding with London and, through linked services, with the leading provincial towns. The regional highways that became turnpike roads in the mid-eighteenth century were already well-established routes that linked the market towns and the increase of trade encouraged local authorities to build stone packhorse bridges to replace the old wooden ones and to lay causeys across the moors to facilitate horse traffic. A team of packhorses could travel, on average, 30 miles a day.

### **Farming regions**

The West Riding was a county of great physical contrasts, ranging from the wet and windswept summits of the Pennine moors to the equally lonely wastes of the Humberhead levels, which were only a few feet above sea level. By the time of the hearth tax returns the market system was so reliable that farmers were able to concentrate upon whatever their soils and climate enabled them to do best.<sup>40</sup> On the Pennine foothills, for example, yeomen and husbandmen concentrated on livestock, especially dairy cattle, because their profits from industrial by-employments paid for the bread corn and malt that they purchased from badgers or in the market place. Oats was still grown where townfields survived in the Pennine hamlets, but many farmers

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<sup>37</sup> For Abraham de la Pryme’s manuscript history of Hatfield, see BL, Lansdowne MS, 898.

<sup>38</sup> B.F. Duckham, *The Yorkshire Ouse: The History of a River Navigation* (Newton Abbot, 1967), 37.

<sup>39</sup> J. Ogilby, *Britannia depicta* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1970), 00-00 (supply reference).

<sup>40</sup> This section is based on D. Hey, ‘Yorkshire and Lancashire’ in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, V:I: 1640-1750*, ed. J. Thirsk (Cambridge, 1984), 59-88.

had abandoned cereal production. In the dales most of the arable townfields had been enclosed by the end of the seventeenth century. Inventories of the personal estate of Wensleydale farmers that were taken between 1670 and 1700 show that only one in seven farmers in the lower parts of the dale and as few as one in 20 in the upper parts grew cereals. The dale bottoms were lined with small meadows and pastures, which were grazed by milk kine and young beasts that were being fattened for the butcher. Large, stunted pastures on the fell sides provided summer grazing for cattle and year-round nourishment for sheep; beyond lay the extensive wastes.

Partible inheritance was a common form of tenure on the manors of the northern Pennines, so farms were small and farming families survived only through dual occupations and generous common rights. Many Wensleydale farmers were part-time weavers, for farms had been reduced in size, and cottagers were increasingly dependent for most of their living on linen weaving, which was replacing the manufacture of woollen cloth as the main trade. In Dentdale many farms were only three or four acres in extent and few were larger than eight or nine acres. Since Elizabethan times the knitting of coarse stockings had been an essential by-employment for men, women and children alike. On the lead fields of the carboniferous limestone extensive exploration took place in the early modern period and the scale of mining operations was beginning to grow in the late seventeenth century, but most miners were still part-time farmers. Further south, though, arable farming was still taken seriously. In 1664 the farmers of Wharfedale and Airedale told the Georgical committee that on the hill sides they planted wheat or maslin in winter and black oats in the spring; they limed their clay lands, and then followed a rotation of fallow, barley, beans or oats, and wheat; on their most fertile ground their course was wheat, barley, beans and fallow. They improved their land with lime, dung and marl, and they bought seed from 'the more champion country' near Wetherby and York.

All the way along the Pennine edges, hay meadows and generous grazing rights on the commons were of prime importance. In a case heard before the Court of Chancery in 1676 Humphrey Bray, a Hepworth copyholder of £10 per annum who paid tax on one hearth, claimed that without the common pastures it would have been impossible to manure his farm and support his flock of sheep.<sup>41</sup> In the huge manor of

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<sup>41</sup> TNA, C5/448/19.

Wakefield, which included much of the moors of west Yorkshire, and further south in Hallamshire, copyholds were secure and manorial policy allowed the enclosing of new intakes from the extensive wastes and commons. Day-to-day decisions on communal farming activities were still being taken at township or hamlet level.

Each Pennine township also regulated the right to dig peat for winter fuel on the moorland wastes. The great extent of these activities can still be seen on the ground, where sledge ways from individual farms and hamlets lead up to areas that have been stripped of turf in an organised manner, with vertical edges and regular depressions. The 1679 probate inventory of Edward Barker of Ronksley, on the Yorkshire-Derbyshire border, noted ‘2 peat sleds, 2 pair of peat sides, a sled rope and 3 pairs of sled legs’, presumably runners.<sup>42</sup> Peat was brought down from the moors in springtime and stacked and dried at the farmstead. Manorial records for Hallamshire note moorland farms with peat houses in 1637 and a dispute between neighbouring townships in 1724 which involved ‘digging turffs in Moscarr’.<sup>43</sup>

In the wood pastures of the coal-measure sandstones east of the Pennines and south of the river Wharfe, industry and agriculture were inseparable. Gentlemen and yeomen profited from their investments or from their organisational roles in industrial enterprises, whilst most of the clothiers, metalworkers and other craftsmen combined their trade with farming. Some of these craftsmen were poor cottagers or smallholders, but many others gained an adequate living, and the yeomen-factors were often substantial men. In 1697 Celia Fiennes described the land on the coal-measure sandstones between Leeds and Elland as ‘good grounds for feeding cattle and for corne’, where the inhabitants ‘are so well provided that together with their industry they needs be very rich’. In the late seventeenth century agreements were made to abandon communal agriculture by enclosing open fields and sometimes also the commons, but many townships retained their common fields. In this region, although there were poor sandy soils on the hills and ill-drained clays on the flatter surfaces, many fertile sandy loams supported a mixed farming economy of dairying and arable. The numerous coppices were carefully managed to provide fuel for the charcoal iron industry, pit props for the coal mines, bark for the tanners, and all the usual products such as fences, hurdles, gates and tool handles.

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<sup>42</sup> Lichfield Joint Record Office, Archdeaconry of Derby wills and inventories.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.; J.G. Ronksley, ed., *An Exact and Perfect Survey and View of the Manor of Sheffield, with other Lands, by John Harrison, 1637* (Sheffield, 1908); Sheffield Archives, ACM S60.

Farming practices in the Vale of York varied according to the nature of the great variety of soils that were found in each township. The calcareous, loamy and freely-drained, red-brown soils that overlie the narrow band of magnesian limestone that rose to the east of the coal-measures provided the best arable land in the North. Here were small, nucleated villages, many of which had shrunk or decayed since medieval times. The parishes normally consisted of a single township and were the smallest in the north of England. Few had any woodland and the crafts were only those that supported agriculture. The more populous parishes retained their open fields and common pastures, but elsewhere a squire had enclosed all. This was a district of mixed husbandry where farmers paid equal attention to livestock and crops. On the sands and Keuper marls to the south-west of Hatfield Chase husbandmen placed equal emphasis upon corn and cattle and kept more sheep than their neighbours in the marshlands. In the eastern parts of the Vale of York ill-drained lands could be used only for grazing. Pasture closes and sometimes meadows were more extensive than arable fields. By 1672 some townships on the heavy clay soils were fully enclosed and in others the open-fields had been adapted to a system of convertible husbandry; however the use of closes for grazing meant that some of the larger commons remained unstinted. Rearing and fattening cattle were the most profitable lines, though most farmers also grew cereals. Around Selby, Snaith and Sykehouse they often grew a few acres of flax and in Hatfield Chase, which had been partly drained by Vermuyden's company in the late 1620s, Dutch and Flemish settlers had improved much of the new land by warping in order to grow oats, winter corn and rapeseed. Hatfield Park was divided up in the 1660s and converted to tillage and each township had a small area of common fields, surrounded by closes and ings, beyond which lay extensive common pastures and turf moors. Many Thorne inventories speak of 'turves on the moors', either for a farmer's own use or for sale down the river; William Middlebrooke, sailor (1726) had 'turves paid for, deliver'd and undeliverd,' worth £10. York was a major market and as far back as 1597 the citizens there had declared that turves were 'nowe the greatest parte of our fewell'.<sup>44</sup>

Small farms did not necessarily lead to conservative husbandry practices, for farmers in many parts of Yorkshire were willing to try new ideas to improve the quality of crops and livestock. For example, in 1664 the Georgical committee of

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<sup>44</sup> D.M. Palliser, *Tudor York* (Oxford, 1979), 273.

enquiry found that farmers in the liberty of Ripon pared, dried and burned their pastures and worst sorts of ground to yield three or four good crops, after which they spread lime, dung, or marl, mixed with dung to make good pastures. Throughout the West Riding, family farms were held on secure tenures or as small freeholds and were often less than 20 acres in extent, though with associated grazing rights on the commons.

### **Industry**

At the time of the hearth tax returns, York still played an important role as a textile marketing centre, Doncaster's woolstaplers were importing good-quality wools, and Ripon's cloth fair remained well attended. But by then, the cloth markets at Leeds and Wakefield had outpaced their ancient rivals and were indisputably the most eminent in Yorkshire. Despite foreign competition and the Anglo-Dutch wars, the West Riding textile industry not only captured much of the home market but exported many of its products to Holland and Germany and thus expanded steadily long before the great stimulus of the opening of the Aire and Calder Navigation in 1699. After the Restoration the manufacture of worsteds began to rival that of woollens, providing the West Riding textile district with a unique and strong combination. By the end of the seventeenth century the parish of Halifax was not only the leading centre of kersey manufacture but also of worsted shalloons. Worsteds manufacture gradually spread beyond the upper valleys of the Calder and Aire, as far north as Haworth and Keighley and as far east as Bradford (the later centre) and even to Leeds and Wakefield. Kerses and other narrow cloths were made in Pennine townships stretching south from Halifax to Huddersfield and Penistone, while broad cloths were made in the district bounded by Leeds, Wakefield, Huddersfield, Halifax and Bradford, and white or undyed cloths were made in the Calder Valley and coloured cloths were produced in the parish of Leeds and in the villages immediately to the west and the south.<sup>45</sup> Both the hearth tax returns and the surviving vernacular architecture demonstrate that the wealth provided by trade and industry differentiated the flourishing textile districts from purely agricultural communities.

The West Riding lay well away from its export markets and had no advantage over its competitors in terms of wool supplies, which were largely imported. Nor were

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<sup>45</sup> On the West Riding textile industry see H. Heaton, *The Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries from the Earliest Times up to the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford, 2nd edn, 1965); Hargreaves, *Halifax*, 25-67.

its labour costs significantly different. Contemporary opinion was that the West Riding owed its success to the peculiar structure of its industry, which provided opportunities for men of enterprise and initiative. Its domestic system of organisation was radically different from that of its ancient rivals in East Anglia and the West Country, where manufacture was dominated by wealthy merchants and clothiers who employed numerous outworkers for wages. In the West Riding countryside the typical enterprise in the woollen industry was the family farm where everyone helped to make one piece of cloth each week for the local market. Little capital was needed and the industry was able to expand enormously, simply by spreading into neighbouring townships. Leeds merchants dominated only the finishing and marketing processes. The variety of woollens and worsteds that were made within the same district meant that manufacturers could switch products relatively easily as fashion demanded. The West Riding textile industry concentrated on the cheaper end of the market with cloths offering value for money to the rising population.

The Hallamshire cutlery industry was organised on a similar basis.<sup>46</sup> It could not yet compete with London at the top end of the market but it had triumphed over its provincial rivals, such as Salisbury and Thaxted, largely because its rivers could be dammed to provide water power and the local sandstone was ideal for making grindstones. Between 1660 and 1740 the number of water-powered sites on the local streams and rivers rose from 49 to 90, about two-thirds of which were used for grinding cutlery, and the number of wheels at each unit rose appreciably. No other place in England used so much water power. In his *Worthies of England* (1662), Thomas Fuller wrote that most of the common knives of English country people were made in and around Sheffield and that 'One may justly wonder how a knife may be sold for one penny'.<sup>47</sup> By the time of the hearth tax, some high-quality cutlery was being made and the growing fashion for forks was encouraging a new craft, alongside other specialisations such as file making. The steel that was necessary for sharp cutting edges had long been imported from Spain, Germany and Sweden. The incorporation of the Cutlers' Company of Hallamshire in 1624 had freed the industry from manorial control. By the middle of the seventeenth century about 60 per cent of

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<sup>46</sup> The following account of the Hallamshire cutlery industry is based on Hey, *Fiery Blades*, 93-145.

<sup>47</sup> Fuller's *Worthies: Selected from The Worthies of England by Thomas Fuller*, ed. R. Barber (London, 1987), 423.

the adult male workforce in the township of Sheffield were employed in the cutlery trades.<sup>48</sup>

The hearth tax returns provide a unique insight into the cutlery and other secondary metal trades at this time, for industrial hearths were listed separately alongside domestic ones while the Cutlers' Company were engaged in a protracted battle at law. . In the sheriff's copy of the returns, smithies were recorded alongside domestic hearths, but here they were placed in separate lists of cutlers who had 'deposited the duty for their forges but refused to pay the Money without a Tryall at Law'. The Cutlers' Company went to considerable expense in hiring counsel and sending a former Master Cutler and their clerk to lobby in London, York and other places before asking Sir John Reresby, JP, of Thrybergh Hall to use his influence at Court. Reresby noted that 'the corporation of cutlers had spent near £200 in law ... without bringing it to any certain issue'. He was well entertained at the Cutlers' Feast in 1677 and was successful in having the tax demands set aside for a while. In 1682 the Company tried another time-honoured method by bribing 'Mr Trueman, Collector of the Hearth dutie to forbear distreineing of Smyths Forges till further consideration' and in the following year by presenting him with some good-quality cutlery 'for his civilities to the towne.' Similar methods were employed with equal success three years later.<sup>49</sup>

The filesmiths, awlbladesmiths and scythemakers joined the Cutlers' Company during this long struggle to exclude industrial hearths from payment of the tax. The hearth tax returns are a major source of evidence for the size and distribution of the various metalworking trades in and just beyond Hallamshire. In 1672 about 600 smithies were recorded in south Yorkshire and adjacent parts of north Derbyshire. Sheffield township had 224 smithies, that is one to every 2.2 houses, but even more Sheffielders were employed in the cutlery trade than this figure suggests, for the most skilled men worked in their chambers hafting and finishing the best-quality knives. Probate inventories suggest that one in every four cutlers had work chambers but no smithies. The grip of the trade on the town was remarkable. Sheffield was an ancient centre of cutlery manufacture long before it became Steel City.

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<sup>48</sup> *Mesters to Masters: A History of the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire*, eds C. Binfield and D. Hey (Oxford, 1997), 12-39.

<sup>49</sup> Hey, *Fiery Blades*, 136-9; Purdy, 23-30.

The small workshop worked by a 'little mester' with an apprentice and perhaps a journeyman or two remained the typical unit of production in both the town and the countryside. At this time, filemaking was an urban craft, scissor-smiths were at work in the townships of Sheffield and Attercliffe, scythe-making was the distinctive craft of the north Derbyshire parish of Norton, whilst their neighbours in Eckington parish made sickles, 'common wares' were made in the outlying townships of Hallamshire, and the nailmakers lived and worked further north in the villages, hamlets and scattered farmsteads near the slitting mills at Wortley and Masborough. Like the weaver-farmers of the Calder and Colne valleys, the rural metalworkers had a dual occupation, with their smithies standing next to the cow shed and the barn.

Most of the steel that the cutlers required for their cutting edges still came from abroad. The first reference to a cementation steel furnace in south Yorkshire is from 1642 when parliamentary soldiers wrecked one recently built by Charles Tooker of Moorgate Hall, Rotherham.<sup>50</sup> The next reference comes in the sheriff's copy of the 1672 return for Kimberworth, where 'Willm Hellefeild or Mr Copley' were taxed on four hearths 'per Steele Furnish'. Mr Copley was Lionel Copley, the leading gentleman-ironmaster in south Yorkshire. These early steel furnaces were erected in the countryside near Sheffield and Rotherham; the urban township of Sheffield did not have one until the early years of the eighteenth century. Fuel for these furnaces and the cutlers' smithies came from the exposed coalfield, which had been mined for centuries. Before the age of the railways the landlocked position of the Yorkshire coalfield prevented it from competing in national markets with Northumberland and Durham, which had ready access to the sea. The local demand for coal as a domestic fuel grew considerably in the seventeenth century, however, for the price of firewood soared when the ironmasters bought up the coppice woods to ensure their supplies of charcoal for their blast furnaces.

During the seventeenth century the English glass industry migrated to the midland and northern coalfields and by the later decades furnaces were at work at Gawber, Glass Houghton and Silkstone.<sup>51</sup> The John Pilmay, who was taxed on four hearths at Silkstone with his stepson, Mr Scott, had established his works there by 1658. He was descended from an immigrant glassmaker from Lorraine who had

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<sup>50</sup> D. Hey, 'The South Yorkshire Steel Industry and the Industrial Revolution', *Northern History* 42 (2005), 91-6.

<sup>51</sup> D. Ashurst, *The History of South Yorkshire Glass* (Department of Archaeology & Prehistory, University of Sheffield, n.d.), 19-44.

moved to southern England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth (d. 1603). Another prominent immigrant family who had not yet arrived in the West Riding were the Fenneys; later on Henry Fenney leased Glass Houghton; while Joshua Fonney was at Rothwell Haigh, and other members of the family built glasshouses at Bolsterstone and Catcliffe.<sup>52</sup>

### **Contrasting ‘countries’**

As the hearth tax was collected by county it is natural to make comparisons at this level, but an analysis of the West Riding returns shows much variety between sub-regions, the neighbourhoods that people once spoke of as their ‘countries’. Daniel Defoe, for example, spoke of ‘the country called Hallamshire’, the ancient estate that became a Norman lordship tucked away in the south-western corner of Yorkshire.<sup>53</sup> The physical geography of Hallamshire, the preservation of its name by the Cutlers’ Company, the unique nature of the work, the vernacular nature of the buildings (especially the smithies), the long residence of its core families, whose distinctive surnames were coined locally, local speech (much of it derived from the cutlery trade), and the strong Dissenting tradition set it apart from its neighbours.

Since the pioneering work of Joan Thirsk and Alan Everitt,<sup>54</sup> agricultural historians have been accustomed to think in terms of *pays* (the French form of ‘country’), where farming practices, settlement patterns, local economies and even social structures were deeply influenced by the topography of a sub-region. In the West Riding, to take but two contrasting examples, life in a nucleated village under the control of a squire on the magnesian limestone belt, the rich soils produced fine crops of cereals in the communal open fields, was very different from life in a moorland township high in the Calder Valley. There families were more likely to live in scattered farmsteads or hamlets than in a village, with no landlord or parson living close by. In such areas where making a weekly piece of cloth was perhaps more important than farming a smallholding.

But even when we get down to the level of a ‘country’ we find that the quality of housing might vary considerably from village to village, even in the richest districts. The different ‘countries’ were not uniformly wealthy or poor. Even in the

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-8.

<sup>53</sup> D. Defoe, *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (London, 1962), 181.

<sup>54</sup> *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, IV: 1540-1640*, ed. J. Thirsk (Cambridge, 1967).

Upper Calder Valley the inhabitants of some of the outlying townships struggled to make a living. It is usual in an analysis of the hearth tax returns (and earlier taxation lists such as the medieval lay subsidies) to rank townships according to the amount of tax paid per 1,000 acres. As this allows a rough-and-ready comparison to be made across the kingdom, maps have been constructed on this basis here, even though this distorts the true picture in the western townships of the West Riding, which consisted mostly of extensive moorland wastes. In Staincross wapentake, for example, 6,522 of the 8,116 acres of the township of Thurlstone were classified as commons and wastes at the time of their enclosure in 1812-16; the wastes had been even more extensive at the time of the hearth tax returns. The inhabitants of an average moorland township were better-off than figures based on total acreages imply. In particular, the townships in the vicinity of Halifax had a high proportion of large, vernacular houses which compared favourably with the best yeomen's dwellings across England.

It is nevertheless true that much of northern England was poorer than the south. This is testified by the disgruntled pleas of auditors who were paid for transcribing the rolls at the rate of a halfpenny for twenty hearths. In 1662 Richard Aldworth, Esq., the auditor for Yorkshire, Durham and Northumberland claimed that he was underpaid 'by reason of the pooreness of the buildings and fewnes of chimneys in each house generally in those parts'.<sup>55</sup> Another petition reads:

'Sirs, May it please your lordships to be humbly informed by Joseph Seymour that there is a great difference between the hearth roll in the North of England and the more western and southern parts, for there are maney rolls in the Northern parts wherein conteyned to every line in that roll but 1, 2 or 3 hearths and generally but one, whereas in Mr Auditor Phelips Office and Sir Edmund Sawyers and others that have great citties and townes, and populous counties there is scarce in any roll but that every line hath 7, 8, 10 or 12 or more chimneys ...'<sup>56</sup>

His complaint was that he was getting a smaller financial reward for his pains than the auditors of more prosperous regions. The 'countries' of the West Riding where industry was profitably combined with agriculture should not be included in this general view of a backward North. Well before the classic period of the Industrial Revolution, the West Riding had emerged as more dynamic and prosperous than Yorkshire's other two ridings.

### **The Compton ecclesiastical census**

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<sup>55</sup> TNA, E179/3544.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, E179/359.

In 1676, just four years after the compilation of the Lady Day 1672 hearth tax returns, ministers made returns of the number of communicants, 'Popish Recusants' and 'Other Dissenters' in their parishes.<sup>57</sup> Although the numbers were often approximations, they provide a rough guide to the geographical patterns of dissent. In the West Riding archdeaconry, dissenters of all kind amounted to only 3.4 per cent of the 75,501 recorded persons; 574 of these were Catholics and 2,013 belonged to Protestant dissenting congregations. They were a small, but often influential minority. Rural gentlemen and urban tradesmen helped to preserve dissent during the years of repression between 1662 and 1689. Many ejected ministers served tiny congregations in a discreet manner, particularly in remote parts of the countryside where patrons provided meeting places and offered some protection from the law. In contrast, dissent was easily suppressed in estate villages where resident lords ensured that their communities remained dependent upon the estate for tenancies and employment. It was a different matter where the lord was a dissenter himself. The largest Catholic congregation was the 80 who lived in the small parish of Burghwallis that was dominated by the Anne family. The next largest Catholic congregations were in central and eastern parts of the riding at Pontefract (57), Wakefield (57), Spofforth (51), Barwick-in-Elmet (40) and Saxton (37).

The strongholds of Protestant Nonconformity were in the growing industrial parishes and the moorland chapelries that were remote from a parish church. Wakefield had about 300 (12.5 per cent), Sheffield and Birstall both had 300 (10 per cent), but the 150 dissenters in each of the large parishes of Halifax and Leeds amounted to little more than 1 per cent. Other parishes in the textile district, with between 50 and 109 dissenters, included Batley (11.7 per cent), Kirkburton (3.75 per cent), Woodkirk (3.0 per cent), Dewsbury (6.25 per cent) and Bradford (2.5 per cent). Economic and topographical considerations favoured the spread of dissent but did not automatically produce it and it is the lack of any urban pattern that is striking at this time. Rotherham had been strongly puritan during the Civil War and its large parish contained numerous metalworkers, but it had only three dissenters among 750 communicants. Barnsley had only seven dissenters out of 638 communicants, despite the fact that it had a flourishing market and a wire-drawing industry and was merely a chapel-of-ease of Silkstone parish. In Doncaster, where only eight of an estimated

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<sup>57</sup> *Compton Census, passim.*

3,000 communicants were dissenters, the mayor and corporation claimed five years later that, 'We can truly say without boasting that we have neither in our town or corporation one dissenter from the present government in church and state'.<sup>58</sup>

In the Vale of York, the highest number of dissenters were at Hampsthwaite (10.6 per cent), Tadcaster (8.6 per cent) and Pontefract (3.75 per cent). Much larger numbers were recorded in the marshland parishes in the southeast. The parish of Fishlake (including its chapelry of Sykehouse) had 136 dissenters (24.3 per cent) and the neighbouring parish of Thorne (including Dikesmarsh) had 103 (20.6 per cent). However, the adjacent parish of Hatfield had only six dissenters amongst its 642 communicants. The immigrant Dutch and Flemish families who had drained Hatfield Chase and settled in the area may partly explain the high number of dissenters in Fishlake and Thorne, but ecclesiastical court books record numerous prosecutions against people with English names, 'for not being obedient to the Church of England in anything'.<sup>59</sup>

### **The Great Landholders**

Neither the Civil War nor the Restoration had serious long-term effects on the general pattern of landholding in the West Riding. By recording the number of hearths in the greatest houses, the tax returns of Lady Day 1672 help to capture an old pattern of landownership before the creation of large estates after the 1688 revolution. The number of recorded hearths include those in lodgings and outbuildings - at High Melton and Wadworth Halls the sheriff's copy even noted heated dog kennels - but they nevertheless allow us to construct an order of ranking. The West Riding had 41 houses that had at least 20 hearths.

At the top of the list with 60 hearths was Skipton Castle, which had been partially demolished at the end of the Civil War but then lovingly restored from 1659 by the formidable Lady Anne Clifford, Countess of Pembroke. The Honour of Skipton stretched from Airedale over much of Staincliffe wapentake into Wharfedale, where she also restored Barden Tower (27 hearths), which had been built by her ancestor during the reign of King Henry VIII (d. 1547). The other great feudal lordship that still formed a single estate was Hallamshire, but the Howards, dukes of Norfolk, were non-resident landlords. Sheffield Castle had been demolished and the

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<sup>58</sup> D. Hey, 'The Pattern of Nonconformity in South Yorkshire, 1660-1851', *Northern History* 8 (1973), 86-119.

<sup>59</sup> Borthwick, R.VI.E.2. The Flemish and Dutch immigrants worshipped just across the Lincolnshire border.

Manor Lodge, which had been extended into a great country house in the sixteenth century by the Talbots, earls of Shrewsbury, on the site of the old hunting lodge in the deer park, was now divided between the lord's two chief officers, Mr Ratcliffe (36 hearths) and Mr Nevill (21 hearths). The deer were soon to be withdrawn, the huge park was divided into farms, and in 1708 or shortly afterwards the lodge was demolished. Continuity with the medieval past was also evident in the archbishop of York's palace at Bishopthorpe (Ainsty), which had 38 hearths, and less so at Tickhill Castle (24 hearths), where the second of three Ralph Hansbys had built a gabled house that still stands within the bailey walls.

The West Riding had some of England's finest 'prodigy houses', built in Elizabethan and early-Stuart times by men who had prospered through government office and who had built up large estates in Yorkshire. Sir Arthur Ingram, a native of Rothwell who had long served as James I and Charles I's finance minister, had enlarged the Darcys' old house at Temple Newsam (45 hearths), which was now owned by his grandson, Viscount Irwin. The Ingrams had extensive estates in other parts of Yorkshire, for Sir Arthur had been steward and master of game in the Forest of Galtres and had built a magnificent town house behind York Minster, now held by Lady Ingram (33 hearths), as well as other properties in Lincolnshire, Derbyshire and Suffolk. At Wentworth Woodhouse (43 hearths), William, the second Earl of Strafford, lived in the house that his father, Sir Thomas Wentworth, had built on his ancestral estate before his execution in 1641. In the eighteenth century, Sir Thomas Watson-Wentworth, first Marquess of Rockingham, enlarged the park until it was nine miles in circumference, built up a 17,200 acre estate, and erected the largest Palladian house in England. The Wentworths also owned Tankersley Hall (25 hearths), a great Elizabethan house that was demolished in the late 1720s, and Sir Thomas had been largely responsible for the present appearance of Ledston Hall (31 hearths), which was added to and was now owned by Sir John Lewis, an East India merchant.

The various branches of the Saviles, a minor gentry family in Norman times who by Henry VIII's reign had become stewards of Pontefract Castle, sheriffs, and members of the Council of the North, also benefited from the spoils of public office to become great landowners in west Yorkshire.<sup>60</sup> Howley Hall (44 hearths), Morley,

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<sup>60</sup> R.B. Smith, *Land and Politics in the England of Henry VIII: The West Riding of Yorkshire, 1530-1546* (Oxford, 1970), 148, 217-18.

which was built for Sir John Savile in the 1590s, was the most impressive of these 'prodigy houses' at 60 yards square.<sup>61</sup> Methley Hall (43 hearths), erected by another Sir John from 1588, was famous for its large expanse of glass windows.<sup>62</sup> Both have been demolished. Nor is there much evidence of the former status of Nun Appleton Hall (40 hearths), owned by George Villiers, second Duke of Buckingham, the son of the court favourite of King James I (d. 1625), and himself a great public figure. He was lord lieutenant of the West Riding from 1661 to 1667 and retired to his Yorkshire estates in 1686. The house was on the site of a former Cistercian nunnery and was depicted in the 1720s by Samuel Buck<sup>63</sup> as a tall, gabled building, three bays square. Other public figures who erected grand houses in the riding included Sir Richard Hutton, a judge in the Court of Common Pleas, who had built Goldsborough Hall (29 hearths), and Sir Thomas Osborne, later Earl of Danby and Duke of Leeds, who had succeeded to a baronetcy and south Yorkshire estates in 1647. These were centred on Kiveton Hall (26 hearths; rebuilt in the 1690s to the designs of William Talman) and Thorpe Salvin Hall (20 hearths; an Elizabethan structure now in ruins). His star was in the ascendancy during the reign of William (d. 1702) and Mary (d. 1694).

Hickleton Hall (32 hearths) was occupied by the fourth Sir John Jackson, the first having bought the estate when he was an attorney at the Council of the North. The Whartons had been prominent Yorkshire gentry since Sir Thomas Wharton, a leading supporter of Henry VIII in Cumberland and a member of the Council of the North, had acquired the Healaugh Priory estate at its dissolution. In 1672 Healaugh (28 hearths) was occupied by Phillip, fourth Lord Wharton, a parliamentarian and Independent in religion, and in south Yorkshire Edlington (21 hearths) was the home of his brother, Sir Thomas. Other converted monastic estates included that of Roche Abbey at Sandbeck (30 hearths, where the Saundersons were now Viscounts Castleton), the Cistercian nunnery at Kirklees (24 hearths, Sir John Armitage baronet), Nun Monkton (21 hearths, a former Benedictine priory now held by George Paler), and Denby Grange (20 hearths), which the Kayes of Woodsome Hall (22 hearths) had purchased at the dissolution of Byland Abbey). Their neighbour, William Ramsden, had also done well out of the dissolution of the monasteries and his descendant and namesake still lived at Longley Hall (25 hearths).

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<sup>61</sup> M. Girouard, *Robert Smythson and The Elizabethan Country House* (New Haven & London, 1983), 142.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 276; L. Ambler, *The Old Halls and Manor Houses of Yorkshire* (London, 1913), 57.

<sup>63</sup> *Samuel Buck's Yorkshire Sketchbook: reproduced in facsimile from Lansdowne MS 914 in the British Library, with an introduction by Ivan Hall* (Wakefield, 1979), 324.

The leading West Riding gentry included two ancient families that remained staunch Catholics: the Annes of Burghwallis (41 hearths), who were descended from a fourteenth-century constable of Tickhill Castle, and the Middletons of Middleton and Stockeld (41 hearths). Other long-established West Riding gentry included the Neville family, who had been at Chevet (33 hearths) since the thirteenth century and had long since removed the village to extend their park, the Darcys of Aston (27 hearths), the Dawneys of Cowick (26 hearths), the Malleverers of Allerton (24 hearths), the Ingilbys of Ripley (24 hearths), the Vavasours of Weston (24 hearths) and Hazelwood (20 hearths), the Slingsbys of Moor Monkton (23 hearths) and the Copleys of Sprotborough (21 hearths).

It is clear from these lists that the West Riding had numerous substantial houses that ranked amongst the finest in the land and that leading families played important roles in national affairs. At a lower social level, the modest prosperity of those districts where trade and industry flourished, in combination with agriculture, was reflected in the number of hearths on which householders were taxed and the quality of their vernacular architecture. The West Riding had a number of thriving towns, specialist urban and rural industries, and varied agricultural regions that set it apart from most of the rest of the North. It is true that, like every part of England, a large proportion of the inhabitants lived in one-roomed houses, especially in those districts where industries had not taken root. It is also true that the extent of poverty is underplayed in the hearth tax returns. But it is clear that the West Riding should not be included in sweeping statements about 'the backward North'. The maps in this volume reveal a very different picture to County Durham,<sup>64</sup> where the only major industry at the time was coal mining (which produced a very different social and economic structure). Forthcoming volumes on the hearth tax returns of other northern counties will also reveal the distinctiveness of the West Riding. Within Yorkshire, the vernacular architecture of the East and North Ridings makes a poor contrast with that of the West Riding, whose wealth generated by trade, industry and agriculture distinguished it from the rest of Northern England. The West Riding's economy was thriving long before the great industrial changes of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

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<sup>64</sup> A. Green, E. Parkinson and M. Spufford, eds, *County Durham Hearth Tax Assessment, Lady Day 1666* (British Record Society, 2006).