

# THE CHANGING FACE OF EMPLOYMENT IN BUCKINGHAM, 1618–1798

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*Occupational information about Buckingham from militia surveys in 1618 and 1798 is compared to show the growth of new professional and leisure occupations characteristic of small towns during the period. However the greatest occupational growth was in the numbers of general labourers and servants, suggesting that Buckingham's economic performance was weak, paralleling the decline of old industries in many of the towns around London in the eighteenth century.*

## I

In 1600 fewer than one in five of England's population lived in towns. To say even that stretches the idea of a town to include almost all communities that had characteristics such as borough status, markets and urban institutions, and even then the urban nature of many of the small towns was marginal by modern standards. By 1851 a majority of a much increased English population lived in towns, many of them much larger than any provincial city in 1600. Yet the network of small towns across the counties of England remained an element of continuity throughout the intervening period and provided a channel for the transmission of urban values and fashions to the rural community.<sup>1</sup> Some of those small towns of 1600, and some communities which were still villages then, developed into the great cities of Victorian England – the Liverpools, Birminghams and Manchesters of 1600 were at most small towns. Others, like Buckingham, remained small, clinging to symbols of social status such as the right to hold the County Assizes even as their economic power fell away.

The small towns of England are currently under investigation by a group based in Leicester University as part of a Europe-wide project. Small towns have gone through many different processes of development, and there are numerous pitfalls in studying them. Where population growth was not particularly fast, and where there were no dramatic changes due to industrialization, the process of change can be difficult to chart. Buckingham is one

such town, and for reasons I shall explain later, is used here as a case study to look at such transitions. How far did it undergo the "Urban Renaissance" which, particularly after 1660, brought to a wide variety of smaller towns many cultural features developed in the metropolis and larger provincial centres in the later sixteenth and seventeenth century?<sup>2</sup> These involved changes in the social and professional functions of towns. The emergence of more clearly defined professional groups in the 17th century began in the metropolis, but the services of lawyers, doctors or surgeons were widely available in small provincial towns by 1700. New groups such as schoolmasters became more prominent, and the acceptance of non-conformity after 1689 led to the establishment of dissenting ministers in many towns and communities. Towns became the focus of local social events such as theatrical performances, concerts, and balls, while the emergence of a more widely literate reading public, especially amongst the increasing numbers of middle class occupations, led to demands for printing, publishing and bookselling services and the eighteenth century saw the emergence of the English provincial newspaper.

Historians have also detected a shift in the economic base of small towns away from craft production towards service, retail and transport occupations. The period between 1600 and 1800 saw the emergence of nationwide regular carrying services, and later of stagecoaches, and the development of large inns to service both transport needs and the development of private marketing.<sup>3</sup> The brewing industry

also became a large scale operation in many towns. How far were these changes apparent in Buckingham? As a town which remained a "small town" and failed to make a transition to either an industrial town or a regional or county commercial focal point in what way was it by-passed by these developments?

## II

A major problem for studies of urban change has been the changing nature of the sources over time, and the comparability of indicators at different periods. Before the nineteenth century censuses – and even then not really beginning until 1831 – occupational data have only survived sporadically. Town occupational structures have been examined using evidence from freeman's rolls, which may give information about the different numbers of people entering the various guilds in a town. However these, like most historical sources, suffer from deficiencies, not least because as new trades developed they did not form new guilds and their members had to join existing groups. The historical records may therefore not show particular changes very clearly. Another source of occupational data which becomes more widely useful from the late eighteenth century is found in directories, though they focus their attention on the professional and skilled occupations almost exclusively, and cannot easily be used to measure their relative importance in any community. Nor do they go back far enough to provide much help in the early modern period.

Other forms of occupational data, such as early local censuses, occur only very rarely, and usually for rural parishes rather than whole towns. In the eighteenth century the organization of the militia on a universal scale led to the listing of male inhabitants, usually between the ages of 16 and 45, in many parts of the country. Many have survived for Northamptonshire, and one complete set has been published by their record society.<sup>4</sup> Very few equivalent documents exist with occupational data from the 17th century. One survived for Gloucestershire in the early 17th century and was used by R.H. Tawney many years ago to examine the whole county's social structure. By chance something rather similar, a militia roll for the Hundred of Buckingham, drawn up by Sir Thomas Temple, Sir Francis Fortescue, and Sir Thomas Denton in 1618, has survived amongst the Stowe MSS in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California, and it gives occupational details for quite

a number of parishes, including Buckingham. It provides us with a snapshot of Buckingham occupations at that time.<sup>5</sup> This can be compared with the *Posse Comitatus* for the same area, instigated by the Marquis of Buckingham and produced for the whole county in 1798. It has recently been published by the Buckinghamshire Record Society and also recorded equivalent types of occupational data, offering an exceptional opportunity to compare Buckingham at the two dates from a parallel source, and to chart social and economic changes over 180 years.<sup>6</sup>

Ideally it should have been possible to look at occupational changes across the whole hundred of Buckingham, but unfortunately the occupational data in the 1618 militia list is patchy and not uniformly set out for all the villages. Many have information in the same form as that for Buckingham, but a number have less exact data. The list for Thornborough, for instance, divides everyone into three categories: householders, labourers, sons and servants, and though there is some additional information, it is insufficiently precise. The same applies to Marsh Gibbon, while in Westbury occupational designations were given to only a few individuals.

However the data for Buckingham borough and parish itself is reasonably consistent and probably provides as comparable a source of occupational data over the 180 years between 1618 and 1798 as is available anywhere in England. The parish covers some 5000 acres, and even today large parts remain rural. Both sets of militia documents covered the rural and urban elements of the parish, and yet surveyed them separately, using recognizably similar subdivisions. The urban portion was composed of the Borough, and "Prebend End", while the various hamlets of the parish, Gawcott, Lenborough, and Bourton were clearly distinguished in the records. The only change between 1618 and 1798 was that the urban part of Bourton (to the south of the town) became separately listed as Bourton Hold. These factors make it possible to estimate how far the town influenced the occupational profile of its immediate rural hinterland and to draw a clearer picture of any geographical concentrations of trades and professions in the five different parts of the parish.

This unusual opportunity to compare the economic and social structures of a small town and parish over 180 years from similarly based sources

has some deficiencies. The greatest omission is the lack of coverage of female occupations in both lists. Some estimate of the importance of women amongst the artisan and trading groups in the late eighteenth century can be drawn from comparisons with the *Universal British Directory*, although its 1798 edition shows its Buckingham trade listings had not been updated since the original 1793 production.<sup>7</sup> In that version (however inadequate) ten women appear in a total of 197 (just over 5 per cent) engaged in the usual retailing, millinery, mantua-making and innkeeping, but also including a maltster and farmer, a butcher, and a tile and brick-maker. But the major source of female employment and income is omitted even from the Directory, for in Buckinghamshire lacemaking was very important and was dominated by female labour and also employed large numbers of children. The fine work of pillow lacemaking required the skills of nimble fingers. The Directory gives some indication of women traders and producers, but also highlighted another weakness of the militia lists in that it gives two or more occupations for many of its entries. The militia lists designated every man with a single occupation, yet we know that many people combined two or more jobs, and that people such as labourers might work in a variety of trades.

There are some omissions among the male occupations and also slight differences between the 1618 and 1798 rolls. We know that the *Posse Comitatus* was intended to include all males between the ages of 15 and 60 who were not engaged in military service, but appears to omit all gentry and Anglican clergy, perhaps presuming that they had already enrolled in the volunteers. We do not know what age limits were prescribed in the 1618 document, but the customary range at that period was 16–45. To some extent this may reduce the completeness of coverage, especially where there were active tradesmen over 45 without grown-up children in the business. There are other distortions that creep in. We cannot make a good estimate of the numbers of men we would expect to find in the 1618 census if it were complete, because there is no good population estimate for that year, nor can we estimate the ratio of men and women in the town very accurately. The 1798 figure of 484 entries for the urban part of the parish appears to be reasonably complete. These entries amounted to 41 per cent of the male population in the 1801 census (1180), a figure that can be compared with estimates

of the percentage of the 15–19 age group from the 1821 census for England (43 per cent).<sup>8</sup> Moreover we can use that figure to see whether Buckingham had a greater registration in the *Posse* than other Buckinghamshire towns and villages. Some 21% of Buckingham's late 18th century population was included in the survey, compared with an average figure of 22% for north Buckinghamshire.

However statistically sound the *Posse* population may appear, there are other problems. Some professions and trades may have been over-represented if they had several male members of the household coming within the terms of the survey, while there are clearly demonstrable omissions which could be explained in a number of different ways. In 1797 Eden reported 26 inns in the town, but only 9 victuallers are listed in the *Posse*. Dual occupations can account for some: George Adkins, listed as a butcher in the *Posse*, was described as butcher and victualler in the *Universal Directory*, while William Attwood, a carpenter, is also described as a victualler operating the Cross Keys. Although the tannery in Buckingham continued to operate until after 1850, only one tanner is named as such in the *Posse*. The omissions may have been women, men over 60, may have lived elsewhere or have been described in more general terms, for instance as labourers. It does not look as if large numbers were simply omitted, though some occupational categories may be under- or over-represented. Bearing in mind the problems that have been set out, the nature and consistency of the material still make an analysis very worthwhile.

### III

Any analysis of the returns needs to be set in the context of Buckingham's social, economic and political situation. It lay fifty miles from London in the agricultural belt that extended some seventy or more miles around the metropolis and in which the growth of towns of over 5000 inhabitants seems to have been inhibited before 1800. To the north and west of London only Oxford and Northampton had exceeded that total by 1801 and there were probably only 13 towns in Buckinghamshire and its neighbouring counties north of the Thames that exceeded 2000 inhabitants in 1670. There is much evidence that the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were bad times for towns north and west of London. Of the 13 towns of 2000 or more in 1670 only Oxford, Bedford and Wycombe grew faster than the national popula-

tion increase up to 1801, in a period which in other parts of the country saw a rapid growth of small towns. Within Buckinghamshire only Aylesbury, Wycombe, and Amersham rivalled Buckingham in population and none was considerably larger. Aylesbury certainly grew faster than Buckingham but not as fast as Wycombe and Marlow, and slower than the national average.

Buckingham's population grew from around 1700 in 1563, to perhaps 2000 in 1670, and had only reached 2605 by 1801. Its rate of population growth was not that much slower than for most Buckinghamshire towns in the period, and faster than a number of towns such as Witney, Amersham, Leighton Buzzard, and Kettering. Aylesbury did not make the transition to a major county centre in terms of population until the later 19th century when it grew to over 6000 in 1851 and more than 9000 by 1901. Although Buckingham's population topped 4000 in 1851, it had fallen to 3152 by the end of the nineteenth century. It lay on the river Ouse, which was not navigable at this point, and the town had no waterborne trade until the opening of a branch to the Grand Junction canal in 1801. Roads through the town lay on a route from London to the Midlands and the north west as described in John Ogilby's *Britannia* in 1675. It certainly retained long distance road traffic through to the end of the eighteenth century, with turnpiking from Wendover to Buckingham since 1721. But this was not a flourishing route and the direct post service seems to have been abandoned as unprofitable in the 1770s or 80s.<sup>9</sup>

Politically and socially, the presence of the Temples, and their successors the Grenvilles in the adjoining parish of Stowe was a continuing influence in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The family sought to dominate the town largely for political purposes, needing to influence only the 13 burgesses who elected the borough's two MPs. In a such a small town the political importance of the local landed magnates over-awed the town's commercial and industrial élite. A further political element in Buckingham's life was its continuing struggle with Aylesbury for the position of County town which enabled it to hold Assizes and county elections there. Aylesbury was gradually gaining the upper hand, aided by its more central position in the county and eventually its larger size.

The evidence of late eighteenth century commentators bears out some of Buckingham's economic problems. In September 1795 Sir Frederick Eden visited Buckingham and used it as a Buckinghamshire case study. He found it was very poor. Labourers could earn 1s – 1s 6d a day, and women 8 – 9d a day making lace, but overall there was insufficient employment and the parish used the roundsman system to spread the cost of unemployment. How far this was accentuated by the fact that "a great part of the parish is pasture" is difficult to say, but contemporary estimates suggest that no more than one fifth of the parish was under the plough around 1800 [1801 Crop returns – 718 acres; Parkinson's survey in 1808, printed in St. John Priest – 1000 acres]. Eden observed the existence of 26 inns in the town.<sup>10</sup> Eden's account is borne out by another description in 1808 which remarked that only 313 of the 2605 inhabitants were reported to be engaged in commerce and manufacture.<sup>11</sup>

This is the economic background for an examination of the changes in economic structure shown by the militia rolls. To do this people on the rolls in both periods were assigned to one of five occupational groups. These were:

- a) Professionals, a category which included gentry, doctors, lawyers, and clergy (specifically non-conformist clergy), but was also widened to include schoolmasters, bankers, bureaucrats, and a dancing master since these represented the new "social" sector of the urban economy.
- b) merchants, dealers and shopkeepers, representing the traditional urban service sector.
- c) tradesmen and artisans, covering a range of producers of traditional industrial and commercial crafts which could either have been for local or wider consumption.
- d) service and provision sector, representing those providing for basically local or transport-related needs, people such as the carriers, victuallers, butchers, bakers, plumbers, carpenters, masons, tailors, wheelwrights and blacksmiths.
- e) agricultural crafts and general employment – farmers, yeomen and husbandman, but also labourers and servants. The latter was not necessarily an

agricultural group, for labourers and servants working in shops and workshops in the town were so designated. What they have in common is that their skills, such as they were, did not fit them into any other classification – they were technically, if not necessarily in practice, unskilled.

The placing of certain occupations within these groups is inevitably a little arbitrary on occasion, but the numbers of marginal cases involved are not large overall, and do not markedly distort the general picture.

When the whole parish was categorized into groups and compared between the two dates, the following table emerged:

*Table 1:  
Buckingham Parish  
in 1618 and 1798 – occupations and percentages*

	1618		1798	
	No.	%	No.	%
Professional	5	1.85	18	3.72
Merchant	21	7.78	21	4.34
Artisan	75	27.78	73	15.08
Service	67	24.81	105	21.69
Agric & Gen	102	37.78	267	55.17
Total	270	100.00	484	100.00

The most marked trend in these figures is the increase in the numbers of the agricultural and “general” labour force. This could have been caused

by the more agricultural parts of the parish dominating the overall figures, To eliminate this possibility a separate analysis was made of only the most obviously urban part of the parish – the “Borough” and the “Prebend End”. The results showed little difference: here too, the “general” labour category predominated despite the fact that there were no longer any farmers in the Borough or Prebend End in 1798. The figures in table 2 illustrate it well:

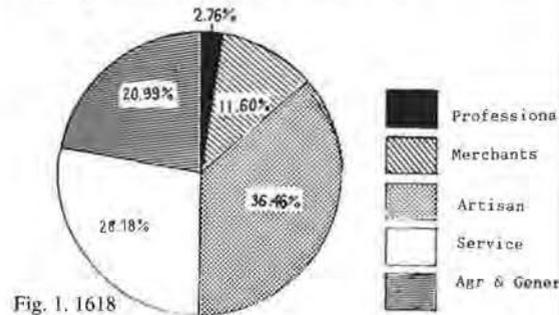


Fig. 1. 1618

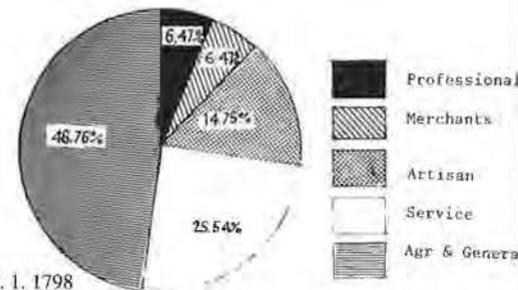


Fig. 1. 1798

*Table 2:  
Borough and Prebend End changes in structure*

*	1618			1798		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Nos	% of all	% of urban	Nos	% of all	% of urban
a) Professional	5.00	2.76	1.85	18.00	6.47	3.72
b) Merchant	21.00	11.60	7.78	18.00	6.47	4.34
c) Artisan	66.00	36.46	27.78	41.00	14.75	15.08
d) Service	51.00	28.00	24.81	71.00	25.54	21.69
e) Agr & General	38.00	20.99	37.78	130.00	46.70	55.17
Total	181.00	100.00	100.00	278.00	100.00	100.00
Total non-agr.	143.00	79.01	79.01	53.24	53.24	53.24

\*Columns are numbered to facilitate reference in the text.

As can be seen, the actual numbers involved in specialised urban occupations rose by only five over 180 years, and the percentage of the adult male population in such occupations fell from nearly 80 per cent to 53 percent. The implications of this will be dealt with later but first changes within and between the occupational groups (a) to (d) will be considered without reference to the labourers and servants, since the inclusion of the agricultural and general workers makes comparisons of occupational change within the “urban” groups of occupations much more difficult. This involves a comparison of the figures in columns 3 and 6 of Table 2, rather than 2 and 5.

#### IV

Among occupational groups (a) to (d) one of the most marked changes relates to the growth in the numbers of professionals in Buckingham. In 1618 only two individuals could be allocated to this group: a barber-surgeon and someone who styled himself "gent". Even the latter is hard to classify – he may have been a wealthy working farmer rather than part of the leisured local élite. We may deduce that beyond the surgeon, who almost certainly shaved and trimmed beards and cut hair in addition to any medical duties, there were few modern professional services in the town. There were almost certainly clergymen in the parish, and quite probably one or more schoolmasters as well, but both were omitted. Overall, however, the range of administrative, bureaucratic and leisure services available in Buckingham, as depicted by the militia survey, appears extremely small.

This is certainly apparent when compared with the picture in 1798. Not only was the surgeon differentiated from the three barbers in the town, but a banker, attorney, schoolmasters, and excise officers, as well as four ministers, a French priest, and a dancing master, gave Buckingham a quite different range of services, able to supply the surrounding hinterland with reasonably sophisticated legal, educational, financial and medical services. The presence of a dancing master is a reminder of the requirements of local social life in the age of Jane Austen. Moreover, the increased numbers of professionals were to be found not just in the Borough, but in Prebend End as well.

*Table 3:  
Professionals in Buckingham*

1618	1798
3.50 percent	12.16 per cent

The changes in the composition of the merchant and shop-keeping group of townspeople are equally distinct, partly reflecting the changing nature of commercial life, but partly the terminology in current usage in the two periods. The 1618 merchant sector was dominated by 8 mercers and 4 chandlers, with 5 maltsters, and a single haberdasher, draper, ironmonger, and chapman. In 1798 there were only two of these trades left – mercery and ironmongery. There were no longer maltsters in Buckingham, and the leading trading group were the mercers. There

were seven in the Borough, and another in Bourton Hold. No other trade was represented by more than one member, and it is difficult to be sure how far their services had been covered by the less specialised merchants of the 17th century.

The new trades can be grouped into types. The new importance of the printed word in 1798 was indicated by the presence of a stationer, a bookbinder and a printer. Another group of new trades was represented by the tea-dealer and liquor merchant purveying the new colonial consumption products that spread widely across Britain in the eighteenth century and the expanding output of gin, brandy, and general spirits which had opened a whole new sector of the drink market. The merchants in the textile trade included a woolstapler and a fellmonger, but also a lacedealer and lacebuyer. All these trades had been concentrated in the Borough in 1618 and in 1798 remained predominantly in the old town although some could be found in Prebend End, Bourton Hold and Gawcott. Interestingly, the actual numbers in each group remained the same in both years, but the percentage of the male commercial population involved decreased slightly.

*Table 4  
Merchants in Buckingham*

1618	1798
14.69 per cent	12.16 per cent

Any discussion of the next two groups of Buckingham's inhabitants, (c) artisans and craftsmen, and (d) services and provision trades, is complicated by questions of which occupations should be in each. My categories put the transport and food trades under (d) but also linked services such as wheelmakers, saddlers, and the building trades. It also includes a number of people who may be considered as providing fundamentally tertiary sector services to the local community, such as coopers, gardeners, chimney sweeps, and milkmen. On the other hand, dyers and tanners, who had originally been assigned to this group, were later re-assigned to group (c) since they were linked to the production-oriented trades which dominated it, and tailors were left in group (c) despite the fact that they were as often as not engaged in repairing and re-fitting work.

What kinds of artisans and craftsmen worked in Buckingham, and how did their balance change over

time? Tailors, who could be found in almost every English village, were present in all non-agricultural areas of Buckingham both in 1618 and in 1798, and in the latter year there were 2 staymakers and one hatmaker, replacing the one pointmaker of 1618. The other two major groups of trades involved the processing of leather and wool. Both were present throughout, but there were interesting shifts of emphasis. The leather trades were represented by 10 tanners, 23 shoemakers, and 8 glovers in 1618. All but one of the tanners were to be found in Prebend End, while the shoemakers and glovers were to be found exclusively in the Borough. This suggests that the whole industrial process was locally based, from local hides, and oak bark from Buckinghamshire woodlands – the Verneys sold bark to Buckingham tanners from time to time – tanned in Buckingham and passed onto the 23 local shoemakers and 8 glovers. Whether or not this was really as simple is another matter, but all necessary parts of the industry were available in the town, and tanning was a substantial source of employment. Research on the leather industry has shown how tanning became much more concentrated in specialised localities, and this process was reflected in Buckingham.<sup>12</sup> In 1798 only one tanner remained, still in Prebend End, but there was also a leatherdresser. More interesting perhaps, was the changing specialization and geographical distribution of the finishing trades in the town. Instead of just shoemakers and glovers there was only one man explicitly described as a shoemaker, but 3 breeches makers, 3 kidlers, and 25 cordwainers (shoemakers). In 1618 they had been concentrated in the Borough, but although all 4 glovers and some 13 cordwainers were found there in 1798, substantial numbers were in Bourton Hold, where there were 11 cordwainers, and all the breeches-makers and kidlers. There was also a cordwainer in Gawcott. The same kinds of subtle change can be found in the wool trades. The five weavers of 1618 in Borough, Prebend End and Gawcott had been reduced to two in Gawcott by 1798, but on the other hand there were 3 woolsorters in Prebend End by 1798 and another in Bourton Hold, perhaps linked to the Fellmonger to be found amongst the merchants. However their skills represented a different, arguably less sophisticated part of the trade than the three fullers, and one dyer who had worked in the town in 1618. Buckingham, to judge from the occupational data, had ceased to be a centre of cloth production, but instead was a centre for the

collection and sale of wool to the thriving industries of areas such as Norwich, the West Riding, and Wiltshire. The decline of woollen and worsted manufacture in the South Midlands is well attested in the fate of the eighteenth-century industry in Kettering.<sup>13</sup>

Production based on wool and leather was the source of employment for the most substantial groups of craft and industrial workers in Buckingham, but other small groups are worth mentioning. An interesting and persistent trade, perhaps to be linked to the leather trades, was the existence of three parchment-makers in 1618, and still two in 1798. They may indicate the continuing importance of legal work and that legal services may have been available in the town in 1618, even if not represented amongst the militia rolls. Of the metal trades there were small numbers in both periods, but their interests differed. In 1618 there had been a bell-founder, a cutler, and a sievemaking. In 1798 there was really only one, a tin-plate worker. The clockmaker who was also to be found in the town then was perhaps indicative of the increasingly sophisticated engineering skills to be found in small country towns by the end of the eighteenth century. One other craftsman, a potter, was to be found in 1798.

How, then, should we characterize Buckingham's industrial and craft sector in the early modern period? Firstly, it appears to be relatively small, with rather fewer members than the service sector at both dates. The old wool and leather trades predominated, but although they showed some signs of diversification and specialization, there was little sign of expansion. In 1798 they may have been less independent, perhaps piece-workers for the Northampton based boot trade which were flourishing in the French Revolutionary war period. There is no evidence of any new industries influenced by developments in the Midlands and North, nor of the area's one growth industry, lacemaking, because its female and child labour was not covered by the militia audit. There are few indications of engineering or other trades apart from the one clockmaker.

Finally, how far had the relative position of this group in the community changed over nearly 200 years. If we look at the actual numbers of people listed in these occupations in the "town" parts of Buckingham parish they fell substantially – from 66 in 1618 to 41 in 1798. As a proportion of the urban population not in agricultural or unskilled employ-

ment, their importance fell by almost one half amongst the militia-eligible males as the figures below show.

Table 5:  
Artisans in Buckingham

1618	1798
46.15 per cent	27.70 per cent

As the artisans and craftsmen of Buckingham lost their relative predominance in the town, those involved in the provision and service industries gained importance amongst the urban trades and just about held their own relative to the total population. This reflects the increasing importance of transport and the marketing of goods and services in the economy of early modern England. If we compare the group's numbers in 1618 with their position in 1798 then we find an increase from 64 to 105, which made them the largest group of occupations, employing almost half the trading population.

Table 6:  
Service Industries in Buckingham

1618	1798
35.66 per cent	47.97 per cent

Numbers involved in the basic provision trades show an increase which outstripped the growth of population. Meat was supplied by seven butchers in 1618 and fifteen in 1798. The staple part of most people's diet, bread, was baked by six bakers in the town in 1618 and the same number in 1798, though there were four other bakers in the outlying districts where there had been none in the earlier period. Then, their meal and flour was supplied by five millers, three in Prebend End and one each in the town and Gawcott. By 1798 the three millers listed were all found in Bourton Hold. The only obvious addition to the direct food supply trade in 1798 was the existence of a milkman (presumably like his modern counterpart carrying milk round the town door steps, but in a large bucket with a ladle).

This new service was a much more modest addition than the marked development of the licensed trade in inns and pubs. Nine "victuallers", covering a range of licensed premises, plied their trade in the

town, where none were recorded in 1618. At the very least this suggests that the drink and lodgings trade was much more localised and part-time in 1618, very much more formalised and distinct by 1800. On the other hand, the major expansion of victualling was not paralleled in land transport. Stage coaches and carrier services expanded markedly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries but this is not reflected in the militia returns. There were 7 carriers in the early period, but only one remained in 1798. This curious phenomenon needs some explanation. Another section of the 1798 *Posse Comitatus* lists horses, waggons and carts in each parish, and shows that one carrier, Ezra Eagles (incidentally one of a long-established family of carriers) had 18 horses, 4 waggons and 2 carts. The *Universal British Directory* shows that he ran services not only from Buckingham, but from Brackley, suggesting that this firm had come to monopolize the London services. He owned far more horses than any other horse-owner in the parish, the next most important being the fellmongering business in Prebend End and a Gawcott farmer. The *Universal British Directory* gives some part explanation, indicating that some fifteen years earlier the mail service through Buckingham to the Midlands had become unprofitable and ceased. Now Buckingham's post came up Watling Street on the Liverpool coach and was picked up at Stony Stratford. In 1788 there had been two carriers, but one (incidentally carrying a surname which was prominent amongst the town's carriers in 1618) had gone by 1798.<sup>14</sup> The effects of the Grand Union Canal on Buckingham were not felt until the Buckingham branch was opened in 1801, largely financed by the Marquess of Buckingham.

The provision of regular road transport services may have been in decline in Buckingham by 1798, but its associated trades appear to have remained buoyant. There had been one wheelmaker, one saddler, and three collarmakers in 1618. By 1798 there were four wheelwrights, four saddlers and only one collarmaker, but they were joined by two ostlers and a coachman, indicating the importance of stage-coach travel. Two daily coach services ran through the town, one to London, one on its way from Birmingham to London. The expansion that had taken place did not apparently require the service of additional blacksmiths. There were seven in each listing, but by 1798 they were no longer concentrated in the old town centre but also found in Bourton Hold

and Gawcott. One further new trade that can be associated with provision and transport services was the presence of two coopers in 1618 and one in 1798.

The other important group of services that have been included in this category are the building and construction trades. In 1618 these consisted of four joiners, five carpenters, three sawyers, six masons and a tiler, a plumber, and two brasiers. (Joiners are included among the building trades because of the importance of wainscoting in the seventeenth and eighteenth-century houses.) By 1798 the plumber and brasiers had gone, and there were more men involved in wood-based trades – seventeen carpenters and six sawyers. Apart from the eleven masons, new trades represented some of the changes that had taken place in the building industry since the early seventeenth century. Three glaziers were needed to provide window glass, which had been relatively rare except in the houses of the wealthy in 1618, and one man was described as a builder, again, an occupation arising out of changed trade organization.

Most of the occupations in this section can be fitted within the broad categories of food and drink, transport and allied services, and building trades. There are a few that do not fit so easily. The two barbers of 1798 were quite distinct from the surgical services of the town. There were also three chimney sweeps, and a ragman, an important part of the paper-making process, perhaps taking the rags he collected to one of the two paper mills on the Ouse within ten miles of the town.<sup>15</sup> Neither trade was recorded in 1618. One small group of people to be found in both periods were the gardeners, three of them in 1618, two in 1798. They were probably market gardeners, cultivating fruit and vegetables on plots of land close to the town to supply local market needs. They could have been seedsmen or nurserymen growing plants wholesale, but this seems unlikely, since they would probably have been described as such, at least in 1798.

In the context of current historical understanding of urban occupational structures in England, the pattern revealed by this analysis is not unexpected, confirming the relative strengthening of the professional and leisure sections of the population and of cultural and educational opportunities during the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The provision and service industries also gained,

while the old merchant and urban artisan lost their relative importance within the town. Buckingham's occupational profile reflected trends in small (indeed almost all) towns in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. What contrasts strikingly with current historiographical optimism in the role of small towns in English economic growth is the static absolute numbers of urban occupational groups, particularly when we consider that the 45-60 age group was probably not included in 1618. Buckingham appears to have failed to expand its economic base over the 180 years and was in many ways being left on one side by the transport and commercial transformations of the period, let alone the emergent industrialization of England.

## V

The main indicator of commercial and industrial stagnation in the occupational records appears to be the rising proportion of labourers and servants in the militia material between 1618 and 1798. This phenomenon was to be found throughout the parish, and not particularly in the rural townships. In this final section I will consider both the occupational trends in the non-urban parts of the parish, and the particular position of the general workers – labourers and servants. These designations, though traditionally connected with agricultural work, also applied to men whose work was unspecialized. The word servant applied to someone, almost always unmarried, who lived with the family employing him or her, was paid an annual salary, and could be found doing work for the farm or business concern at least as frequently as domestic work.<sup>16</sup> A labourer was much more likely to be married, without significant hand or craft skills to support him, and available for whatever work was offered, frequently on a casual day-to-day basis.

Any understanding of the changing position of these groups requires first an analysis of the part that agricultural pursuits played in Buckingham. Farmers were listed in all parts of the parish in 1618 including the two substantially urban sections. There were two yeomen and one husbandman in the Borough, and one husbandman in Prebend End. By 1798 these had gone, though there were substantial numbers of labourers, servants, and apprentices in both. This suggests that the town core lost its farmers over our period, and we shall probably never know whether their land had been on the urban fringes in 1618, or whether they simply lived in the town. Bourton had

farmers in both periods, with relatively few servants or labourers. Although the ten farmers were called husbandmen in 1618, their eight successors were more specialised – two were called farmers, the other six were designated as dairymen, reflecting the eighteenth-century trend in north Buckinghamshire for enclosure to be linked with the conversion of land from arable to pasture.<sup>17</sup> The changes in the numbers of working farmers in Bourton were relatively minor, perhaps because relatively small dairy farms could be effective economic units.

Gawcott, which remained unenclosed, showed more dramatic changes. In 1618 there had been sixteen working farmers listed – seven yeomen farmers, and nine humbler husbandmen. By 1798 there were only seven farmers there, together with three specialist agricultural workers – two shepherds and a calvesman. This evidence suggests that farms were being enlarged over our period. Yet as we shall see, Gawcott retained a large number of agricultural labourers and servants who made up 80 per cent of eligible males in 1798, while the numbers engaged in artisan and service trades had fallen absolutely. Gawcott was on the way to becoming a classic “open” community providing ready labour for the farmers in the townships and parishes around, and developing into the community which fostered some of the earliest organized agricultural workers’ strikes in 1867.<sup>18</sup>

Lenborough presents different problems of interpretation. It had long been owned by a single landowner, and had been farmed in large units producing for the market. In 1618 the militia return is quite difficult to interpret, for it describes all seventeen men as “servants to Sir Richard Ingoldsby”, yet at the same time also puts the designation yeomen beside six of them. It is possible that Lenborough was being run as a single unit in 1618 – a demesne farm, with a number of wealthy managers. This seems unlikely, though a list of large enclosed sheep runs in Buckinghamshire drawn up for purveyance purposes in 1610 shows Lenborough as one of the largest recently enclosed pastures in Buckingham Hundred at that time.<sup>19</sup> If not, then the yeomen may have been tenant farmers, and it is interesting that the number, six, is exactly the same as the number of dairymen recorded in Lenborough in 1798 suggesting that unit farm sizes had remained unchanged between the two dates, but that dairying was the preferred form of

farming by the end of the eighteenth century. The small number of other males noted as of militia eligibility, and their status as farm servants is also indicative of the way in which Lenborough had many of the attributes of a classic “closed” village specialising in one kind of farming.<sup>20</sup> This certainly bears out the evidence of how the Verneys organized and ran those Lenborough farms when they owned them in the mid-eighteenth century.

Although the process of agricultural specialization is apparent, in Gawcott and to a lesser extent in Bourton, this is not the only feature of occupational change in the rural townships of Buckingham parish. The tables below show changes in all three. Gawcott lost services and trades between 1618 and 1798 though it gained two shopkeepers. The huge rise in the numbers of labourers and servants suggests that Gawcott became considerably more dependent on Buckingham town for its needs. The figures for Bourton include an analysis of Bourton Hold which was separately designated in 1798, to ensure that the same area is being compared. Bourton Hold became significantly urbanised with a wide range of services, and included only one farmer. On the other hand the rest of Bourton remained exclusively rural, as did Lenborough.

*Table 7:  
Gawcott, Bourton and Lenborough occupational  
changes 1618–1798*

<i>Gawcott</i>				
	1618		1798	
	No	%	No	%
Prof	0	0	0	0
Merchant	0	0	2	2.17
Artisan	9	18.75	5	5.43
Service	15	31.25	11	11.96
Agr & Gen	24	50.00	74	80.43
Totals	48	100.00	92	100.00

<i>Bourton and Bourton Hold</i>				
	1618		1798	
	No	%	No	%
Prof	0	0	0	0
Merchant	0	0	1	1.19
Artisan	0	0	27	32.14
Service	0	0	23	27.38
Agr & Gen	23	100	33	39.29
Totals	23	100	84	100.00

### Lenborough

	1618		1798	
Prof	0	0	0	0
Merchant	0	0	0	0
Artisan	0	0	0	0
Service	0	0	0	0
Agr & Gen	17	100	21	100
Totals	17	100	21	100

This brings us finally to consider the position of the labourers and servants in the urban parts of Buckingham. If anything, the proportion of general labourers in the urban sector rose rather more dramatically than for the parish as a whole, from 21 to nearly 47 per cent. By 1798 the proportion of townsmen who were in what were obviously specialised urban occupations was barely above half. What is the significance of this? It is possible that fewer people were occupationally categorized, particularly as guilds fell away and apprenticeship became less important, and certainly not universal. There were geographical differences in the balance of labourers and servants. Far more servants were found in the Borough, and with the apprentices they outnumbered the 21 labourers by over 3 to 1. In the Prebend End and Bourton Hold labourers predominated and servants and apprentices were few in number. This suggests geographical segregation of the richer and poorer segments of the population, with the town élite concentrated in the Borough, and the labouring poor congregated in the Prebend End and the new suburb of Bourton Hold.

The overall impression remains, and it is one which may also be true for many small towns, especially where new occupations and trades did not expand substantially during the eighteenth and nineteenth century, that the natural increase in population during the later eighteenth and nineteenth century was not productively absorbed but formed a semi-skilled and un-skilled proletariat which looked to find work wherever it was available inside or outside the town. Eden reported that the Roundsman system was in use in the parish, and it would be interesting to know whether it was applied to the inhabitants of the town, and to town employers, as well as to farmers. However interesting and dynamic the changes in Buckingham's urban functions and services over 180 years, their quantitative impact was relatively small, and their numbers were overshadowed

by the growth in those designated as general labourers and servants, who made up over half the active male population.

In conclusion, Buckingham can be seen to have responded to many of the national trends amongst towns great and small between 1600 and 1800. It gained new professionals who provided a wider range of sophisticated services, including some leisure industries. Its economy shifted away from the traditional production crafts towards the service sector, particularly the victualling trade. There is some evidence of changing geographical distribution of different trades and crafts in the Borough and Prebend End. Yet the economic changes involved no deepening of urban functions. The total number of males involved in "urban" occupations remained constant while the population itself rose gently. Overtly agricultural activities disappeared amongst those who lived in the town, but the largest occupational group remained the labourers and servants who probably lacked specialist skills and swelled those on the margins of poverty. While Buckingham kept up the trappings of urban renaissance its sophistication rested on very weak foundations.

The effects of urban change on the immediate hinterland of Buckingham parish seems very limited. The town may have lost its few remaining farmers, and it certainly incorporated a new southern suburb, Bourton Hold, where in 1798 farmers are still found alongside craft, service and building trades. Of the other townships Lenborough and Boughton remained predominantly agricultural, while Gawcott's occupational changes were more characteristic of a separate "open" village, than of an urban suburb or satellite. The nature of Buckingham's urban development and its gentle pace did little to widen its sphere of influence as recorded by occupational indicators. The disastrous fire of 1725 was undoubtedly a setback, destroying 138 houses. Contemporaries remarked on the slow pace of rebuilding, which reflected the weak economy. The important unanswered question is how far this narrow pattern of occupational development was reflected in the other small towns of southern England. Kettering's disastrous decline and unemployment at the end of the 18th century is well documented. The Swiss traveller JC Fischer, travelling through St. Albans in 1814, was regaled with tales of the antiquity of houses in the town, "standing since Julius Caesar's time", and com-

mented, "from their dilapidated condition I could well believe it".<sup>21</sup> If the small towns of England were an important element in economic and social change, then all the evidence suggests that Buckingham's contributions mainly had been in the transmission of

social and cultural ideas. For most of its inhabitants, and those who came from its immediate hinterland to buy or sell, borrow books, or dance, it was, in Eden's words, "a place of very little trade, and the inhabitants, in general, seem poor".<sup>22</sup>

## APPENDIX

### *Militia Roll for Buckingham parish 1618*

Buckingham Tria Hundredi de Buckingham A generall Muster taken at Buckingham of the three hundreds of Buckingham aforesayde the 24th day of September 1618 Anno regni Regis Jacobi Angliae &c 16to et Scotiae 52to. By Sir Thomas Temple, knight & Baronett, Sir Francis Fortescue, knight and Sir Thomas Denton, knight.

Burgum de Buckingham			Caliver	Robert Symonds	Shoemaker
	William Myddleton,		Caliver	William Illinge	Shoemaker
	constable	Carier	Caliver	William Townsend	Shoemaker
	Raphe Turveye. constable	Smyth	Caliver	Edward Winslowe	Shoemaker
Caliver	Richard Okeley	Chaundler	Caliver	Raphaell Smyth	Shoemaker
Pike	Thomas Okeley senior	Mercer	Lance	John Stoneck	Shoomaker
Caliver	John Okeley	Chaundler, supply		Barnaby Chatwin	Shoomaker Lane
Caliver	Tho Okeley Junior	Chaundler	Musket	John Chatwine	Shoemaker
Pike	Robert Woodcock	Mercer, supply	Lance	John Oveattes	Shoemaker
Musket	William Towers	Mercer, supply	Lance	John Twitchen	Shoomaker
Caliver	Thomas Foulke	Mercer	Lance	William Archer	Shoemaker
Caliver	Hugh Cheesey	Mercer	Lance	Charles White	Shoemaker
Caliver	Silvester Costerdine	Mercer	Caliver	Thomas Baldwine	Shoemaker
Musket	William Attow	Mercer	Caliver	John Coles	Shoemaker
Caliver	John Matcham	Mercer	Lance	Thomas Lyaile	Shoemaker
Musket	Thomas Kent	Chaundler		John Lambert	Gentleman,
Musket	Tymothe Bedourton	Draper			Trayned
Caliver	John Marson	Ironmonger	Pike	Nicholas Shepheard	Maltster
Lance	Thomas Woodcock	Haberdasher	Pike	Thomas Hillesdon	Maltster, Supplye
Musket	Robert Holtwood	Chapman Lane	Pike	Richard Webb	Maltster
Lance	Anthony Bonam	Butcher	Musket	Giles Lucas	Maltster ,Trayned
Musket	Thomas Bonam	Butcher	Lance	Richard Burrowes	Maltster
Caliver	John North	Butcher	Musket	Edward Waste	Brasier
Lance	Thomas Wadkins	Butcher	Musket	Fraunces Hayward	Brasier
Pike	Edward Gibbs	Carrier	Caliver	Thomas Howse	Plumber
Lance	Robert Warr	Carrier	Pike	Fraunces ?Jeeling	Barber Chirurgian
Caliver	Thomas Bumpas	Fuller	Lance	William Gray	Taylor
Lance	Phillip Demckwat	Fuller	Caliver	Richard Maior	Taylor
Caliver	Thomas Rislee	Fuller	Caliver	William Watts	Tailer
Pike	John Stotusbury	Carier	Caliver	Thomas Bates	Tailer
Pike	Thomas Stotusbury	Carier	Caliver	John Hasker	Taylor
Caliver	Robert Laughton	Carier	Lance	William Smyth	Taylor
Caliver	Robert Myddleton	Carier	Musket	Valentyne Slynne	Taylor
Caliver	William Stoneck	Carier	Caliver	Noah Naseby	Taylor
Musket	Robert White	Shoemaker	Caliver	William Holton	Blacksmith
Lance	Peter Smyth	Shoemaker	Lance	John Holton	Cuttler
Musket	William Barnes	Shoemaker	Musket	Michael Hearinge	Blacksmith
Caliver	Edward Etherscy	Shoemaker	Musket	Henry Pynnell	Blacksmith
Lance	Thomas Beecher	Shoemaker	Caliver	Phillip Duncley	Blacksmith
Lance	William Ledginghand	Shoemaker	Caliver	Richard Meadcraft	Blacksmith



*Gawcott membrum de Buckingham*

	Robert North	Husbandman Constable
Lance	William Haynes	Husbandman
Lance	Hercules Fisser	Husbandman
Lance	Edward Wright	Servant
Caliver	James Horne	Mason
Lance	John Bicke	
Lance	John Lucas	Mason
Musket	John Symondes	Taylor
Caliver	Thomas Hedgman	Labourer
Caliver	Humfrey Watkins	Sawyer
Caliver	Thomas Thommes	Carpenter
Caliver	Thomas Bull	Husbandman
Pike	William Tanner alias Heath	Butcher
Caliver	John Miller	Taylor
Musket	Gylbert Burtleigh	Labourer
Lance	John Warr	Husbandman
Lance	Stephen Hicks	Labourer
Lance	John Cropper	Husbandman
Lance	Richard Boyes	Mason
Caliver	Thomas Watts	Labourer
Caliver	Rumbold Muxley	Taylor
Caliver	Edward Breerton	Labourer
Musket	John Meaks	Taylor
Musket	James Hayes	Labourer
Musket	Edward Hayes	Labourer
Caliver	Richard North	Sawer
Lance	James Harris	Sawyer
Lance	Roger Watts	Labourer
Lance	John Smyth	Labourer
Lance	Laurence Grove	Labourer
Musket	Peter Warner	Labourer
Caliver	Stephen Fisser	Husbandman
Caliver	William Collett	Cooper
Lance	Thomas Collett	Mason
Lance	Thomas Shephard	Taylor
Lance	Thomas Greene	Labourer
Musket	Thomas Knight	Carpenter
Caliver	William Thomas	Carpenter
Caliver	Raphaell Collett	Weaver

Caliver	Robert Collect Junior	Cooper
Pike	John Warner	Taylor
Musket	William Knight	Carpenter
Lance	George Hyvenes	Husbandman
Musket	Thomas Chennell	Taylor
Musket	John Robins	Taylor
Caliver	William Hinton	Labourer
Caliver	Edward Luck	Mason
Lance	George Greene	

*Bourton in paroch Buck:*

Musket	Thomas Reeve	Husbandman
Musket	Thomas Wiseman	Husbandman
	Richard White	Husbandman Trayned
	Edward Wootton	Husbandman Lame
	John Lucas	Lame
	Andrew Marcy	Lame
	Robert Wells	Aged
Musket	Fraunces Martyn	Labourer
Musket	John Byrtwissell	
	John Rogers	Husbandman Trayned
	William Reve	Husbandman Trayned
	Thomas Waddesdon	Husbandman Trayned
Musket	William Waddesdon	Husbandman
Caliver	William Reeve	Husbandman
Caliver	John Francklen	Servant
	Randolphe Turpine	Husbandman Trayned
Caliver	Edward Hicks	Servant
Caliver	John Brodwick	Servant
Lance	James Baubrook	
Lance	Jonas Hanwell	Servant
Caliver	William Knott	
Caliver	William Stopp	Miller
Lance	Richard Parrott	Servant

*Lenborough in Paroch de Buck*

Servants to Sir Richarde Ingoldesby viz sequitur

Richard Barker	Yeoman
William Aston	Yeoman
Richard Sapper	Yeoman
George Hawkins	Yeoman
Origen Wakford	Yeoman
Thomas Moore	Yeoman
Raphe Holyard	Yeoman
Albane Smyth	
Richard Spratley	

Hugh Brasshead
Edward Warr
Henry Stotusbury
Richard Boner
Thomas Payne
Richard Hatton
Richard Jervasse
Thomas Golder

Memorandum: within the parish of Buckingham 250

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