

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE POLL TAX RECORDS

1377–79

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Attempts to tax individuals in ways unrelated to their wealth or ability to pay, have been comparatively rare in England. Indeed, when such taxes were levied, they have tended to prove extremely unpopular. Most recently, the Thatcher government's so-called Community Charge of 1988–91 provoked rioting in central London and there was large-scale refusal to pay. Six centuries earlier, the governments of Edward III and Richard II hoped to increase revenues by moving away from taxes on movables – the norm for almost a century – to a tax on individuals at a flat per capita rate. This tax was levied in 1377, 1379 and 1381 and was probably a principal cause of the Peasants Revolt of 1381. Governments soon reverted to tried and tested means of taxation. Like all medieval taxes, the Poll Tax generated a substantial body of records, but, as usual, their survival is highly variable. Unfortunately, Buckinghamshire has very sparse coverage. Totals for the county for all three years survive, as do the numbers of taxpayers and tax raised in 1377 for the Chiltern Hundreds (Burnham, Stoke and Desborough). However, only two parishes, Weston Turville and its neighbour Stoke Mandeville, have lists of taxpayers' names for 1379. This paper examines these surviving records and compares them with the equally exiguous data in Domesday Book.

INTRODUCTION

The taxes known as the Lay Subsidy, or the Tenth and Fifteenths (the former levied on Crown lands or ancient demesne, the latter on other places) originated in the late-twelfth century. Traditional taxes on land, notably hidage, were failing to produce sufficient revenues to meet growing national expenditure. The costly wars with France and Scotland, beginning in the later thirteenth century and lasting throughout the following century and a half, caused further demands on the Exchequer. In part, the problem arose because, from 1334, the yield for the subsidy from each place was essentially fixed at the 1332 level. A lump sum was required from each vill, to be apportioned locally. In the past, some details of individual taxpayers had been recorded, but this now ceased. In the case of Buckinghamshire, only a few dozen such lists have survived – from 1327 and 1332 – although there are full lists of the totals for every vill from 1332 and 1336.¹ Poll taxes were intended to shift the basis of taxation from property to the individual. The 1377 tax was literally a poll or head tax, levied at a flat rate per capita. By 1379, however, the concept of charging on the basis of an individual's resources had re-emerged, and the local commissioners were

required to consider everyone's 'estate and degree according to his property, lands, rents, possessions, goods and chattels'.² In 1381, the tax was again charged 'each according to his means'.³ In February 1377, the terms of the grant by Parliament were that every layman and woman, married or single, and over fourteen years of age, should pay one groat (4d), except for true and genuine mendicants. The taxes were due to be paid to the Exchequer by 6 April 1377. The commissions of collectors were appointed by writ on 4 March, leaving only one month to assess and collect the money.⁴ In the absence of complete returns, either at national or county level, it is impossible to be certain how many of those liable actually paid their fourpences, and how many successfully evaded this novel impost. It appears that this Poll Tax was judged a success, as a second grant was made by Parliament, probably in May 1379. This time, every male, single or married – but only single women – over sixteen years of age was to be taxed. The tax was to range from fourpence to ten marks (£6 13s 4d), as laid out in a schedule, though again excluding genuine paupers, and was to be paid in to the Exchequer on 24 June and 1 August 1379. Nobody was to be charged in more than one place, a concession mainly to the upper echelons of society with

multiple manors and holdings.⁵ In the case of the two surviving Buckinghamshire returns, only three men paid more than 12d: William Crokes, merchant at Weston, who paid 6s 8d – the maximum laid down for ‘lesser merchants who have profit from the land’ – and John Audlaf and Robert Gorneye of Stoke, franklins, who both paid 40d. Nobody else at Stoke paid more than one groat, but there are several artificers at Weston paying between 6d and 12d. The third Poll Tax was granted by Parliament in December 1380. This time, all men and women over the age of fifteen were required to pay three groats (12d), according to their means. The rich were supposed to help the poor, but no single person or married couple should pay more than sixty groats (20s) or less than 4d. Paupers were exempted and there were no charges for multiple residence. Two-thirds was to be paid in by 21 January 1381, the rest by 2 June.⁶ New rolls of taxpayers were required, and no current member of the Commons could be a collector. Doubts were soon raised about the honesty of the collection, and reassessment commissions were appointed in March 1381. (The clergy were exempt from parliamentary taxes, Convocation granted poll taxes in all three years.) The vexed question of levels of evasion and the way these may have varied over the three levies arises with all medieval taxation. The changing age threshold means that the numbers paying tax in any given vill would have varied, even with 100% collection rates. Also, it is not clear to what extent the flat-rate tax of 1377 was successfully collected from the nominated groups. Equally problematic is the definition of mendicants and paupers at the local level. Single people falling into the relevant age group, but not in receipt of cash wages, would have probably been excluded from the headcount.⁷ Many such individuals worked on family lands and were paid in kind rather than cash.

It should also be noted that during the years in which the Poll Taxes were levied, other more traditional taxes continued to be raised: in 1371 one tenth & fifteenth; 1373 double tenth & fifteenth collected over two years; 1377 as 1373, but collected simultaneously; and 1380 one and a half tenths & fifteenths. The apparently rising level of evasion of the Poll Tax may reflect increased poverty and inability to pay. The omission of married women from the 1379 tax and the increased age threshold meant that every taxpayer should have paid 6½d simply to achieve the same

yield as in 1377. Even allowing for the large number of new tax bands, the retention of the 4d basic tax was clearly an error. In the two surviving Buckinghamshire returns for 1379, only 14% of individuals paid more than 4d, of whom 8% paid 6d (see the discussion of these returns below).

It is difficult to use the Poll Tax returns to assess the total population of late-fourteenth century vills, since evasion and exemption are hard to quantify. Those charged with collecting the tax had at least some knowledge of the localities in which they operated and hence wholesale evasion must have been unlikely without their collusion. More critical is how to estimate the numbers exempted by reason of age, sex, marital status or poverty. Various estimates have been made for those aged below 14, 15, or 16. In the case of the 1377 tax, Russell assumes that one-third were under 14, implying a multiplier of 1.5 to obtain the total population.⁸ Postan, however, assumes a proportion of 45%, requiring a multiplier of 1.8.⁹ Unfortunately, the recurrence of epidemic disease and the consequent distortion of age-profiles from the mid-fourteenth century onwards, precludes the use of “normal” age profiles. Russell assumes an evasion rate of 2.5% (which seems too low), while Postan assumes 25% evasion (which is almost certainly too high, at least for the 1377 Poll Tax). For the purposes of this paper, a low evasion rate of 5% and a high rate of 20% will be used when considering the data for the Chiltern Hundreds, the only survivors for Buckinghamshire.

THE 1377 POLL TAX

As usual in Buckinghamshire, historians of the medieval period must be grateful for the survival of any information and should avoid the temptation to bemoan how much has been lost. At least there is a county total, which shows that 24,672 individuals paid their groats, yielding a total of £411 4s 0d. This may be compared with a county total of £682 15s 8d for the notional yield of one tenth and fifteenth at the rate fixed in 1334.¹⁰ Of course, tenths and fifteenths were collected only from those whose movables were deemed taxable and thus affected far fewer people than was the case with the Poll Tax. Applying the multipliers for evasion/exemption discussed above, we obtain a notional total of between 38,858 and 53,292 for the population of Buckinghamshire in 1377, representing around

1.8% of the total for England. This compares with about 1.8–2.0% of the notional total for Domesday England three centuries earlier.¹¹ This apparent stability is noteworthy – not least because of the rapid and substantial growth in the population between the late-eleventh and early-fourteenth century and the subsequent even more rapid decline. Of course, Buckinghamshire remained an overwhelmingly agriculture county throughout, and any growth or decline taking place in its relatively modest urban sector was probably directly related to the fortunes of farming.

The three Chiltern Hundreds occupy the southeast of the county, between the Thames and the upper reaches of the Chiltern dip-slope, although seldom reaching the escarpment. In medieval times, the area was the most wooded in Buckinghamshire, not only on the chalk and clay of the hills, but also on the gravels of the Thames-side terraces. It included a mixture of open-field and enclosed land, basically in the southeast and northwest respectively. There was a scattering of urban centres: Marlow on the Thames, and High Wycombe and Amersham, located in gaps through the Chilterns leading to the Vale of Aylesbury. Chesham, in a similar location, did not have formal borough status in 1377, but clearly possessed urban attributes, including a market. Other quasi-urban centres, with markets and/or fairs, but still taxed as rural settlements, were Beaconsfield, Burnham, Chalfont St. Peter, Datchet [fair], Denham, Hambleden, Iver, and Stoke Poges. Data for the 1377 Poll Tax are set out below (Table 1).

The Chiltern Hundreds cover about 29% of the county area and, in 1377, contained 22.8% of the taxpayers, compared to about 18.5% of the enumerated population in 1086. This suggests either that the population had grown more rapidly here than elsewhere in Buckinghamshire – possibly under the influence of the developing London market for produce – or that it had been less affected by the impact of epidemic disease after 1348. One sixth of those paying tax in 1377 lived in the three boroughs. Compared to the enumerated population in 1086 (increased by 25 per cent to allow for omissions), factoring up the basic data from the 1377 returns to allow for those exempt and evading the Poll Tax gives the following results (Table 2). (The urban element within these Hundreds in 1086 is unknown, although it is likely that Wycombe and Marlow at least had some marketing functions by then.)

In so far as these data are comparable, it appears that even after three decades of periodic outbreaks of epidemic disease, the population was still 50–110% greater than 1086 in Stoke Hundred, 100–175% in Burnham Hundred and 115–160% in Desborough Hundred, or 50–105% across the whole region. There is still much debate about the level of mortality associated with the Black Death – in both the initial and subsequent outbreaks – and also about the rate of recovery. Taking a range of 30–50% mortality by the 1370s, the pre-plague population of the Chiltern Hundreds would have been between 11,545 to 18,260, that is between 90% and 205% above the 1086 level. A recent study of Stewkley suggests an increase of 100–120%.¹² It is likely that areas like the Chiltern Hundreds – with large reserves of land available for clearance in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries – would have achieved even higher rates of growth than at Stewkley. Even so, the level of adjustments to the Poll Tax base suggested by Postan seem excessive – at least in this area. The density of population varies markedly between those areas essentially within the Chiltern Hills and those in the southeast of the county (figures are persons/square mile). The Domesday densities are based on the recorded figures multiplied by five and increased by 25% to allow for omissions (Table 3).

There had clearly been a sharp increase in population density in Stoke and Desborough Hundreds since 1086, especially when losses caused by plague are taken into account. Burnham appears less affected, although this might reflect a higher level of mortality after 1348. Along with the totals of taxpayers and tax paid in each vill, the 1377 records give the names of local constables and *probi homines* (lit. ‘honest men’, who appear throughout Europe in medieval documents), albeit with some textual omissions (Table 4).

In places where there was a single vill in the parish, the normal pattern seems to have been one constable and two *probi homines*. In Chesham, with its vast area and large number of secondary settlements, there were no fewer than eleven constables and six *probi homines* – of which only Leyhill and Ashley Green are identifiable from the names of its representatives. Where vills were paired for tax purposes, but not otherwise linked – for example Turville/Ibstone and Langley/Wraysbury – there is more than one constable. This also happens where a parish has a detached portion

TABLE 1 Chiltern Hundreds Poll Tax, 1377

<i>Place</i>	<i>Taxed</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Taxed</i>
BURNHAM HUNDRED		DESBOROUGH HUNDRED	
Chenies	73	Fawley	76
Amersham Forum	156	Fingest	41
Amersham Borough	193	Bradenham and Chawley	36
Hitcham	19	Turville and Ibstone	97
Dorney	60	Hambleden	169
Beaconsfield	194	Medmenham	66
Chalfont St. Giles	120	Hughenden	80
Chalfont St. Peters	89	Saunderton St Nicholas	42
Farnham Royal/Seer Green	125	Saunderton St Mary	43
Penn	81	Wooburn	158
Taplow	51	West Wycombe	165
Chesham with members	514	Hedsor	29
Cippenham/East Burnham	144	Little Marlow	142
Burnham with Boveney	206	Marlow Forum	60
TOTAL	2025	Marlow Borough	270
		High Wycombe Forum	150
STOKE HUNDRED		High Wycombe Borough	482
Eton, Wexham, Hedgerley	124	TOTAL	2106
Denham	183		
Fulmer	17	CHILTERN HUNDS. TOTAL	5636
Datchet	138		
Horton	105	BUCKINGHAMSHIRE TOTAL	24672
Upton and Chalvey	140		
Stoke Poges	159		
Langley with Wraysbury	379		
Iver (with soke)	260		
TOTAL	1505		

Notes:

1. Radnage is omitted from Desborough Hundred. It was counted as ancient demesne and taxed at 1/10th when lay subsidies were raised.
2. The cash raised from Burnham indicates a total of 2023 taxpayers, those taxed total 2025, which is the figure used here.

TABLE 2 Estimates of Chiltern Hundreds
Population: 1377 and 1086

<i>Hundred</i>	<i>1377 Low</i>	<i>1377 High</i>	<i>DB</i>
Stoke	2370	3250	1545
Burnham	3190	4375	1590
Desborough	3320	4550	2845
TOTAL	8880	12175	5980

TABLE 3 Population Densities: 1377 and 1086

<i>Hundred</i>	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Low Est.</i>	<i>High Est.</i>	<i>DB</i>
Stoke	33.56	52.84	72.46	34.44
Burnham	23.50	37.02	50.78	34.50
Desborough	25.56	40.29	55.22	18.44

with its own settlement (e.g. Upton/Chalvey and Stoke Poges/Ditton). Marlow and Wycombe boroughs also mention bailiffs, as additional constables/ *probi homines*. In medieval times, Saunderton was divided into two distinct parishes. With the exception of Horton and Iver, all villages managed to deliver their collected four-pences to the authorities by mid-May 1377, the great majority of them in the first two weeks of April. However, Parliament had directed that monies should reach the Exchequer by 6 April, a fortnight after Easter. By this time, most of the money raised in the Chiltern Hundred had only got as far as the local collection centres at Beaconsfield and High Wycombe. The choice of two centres so close together, and relatively distant from most of south-east Buckinghamshire seems odd, but must have had some logic at the time! The late deliveries made at Wooburn, Colnbrook and Horton probably relate to the passage of monies collected elsewhere en route to the Exchequer. We have already seen that the absence of anything remotely resembling a census at any time between 1086 and 1377 makes it impossible to tell how the local populations grew and then declined. However, the ranking of the available data can provide some idea as to how places changed relative to one another (Table 5).

Overall, few places seem to have experienced a fundamental change in their position in the settlement hierarchy. It should be remembered, however, that in 1086, some places were silently included with a parent vill, which was not necessarily adjacent. For example Penn was included with the much smaller Taplow, and Ditton with Stoke Poges. Langley and Wraybury also had a long-standing connection for tax purposes. Equally, large numbers of small settlements were included under Chesham and other parishes. The growth of urban functions and their associated settlements after 1086 meant that four of the five top-ranking places in 1377 were towns. Unfortunately, Beaconsfield is impossible to identify in 1086, but would have ranked eighth in 1377. Thirteen places moved up the table, fifteen moved down and two (Farnham Royal and Fawley) remained the same. The most dramatic changes were at Denham (+17) and Taplow/Penn (+13). Denham had acquired marketing functions and had evidently been highly developed by the abbots of Westminster, who had only obtained the estate in 1065. At Taplow/Penn, the development of the pottery and tile-making indus-

try at the latter had clearly produced a disproportionate growth. Stoke Poges gained nine places, well in excess of its neighbours. Among the more purely agricultural settlements, some small places had either failed to grow proportionately after 1086, or had been hard hit by the crises of the fourteenth century – for example, Horton, Dorney and Eton with its detached members. Large rural parishes which had experienced a decline in their ranking include Hambleden, Hughenden and to a lesser extent Saunderton.

THE 1379 POLL TAX

Even the limited survivals from the 1377 Poll Tax records provide a relatively rich seam compared to those of 1379. Apart from the centrally computed county total of £341 4s 2d, we have list of taxpayers for Weston Turville, and a partial list of those at Stoke Mandeville. This time there is no county total of taxpayers and, compared to 1377, the yield is down £70. The great majority of individuals in the two surviving records still paid 4d in 1379, so that their average of 5½d seems an appropriate divisor, giving 14,889 taxpayers for Buckinghamshire. Although the age threshold for the tax had been raised to sixteen and married women were now exempt, the reduction of almost 9,800 or 40% appears excessive, although it is in line with the figures of 17–18,000 achieved in 1381. It must be presumed that the novelty of a per capita tax had worn off as quickly for fourteenth century taxpayers as it would for their successors in the late-twentieth century. Clearly, however, the apparent equity of charging on the basis of ability to pay failed to yield any significant benefit to the Exchequer. Be that as it may, any substantial list of individuals resident in a Buckinghamshire village in the 1370s provides an invaluable source. Other than this list, only manorial documents give the names of local people, and these are weighted towards the more prosperous end of the peasantry – those who held virgates or half-virgates and were involved in the land market and in the manorial courts. The substrata of lesser tenants and the landless are usually invisible, although many of them would have been exempt from the Poll Tax by virtue of poverty – as are all women apart from those who were single or, presumably, widowed. A total of 115 names is given for Weston Turville and 47 in the incomplete listing of Stoke Mandeville (see

Table 4 Names of Constables & *Probi Homines*

<i>Place</i>	<i>Constable</i>	<i>Probi Homines</i>	<i>Tax Received At</i>
BURNHAM HUNDRED			
Chenies	John Grace	William Spiser John Grene	Beaconsfield 19/4/77
Amersham Forum	Roger N... John atte Hathere	William Clarstret John Portreve	Wycombe 14/4/77
Amersham Borough	Thomas Mulleward Richard Deyere	Richard Kynbelle Roger Garyer	Wycombe 30/3/77
Hitcham	William de Mulsham	John Budewelle	Beaconsfield 17/5/77
Dorney	Richard Noreys	Nicholas Newenham Robert Thomas	Beaconsfield 7/5/77
Beaconsfield	Andrew Smith Robert Brune	William Coker John Sparwe	Beaconsfield 12/4/77
Chalfont St Giles	Thomas Barone Richard Rossel	Nicholas de Duntone John de Duntone	Beaconsfield 12/4/77
Chalfont St. Peter	John Tyler John Whelere	John Raulyn	Beaconsfield 12/4/77
Farnham & Seer	William Shaftesbury William Cryps	Thomas Cryps Henry Hemmesworthe	Beaconsfield 17/4/77
Penn	Walter Colyere Richard Hulmete	Simon Raan	Wycombe 13/4/77
Taplow	William atte Reye	n/a	n/a
Chesham + members	Thomas Crickelade John Blakewelle Richard Layhulle John atte Dene W... Raan Walter Asschelee John Brone Richard Pipard Robert Barone John le Smythe Roger at Layhulle	John Brok William Tokenyle John Impey William Chapman Robert Morynge John atte Leyhulle	Wycombe 13/4/77
Cippenham/E. Burnham	Richard Symond John Crytemain	John Wyte	Beaconsfield 24/5/77
Burnham & Boveney	John Wodeward John Smythe	William Lovel John Lewyn	Wooburn 26/4/77
STOKE HUNDRED			
Eton/Wexham/Hedgerley	John Sprake	Simon Prestwyk John P*delay	Beaconsfield 19/4/77
Denham	William Neel Walter Kyng	William Pottere Robert ??	Colnbrook 29/4/77
Fulmer	William Overe	John Perys John Fraunceys	Wycombe 6/4/77
Datchet	William Aytriche Adam Wedyat	John Claryns John in the Hale	Beaconsfield 14/5/77

Table 4 (cont.)

<i>Place</i>	<i>Constable</i>	<i>Probi Homines</i>	<i>Tax Received At</i>
Horton	Thomas Adam Richard Clerke Richard Sherman	William Osegod John Barbour	Horton 7/6/77
Upton & Chalvey	Walter atte Paldre Thomas Broker	John Knyf William atte Lee	Beaconsfield 19/4/77
Stoke Poges	Thomas atte Noke Richard Isaak	William Lambard Richard Batayl	Beaconsfield 12/4/77
Langley/Wraysbury	William Halyday Walter Heyward John Felley	John Wyot Thomas Wyot	Beaconsfield 7/5/77
Iver	William Saleman John Tobbe	John atte Forde John Pottere	Beaconsfield 7/6/77
DESBOROUGH HUND.			
Fawley	Richard Strete	John Brokman John Boutonsail	Wycombe ?/4/77
Fingest	John Boltere	John Boltere Thomas Stompe	Wycombe 6/4/77
Bradenham/Chawley	John Fastendyche John le Hunte	John Goldfot	Wycombe 13/4/77
Turville/Ibstone	Robert Beal Robert Peres	Thomas Westend John Ern	Wycombe 6/4/77
Hambleden	Robert Spynvyle John Grenelane	John ??	Wycombe 6/4/77
Medmenham	Edmund Houghes	John ?? William Bond??	Wycombe 6/4/77
Hughenden	John Smythe	William Bailly John Baudewyne	Wycombe 6/4/77
Saunderton St. Nicholas	John Frensch	John Broun Roger Broun	Wycombe 6/4/77
Saunderton St. Mary	Roger Shynhold	John Barone John Dayerel	Wycombe 6/4/77
Wooburn	James Fysshere John Cook	John atte Burnerd Benet Kene	Wycombe 6/4/77
West Wycombe	Thomas atte Hoo John Grededone	Ralph de Wydyndone Rich'd de Wydyndone	Wycombe 6/4/77
Hedsor	Robert Carpentere	Gilbert Wodewyk William Shaftesbery	Wycombe 14/5/77
Little Marlow	Roger atte Felde	William Cherteseye	Wycombe 13/4/77
Marlow	William de Toune	???	Wycombe 6/4/77
Marlow Borough	Thomas Prynchard John Smythe Gilbert [de forum]	John Prynchard ¹ John B?? William Douffeld	Wycombe 6/4/77
Wycombe Forum	Richard Poyngnaunt John Snel	Thomas Catour	Wycombe 13/4/77
Wycombe Borough	Thomas Caunville John atte Gotere John Andolf ¹	John Barone dyer John Barone clerk Walter Whelere ¹	Wycombe 13/4/77

Note: 1 bailiff

TABLE 5 Chiltern Hundreds: Rank Order of Villis 1086 & 1377^a

<i>Place</i>	<i>1086</i>	<i>1377</i>	<i>Change</i>
Marlow B+F	1	3	-2
Hambleden	2	9	-7
Chesham with members	3	2	+1
High Wycombe B+F	4	1	+3
Langley with Wraysbury	5	4	+1
West Wycombe	6	10	-4
Amersham B+F	7	5	+2
Iver (with soke)	8	6	+2
Burnham with Boveney	9	7	+2
Wooburn	10	12	-2
Upton and Chalvey	11	15	-4
Datchet [& Fulmer]	12	13	-1
Eton, Wexham, Hedgerley	12	18	-6
Horton	12	20	-8
Chalfont St. Giles	15	19	-4
Dorney	15	26	-11
Cippenham/East Burnham	17	14	+3
Farnham Royal/Seer Grn	17	17	0
Hughenden	17	23	-6
Chalfont St. Peter	20	22	-2
Saunderton St Mary	20	27	-7
Stoke Poges	20	11	+9
Turville and Ibstone	20	21	-1
Fawley	24	24	0
Denham	25	8	+17
Saunderton St Nicholas	25	28	-3
Medmenham	27	25	+2
Hitcham	28	30	-2
Taplow [& Penn]	29	16	+13
Bradenham and Chawley	30	29	-1

^a excludes places not identifiable in 1086.

Appendices 1 and 2). A list of those paying tax for the 1327 Lay Subsidy at Weston, Bedgrove and the Lee includes only thirty-seven names, about a third as many as the Poll Tax list for a much larger population.¹³

WESTON TURVILLE

Of the 115 individuals named in 1379, eighty-four (73%) paid the basic four-pence, twenty (17%) paid the basic sixpence rate for artificers, ten (9%) paid twelve pence or three groats, and one, the merchant William Crokes stood out far above his co-residents, paying 6s 8d (20 groats). The majority of the non-agricultural workers are merely

noted as *art'*, but the specific trade is sometimes indicated: John Hare was a fuller, John Brid and John Sandewelle were butchers, Thomas Phylip a tailor, Richard Souter (shoemaker), Richard Adekyn and Henry Packer were all shoemakers, Robert Kyppyng a tanner, Matthew atte Doune a shearman, John Brennewater a smith, and William Fyscher a fisherman. It is unclear why William Coupere, the first name on the list, paid 12d, as no occupation is given, although he may have followed the eponymous trade as a barrel-maker. Interestingly, while some occupational surnames remained in the family, as it were, others had ceased to do so. Neither Henry nor Thomas Smythe were smiths, and John Tanner apparently no longer

followed that trade. This fixing of surnames was a feature of the fourteenth century. At Weston in 1379, there are no examples of the X son of Y type of name and while a few *atte* (at the) names survive in that form, all refer to purely local features (well/spring, street, moor, hall and hill). There are three obvious place-name surnames of a non-local variety: Leicester, Deeping (Lincs.) and Banbury, although others may be concealed by obscure spellings. The non-agricultural section of the population is summarised below:

TABLE 6 Non-agricultural section, Weston 1379.

Artificer	18	Shoemaker	3
Butcher	2	Smith	1
Fisherman	1	Servant	16
Fuller	1	Tailor	1
Merchant	1	Tanner	1
Shearman	1		

With the exception of the merchant, tailor and shoemakers, and some but not all of the servants, all of these trades are directly related to agriculture. William Crokes may have been a wool merchant or otherwise involved with agriculture. In 1379, therefore, the population of Weston was overwhelmingly dependant on working the land or processing its products, with a small number of service providers. Sixteen individuals (14% of the total) are described as servants; only two are identified with surnames and the others merely with the name of their

masters. However, appearances can be deceptive; the basic-rate taxpayer Henry Smythe had no fewer than three named servants, while William Crokes, the wealthy merchant, had only two. Sixteen females appear in the list (14%), representing single women (and possibly widows), six of them servants. All paid only the basic four-pence tax.

Among the one hundred individuals listed with their surnames, no fewer than eighty-five different names appear. It is impossible to know how many other family names occurred among those who either evaded or were exempt from the tax. There are three each of Henores (one artificer, one servant), Packers (one shoemaker), and Scriveyns, along with two instances of the following names: Gerveys (both artificers), Hare (one fuller), Phelip/Phylip (one artificer, one tailor), plus Skynner, Smythe, Tayllour and Webbe, none of whom followed their eponymous trades. In most cases of multiple names, it seems likely that father-and-son or sibling groups are present. Of those surnames whose origins can be securely identified, twenty-two relate to occupations, and nineteen to places or local topographical features. If we assume that servants named with reference to their masters are single people living in the household, and take a low estimate of 10% and a high estimate of 20% for exempt or evading families, the number of families in Weston in 1379 would be between 90 and 100. An average size of four per household would give a total population of 360–400. This compares with: 240 communicants in 1603,¹⁴ 288

TABLE 7 Christian names at Weston 1379

<i>Name</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%M</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%F</i>
John	42	42.9	Johanna	5	31.2
William	14	14.3	Agnes/Agnetta	3	18.8
Richard	11	11.2	Margaret/Margot	3	18.8
Thomas	10	10.2	Alice/Alicia	2	12.5
Robert	6	6.1	Isabel[la]	2	12.5
Henry	4	4.1	Beatrice	1	6.2
Matthew	3	3.1			
Reginald	2	2.0			
Walter	2	2.0			
Alexander	1	1.0			
Michael	1	1.0			
Roger	1	1.0			
Simon	1	1.0			

communicants and dissenters in the Compton Census of 1676,¹⁵ and 647 in the 1801 Census (including The Lee). It also suggests that the population of Weston at its Medieval peak at the beginning of the fourteenth century – that is before the reduction caused by famine and disease – must

have been well in excess of 500. In 1379, the surnames of Weston may have been many and varied, but the stock of Christian names was very limited. Apart from Thomas Smythe's anonymous servant, the remaining in 114 names were divided between 13 male and six female names (Table 7).

TABLE 8 Taxpayers at Weston Turville, Bedgrove & Lee 1327

<i>Name</i>	<i>Total Sh.</i>	<i>Tax Sh.</i>	<i>Animals No.</i>	<i>Crops Qtr.</i>	<i>Hay &c Pence</i>	<i>Vessel Pence</i>
Butiller, William le	243.33	12.17	69	18	132	
Hardeshull, Philip de	160.83	8.08	21	35	120	
Strete, Ralph atte	115.00	5.75	5	25	60	
Wychcot, Geoffrey atte	66.67	4.33	11	9	32	20 [brass]
Peygnaunt, Gilbert	60.42	3.04	19	8	37	
Carpenter, Richard le	48.33	2.42	16	3	8	
Hanekyn, Geoffrey	46.67	2.25	5	4	20	12 [2wd]
Alein, Robert s Richd clerk	37.50	1.87	3	6	12	12 [wd]
Hering, Richard	36.67	1.83	4	4	18	18 [brass]
Caldecote, Alice de	31.67	1.57	3	6	12	
Ernald, John	30.00	1.50	2	4	12	24 [uten]
Lane, William atte	28.33	1.42	2	4	32	
Fulkes, Christina	27.50	1.37	3	4.5	12	
Daubeney, Ralph	26.67	1.33	2	6	24	
Walder, John	26.67	1.33	3	4		
Brok, William atte	25.00	1.33	3	2		
Lotegersal, William de	25.00	1.25	2	4	12	
Noby, Hugh	25.00	1.25	2	5	16	
Walder, Matilda	23.67	1.33	3	2.5	12	12 [wd]
Grot, Geoffrey	21.67	1.08	2	4	12	
Janekyn, Robert	21.25	1.08	2	3.5	12	
Hankyn, William	20.83	1.04	2	3	8	8
Gyve, John	20.83	1.04	2	2	10	
Reveson, John s Walter le	20.00	0.83	2	1.5	12	
Jonesone, Simon	19.17	0.96	8	1		6 [wd]
Frensch, Geoffrey le	18.33	0.92	2	2		
X, John or Juliana	16.67	0.83	2	2		
Geoffrey, John son of	16.67	0.83	2	2	12	
Seyhot, Stephen	15.00	0.75	2	3		
Frensch, William le	14.17	0.71	1	1		14 [brass]
Bate, Hugh	13.33	0.67	2	2		16 [wd]
Colderel, Hugh	13.33	0.67	1	2.5		8 [wd]
Havel, William le	12.08	0.60	2	2.5		7 [wd]
Halton, Gilbert de	11.67	0.57	1	2.5	8	
Pryk, Richard le	11.67	0.57	1	2		4 [wd]
Alein, Robert s Ralph	10.83	0.54	2	2		4 [wd]
Bouyndon, Robert de	10.83	0.54	3	0.5		4 [wd]
						12 [wd]
Total 37	1373.26	69.65	217	193	645	181

This distribution is similar to that noted elsewhere in 13–14th century Buckinghamshire.¹⁶ The very strong preference for John probably owes more to saints of that name than to England's least-favourite medieval monarch. The complete absence of Edward is not unusual, though slightly difficult to explain after a century of King Edwards; perhaps it was considered improper for the peasantry to use such a grand name for their sons. Less explicable is the unpopularity of Matthew, Michael and Henry. Two-thirds of men at Weston in the late-1370s answered to John, William or Richard, and about the same proportion of women who paid tax to Joanna, Agnes or Margaret.

The chance survival of a list of taxpayers for 1327 allows examination of the persistence of families at Weston Turville until the time of the Poll Tax of 1379 – a process further assisted by a series of land transactions in the Lowndes papers at the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies.¹⁷ The 1327 Lay Subsidy was one of a series from that period, in this case for one-twentieth of movables, including crops and livestock. Then, there were only thirty-seven taxpayers, out of a population likely to have exceeded five hundred. The 1327 taxpayers must represent the upper echelons of the community, those holding one or more virgates. (In a separate paper, it is intended to make a fuller study of all the surviving Buckinghamshire Subsidy returns from 1327 and 1332, but, in view of their interest in connection with the Poll Tax record, summary details of the Weston Turville return are set out in Table 8.

The two largest taxpayers are manorial lords, William le Butler at Weston itself, and Philip de Hardeshull at Beachampton, not necessarily resident locally.¹⁸ They stand out clearly from the mass of the peasantry in that their livestock and crop

holdings represent around 40% of the total recorded. The majority of those taxed possess only one-three animals, most of them associated with ploughing. Simon Jonson stands out by owning four sheep and two lambs, possibly by virtue of being a manorial shepherd. There is a wide range of crops held, with most tenants having between two and five quarters of grains and pulses, almost 90% of which are wheat or dredge (a mixture of oats and barley), indicating that these were the principal winter- and spring-sown crops, respectively. Apart from the three highest taxpayers, most have only small amounts of hay and other fodder for their livestock. If they have any domestic equipment worth taxing it is the form of wooden – rather than metal – vessels. If the 1327 list is compared with the 1379 Poll Tax (Appendix 1), only two family names occur in both years. This rate of wastage seems exceptional, even allowing for the steep decline in population in the intervening years. The surviving names are those of Bate and atte Strete. In 1327, Hugh Bate is one of a group of small tenants who had to pay the subsidy, while, fifty years later, John Bate is an artificer paying 6d. In contrast, in 1327, Ralph atte Strete was the third wealthiest taxpayer, largely because of his substantial holding of crops. His successors in 1379 were John atte Strete senior and minor, the former also an artificer paying 12d. As a rule of thumb based on tax returns from other villis in the 1330s, it appears that those worth between about twenty and thirty shillings were virgate holders, those between ten (the threshold for tax) and twenty shillings held half- or quarter-virgates, and those between about thirty and sixty shillings two virgates or more. On this basis, there would have been thirteen half-virgaters, fifteen virgate holders and eight more

TABLE 9 Family Names in Weston Turville c1300–c1400

<i>Name</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Period</i>
Aleyn	1299–1364	Ernald	1319–1330
Bate	1327–1407	Halton	1315–1327
Bertain	1315–1330	Hurne	1338–1374
Bovingdon	1319–1327	Isabele	1316–1397
Bray	1299–1379	Peygnaunt	1316–1358
Butler	1327–1374	atte Strete	1327–1379
Caldecote	1327–1349	Walder	1315–1327
Daubeney	1327–1330		

TABLE 10 Christian names at Stoke Mandeville 1379

<i>Name</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%M</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%F</i>
John	16	44.4	Alicia	5	45.4
William	8	22.2	Agnes	1	9.1
Richard	3	8.3	Emma	1	9.1
Henry	2	5.5	Johanna	1	9.1
Thomas	2	5.5	Magota	1	9.1
Andrew	1	2.8	Margaret	1	9.1
Geoffrey	1	2.8	Matilda	1	9.1
Ralph	1	2.8			
Robert	1	2.8			
Roger	1	2.8			

substantial tenants. A series of manorial records in the Lowndes collection provides details of the names of Weston Turville people between the late-thirteenth and late-fourteenth centuries, helping to fill the gaps between the taxation returns.¹⁹ Once again, these show a low level of continuity, indicating the impact of mortality and, in some cases, the failure of the male line. It is also possible that the relative fluidity of family names, characteristic of the early medieval period, continued to produce inter-generation changes before finally settling down. The names in Table 9 are the only ones with high levels of continuity, although they amount to only fifteen out of a total of some 153 separate family names in the various sources, a persistence rate of only 10%.

Clearly high levels of mortality from the 1310s to the 1370s and beyond removed a considerable proportion of family names, as well as a substantial percentage of the population of Weston Turville. Factors apparently not related to epidemic disease include failure of the male line. Thus, Edward Botiller, who held half of the manor of Weston Butlers, died in 1376 without direct heirs and his estate was divided between his four sisters or their heirs.

STOKE MANDEVILLE

Unfortunately, the 1379 Poll Tax listing for Stoke is deficient, thus precluding even the highly speculative remarks about the total population of Weston Turville. A total of forty-seven names is given (see Appendix 2). Eleven are women (23%, cf. 14% at Weston). Only two individuals paid more than the

basic four-pence tax. John Audlaf and Robert Gorneye (Gurney) each paid 3s 4d (ten groats) and are described as franklins. This title, used by Chaucer for one of his near-contemporary Canterbury Tales, meant 'substantial landholder, free but not noble'. Neither Audlaf nor Gorneye was a manorial lord of the various manors and sub-manors in late-fourteenth century Stoke Mandeville. The only servant mentioned is Margaret, who worked for Robert Gurney. The forty-seven taxpayers share thirty surnames, an average of 1.6 occurrences (cf. 1.3 at Weston). Nine of the names are of topographical origin, some of them very local (like Broughton and Halling), and seven are occupations: carter, collier (charcoal burner), monk, palmer, reeve, smith and thresher. Even more than Weston, Stoke was a purely agricultural settlement in 1379, no doubt providing the adjacent town of Aylesbury with grain and livestock as it had for centuries. The very limited overlap in surnames between Weston and Stoke is noteworthy.

As at Weston Turville, there is a limited range of personal names. John, William and Richard account for three-quarters of the men, and Alice for nearly half of the women (Table 10).

CONCLUSION

Although the Poll Tax returns for Buckinghamshire are disappointingly few, they do shed some light on parts of the county in the period after the Black Death. In the Chiltern Hundreds in 1377, and at Weston and possibly Stoke in 1379, the populations appear greater than might be expected after several decades of high mortality. So far as can be judged,

numbers were still significantly higher than in 1086, even if the various crises since 1315 had resulted in a decline from the high-medieval peak. The subsistence crises that occurred from the thirteenth century – when numbers had pressed ever harder against finite agricultural resources – were well past by the 1370s. Many of those who remained were able to take on vacant holdings and exploit the possibility of moving from subsistence arable farming to more market-orientated activities. Of course, much more research – for example into manorial records – will be needed before it will be possible to present a more rounded picture of village life in Weston Turville and Stoke Mandeville but the Poll Tax lists provide a useful starting point.

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APPENDIX 1

POLL TAX PAYERS AT WESTON TURVILLE, BEDGROVE & THE LEE 1379

<i>Name</i>	<i>Tax</i>	<i>Trade</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Tax</i>	<i>Trade</i>
Abraham, John	6	art	Melle, Agn' atte	4	
Adekyn, Richard	12	shoemkr	More, William atte	4	
Albon, Robert	4		Nethercote, Richard	4	
Aschbrenner, Richard	4		Northgate, John	4	
Bakere, Agn'	4		Packere, Henry	12	shoemkr
Bakere, Richard	4		Packere, John	4	
Bannebury, Johanna	4		Packere, John	4	
Barbour, John	4		Perys, John	4	
Bate, John	6	art	Phelip, John	6	art
Bauchon, William	6	art	Phylip, Thomas	12	tailor
Baudethe, John	4		Polidod, Robert	4	
Bosse, John	4		Porchas, John	12	artific
Bradeweys, Agn'	4		Queyne, Thomas	4	
Braspot, John	4		Rakelot, John	4	
Bray, John	6	art	Reynere, John	4	
Brennewater, John	12	smith	Sandewelle, John	6	butcher

Brid, John	6	butcher	Scriveyn, Henry	4	
Brugge, Is'	4		Scriveyn, John	4	
Cademan, John	12	art	Scriveyn, John	4	
Campione, Thomas	4		Skynnere, John	4	
Chamber, John	4		Skynnere, Roger	4	
Clay, William svt to W Croke	4		Smythe, Henry	4	
Clerc, John	4		Smythe, Thomas	4	
Cok, Alice	4		Soutere, Richard	6	shoemkr
Coleman, Alexander	4		Sperling, John	4	
Cosyn, William	4		Springe, John	4	
Coupere, William	12		Strete, John atte minor	4	
Cristemasse, William	4		Strete, John atte senior	12	art
Crokes, William	80	mcht	Tannere, John	4	
Cudole, Thomas	6	art	Tayllour, John	4	
Dene, Richard atte	6	art	Tayllour, William	4	
Depinge, Johanna	4		Tyllere, William	4	
Doone, Matthew atte	6	shearman	Verdone, John	4	
Fenel, Robert	4		Vicory, Richard	4	
Fyschere, William	6	fisherman	Webbe, John	4	
Gerveys, Robert	6	art	Webbe, John	4	
Gerveys, William	6	art	Welle, John atte	4	
Glovere, Henry	4		Wellere, Robert	4	
Godefelawe, Richard	6	art	Wenge, Michael	4	
Grenewod, John	4		Whelere, William	4	
Hace, Thomas	4		Wodecok, Thomas	4	
Halle, William atte	6	art	Wyppyng, Walter	4	
Hare, Johanna dau John	4				
Hare, John	6	fuller	Alicia [Richard Adekyn]	4	svt
Hay, Johanna	4		Is' [John Northgate]	4	svt
Henore, John	12	art	Richard [John Brud]	4	svt
Henore, Simon	4		John [John Packere]	4	svt
Henore, Thomas	4	svt	Walter [Henry Smythe]	4	svt
Hod, John	4		Marg' [Henry Smythe]	4	svt
Holwod, John	4		John [Henry Smythe]	4	svt
Horn, John	4		William [John Reyner]	4	svt
Hunte, Thomas	6	art	Matthew [Thos Hunte]	4	svt
Knyght, Richard	6	art	Marg' [Henry Packere]	4	svt
Kypping, Robert	12	tanner	Thomas [Rbt Kypping]	4	svt
Leycestre, Matthew	4		Marg' [Robert Gerveys]	4	svt
Lok, Richard	4		X [Thomas Smythe]	4	svt
Lokemyl, Reginald	6	art	Beatrice [Wm Croke]	4	svt
Lynche, Johanna	4				
Masone, Reginald	4				

APPENDIX 2

POLL TAX PAYERS AT STOKE MANDEVILLE 1379

<i>Name</i>	<i>Tax</i>	<i>Trade</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Tax</i>	<i>Trade</i>
Adam, Henry	4		Northcote, Alicia	4	
Audlaf, Alicia	4		Northcote, John	4	
Audlaf, John	40	franklin	Palmere, Johanna	4	
Brogton, Thomas	4		Palmere, John	4	
Brogton, William	4		Rauenyng, John	4	
Cartere, Magota	4		Reuenyng, Geoffrey	4	
Colyere, John	4		Reuenyng, William	4	
Daye, John	4		Reuenyng, William	4	
Gorneye. Robert	40	franklin	Reve, Agnes	4	
Halle, Emma of	4		Reve, John minor	4	
Hallyng, Alicia	4		Reve, John senior	4	
Hallyng, John	4		Rose, Richard	4	
Hallyng, Matilda	4		Smythe, John	4	
Holond, William	4		Smythe, John	4	
Hore, Thomas	4		Smythe, William	4	
Ivere, William de	4		Stoke, Richard	4	
Jordan, Alicia	4		Temple, John	4	
Jordan, John	4		Thresscher, Ralph	4	
Jordan, John minor	4		Walreuen, William	4	
Kylle, John	4		Wermenhal, John	4	
Lane, Roger atte	4		Whiteued, Alicia	4	
Monke, William	4		Wolf, Andrew	4	
Nauger, Henry	4		Margaret [R Gorney]	4	svt
Nauger, Richard	4				