

Markets and Trade

The Whittlewood Project is not only seeking to answer the central questions of settlement origins and development which Richard has just addressed in his talk. It also aims to understand the wider economic and social context of the study area. For this reason, I have started to examine the pattern of markets and trade in the Whittlewood region. I am going to focus on three themes today: first, market hinterlands, with particular reference to Brackley and Buckingham; secondly, evidence for unlicensed markets and so-called hidden trade within the project area; and thirdly, evidence for long-distance trade involving the inhabitants of our Whittlewood parishes. Some of this evidence is relatively late; for example, the hinterlands of Brackley and Buckingham were reconstructed using sixteenth-century records. However, the period with which we are most concerned is the three centuries between 1100 and 1400, for most of which England experienced an expansion in the number and size of markets and towns and a quickening of the economy. This is the same period for which we have evidence of growth in the number and size of settlements in the project area.

The study area includes within its boundaries no medieval towns and no markets formally licensed by the king. On the other hand, our parishes are close to four small towns which flourished in the Middle Ages – Brackley, Buckingham, Stony Stratford and Towcester – the economic hinterlands of which almost certainly overlapped in the project area and included all of our villages within their spheres of influence. The first map shows each town surrounded by a theoretical hinterland with a radius of 6.66 miles (10.7km), the distance which thirteenth-century lawyers regarded as the maximum for a day's journey to market. It is noticeable that the limits of these hinterlands lie close to the neighbouring towns, very close in the case of Buckingham and Brackley, and Buckingham and Stony Stratford, suggesting that the figure of 6.66 miles as the maximum for a day's journey to market reflected real trading patterns in the Middle Ages and encouraged the development of towns close to but not within the hinterlands of neighbouring towns, although as we shall see in a moment this simple pattern may be somewhat misleading. But for most of the inhabitants of the project area, two or even three of these nearby towns lay within a day's journey, with Buckingham, Stony Stratford and Towcester being the most likely destinations. Markets were usually held weekly, and in some districts there appear to have been cycles of markets which traders and consumers could attend on successive days of the week. In the project area, the towns furthest from each other, Brackley and Stony Stratford, both held their market on a Sunday, until Brackley changed its market day to Wednesday in 1218. The market at Towcester was held on a Tuesday, that at Buckingham also on a Tuesday. It may be, therefore, that a cycle of markets existed in the Whittlewood area, with traders visiting Stony Stratford on a Sunday, Buckingham or Towcester on a Tuesday, and Brackley on a Wednesday. This simple pattern, however, becomes much more complex if village markets and more distant towns are added to the picture.

The second map shows both prescriptive markets and those licensed by the king in the Middle Ages, as recorded in the new gazetteer of markets published last year by the List and Index Society. At once we can see that our simple pattern of theoretical hinterlands shown on the first map has broken down. Brackley, for example, lies within 6.66 miles of the Domesday market of Kings Sutton, while Stony Stratford is also just over 5 miles from Newport Pagnell, the site of an Anglo-Saxon mint and Domesday borough. The growth of both Brackley and Stony Stratford, however, can be explained by their location on important roads. Brackley no doubt benefited from the passing trade of those travelling between Oxford and Northampton along what is now the A43, while Stony Stratford lay on the equally important route of Watling Street. Note that Stony Stratford's nearest neighbours on Watling Street, Fenny Stratford and Towcester, both lay just beyond the 6.66 mile limit. There may not have been much competition, therefore, between Stony Stratford and Newport Pagnell and between Brackley and Kings Sutton. They were exploiting different markets and different patterns of trade. Apart from Kings Sutton and Newport Pagnell, a further 11 markets were licensed by the king within the theoretical hinterlands of the four towns in the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Some of these were quite substantial places, such as Aynho and Winslow. Others were merely village markets, some of them very late

creations, such as Great Horwood in 1447 and Grafton Regis in 1465. Little evidence relating to the activities of village markets tends to survive in the historical record, partly because so few prospered, and indeed it seems unlikely that many of these markets flourished, especially in the difficult economic conditions of the fifteenth century. Some may never even have been held. The grant of a market charter was a useful piece of patronage for late medieval kings but it was no guarantee that the lord to whom it was granted would be successful in attracting traders to his manor. Evidently the lords of our Whittlewood manors either did not seek the grant of such a charter or failed to secure one. It is possible, however, that some of these markets did provide an additional trading venue for the inhabitants of Whittlewood Forest. In 1383-4, for example, 1500 slates were bought at Charlton for roofing the lord's chamber at Passenham. But the evidence is fragmentary; in this instance, a chance reference in a manorial account roll, and we have no real way of assessing the importance of these village markets to the lives of our medieval villagers.

We can say more about the significance of some of the towns. One way of defining a town's hinterland is to examine borough court records for the place of residence of people involved in pleas of debt, detention of chattels, broken contract and trespass. This has been done for Brackley and Buckingham in the sixteenth century, the earliest surviving series of borough court records for the Whittlewood area. The third map shows the residences of plaintiffs and defendants in Brackley's borough court between 1557 and 1571, first, within a 10km radius (roughly the 6.66 miles of the earlier map) and, secondly, up to 20km from the town. The thickness of the lines represents the number of different cases involving people from the various towns and villages, the thicker the line the greater the number of cases. The pattern is one we would expect. Most villages in the immediate vicinity of Brackley are represented, the inhabitants of which would naturally be drawn to Brackley to engage in trade. The more distant places tend either to be neighbouring towns, such as Banbury and Buckingham, or villages with good communications, such as Silverstone which lies on the Oxford to Northampton road, which passes through Brackley on its way to Towcester. As the most distant of the towns from the project area, it is no surprise that Brackley's influence extends no further than Lamport and Silverstone, and although Brackley was a much more important market centre in the thirteenth century than the sixteenth, when its fortunes had long been on the wane, the few pieces of evidence surviving from the earlier period do not suggest that the town had a much wider hinterland in the years around 1300. For example, the evidence of locative surnames in the 1301 lay subsidy for Northamptonshire reveals an Adam de Brackley in Silverstone but no one else with that name appears in the Northamptonshire parishes of the project area. Likewise, the returns for Brackley suggest immigration from within the 10km hinterland shown on the map: from Radstone in the north, Whitfield, Cottisford in the south, Croughton, Aynho, Steane near Hinton in the west (which was deserted by the sixteenth century), Culworth (just beyond the 10km limit) and Sulgrave. Our mid-sixteenth-century market hinterland may thus be a reasonable reflection of Brackley's sphere of influence some 250 years before.

The comparable map for Buckingham, for the years 1538 to 1559, shows a very similar pattern. Even more places than for Brackley within a 10km radius (the outer circle) are represented in the town's court records, together with (again) a rather larger sample of places than was shown for Brackley up to 20km away. Buckingham appears to have been a more prosperous and busier town than Brackley in the sixteenth century and may also have attracted traders and visitors from a wider area due to its position as the county town. With the exception of Leckhampstead, all the villages in the southern half of the project area were represented in Buckingham's borough court. The town's economic hinterland may also be revealed in a document recording the spreading of a rumour about the destruction of Catholic images and objects in 1537. Having traced the rumour to a Buckingham bakehouse, the baker's servant gave the following description of the rumour's spread: 'the said deponent sayeth that he daily carryeth bread from Buckingham to Padbury and three towns more adjoining to Buckingham, and so from town to town to the number of thirteen towns of any side of Buckingham. And now of late ... many persons of the inhabitants of the said towns where he carried bread demanded of him at sundry comings whether Buckingham church was put down or not'. We seem here to have a description of the trading hinterland of a Tudor baker. Although, with the exception of Padbury, these 13 towns (or villages as we would call

them) remain unnamed, we can on the basis of this map make a fair assumption about where they might be. The inner circle on the map, with a radius of 5km (or about 3 miles), encompasses a total of 12 of the settlements named in the court book to which should probably be added Radclive to the west of Buckingham. Assuming the baker to have delivered to villages all round the town rather than focusing on the region to the south around Padbury (which may not be a fair assumption at all despite the report that his servant travelled to 13 towns 'of any side of Buckingham'), it seems that we should be thinking in terms of quite a small hinterland for daily or regular contact with the market. For those outside the 5km radius contact with the town may have been only weekly or even more occasional which perhaps encouraged a greater degree of trade outside the market place, about which I will say more in a moment.

To quickly mention our other towns, it has not proved possible to draw similar maps for Stony Stratford and Towcester due to the lack of court records of a comparable date. Our understanding of their hinterlands, therefore, is much less clear. It is no surprise to find the reeve of Passenham purchasing a pair of cart wheels at Stony Stratford in 1383-4. Despite its proximity, however, the town was not the only source of goods for the manor. I have already mentioned the purchase of slates at Charlton, and in the same year laths were bought at Buckingham, about 10km away. The 1301 lay subsidy does not record anyone with the surname de Stratford or de Towcester in the Northamptonshire parishes of the project area. Nor do the returns for Towcester indicate migration from the Whittlewood area. The locative surnames of people resident in the town instead suggest that Towcester faced north-westwards rather than to the south, although this is likely to be only a very partial view of the town's market hinterland.

I want now to move on and say something about unlicensed markets and hidden trade within the study area. The most remarkable example of an unlicensed market in the Whittlewood area which grew into a place of considerable size is Old Stratford, which lay at the crossroads of Watling Street and the Buckingham to Northampton road less than a mile to the north-west of Stony Stratford. The outline of the project area on the maps shows the modern civil parish of Old Stratford lying to the east of Deanshanger and to the south of Potterspury. But this is an invention of the mid-twentieth century. Since Watling Street here formed the boundary between the ancient parishes of Passenham on the south and Cosgrove on the north, Old Stratford lay partly in one parish and partly in another. The Whittlewood Forest map of c.1608 shows a total of 10 houses on either side of the road, of which several no doubt represent the inns which we know existed there in the seventeenth century. At least four inns can be identified in seventeenth-century sources. The development of Old Stratford on Watling Street straddling a parish boundary mirrors the development of its neighbour Stony Stratford which originally was divided between the manors of Calverton and Wolverton, the only difference being that Stony Stratford was granted recognition as a market and a borough by the king in the Middle Ages. Very little can be said about Old Stratford in the medieval period, or rather For Stratford or West Stratford as it was then known, but it seems likely that some form of trading activity took place there to cater for the needs of the medieval travellers who found themselves at this crossroads. A hermitage established close to the crossroads in the fourteenth century or before was probably sited to attract alms from passing traffic.

A somewhat different example of a possible early medieval market within the study area is Lamport in Stowe parish. The place-name means 'long market-place', presumably in the sense of a market-place consisting of a row of booths on both sides of a main road. Although seemingly remote today, surrounded by the parkland of the estate at Stowe, Lamport was on the route of a significant north-south road called *Kingestrete* in the Middle Ages, which was described as a *via regia* in a document of the early thirteenth century and ran from the vill of Lamport to another of the king's highways called Buggilderode. Lamport was also the traditional meeting-place for the hundred of Stodfold, in which all the Buckinghamshire parishes of the project area lie. It may thus have been an appropriate venue for trading activity. Its disappearance as a market centre is probably to be related to the growth of Buckingham as an important town in the tenth century, so that by the time of the Domesday survey Lamport appears to have been a purely rural settlement with a mixture of arable land and wood pasture. Parallel cases have been noted elsewhere in the

country and we are hopeful that Eleanor's research will shed more light on this interesting and significant place-name.

As far as the later Middle Ages are concerned, it is likely that a good deal of trade took place outside licensed markets and towns, at the farm gate or unofficial market venues such as a churchyard or other open space. There are a number of references to purchases being made in the project area, at places with no official market. For example, in 1380-1 the reeve of Passenham bought two oxen at one of the Lillingstones, either Dayrell or Lovell, from one John Howesson. Two other oxen were purchased from a John Butcher of Newenton, possibly Newton Longville in Buckinghamshire, a little over 6 miles to the south of Passenham. Closer still, a cart was hired from the reeve of Whaddon for transporting oaks from the wood of Shrob in Whittlewood to repair the bridge at Passenham. The residents of nearby villages likewise travelled to Passenham in order to make purchases; for instance, hay was sold to an inhabitant of Beachampton in 1379-80, and other parcels of hay were sold in 1380-1 to residents of Potterspury and Wicken. Much produce, therefore, never made it to the market place but was sold at the farm gate. The discovery of a pottery kiln at Silverstone producing a fabric found only in the village also suggests that some trade bypassed official markets and towns. The potter may have delivered his wares directly to the customer, of whom the king at his hunting lodge may have been the most important. Alternatively, there may have been an unofficial market place at Silverstone, perhaps where the roads converge and widen close to the church, as can be seen on the forest map of c.1608. At Akeley too the road plan seems to hint at the presence of an unofficial market place. The Square, as it is called, outside the Bull and Butcher, appears to be older than Church Hill which joins the A413 to the Leckhampstead road. Located opposite the church, at the side of the Buckingham to Towcester road, it is possible that The Square was originally closed at its southern end and functioned as a kind of market place where locals could sell food and drink and possibly other goods to passing customers. Certainly there were appropriate craftsmen resident in Akeley in the Middle Ages, such as John Perkins the shoemaker. Again, we hope that English Heritage's survey of vernacular buildings in the project area may shed light on the original appearance of Akeley's square. The final point I want to make about the hidden trade of Whittlewood is that it may also have included the ill-gotten gains of those who engaged in poaching and the theft of timber and wood in the forest. For example, a deer killed in Wicken wood in 1250 was taken first to a house in Wicken and then on to the house of Hamo Hasting in Wolverton, a local landowner and donor to Luffield Priory, to whom the deer may have been sold.

My final theme this morning concerns long-distance trade. The inhabitants of Whittlewood established links with a number of towns and cities and other centres of production a great deal further than the 6.66 miles of a day's journey to market. Work carried out on the hinterland of London, for example, reveals that people from our region traded in the capital, although these tended to be the inhabitants of the surrounding towns, such as Stony Stratford and Towcester, rather than the rural villages. For example, a chapman of Stony Stratford owed £6 to a London mercer in 1424. It was more common for the residents of our parishes to trade with towns in the Midlands. Thus, a resident of Lillingstone Lovell was in debt to a draper from Northampton in 1403, while an inhabitant of Deanshanger owed £2 to the prior of the Augustinian friars of Northampton in 1384. An analysis of the locative surnames of townspeople and food-sellers resident in Northampton in the years around 1300, based on a detailed rental and an account of purveyance, reveals immigration to the town from a wide region, indeed a wider region than is depicted on the map. However, despite the evidence of the debt cases involving inhabitants of the study area, only Silverstone is represented among the surnames found in these documents. This is not necessarily indicative of a lack of contact between Whittlewood and Northampton, only that the town was apparently less successful at attracting immigrants from the Whittlewood and indeed the Salcey region to the south-east of the town than it was from areas to the north-east and west outside the 10km limit shown here. Perhaps the opportunities and resources available in these woodland areas discouraged migration to an urban environment.

Contacts between Whittlewood and other towns in the Midlands can be identified from a variety of documents. The 1301 lay subsidy, for example, records a taxpayer in Potterspury called Geoffrey de Daventry. The reeve of Passenham purchased a cart-horse at Banbury in 1380-1, while the Holy Trinity Guild of Coventry included among its members Thomas de Passenham and his wife. Towns such as Northampton, Oxford and Dunstable received timber from Whittlewood Forest, as a result of grants to religious houses by the king in the thirteenth century. It may well be that the lords of private woods who were given permission to sell timber also looked to the demand from towns to make a profit from the resources of Whittlewood, although our sources tell us almost nothing about their buyers. While timber was clearly exported from Whittlewood, a good deal of pottery was imported. The map reveals the production centres at which pottery found during archaeological fieldwork was made. Much of it, as might be expected, was sourced locally at Potterspury but other kilns were also important. Moreover, there appears to have been a distinct regional distribution in the pottery recovered. Richard has noticed that the western portion of the project area is dominated by finds of sandy ware from Brackley and Banbury, while shelly ware, from Yardley Gobion, is more common in the eastern parishes. This brings us back to the market hinterlands with which we began. Assuming that a good deal of pottery was purchased in the market place or sold by itinerant traders operating within a restricted hinterland, we may conclude that the regional distribution of pottery found in the Whittlewood area reflects local trading patterns and the limited economic hinterlands suggested by borough court records, locative surnames and other sources.

To sum up, the inhabitants of medieval Whittlewood had occasional trading contacts over a wide area of Midland England, exemplified most clearly in the map of pottery sources but also suggested by documentary links with Northampton and other towns. However, what these maps and documents also reveal is that regular trading activity took place much closer to home, in the immediate vicinity of local towns such as Brackley and Buckingham, and at unofficial market places in villages and at the farm gate. The Buckingham baker's daily round of thirteen villages probably took him no further than 3 miles from the town, while the distribution of pottery finds shows not only the dominating presence of Potterspury but also the favouring of other kilns according to distance. In other words, our villagers seem to have been integrated very much into local patterns of markets and trade.