THE ECONOMIC HISTORY REVIEW

EDITORS: R. M. HARTWELL AND CHARLES WILSON

Second Series, Volume XVIII, No. 1, August 1965

The First Half-Century of the Borough of Stratford-upon-Avon

By E. M. CARUS-WILSON

Our knowledge of the medieval English borough, like that of the medieval manor, has been much influenced by the legal preoccupations of its first historians. Today we possess many learned studies of burgess status and burgage tenure, of borough 'customs', borough courts, and the law merchant, and many published collections of borough charters and custumals. But although some boroughs have published large and varied selections from their records rangeing far beyond charters and custumals, we still know little of the social and economic realities behind the legal formulas – of the origin of the burgesses, for instance, of how they made their living, and of the economic functions of urban communities in the life of the community as a whole. The prevailing approach to borough history, as shown even in some of the best recent histories of English towns, and in the general plan adopted by the *Victoria County History*, is that of fragmentation, with separate sections on topographical, constitutional, and ecclesiastical developments, and in conclusion perhaps, quite unrelated to the rest, an isolated 'social and economic' section, often anecdotal and much less scholarly in character. But the inhabitants of the boroughs were not themselves thus fragmented. They were at one and the same time occupiers – and sometimes builders – of houses and shops, suitors at the borough courts and perhaps members of its governing body, and parishioners attending, regularly or irregularly, one of its churches; and for the greater part of each week most of them were concerned with the humdrum job of earning a living. In old age and retirement they were, perhaps, founders of a chantry or inmates of a local hospital. If we would understand any part of their history we must look at it as a whole and be prepared to consider their ordinary avocations, commonplace as the subject may seem. Nowhere, probably, is our ignorance greater than in the case of those smaller English boroughs, founded after the Norman Conquest, which are often regarded as being distinguished from villages merely by the different legal status of their inhabitants – a difference which seems sometimes to have neither purpose nor meaning. It may therefore be of interest to look briefly at the formative period of one of them – one which today is better known and more sought after by visitors from all parts of the world than any other, since it was Shakespeare's birthplace.

The Domesday Survey of 1086 found no burgesses at Stratford-on-Avon, but only a small rural settlement, as in early Saxon days, close to the 'streetford' where the Roman road crossed the Avon.[1] This settlement, however, would

[1] O. E. 'Straetford', i.e. ford by which a Roman road crossed a river. All the Stratfords are on Roman roads, and in this case the reference is to an important cross-road linking Fosse Way, via Stratford-on-Avon, with Ryknield Street at Alcester.

seem to have grown considerably in the twenty years since the Norman Conquest. Both at the Conquest and in 1086 it formed part of an estate held by Wulfstan, Bishop of Worcester, one of the few Saxon bishops who remained in office under the new regime, and it continued to be held by his successors until the sixteenth century. A monastery also had existed at Stratford in the late seventh century, but this had vanished utterly in the troubled times since then.[1]

On the bishop's manor of Stratford in 1086, according to Domesday Book,[2] there was demesne land with 3 ploughs, and 21 villeins, 7 bordars, and a priest with 28 ploughs between them. There was also a water-mill, whose annual value was reckoned as 10*s*. and 1000 eels, and a considerable stretch of meadow land – five furlongs long and two furlongs broad. The whole manor was valued at £5 before and at the time of the Conquest, and at £25 twenty years later at the time of the survey. It would seem to have included then, as later, the hamlets of Shottery and Welcombe in addition to the settlement at Stratford itself.[3]

The countryside round Stratford was sharply diversified, for the Avon marks broadly the division between the wooded 'Arden' district to the north-west and the open 'Feldon' to the south-east. North-west of the river lay a region of woodland and scrub, as yet sparsely inhabited, extending beyond Henley-in-Arden into what came later to be known as the Forest of Arden, with vast stretches of virgin 'forest', scarcely as yet penetrated by the plough, reaching away to the northern boundaries of Warwickshire. Settlement in this region was mainly concentrated along the rivers, on the Avon's tributaries the Alne and the Arrow, and where these two met stood the little town of Alcester, indicating by its name its Roman origin; through it ran the Roman road which crossed the Avon at Stratford, bound for the salt-working centre of Droitwich. The valley of the Avon itself, with its rich, easily worked soils and its well-watered meadows, had long since been cleared and colonised. Some nine miles up the river above Stratford lay the Saxon borough of Warwick, founded as a defensive centre at the time of the Danish invasions; still a shire capital, headquarters of a royal sheriff, it was now resplendent with its new Norman castle. Below Stratford the river wound slowly on past Bidford, where it was crossed by a second Roman road bound for Alcester, into the broad open vale where stood the great Benedictine monastery of Evesham. South-east of the Avon the land rose gradually on to the open plateau of the Feldon, bounded by the steep northern slopes of the Cotswolds where, from the heights of Edgehill, a splendid panorama over the vale is unfolded. Already almost wholly cleared of woodland, the Feldon was even more thickly populated than the Avon valley.[4]

Potentially wealthy, with land well suited for corn-growing as well as for pasturing sheep and cattle, the country round Stratford, more particularly the Arden woodland, was still at the time of Domesday an underdeveloped area. But a century later great changes had come over the scene. Everywhere there were signs of growing population and a more vigorous exploitation of the

[1] Levi Fox, *The Borough Town of Stratford-upon-Avon* (1953), 15.
[2] *Victoria County History of Warwickshire*, I, 302 b.
[3] *Ibid.*, III, ed. Ph. Styles (1945), 259–60, 264.
[4] For the distribution of settlement at the time of Domesday see H. C. Darby & L. B. Terrett, *The Domesday Geography of Midland England* (1954).

region's natural resources, of fresh penetration of the forest and more intensive cultivation of the old settlement lands. In Arden, for instance, new Norman landlords had carved out estates on what had once been waste, as did the Norman family who settled near the River Alne, calling the castle which they built 'the castle of the beautiful wilderness' (*Beaudesert*).[1] New religious houses, too, had been planted there. The Benedictines had founded a monastery at Alcester (1140) and a little nunnery at Wroxall (by 1135). The Cistercians had established houses for nuns at Pinley (*temp.* Henry I) and at Cook Hill (*circa* 1180), in addition to the much more important house for men at Bordesley (1138) which was actively concerned in farming the land from its many outlying granges such as Binton, Bidford, and Bearley in the immediate vicinity of Stratford. There were houses for Augustinian canons at Studley (post-1135) as well as at Warwick (pre-1123). At Wootton Wawen a small alien priory had been founded soon after the Norman Conquest by the Benedictine Abbey of St. Peter de Castellion at Conches, and by the end of the twelfth century the Hospitallers had a house at Temple Grafton.[2]

Land-hungry peasants, also, were clearing woods and thickets, ploughing and cultivating the soil – and swelling manorial rent-rolls by payments for the new holdings they had won from the waste. Thus when the manor of Stratford was surveyed for the Bishop of Worcester a century after Domesday (in 1182), two tenants, Stigant and Stout, were reported to be paying *7s.8d.* and two sextars of nuts each year for 'certain assarts' which they held.[3] These assarts were most probably some twelve miles distant in Lapworth parish [4] in the Forest of Arden, in the Bishop's Wood (now 'Bushwood') which was appurtenant to his manor of Stratford and which may possibly be identified with 'Nuthurst' ('Hnuthyrste') – a woodland given to the bishop with Shottery in the eighth century.[5]

In areas of old settlement, too, population was evidently increasing. In the manor of Stratford, according to the Bishop's survey of 1182, the number of peasant landholders had nearly doubled since 1086; in addition to three cottars there were now some 42 villein tenants in Stratford, Shottery and Welcombe, holding between them 29 virgates, apart from a few free tenants; three virgates were vacant.

[1] *Victoria County History of Warwickshire*, III, *ut supra*, 45.

[2] For the dates of these foundations see David Knowles & R. N. Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales* (1953), and for the Bordesley granges *V. C. H. Warwickshire*, III, *ut supra, sub* Binton, Bidford, and Bearley.

[3] *The Red Book of Worcester*, ed. Margery Hollings (Worcestershire Historical Society, 1934 (Parts I & II), 1939 (Part III), III, 260–262. The Red Book was compiled at the end of the thirteenth century and preserved among the cathedral archives till the time of George I, since when it has been lost. It is known to us through a transcript made, apparently very carefully, by William Thomas (1670–1738); preserved until recently at the Public Record Office among the records of the Ecclesiastical Commission, this transcript has now been returned to Worcester in accordance with the policy of dispersing the Ecclesiastical Commission records to the various dioceses.

[4] Cf. the mention in a deed of 1197 of the house in Lapworth which Stigand the forester had occupied (Sir William Dugdale, *Antiquities of Warwickshire* (1730) 793).

[5] Cf. Darby & Terrett, *ut supra*, 277 and *V. C. H. Warwickshire* III, *ut supra*, 261. Several other manors in the Avon and Feldon districts similarly held woodland some distance away in the Forest of Arden, as did Brailes, Wasperton & Wellesbourne (*ibid.* V, 168, 130, 112). These woodlands are, however, shown in the Domesday Woodlands map in Darby & Terrett (*ut supra* 292) not in the Forest but, somewhat misleadingly, in the manors to which they were appurtenant.

Despite these signs of growth the manor of Stratford would appear still to have been wholly rural in character. Almost all the Bishop's tenants held in villeinage, and held the typical villein tenements of a virgate or half a virgate; about half of them held for a money rent of from 3*s.* to 4*s.* a virgate or from 1*s.* to 1*s.* 6*d.* a half virgate, and about half 'at works', owing three days labour each week on the lord's demesne in addition to a variety of other services and money payments. The manorial smith did all the necessary work on the demesne ploughs in return for his land, 'besides many other things as a grace'. There was still a manorial mill, now valued wholly in money at 36*s.* a year.[1]

Within a few years of this survey striking developments took place; Stratford became the scene of one of the many experiments made in the planning of new towns at the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth century. John de Coutances, Bishop of Worcester from 1196 to 1198, had not been long in office before he determined to found there a borough and market town. Doubtless he sensed the possibilities of this point at which the road striking off from the Fosse Way to Alcester and Droitwich crossed the river route between Evesham and Warwick; here, rather than at his neighbouring manor of Hampton, was the strategic site for a new town which might attract craftsmen and dealers and become a centre to meet the needs of the surrounding countryside, thus bringing added revenue to himself. On January 25th 1196 the Bishop obtained from King Richard I a charter for a weekly Thursday market at Stratford, thus securing the right to hold a market and to take for himself the profits accruing from it, such as rents for stalls and pitches, tolls on goods bought or sold, and dues for the use of standard measures. Markets had, indeed, been held in many places from time immemorial, by prescription rather than by charter, but more and more the Crown, ever seeking new sources of income, was insisting that the market was a royal prerogative, though one which could be conveyed, for a consideration, to a subject. If only for this reason it was as well to ask royal permission at the outset rather than to risk incurring a heavy fine later, or even the suppression of the market.[2] With his market rights assured, the Bishop formally created his borough, laying it out in uniform building plots, or 'burgages', to be held by burgage tenure at a money rent of 1*s.* a year, payable quarterly, in lieu of all services; at the same time he promised the 'burgesses' who should occupy them freedom from toll 'according to the custom of Breteuil' – the little Norman town whose customs were taken as the model for many of the new boroughs founded in England after the Conquest. Dugdale, writing his *Antiquities of Warwickshire* in 1730, had himself seen the original deed of foundation, now apparently no longer extant, in a cupboard among the episcopal archives at Worcester, and it is to him that we are indebted for our knowledge of it. He tells us, after describing the market charter, that the Bishop 'by his own deed, reciting the said charter of Richard, bestowed on his burgesses of Stratford (for by that name he calls them) the inheritance of their burgages,

[1] *The Red Book*, *ut supra*, 260–262, and 276–278 for definition of services, which are the same as for the manor of Hampton.

[2] For the great increase in chartered markets at this time see G. H. Tupling, 'Markets and Fairs in Medieval Lancashire', *Essays in Honour of James Tait* (1933).

paying yearly for each of them to himself and his successors 12d. for all services at four times of the year viz. Michaelmas, the Nativity of Christ, Easter, and the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, to each of which burgages he thereby allowed three perches and a half in breadth and twelve perches in length, that they should be free of toll for ever according to the custom of Bristoll (*sic*),[1] excommunicating all those persons who should presume to make violation of these their privileges'. All this, Dugdale adds, the next bishop confirmed, while at the end of King John's reign (in 1214) Bishop Walter Grey obtained the grant of a fair on the eve of the Trinity to continue for two days.[2]

What success attended the Bishop's venture? How many burgages came into being? Who took them up? And how did the burgesses make their living? Who, in fact, was prepared to pay 1*s*. a year for a mere quarter acre of land,[3] when a whole virgate (perhaps some 30 acres of arable, with rights in meadow, wood, and pasture) could be had for 3*s*. or 4*s*.? What was the relation of the new borough to the old manor? By good fortune answers, even if not complete answers, to these and many other questions can be obtained from a remarkably detailed survey made half a century after the founding of the borough for one of John de Coutances' successors, Bishop Walter de Cantilupe, in the fifteenth year of his pontificate, i.e. in 1251–52. The original survey, like that of 1182, has disappeared, and it is known to us by a transcript which is to be found bound up with a variety of other documents printed by Sir Thomas Phillipps at his Middle Hill Press between 1840 and 1850.[4] Presumably the original itself was once among Sir Thomas Phillipps' papers; just possibly it may even yet be traced.

The transformation that had come over the Bishop's estate at Stratford during the first half of the thirteenth century is at once here apparent. For the survey of 1251–52 is divided into two distinct parts, each with its heading separately, but similarly, dated, and each with its concluding, but totally different, list of jurors who had sworn to its veracity. The first part is entitled 'Extent of the Manor of Old Stratford' (*Extenta Manerii de Veteri Stratford*); the second, 'Extent of the Borough of Stratford' (*Extenta Burgi de Stratford*).[5] In the first part comes an account of the Bishops' demesne lands – arable (220½ acres), meadow, woodland, pasture, mills and fisheries, followed by a list of tenants holding by knight service, of free tenants, customary tenants, and cottars; there are sub-headings for Shottery and Welcombe, as in the preceding survey, and there is a new one for Lapworth, where there had evidently been further forest clearance since six tenants (one described as 'le wodeward') now held

[1] 'Bristoll' should no doubt be 'Breteuil'; see M. Bateson, 'The Laws of Breteuil', *English Historical Review* XV (1900), 513. The date of the market charter is that given in Dugdale.

[2] Dugdale, *ut supra*, 680, quoting in each case '*ex autog. in Armario Wigorn. Episc.*' and Charter Roll 16 John, m. 7.

[3] Not half an acre as in Levi Fox, *ut supra*, 36.

[4] British Museum Tab. 436 b.y (10): *Sir Thomas Phillipps Tracts: Topography and Genealogy 2: Hampshire – Warwickshire*, Middle Hill Press c. 1840–50, unpaged. Reprinted in *The Red Book*, *ut supra*, 471–97.

[5] The whole survey has sometimes been erroneously referred to simply as '*Extenta Manerii de Veteri Stratford*', e.g. by Philip Styles in *V. C. H. Warwickshire* III *ut supra*, 221–2, 247, even when the second part is being quoted. Levi Fox also twice refers to it as a 'survey of the manor' when quoting the second part, though once he speaks of it as 'a survey of Stratford (*Extenta Burgi de Stratford*) made for Bishop Walter de Cantilupe in the year 1252' (*op. cit.* 17, 34, 68). Both authors date the surve y 1252.

assarts there, paying 24*s.*6*d.* a year. Altogether some 70 tenants are listed in this section – a considerable increase since 1182. Between 50 and 60 of them were customary tenants holding in villeinage the typical virgate, half virgate, or occasionally quarter virgate. Appended to the name of the first customary tenant is a long and detailed account of what was due for each virgate. The services were many and onerous. For each virgate the villeins owed one day's work a week from Michaelmas to June 24th, and four days, with one man to assist, from June 24th to Michaelmas, in addition to a multitude of other miscellaneous dues and services and a money rent of 2*s.*11*d.* a year. Should the lord not wish to exact labour services he could, at his pleasure, take in lieu a money rent only; this was now fixed at 8*s.* a virgate, i.e. at about twice the level of that of 1182 – a significant pointer to the pressure of population on land; in addition to this the tenant was still liable for various tolls and other customary payments. There was still a manorial smith, holding half a virgate in return for work on two ploughs and another piece of land for work on a third plough. Here then is the traditional 'classic manor', with demesne and villein services, appropriately called from this time on '*Old* Stratford' – a name which has puzzled some historians.[1]

In sharp antithesis to 'The Manor of Old Stratford' stands that new creation 'The Borough of Stratford'. The second part of the survey – *Extenta Burgi de Stratford* – consists of a single long list of the names of 'burgesses', with the holding of each and the annual rent due. Appended to the first name, that of Robert le Tanur, is a detailed account of the conditions of tenure. They are simple indeed compared with those of the customary tenants on the manor. Robert le Tanur is described as holding one burgage (*burgagium*) by service of 12*d.*, payable quarterly at Christmas, Easter, the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, and Michaelmas; and he owes suit 'to the court of the borough' (*ad curiam burgi*) at the three lawmoots, i.e. at the first court after Michaelmas, the feast of St. Hilary, and Hock Day[2] respectively, and at other times when summoned. At the end of the list is a note to the effect that all the 'burgesses' named (*omnes supradicti burgenses*) owe the same suit to the court of the borough, and in the same manner, as Robert le Tanur. The length of the list is impressive. It contains the names of no less than 234 tenants,[3] holding between them some 250 burgages, 54 pieces of ground (*placea* or *placea terrae*), 14 shops (*solda*), 10 stalls (*stalla*), 2 ovens (*furnum*), and 2 dyepans (*tinctorium*). Only two of these names occur also in the survey of the manor. Hence it is apparent that the total number of the Bishop's tenants in Stratford, manor and borough, now exceeded 300 – a sixfold increase in half a century, and that a new and quite distinct commu-

1 See, e.g. the section on Stratford-upon-Avon by Philip Styles in *V. C. H. Warwickshire* III, *ut supra*, 221. Mr Styles notes that the term 'Old Stratford' is first mentioned in the 13th century survey, while in that of 1182 'the manor is described simply as Stratford'; he suggests, however, that the term 'was probably used to distinguish the chief manor from the various sub-manors which by then had been formed out of it'. Mary Bateson was nearer the truth when she wrote, over sixty years ago, 'Old Stratford may well have been the original 'old' town', and 'Stratford-on-Avon seems to have been cut out of Old Stratford'. (Mary Bateson, *ut supra*, 340).

2 The second Tuesday after Easter.

3 One of the names in the list of 'burgesses' is that of 'the Altar of the Blessed Mary'; all the others are those of persons.

nity had come into existence in the borough: a community (if we measure by the number of tenants holding directly from the Bishop) more than three times as large as that of the manor, though this too had much increased since 1182. The total population of the borough may well, at a very conservative estimate, have been in the region of a thousand, thus perhaps approximating to that of Warwick, and exceeding that of Worcester, at the time of Domesday. The Bishop's bold enterprise had been amply rewarded; his burgages had proved a most attractive proposition.

The survey of 1251–52 thus makes it abundantly clear that Bishop John de Coutances had partitioned his estate, cutting out of it a portion to be known henceforth as the Borough of Stratford, with its uniform burgage tenements held for a money rent only, and its separate borough court, while the remainder continued as the manor of Old Stratford with its villein tenants liable for their labour services, tolls, and other dues, and its separate court of the manor. The borough was not coextensive with the manor – the total holdings of the burgesses amounted only to some 60–70 acres; nor had the bishop's villeins been converted wholesale into burgesses, as has sometimes been suggested.[1]

In doing this the Bishop was only following the fashion of his day. As Mary Bateson noticed long ago in those penetrating and suggestive articles which in fact contain much more than a discussion of the problem of the laws of Breteuil, many of the boroughs founded at this time 'look as if they had been cut out of townships'. And she observes that this is probably what happened at Stratford.[2] In a similar manner Hugh de Gondeville (*circa* 1180–84) created a little borough not far from Stratford that came to be called 'Chipping' (or 'Market') Campden to distinguish it from the manor.[3] So, too, Maurice Paynell carved a borough out of his manor of Leeds in 1207, with thirty building plots on each side of a wide street leading up from the Aire crossing, on the outskirts of the existing village.[4] What remained of the old rural manor with its fields, pastures, meadows, and dwellings was sometimes distinguished from the borough by the suffix 'Old', as at Stratford, while sometimes it, or the borough, acquired a wholly different name; thus at Tavistock the Abbot's new borough retained the name of Tavistock (as it could hardly fail to do since it was apparently on the actual site of the original vill), and what remained of the manor was called after his demesne farm – 'the manor of Hurdwick'.[5]

The very large number of burgage holders at Stratford makes it evident that the great majority of them cannot have sprung from families already on the manor. Whence then had they come? On this problem, too, much can be learnt from the survey of 1251–2. It is, of course, true that not all those described as burgesses and holding burgage tenements were necessarily themselves resident in Stratford. No doubt here as elsewhere an active market had de-

[1] E.g. by Levi Fox, *op. cit.*, 16.
[2] See p. 50, note 1.
[3] P. C. Rushen, *Chipping Campden* (undated) pp. 2, 3, 16.
[4] G. Woledge, 'The Medieval Borough of Leeds', *Thoresby Society Miscellany*, XXXVII, Pt. III (1944), 288 *et seq.*
[5] H. P. R. Finberg, 'The Borough of Tavistock: its origin and early history', W. G. Hoskins and H. P. R. Finberg, *Devonshire Studies* (1952), 176.

veloped in burgages and some must have been held merely as investments. Nevertheless, though strictly speaking the list tells us only who were the tenants holding burgages 'in chief' from the Bishop, not who were the occupants of the burgages, it would be unreasonable not to regard it as reflecting to a considerable degree the composition and character of the new community. What then can it tell us of the origin of the immigrants? Virtually all the burgesses are described, as the tenants of 1182 were not, by both a Christian name and a second name. More than a third of the second names are place names preceded by '*de*', and almost all of the places prove to be within 16 miles of Stratford. While it is likely that those few Stratford burgesses who were called after places further afield than this had not come directly thence, in the case of the great majority of place names it would seem probable that we have in fact the name of the place from which the burgess himself, or his father, or just possibly his grandfather, had come. If this is so, then we have here a very fair sample of the origin of the immigrants.

A detailed analysis of the list shows that 82 burgesses have place surnames, and that if we exclude names such as 'de la Grave', 'de la Waude', 'de Bosco', 57 different places occur, some of them more than once. We may identify at least 47 of these places with a fair degree of certainty; 26 of them prove to be (as the crow flies) within 6 miles of Stratford, 31 within 8 miles, 33 within 10 miles, 37 within 12 miles, 40 within 14 miles, 42 within 16 miles, and only 5 outside the 16 mile radius (Figure 1). Most of the ten places which cannot be certainly identified are probably close to Stratford, for several of the names

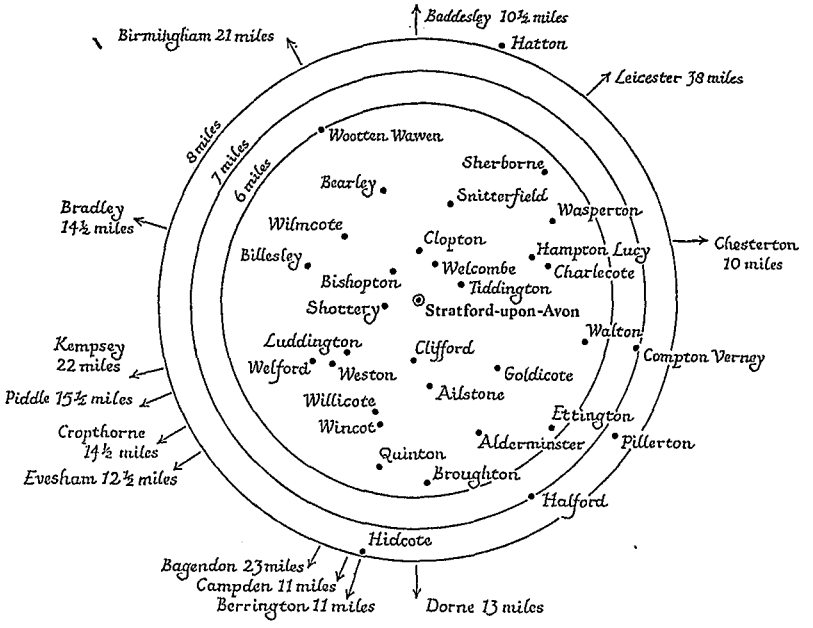

Figure 1.

The distances of places outside the 8-mile radius are given as from Stratford-upon-Avon.

are those of small hamlets like Greenhill, Sydenham, and Wike, of which there are more than one in the immediate vicinity. It is noticeable that none of the burgesses were called after the two ancient boroughs in the immediate neighbourhood of Stratford – Warwick (8 miles away) and Alcester (7 miles away). These towns were no doubt attracting immigrants themselves, as perhaps were those villages within a few miles of Strafford which had gained market charters by the mid-thirteenth century, like Bidford (1220), Henley-in-Arden (1220) Kineton (1220), Aston Cantlow (1227), Snitterfield (1242), and Wellesbourne Hastings (1246). Of all these only Snitterfield appears among the Stratford surnames.[1] Indeed within the 16 miles radius the only market towns to appear in the list of surnames are Evesham and Chipping Campden.[2] Outside the 16 miles radius we can identify among the surnames Kempsey (22 miles), Birmingham (22), Bagendon (32),[3] Leicester (38) and possibly Southwell (69),[4] while one of the burgesses appears to have been Irish in origin ('le Yreis').

Judging then from our sample of place surnames it would appear that some 90 per cent of those who took up Stratford burgages came from little villages and hamlets within a 16 mile radius; most of them were from ancient settlement areas in the Avon valley and in the Feldon, and few of them, as we should expect, from the more recently developed and much less densely populated Arden area. Further, it is clear that the majority of them came from the rural area within a radius of 6 or 8 miles of Stratford, from what we might perhaps call the Stratford market area, in that it is the people of this area who would regularly have used the weekly market at Stratford, walking there in the morning, doing their business there in the middle of the day, and walking home before nightfall. Bracton, discussing with legal precision in what circumstances a new market might be regarded as injurious to an old one, evidently considers that it is reasonable for a man to expect to go nearly seven miles to market, but not more, and that it is on this basis that the lawyers should determine whether or no a new market should be allowed. A new market, he says, is a nuisance if it is established 'within six leagues and a half and the third part of a half' of an old one. He argues thus: 'Twenty miles is a reasonable "day" (*dieta*). Let the day be divided into three parts. The first part, in the morning, is taken up with going to market. The second part is devoted to buying and selling; this should suffice for all except perhaps those who are merchants with stalls (*mercatores stallati*), who have to deposit their wares and set them out for sale and who will need a longer time in the market. The third part is given up to returning home from market, and all this must be done in the daytime and not at night, for fear of ambushes and attacks by robbers, so that all shall be in safety.' [5] In other words, a man would not

[1] It is just possible that 'Wells' may represent Wellesbourne Hastings.

[2] If 'Campden' may be identified as Chipping Campden.

[3] Probably the correct identification of 'Bagingedone', which is found as 'Bagingedon' in the thirteenth century.

[4] 'Suwelle'.

[5] Bracton, *De Legibus*, ed. Geo. E. Woodbine (Newhaven: Yale University Press, 4 vols. 1915–1942), III, 198, (f. 235b). If Bracton's 'league' is here a two-mile league, as it seems to be, he suggests that a a new market would be a nuisance if established within 13⅓ miles.

normally wish to deal with a market more than 6–7 miles from home. Within this distance he could be sure of getting there and back by daylight, even in the shortest days of winter. Two markets on the same day 13 or 14 miles apart would therefore scarcely be in competition with each other, for each would draw its regular customers from a different area. There was in fact no other Thursday market within 20 miles of Stratford, except for one which was granted to Feckenham in 1237, and this was moved to a Saturday in 1253.

What had lured these many immigrants into the Bishop's new borough? It is clear that they cannot have come as agricultural colonists for, as we have seen, they had no holdings in the fields; and though a burgess might keep pigs and poultry, and perhaps a cow, and grow fruit and vegetables on what was left of his quarter-acre burgage after a house had been built on it, to pay rent at 4*s.* an acre for such a purpose was scarcely a tempting proposition. Here again the survey of 1251-2 is illuminating. A first reading of the list of borough tenants after that of tenants on the manor at once gives the impression of a community of traders and artisans, in sharp contrast to that of the manor. Out of all the 234 burgesses 64 have occupational surnames compounded (unless they are in Latin) of 'the' or '*le*' with a word descriptive of a trade or profession. At this date these surnames must almost always, if not invariably, indicate the occupation of the burgess himself or at least that of one of his immediate forbears. Here, surely, we have a very fair sample of the trades practised by Stratford burgesses within half a century of the borough's foundation.

Most of the occupational names are those of artisans, and of such artisans as would be concerned with supplying the essential goods and services required by Stratford and the rural 'market area' round it. None suggest the production of luxury goods – there is no sign of a goldsmith, for example, and no one trade is more prominent than the others, which suggests that there was little if any specialisation in one particular product for sale over a wider area. Stratford, in fact, was a very ordinary market town.

Most prominent are what might be called the clothing trades – those concerned with leather working and cloth working, for both of which the raw material was ready to hand in the hides and wool produced from the sheep and cattle in the surrounding countryside. Six burgesses are described as tanners (*le tanur*) and while some of them appear to be wealthy men, like Richard le Tanur holding 4 burgages, 2 half burgages and a piece of ground, some are of more modest means, holding only a half or quarter burgage. Two are described as shoemakers (*sutor*), and the Stratford glovemakers, famous in the sixteenth century, not only because Shakespeare's father was a glover, were already in evidence, for there are two burgesses called *le waunter*. A *parmentarius*, too, probably worked in skins. Clothmaking is represented by two men described as weavers (*textor, le webbe*); two as fullers (*fullo, le fulur*); and three as dyers (*tinctor*). There are three tailors (*le tailleur*) concerned, no doubt, with making up, altering, and selling clothes new and secondhand. That fulling and dyeing were carried on in Stratford is also shown by the mention of a fulling-mill in the survey of the manor, and of two dyepans

(*tinctoria*) in the survey of the borough, held at rents of 3*d.* and 2*d.* respectively by two men who each have in addition a half burgage. Thus Stratford could supply clothing of all sorts, including shoes and gloves.

Different kinds of metal-working are indicated by three men called white-smith (*albus faber*), two of whom share a shop (*solda*) while the other holds four burgages and two half burgages; by two men called smith (*faber*), and one called locksmith ('Adam the Lokiere'). Woodworking and the building trades are represented by one carpenter (*carpentarius*), three tilers (*le teler*), four coopers ('cooper', *le cuverer*, *le cupere*), and one wheelwright (*rotarius*).

Among the less common productive industries there are already signs of the oil-making that gave its name to Ely Street in the surname, occurring twice, of 'Ylger' or 'Ylgier'; there was an oil mill ('ullemylle') in Ely Street at least by the early fifteenth century,[1] and perhaps these oil-makers were using nuts from the Bishop's wood. There is also a woman rope-maker, 'Alice the roperes'.[2]

The food trades are represented by one man called butcher (*le flesmonger*), one called baker (*le furner*), one called cook (*cocus*), and two called miller (*molendinarius*). There is also mention of two ovens for which rents of 1*s.* and 1*s.* 6*d.* were paid. The mills, as we have seen, were still a part of the manor, not the borough, and instead of the one mill ('*molendinum*') worth 36*s.* mentioned in 1182 there were now four mills – three for grinding corn in one building, and one fulling-mill ('*molendinum fulerez*') in another; the four were farmed out at £13. 6*s.* 8*d.*

That entertainment was not lacking in Stratford even in its early days is suggested by the surname 'le Piper' and by 'Iseude Jugleur', and among miscellaneous trades and professions mentioned are those of butler (*le buteiller*, *pincerna*), beadle (*le bedel*), chamberlain (*camerarius*), doctor (*medicus*), clerk (*clericus*), parson (*persona*), palmer, (*le palmer*), carter (*carectarius*), and farrier (*marescallus*).

It is impossible to be certain whether *le mercer* implies a general merchant or, more narrowly, one trading in mercery, but general merchants no doubt there were, dealing in all manner of commodities, among those with family or place names. By 1270 at least there was at any rate one grocer, William le Spicer, and one skinner, William Pelliparius, who probably dealt in skins as well as making them up.[3]

The striking contrast between these burgess names – the majority compounded of place-names or occupational names – and those of the manorial tenants further emphasises the distinction between the two communities: the one rural and ancient, with its roots stretching far back into the past; the other urban and modern, composed of diverse folk drawn together from many

[1] *V. C. H. Warwickshire*, III, *ut supra*, 222.

[2] The ropemakers had their stalls in Bridge Street in the 17th century, *ibid.*, 237. That Alice was not alone in following this occupation may be seen from the mention of Walter the ropemaker (*cordarius*) in a deed of *c.*1235 relating to land in High Street, F. C. Wellstood, Calendar of Medieval Records belonging to the Mayor and Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon (1941, unpublished manuscript in the custody of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trustees).

[3] Calendar of Medieval Records, *ut supra* note 2, deeds of *circa* 1270.

places. The manorial tenants have, it is true, surnames, as most of them had not in 1182, when many were just plain Alured, Eynulf, Frewin, Teodulf and so forth, though if the name was a common one they were often further described as, for instance, 'William son of Lothair' was distinguished from 'William son of Hereward', and 'Adam son of Tinbert' from 'Adam de Shottery'. But at least a third of the 70 manorial tenants listed in 1251–2 were called after one or other parent, as were 'Alured son of Eynulf' and 'Thomas son of Cicely', while in the borough only three out of 233 were so described. Only eight (six of them free tenants) had surnames compounded of place-names. Only seven (or ten if we include the reeve, the hayward and the woodward) had occupational surnames; three of these – a weaver (*le webbe*), a fisherman (*piscator*), and a clerk (*clericus*), were cottars; the remainder include the manorial smith, a second weaver, a second fisherman ('the fissere'), and a falconer (*le faukoner*), each with half or quarter acre holdings. Some were known by nicknames like 'Fayrher', 'le Large', or 'the Newman', while a very few have what seem to be established family names, as had Adam Mogge and Alice Bardolf – whose family must surely still have been there in Shakespeare's day. This is very different from the borough, where those with no established family name – some two-thirds of the whole – were almost invariably called after either a place or a trade; in so new a community parentage was of little account. Thus the borough was distinguished from the manor not only by the legal differences associated with burgage tenure, burgess status, and a borough court, but also by its almost completely different personnel and economic functions. A wholly new urban settlement had grown up alongside the village; its people were mainly immigrants recruited from the surrounding countryside, and they lived primarily not by agriculture but by trade and industry.

The commercial and industrial character of the borough is also shown by the mention here and there in the survey of a shop (*solda*) or a stall (*stalla*). There were altogether 14 shops (*soldae*). For some a rent of 1*s.* a year was payable, for others 8*d.* or 4*d.*, whereas for each of ten stalls no more than 2*d.* was charged. Whatever the precise meaning of the word *solda* at this time, it clearly implied something more substantial than a mere movable stall or the site on which one could be erected. Such stalls would be used not only by Stratford people but by outside folk – Bracton's *mercatores stallati*, who, when they came to market, needed to set out their wares on a stand, unlike the dealers in sheep and cattle, corn and wool.[1]

If neither 'shop' nor 'stall' can be precisely defined, we are more fortunate in the case of 'burgage'. As we have seen, when the Bishop created his borough he planned a wholly new town and laid it out in uniform building plots, allowing to each 'burgage' 3½ perches in breadth and 12 perches in length. Each burgage thus had a frontage of almost 60 feet and stretched back nearly 200 feet from the street, giving an area of 1,270½ square yards, or rather more than a quarter of an acre. In thus standardising his building sites the Bishop was conforming to the general practice of those who founded new boroughs,

[1] Cf. *supra*, p. 54.

though the actual size varied from borough to borough. The street frontage of the Stratford plots, for instance, was slightly wider than that allotted by Maurice Paynell for his borough at Leeds.[1]

With a site of this magnitude a tenant would have space enough, should he also have the means and the inclination, to erect a house comparable to many of the modest manor houses then going up in England, with an entrance passage and several rooms – including a hall – on the ground floor facing the street, and perhaps other buildings round a garden or courtyard behind. A fourteenth-century burgess house of this description can still be seen not far from Stratford at Chipping Campden; it was built by the wool merchant William Grevel, and was even more extensive than one on a Stratford burgage could have been, but then Grevel was 'the flower of the wool merchants of all England' in his day.[2]

Doubtless only the wealthiest burgesses in Stratford, as in Chipping Campden, could have afforded houses of anything like this size. Burgages, however, with their wide frontages, lent themselves readily to subdivision into two, three, or four dwellings, each with its own front door on the street. Perhaps at Stratford there was some such rule as at Preston in Lancashire, that a tenant could qualify as being of burgess status provided he held a street frontage of at least 12 feet;[3] even this would give room for the building of quite a sizeable town house, particularly if it had more than the two storeys which was all that most manor houses of the period achieved. Many a wealthy merchant in England's leading commercial cities was content with such a frontage. In the High Street at Bristol, for instance, the Chesters' house, rebuilt in the fifteenth century, had a width of only 10 feet 5 inches, but this allowed for a shop on the ground floor, a hall over it with an oriel window, a chamber on the second floor, also with an oriel window, and yet another chamber above this, while the house stretched back behind the street nearly 20 feet.[4] But even in Bristol not all streets were as built up as the ancient and congested High Street. In suburbs such as Redcliffe merchants' houses were more rural in character, with a generous allowance of ground and a lofty open-roofed hall and other buildings grouped around a courtyard. Such was the house to which the Canynges family in the fifteenth century added a new and up-to-date wing fifty feet long, with four bay-windows.[5] The spacious lay-out of Stratford clearly made it possible to build houses of this kind when a whole burgage was retained in the hands of one man, and even the centre of the town must always have been as well provided with trees and gardens as it was in Shakespeare's day.

How then were the Stratford burgages distributed in 1251–2? As we have

[1] Woledge, *ut supra* p. 52, note 4, 293–4. The street frontages allotted to burgages in newly-created boroughs varied from 1 to 4 perches, or even more, while the depth of the burgages varied from 5 to as many as 24 perches. The plots were usually, but not invariably, uniform within a single borough.

[2] See the inscription on his brass at Chipping Campden. On the planning of town houses see W. A. Pantin, 'Medieval English Town-House Plans'. *Medieval Archaeology*, VI–VII (1962–3).

[3] M. Bateson, *ut supra* p. 50, note 1, 503.

[4] E. M. Carus-Wilson, *Medieval Merchant Venturers* (1954), 76.

[5] *Ibid.*, 75.

seen, there were altogether 234 'burgesses' holding between them some 250 burgages, besides shops, stalls, 'places', ovens and dyepans. Inevitably there were inequalities of wealth, even among the burgesses, let alone among the many servants, apprentices and mere labourers who could not aspire to burgess status, and whose very names are unknown to us. Yet few considerable concentrations of property appear in the survey. The largest burgage holder was Richard de Bagendon holding 'many burgages and places' and paying a rent of 18*s*., equivalent to 18 burgages. Next in importance was Richard Warner, holding 5 burgages, 8 half-burgages, 5 shops, a stall, a place, and a share in an oven held jointly with Rosa Manning; Rosa held also 5 burgages and 2 half-burgages. Almost as important were Richard de Pydele holding 4 burgages, 4 half-burgages, and 2 stalls; John the Whitesmith with 4 burgages and 2 half-burgages, and Richard the Tanner with 4 burgages, 2 half-burgages and a place; 29 other burgesses held from 2 to 4 burgages each. Of the remaining burgesses, 66 held single burgages, in some cases sharing one with another burgess; 67 held half a burgage each, again in some cases sharing with another; two held two-thirds of a burgage each; five one-third each; and one a quarter of a burgage. Some held only a place, a shop or two, or a stall. Thus the majority of the burgesses held only a single burgage or less.

It is noteworthy that more than two-thirds of the original burgages remained undivided in 1251–2, and that most of the rest were split only into half. Indeed many whole or half burgages remained intact long after then, and even at the present day the Bishop's building plots may still be traced on a 1/2,500 ordnance survey map or by perambulating the streets of his borough; their outlines are unmistakable. Such is the site of Mason's Court in Rother Street, now split into two tenements. From the existing building on this site – a half-timbered building which certainly goes back to the fifteenth century – a good idea may be obtained of the lay-out and character of one of the larger burgess houses of Stratford in the middle ages. Along the street frontage this house has a central hall of one 14-foot bay, originally open from ground to roof, with a through passage cut off one end of it, leading to the courtyard behind, a south wing on one side of the hall about 12 feet wide, and a north wing on the other side of two $13\frac{1}{2}$ feet bays, making a total frontage of about 53 feet.[1]

Other Stratford houses also still perpetuate the outlines of the original burgages as, for example, does 'The Five Gables' in Chapel Street (formerly Corn Street), with its five approximately 12-foot bays, making a frontage of some 60 feet. The Shakespeare Hotel next door, with which it is now incorporated, is also about 60 feet wide – i.e. the width allowed by the Bishop for one of his burgage plots (Figure 2). Adjoining the Shakespeare Hotel, at the corner of Chapel Street and Sheep Street, the modern Town Hall occupies the site of yet another burgage, once owned by Hugh Clopton, younger son of the lord of the manor of Clopton, close to Stratford, who made his fortune as a Merchant

[1] *Victoria County History of Warwickshire*, III, *ut supra*, 230. Mason's Court is illustrated in Levi Fox, *op. cit.*, Plate following p. 96. The great fires of 1594, 1595, and 1614 destroyed most of Stratford's medieval timbered buildings.

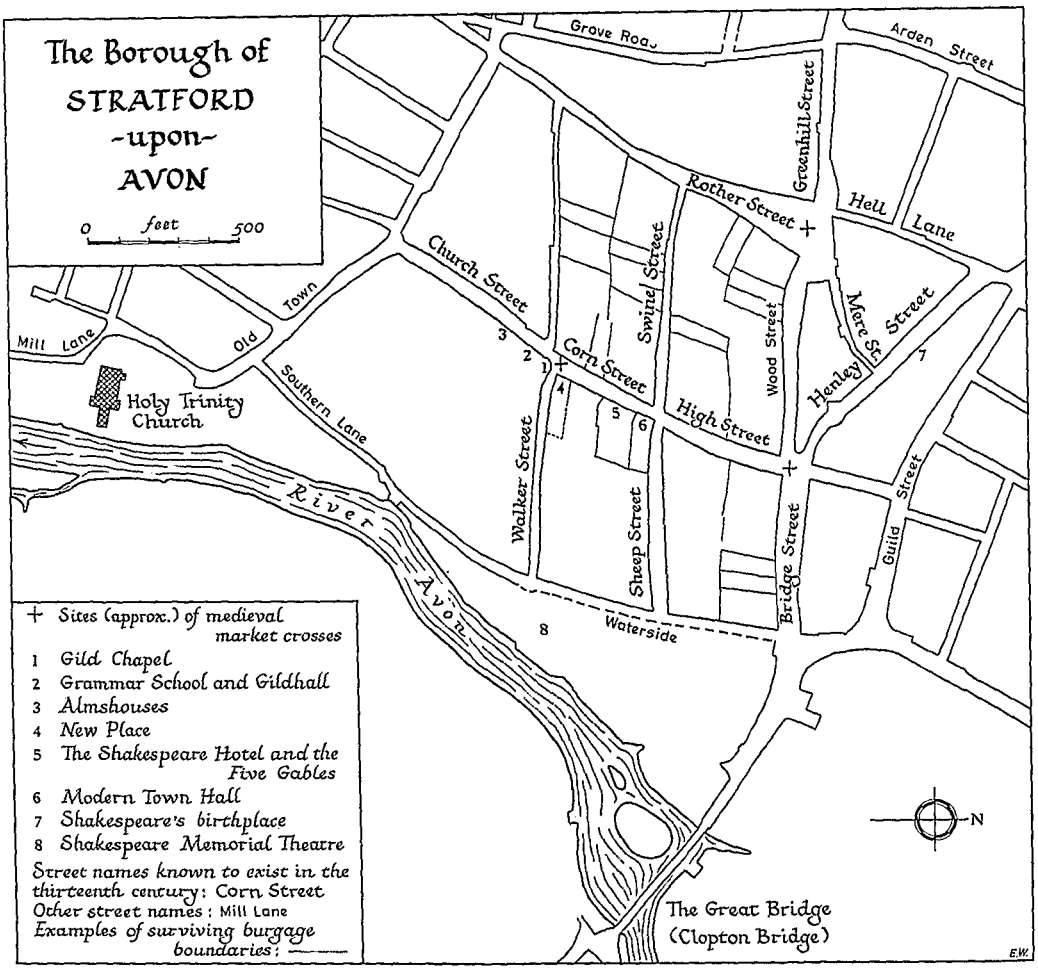

Figure 2.

The Borough of Stratford-upon-Avon, from Ordnance Survey map as revised in 1938. The area round the parish church of Holy Trinity, including most of Southern Lane and Old Town, was outside the borough until 1879: The borough's northern boundary ran from the river at Clopton Bridge along Guild Street, and its western boundary along Arden Street and Grove Road. Beyond, on each side, were the common fields.

Adventurer and was chosen Lord Mayor of London in 1491. At the other end of Chapel Street, on the corner of Walker Street, we can still discern the burgage plot on which Hugh built for himself that 'praty house of brike and tymbar' – New Place – which so attracted Shakespeare a century later that he bought it and made it his home.

As we may trace the outlines of the Bishop's burgages in Stratford today, and gain some impression of their size and form, so too we may trace the outlines of the streets he planned, noting as we do so how broad and spacious they were; the principal ones were 50–60 feet wide, or even more (see Figure 2). Bridge Street, leading up from the great bridge over the Avon, was as much as

90 feet at its widest, but this was the main shopping street, as was Bridge Street at Leeds. Down the centre of it was a block of shops – or perhaps originally stalls which were gradually converted into more permanent structures.[1] This was known as Middlerow, and it is here, and here alone, that shops are mentioned in surviving thirteenth century deeds. Sometimes the goods on sale there are also mentioned; thus we hear of the shops where meat was sold, or salt, or honey.[2] After Middlerow the street forked, dividing into the road leading towards Henley-in-Arden (Henley Street) and that leading to Alcester and thence to Worcester (Wood Street).

South of Bridge Street three roads branched off at right angles parallel to each other and to the river (Fig. 2), while two cross-roads running east and west, parallel to Bridge Street, divided the space between them into four nearly rectangular blocks or *insulae* as they would have been called by Roman planners. Indeed in the symmetry of their lay-out the thirteenth century town-planners were emulating their classical predecessors. Bridge Street and the two cross-roads parallel to it were nearly 400 feet distant from one another, thus giving room for the burgages, each of which, as we have seen, stretched back 12 perches (nearly 200 feet) from the street front. Still today a clear demarcation line half way between these cross-roads is readily apparent.

Deeds now in the possession of the Mayor and Corporation of Stratford reveal that many of these streets still carry the names by which they were known in the thirteenth century, as for example do Bridge Street, High Street, Henley Street, Mere Street, Greenhill Street, Rother Street (i.e. the street where cattle were sold), Sheep Street – 'the street where sheep are sold',[3] and Church Street which leads away from the borough towards Old Stratford and the parish church of Holy Trinity.[4] The present Ely Street was then Swine Street or 'the street where pigs are sold';[5] Windsor Street was Hell Lane;[6] Chapel Street was originally Corn Street, where corn was sold;[7] while Chapel Lane was Walker Street – the street of the walkers, i.e. fullers, down which ran a brook that flowed into the Avon close to the present memorial theatre; later evidence records a walk-mill (i.e. fulling-mill) at the bottom of this street.[8] We read also in the thirteenth century of a street where hay was sold.[9]

As in most medieval towns, whether in England or on the continent, the fullers at Stratford tended to congregate together in one street where a supply of clear, fresh water was available near by, and where its use could be regulated.

1 Cf. W. G. Hoskins, *Local History in England* (1959), 85, quoting Stow's *Survey of London.*

2 Calender of Medieval Records, *ut supra*; deeds of *c.* 1260, 1275, 1285, etc.

3 *Ibid.*, a deed of *c.* 1260 refers to a tenement in 'Sheep Street' ('Scep strete'), and one of c. 1270 to a messuage '*in vico ubi bydentes venduntur*'.

4 *Ibid.*, e.g. a deed of *c.* 1272.

5 *Ibid.*, a deed of *c.* 1270 records a messuage '*in vico ubi porci venduntur*', while a grant confirmed in 1277 speaks of 'Swynistret'. For the change of name from Swine Street to Ely Street see *supra*, p. 56.

6 *Ibid.*, e.g. deeds of *c.* 1294, 1297/8.

7 *Ibid.*, e.g. deeds of *c.* 1265, *c.* 1270, c. 1285; for the change of name see *infra* p. 62.

8 *Ibid.*, grant confirmed in 1277; for the brook see *Victoria County History of Warwickshire*, III, *ut supra*, p. 222; for the fulling-mill see E. I. Fripp, *Shakespeare's Stratford* (1928), 42.

9 Calendar of Medieval Records, *ut supra*, deed of *c.* 1270.

Otherwise there was comparatively little localisation of industry. Marketing, on the other hand, was highly localised, and instead of one general market-place a town of the size of Stratford set aside special places for the sale of the chief products brought in to market, such as corn, hay, sheep, cattle, or pigs, as we may see from these thirteenth-century street names. In course of time at least three market crosses were erected: one – the High Cross, at the junction of Bridge Street and High Street, another – the White Cross, at the junction of Corn Street and Walker Street, and a third in Rother Street.[1] Thus on a Thursday market day almost every corner of the borough must have been full of activity.

The 'great bridge' over the Avon, on the site of the ancient ford, had certainly been built by the early thirteenth century, if not before then, for in 1235 we hear of a house on the bridge and of a bridge keeper – 'Richard the Bridge-keeper'.[2] But as yet it was only a timber structure. Leland, after describing the 'sumptuose' 14-arch stone bridge and its stone causeway over the marshy land, built at the close of the fifteenth century by Hugh Clopton, and still one of the glories of Stratford today, remarks that before this time there was only 'a poore bridge of tymber, and no causey to come to it; whereby many poore folkys and othar refusyd to cum to Stratford when Avon was up, or coming thithar stoode in jeoperdy of lyfe.'[3]

Stratford's celebrated gild buildings at the corner of Church Street and Walker Street (now Chapel Lane) – the chapel of the Holy Cross, the grammar school and the gildhall that became the centre of the borough's government, date only from the end of the middle ages, but they replace earlier gild buildings. Part of the structure of the chapel is almost certainly thirteenth-century, going back at least to the time when Bishop Giffard granted a licence (in 1269) for building a chapel and a hospital of the Holy Cross.[4] And that the gild or fraternity of the Holy Cross, together with the hospital, had come into existence within half a century of the founding of the borough is clearly shown by two deeds now in the possession of the corporation. One, of about 1235, records a grant of lands 'to the Hospital of Jesus Christ and the Holy Cross of Stratford'; the other, attributed to the early thirteenth century, states that 'William Wade of Stratford' (one of the burgesses in the 1251–2 survey) granted the rent from a house in Henley Street 'to the Fraternity of the Holy Cross, for the souls of himself and his ancestors'.[5] A later roll of grants confirmed by Edward I in 1277 shows that many other burgesses listed in the 1251–2 survey gave lands, houses, or rents to the Fraternity, as John Whitesmith (holder of 4 burgages and 2 half-burgages) gave the rent of a piece of ground 'whereon Robert Billesley built a solar', between the land of John and Robert (holder of 1 burgage and 1 half-burgage).[6]

[1] *Victoria County History of Warwickshire*, III, *ut supra*, 222; the White Cross is mentioned in a thirteenth century deed (Calendar, *ut supra*, deed of *c.* 1275), as 'is the street where hay is sold' *(ibid c. 1270)*.
[2] *Victoria County History of Warwickshire*, III, *ut supra*, 224, quoting a deed of 1235.
[3] *The Itinerary of John Leland*, ed. Lucy Toulmin Smith, II (1908), 49–50, cf. 27.
[4] *Victoria County History of Warwickshire*, III, *ut supra*, 247, 276.
[5] Calendar of Medieval Records, *ut supra*, deed of *c.* 1235 and of the early thirteenth century.
[6] *Ibid.*, grant confirmed in 1277.

Thus within half a century of the borough's creation a new and vigorous community had developed, recruited from the surrounding countryside, for which it provided goods and services and a convenient market centre, and united in a fraternity which watched over the interests of its members in this world and the next. The earliest extant ordinances of the gild or fraternity of the Holy Cross, dating from 1269, come to us from ecclesiastical sources. They therefore reveal nothing of the part it must have played then, as it certainly did later, in the ordinary secular affairs of the borough. But they do tell us of its religious and charitable activities, such as were properly associated with the term fraternity, for these came within the jurisdiction of the church. Thus we learn of the chapel, where masses were to be said for the souls of all the faithful departed, as well as for those of members and their ancestors, and of the hospital with its common dormitory, refectory, and infirmary; here aid was to be given not only to needy brothers and sisters of the fraternity and to poor priests of the diocese, but also to 'the poor of the town'.[1] Stratford-upon-Avon had created its own welfare services. Perhaps its school also had already been established, though positive evidence of this dates only from the late thirteenth century.[2]

The London School of Economics and Political Science

1 J. Harvey Bloom, *The Register of the Gild of the Holy Cross, The Blessed Mary and St. John the Baptist of Stratford-upon-Avon* (1907), v.

2 Levi Fox, *op.cit*, 88.