

## **England in 1672**

Since the Stuarts in the person of Charles II were restored to the throne in 1660 , the ruling of England was a compromise between the returning monarch with his noble friends , and the Parliament which had become used to power during Cromwell 's Commonwealth . The country was at war worldwide with its great rival Holland , and was engaged in the troubles across the Atlantic which would result in American Independence . Money was needed to carry out the country 's national obligations , and , then as now , politicians were ever on the lookout for novel ways of levying taxes on those most likely to be able to pay . The Hearth Tax , based on the number of chimneys in, and therefore the size of , a house was doubtless deemed a fair levy by the powers of the day -- likely to raise money successfully and be easy to administer .

It was clearly aimed at those with property , and therefore presumably money. Just who they were can be seen in the following passage taken from G.M. Trevelyan 's ' History of England ' pp. 433 - 6 ,which gives a picture of people of the sort likely to have been living in Bramham in the mid - 1600 's [ i.e. just before the coming of the Lane Fox dynasty ] .

The tables which follow give a fascinating picture of aspects of Bramham compared with other towns and villages in the area ; they are well worth studying.

BR. MHAM		HEARTH TAX RETURNS 1672		THORP ARCH	
Name	Chimneys	Name	Chimneys	Name	Chimneys
Nich. Els Leake	10	Thomas Hill Cler.	4	Richard Brewerton	6
Oglethorp Hall	10	Marmaduke Shepherd	1	Widdow Smith	1
Bramhan Biggin (10 not yet finished)	17	John Clough	3	Mathew Elsworth	1
Mr Edwd Beale	9	James Powell	3	Thomas Jackson	5
Hope Hall	5	Thomas Darley	1	Thomas Farrand	1
Willm Smith	1	Mary Middleton	poore 1	Robert Marshall	1
Thomas Senyor	3	Thomas Sanior	1	Christopher Fearn	2
John Dickinson sen.	1	Thomas Richardson	ded 1	Henry Hall	2
Christopher Powell	3	John Richinson	1	Ann Scott widd	1
William Clough jun.	1	Robt Knapton sen.	4	George Marshall	1
more a Smithy	1	Francis Wilkinson	poore 1	John Wiseman	1
Willm Powell	1	Richard Stables	1	John Pickering	1
Widdow Powell	1	Mary Martin not finished	1	James Hopwood	1
Henry Shippen	1	Robt. Husband Coll.		John Hopwood	2
Widdow Senyor	1	Robt. Faireburne Const.		Thomas Bowill	1
Willm Denton	1			John Foster	2
John Hopwood	2			Toby Dickinson	2
John Fawcitt	1	<b>CLIFFORTH</b>		Arthur Turton	1
Willm Middleton	1	John Bealby Esq.	10	Joseph Wardman	1
Richard Smith	2	more not yet finished	2	Christopher Foster	1
John Powell	2	Mr Pulleane	4	Christopher Scott	1
Richard Bustard	1	James Stead	3	Robert Wilson	1
Robert Fairbarne	1	more 2 & wth Smithy	2	Thomas Hill	1
Henry Fowler	1	not yet finished		Willm Hopwood	1
Christopher Witton	1	Richard Nicholson	1	Mr George Procter a distress	3
Willm Brighton	1	Francis Kilner	1	Robt Dobson	2
Richard Stables	2	Thomas Tompson or John	1	Widdow Marshall	1
Christopher Hill	1	Richard Nelson	1	Toby Dickinson	1
Willm Snawe	1	Abraham Wright	1	Thomas Farrand	1
Edward Knapton	1	Robert Morley	1	Richard Tindall	1
William Harpan	3	George Reighton	1	Marke Younge	1
Richard Starverley	1	Willm Prewilley	1	Christopher Nelson	1
Thomas Tate	2	Willm Richardson	2	Robert Williamson	1
Thomas Lee	1	Jane Bustard	1	Willm Piewes	1
John Bateson	1	Widd Duffield	ded 1	Marke Wilson	1
Christopher Bustard	2	Ellin Calverley	1	Willm Selby	1
John Pettey	1	Thomas Procter	3	Thomas Bellases	1
Widd Coulton	poore 1	John Dell	ded 1	Richard Nowill	1
		Thomas Knapton	1	Robert Elsworth	1
Richard Clough	2	Willm Scott	1	Ellias Pickard No distress	3
George Burley	1	Richard Knapton	1	John Bell	1
James Dalleby	1	George Hopwood & forge	4		
John Smith	3	James Cooper	1	Robt Husband } Collectors	
Thomas Senyor jun	1	John Cundall	1	George Waineman } Collectors	
Willm Fairburne sen	1	Willm Hopwood	2	John Pickering. Const.	
John Jackson	2	Margt: Knapton widdow	1		
Mathew: Widd Gibson	ded/ 1	Mathew Lee	1		
		Peter Selby	1		
John Farrar	4	John Fairburne	1		
New Milne	1	Sir Tho: Gascoyne	1		
Slate Milne	1	Richard Nicholson	1		
Christopher Bowman	2	Richard Powell	2		
Willm Armstronge	1	Willm Knapton	1		
Willm Willan	1	Richard Bealby	poore 2		
Willm Fairburne	1	Ann Scott	1		
Thomas Houseman	1	John Atkinson	1		
Widdow Richardson	1	Sir Thomas Gascoyne	2		
John Smith jun.	4	Thomas Rigton	1		
Willm Clough	1	Francis Vevars	1		
Thomas Tompson	1	Willm Abbey	1		
Thomas Dodgson	1	George Gurley	1		
		Robt Husband Coll.			
		John Faireburne Const.			

Such were the towns of England from Elizabeth to George III. And, such as they were, they housed only a small part of the population, for under the Tudors and Stuarts the crafts and manufactures were increasingly carried on, not in the corporate towns but in the country. Many villages and hamlets manufactured for the national and international market. The mediæval isolation of the peasant was broken down, and he came in contact in his own village with men of various occupations dealing much with distant shires. Community of trade drew the whole nation together, sharpening the wits and broadening the outlook of the villager.

The new agriculture and the enclosures had upon the whole increased the number and importance of the well-to-do tenant-farmers and freehold yeomen. Thomas Fuller, writing at the outbreak of the Civil War, thus describes the yeomen :

The yeomanry is an estate of people almost peculiar to England. France and Italy are like a die which hath no points between sink and ace, nobility and peasantry. . . . The yeoman wears russet clothes, but makes golden payment, having tin in his buttons and silver in his pockets. . . . In his own country he is a main man in juries. He seldom goes abroad and his credit stretches further than his travel. He goes not to London, but *se-defendendo*, to save himself a fine, being returned of a Jury, where seeing the King once, he prays for him ever afterwards.

The forty-shilling freeholder, who included many of this sturdy class, enjoyed the parliamentary franchise in the shire elections. The independent part played by the yeomen for King Charles' cause in the West, and for the Parliament in Hampden's Buckinghamshire and Cromwell's East Anglia, showed how far the better class of English peasant had progressed out of the ignorance and dependence of the serfs over whom the Norman Barons had ridden roughshod.

The small squires, freehold yeomen, leasehold farmers and craftsmen formed together a large part of the rural population. But there existed also an agricultural proletariat. Towards the close of the Stuart period the publicist Gregory King surmised that the 'cottagers and paupers' considerably outnumbered the yeoman freeholders and well-to-do tenant farmers, and slightly outnumbered the 'labouring people and out-servants.' All is extremely uncertain, local variations were infinite, and there are no figures available except such guesswork as Gregory King's. But it is probable that there was a large class of poor folk in every village, part of it landless and working for hire, part of it living from hand to mouth on a few strips in the common field, or on pasture rights or squattings on the common waste. Then, too, there was the nomad population of the roads and lanes,—the campers in the dingle, the tinker and wandering craftsman, the gipsy from far lands, the highwayman and footpad, the ballad-monger, the quack and the showman,—a world of infinite variety, entertainment and romance, which Shakespeare loved in its prime, and George Borrow portrayed on the eve of its fading away before the remorseless regimentation of modern 'improvement.'

Every class of the rural community found an additional means of livelihood and enjoyment in the snaring of hares, wild-fowl and rabbits in places where no one then cared to preserve them, besides more adventurous poaching in warrens and parks.

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England under the Stuarts was not sharply divided between an urban and a rural way of life. Since the feudal life of the manor had disappeared and municipal life had become decadent, village and town were both governed by Parliamentary Statutes rather than by local legislation, and were harmoniously related in a single economic system of national dimensions.<sup>2</sup>

Yet in spite of the political and economic unity of England, means of locomotion were still so primitive, and the ill-tended roads so execrable, that provincial differences in speech, custom and character still gave picturesqueness and piquancy to life. The absence of a newspaper press and of a standardized and universal system of education enabled local traditions to survive. Shire differed from shire, town from town and hamlet from hamlet. There was more individuality then than now, at least in the external expression of character.

Men and women were widely scattered through the island, thrown back upon themselves during frequent hours of solitude and isolation ; each had space to grow, like the spreading oak tree alone in the field, without troubling too much to conform to any conventional pattern. It was 'every man in his humour.' The typical economic life of the time, as conducted by yeoman, farmer and small craftsman, left the individual more unfettered and self-dependent than he had been in the corporate life of mediæval burgher and serf, or has become in our own day under great capitalist and labour combinations.

But such individualism, greater than is possible in the crowded world of to-day, was qualified by the greater subjection of women to men. It was still the exception for women of the upper and middle class to choose their own husbands, and when the husband had been assigned he was lord and master, so far at least as law and custom could make him.