

## Chapter 5. Industry and Agriculture in Eccleston, 1600-1750

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*Editors' note: The extracts from inventories reproduced in this paper have not been checked against the original documents.*

The township of Eccleston is a largely rural area between the two urban centres of St Helens and Prescott, in the north east and south west respectively. The western boundary of the township separates Eccleston from Knowsley Park and borders Rainhill on the south east and Windle on the north. Despite its proximity to urban and industrial areas, the township has remained surprisingly unaffected by modern developments.

During the period 1600-1750 rural industry or proto-industrial activities were closely bound up with the agricultural economy of the area. Although this was more generally a period of great change, expansion and development, the emergence of industry as a contribution to the local economy came later in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and is, in Eccleston, closely connected with the two adjacent towns. The eastern area of the township became an industrial zone during the 19<sup>th</sup> century as part of St Helens' urban growth.

Apart from the peat mosses in the north, most of Eccleston was suitable for fairly intensive arable agriculture. The soils developed from boulder clay supported crops of wheat, oats and barley, and stock grazing also played an important part in the economy. The enclosure of the mosslands during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries also added to the land available for grazing.

Historical sources for Eccleston in the period of study are fairly good and, to a limited extent, they permit an examination of the relationship between agriculture and industry. For example, the Hearth Tax returns for 1662 provide a relatively comprehensive record for the township in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century but though they name householders and the number of hearths in each dwelling, occupations are only given where two people share the same name, such as William Webster (smith) and William Webster (mason). Further information can be obtained, however, by relating the hearth tax returns to 17<sup>th</sup>-century leases and probate records (see below). Most of the available sources come from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, however, and

the detail for this period is therefore much greater than that for the earlier period.

Parish registers are a most important source for details of occupation before the first census of 1841. Eccleston lay within the parish of Prescott but a chapel had been built before the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century in Windle for the convenience of the local population. Baptisms, burials and marriages in Eccleston are, therefore, registered both at St Mary's, Prescott and at St Helens chapel, where separate registers were started in 1713. The St Helens register provides valuable information for the period of industrial growth between this date and the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The development after 1750 is very clear. Between 1713 and 1750 only five glass makers are recorded; after 1750 (up to 1812) there are forty-six. Other occupations such as bottle making and brass founding attest to the rise of industry.

Estate rentals and surveys are another valuable source of information. The Scarisbrick Papers contain over 100 leases made on the Eccleston estate between 1605 and 1786 (Lancs RO DDSc/12/6-133). They give details both of the tenants and the land which they leased. Many give the occupations of the tenants which vary from mariner to schoolmaster and include the whole range of agricultural and industrial workers. An estate survey executed around 1720 for the Scarisbrick lands in Eccleston gives the name of each tenant, the size of the holding and rent, and also records the size of individual buildings on the property, expressed as the total number of 'bays' or units of which the building was composed:

'William Hulme one house 3 bays one barne and shipon 4 bays one foulde and one orchard and ...'

Though they are representative only of a small section of society as a whole, probate inventories have been a major contribution and starting point in this study since they span the whole period. A considerable number refer to individuals with stated occupations, or the contents of the inventory indicate the most likely principal occupation so providing evidence for agricultural and industrial pursuits. There are, however, some constraints on the use of probate records. Many wills and inventories give no stated occupation and inference,

from the contents of an inventory, can be misleading. For example, the inventories of individuals known from leases to be potters, may contain no details of equipment indicative of this occupation. Conversely the inventory of an individual named as a potter may indicate that he also owned substantial farming equipment and stock, and that this contributed a major part of his livelihood. The poorer members of society, such as colliers, are not represented in the probate records. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, in particular, the values cited in the inventories are on average high, many rising to over £50 or even £100. By contrast, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century a large proportion of inventories are valued at less than £5. This, however, cannot be taken as an indication of general economic decline since the more numerous records for the 18<sup>th</sup> century cover a greater cross-section of local society. The use of probate records is, therefore, limited but can provide very illuminating detailed examples.

The earliest complete picture of Eccleston township can be seen from the records in a combination of the first census returns of 1841 and the tithe map of 1840. The tithe schedule describes each piece of land, its state of cultivation, area and rent, the names of the tenant and owner. The census of the following year gives information about the occupations of all the inhabitants which helps to complete the picture of the economy. The development of industry and agriculture as different aspects of the economy can be traced back to the social and economic changes which start to become apparent during the 17<sup>th</sup> century and were to accelerate in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This study is concerned with an analysis of the records for one township in order to understand some of the processes in the growth towards an industrial economy, and how and why it emerged in this area.

### ***Farming in Eccleston***

Eccleston today has more land used for grazing than any other township in St Helens district. The importance of dairying in the agricultural economy can be shown throughout the post-medieval period. The drained mosslands provided good pasture and there was probably a ready market for dairy products in nearby Prescot and, later, in St Helens.

More than 120 wills survive for Eccleston between 1616 and 1759 during which period over half of the individuals classified themselves as husbandmen or yeomen. Relatively few of these people have inventories of their possessions but, where inventories do exist, cattle form the chief part of the estate, heading the lists of 'goods cattles and chattels'. There are many descriptive terms for the

various ages and types of cattle: milking cows were distinguished as 'kine', 'milckyne', 'feeding cows' and 'milkcows'; young animals as 'heffers', 'stirkes', 'twinters'; some beasts would be identified by name, such as 'one cow called Tudge, one cow called Nutt'.

The value of one beast in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>-century inventories varies between £1.10s.0d. and £3.10s.0d. Though the evidence is limited, the difference in value between animals seems to reveal an economic differentiation between the 'yeoman' and the 'husbandman' and the latter would own a less valuable animal. For example, in August 1666 a husbandman's cow was valued at £1.14s.0d. and in November of the following year, a yeoman's animal was assessed at £3. Yeomen also owned more cattle than husbandmen, possessing an average of eleven and rarely less than seven. Husbandmen generally owned fewer than five animals though there are exceptions. Robert Goodman, for example, died in 1740 leaving ten calves, two cows, five stirkes and eight milk cows. The inventory was written in May which accounts for the young animals.

The dairy herd would spend the summer in the pasture or meadow, with their calves, from April until September when they would start to be brought into the shippens for the night. By October they might be lying up day and night when the weather was severe. At this time of year the barns would be stocked with hay, corn, barley and wheat. Inventories compiled between October and April testify to substantial quantities of 'fodder' stored for the cattle which were kept indoors over the winter. Richard Bushell's inventory of October 1667 records 'old wheat, barley', 'blend corn' and hay worth £36 for the winter feeding of his twenty animals. At the end of January 1707, for his sixteen animals yeoman Thomas Brown's stored produce included corn and hay valued at £17.15s.0d.

The 1720 estate survey assesses the properties of thirty-six tenants living on the Scarisbrick estate in Eccleston. Twenty-four of these tenants were recorded as having a barn. Twenty-three people had a shippen most of which had between two and five bays and accommodated about four cows in a bay. An inventory made in October 1727, after the death of Henry Blackburn (table 5.1), illustrates the variety of stock and equipment that a dairy farmer might own, although this individual was a wealthy

		£	s	d
'14 milk cows at		46	6	8
1 cush 20s.	1 bull £3 10s.	4	10	0
4 heffers £13	Stirks			
	£18 13s 4d	31	13	4
9 calfs £6 - 8s.	2 swine 40s	7	8	0
	(sic)			
4 horses £7 - 28s.	1 mare and colt			
	£7	35	0	0
corn 180 thrave 2/6d	50 load of hay			
	6/8d	39	3	4
3 carts and 2 pr	ploughs and			
wheels £5	harrows 20s.	6	0	0
Horse gears 20s.		1	0	0'

**Table 5.1:** Inventory of Henry Blackburn, yeoman, 172

yeoman leaving a considerable estate in animals, crops and personal possessions. The extract is only a portion of his inventory, which was meticulously drawn up, concerning his farming goods. They contribute about two-thirds of his total wealth of £246.10s.4d.

The inventory does not record how many stirkes he had but for a value of £18.13s.4d. there must have been at least nine. His herd was, therefore, very large, totalling around thirty-seven beasts and of good quality to judge by the value. Some of the milk which they produced was evidently made into cheese on the farm since 24 cwt. in his parlour was valued at £21.8s.0d. Since Henry Blackburn was a wealthy yeoman it is not surprising that he owned a bull, but these are rarely found except amongst the more prosperous farmers. The four horses are likely to have been draught animals since they are assessed at almost the same value as the mare and colt. Almost every farmer in Ecclestone in this period owned at least one horse, mares being the more common. Oxen rarely appear for draught except in the two inventories of yeomen Ralph Green and John Crane in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century.

Pigs are recorded in inventories throughout the period. They supplemented the owner's larder as the stocks of 'bacon and swyne grease' testify. Sheep do not appear frequently in the records and only in small flocks of about a dozen. It is interesting that these are often owned by individuals engaged in occupations other than farming (see below).

### *Alternative sources of income for the farmer*

It was very common for farmers in Ecclestone to have a second occupation with which to supplement their income. However, the information available from wills and inventories, as explained above, is

not well-defined. Where an occupation was named, it was placed prominently following the name of the deceased, and his place of abode.

'... I, Edmund Sephton of Ecclestone near Knowsley in the County of Lancaster, claypotter ...'

Problems arise when the occupation stated in a will cannot be substantiated by the evidence in an attached inventory. The clay potter mentioned above is one such example. His inventory contains seven cows, two calves, four heifers, one colt, one swine, malt, barley, oats, wheat, four hens and a duck. Discrepancies like this occur in many Ecclestone inventories of the post-medieval period arising from the fact that it was a common practice to maintain two occupations at once. It is generally possible to determine likely sources of income from the contents of an inventory. It appears that the farmer would frequently turn to a non-agricultural occupation during the winter months when his income from dairying would be greatly reduced because the cattle were being stall-fed, largely on hay. Clay pot manufacturing and spinning were two local cottage industries which were commonly undertaken in the winter. Thus Edward Sephton could be considered to be primarily a farmer since almost half of his total wealth derived from his livestock, crops and husbandry equipment. It is possible that he is called a claypotter in his inventory because that is what he was known to have been doing at the time of his death.

Clay industries appear to have been a popular second occupation since suitable clay and coal were locally available and there was a ready market, but the inventories themselves show no real evidence of the industry. To determine its extent we must rely upon those who state it as their occupation or, like Edmund Sephton, give indications in their will. Here the other indications that he was involved are mention of a 'Clay Chamber' and a 'mug cart' in his inventory and, in his will, 'the implements belonging to the potters trade' which he left, with his best suit of clothes, to his brother John. We also know that Edmund Sephton leased 6½ acres of land from Thomas Ecclestone 'with the liberty to dig clay and marl earth', for which he paid the yearly rent of 31s.7d., from 1687. Edmund Sephton died a wealthy man, leaving £297.16s.2¾d. in his inventory - an unusually large sum.

Henry Leon is more typical, leaving just £38.4s.6d. in his inventory, compiled on the 19th day of February 1688. This contains evidence of dairying and potting activities (table 5.2).

	£	s	d
'Potts at ye house and other earthen ware	2	0	0
clay in the browe	0	10	0
boards and other materials belonging to ye workhouse	0	10	0
5 caves (calves) and 4 stirkes	11	0	0
one marle (mare) and colts	4	10	0
chees press in the kitchen	0	8	0
lead weights	0	6	0'

**Table 5.2:** Inventory of Henry Leon 1688

The inventories reveal, particularly during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, that householders of yeomen and husbandmen in Ecclestone spun hemp or flax, in common with much of south Lancashire at this time. Almost every inventory contains one or more spinning wheel, sometimes called a 'sitting weel' or a 'little weel'. These were worth around a shilling each, better ones could be valued at two shillings. The inventory compiled at the death of the husbandman, William Swift, in September 1658, demonstrates this well (table 5.3). In addition to his six cattle were two horses and various crops all of which he left to his four daughters.

	£	s	d
'... two spinning wheeles	0	2	0
hempe and hempe yarn	1	4	0
hempe pulled and on the ground	1	0	0
apron wayre	3	2	0'

**Table 5.3:** Inventory of William Swift, 1658

Few of the farmers' inventories are as explicit about this secondary occupation and it was more usual to own only one spinning wheel. That flax and hemp were both grown and spun in Ecclestone is not in doubt. The description 'Hemp Yard' appears commonly in the 1720 survey. The various conditions of hemp and flax are described and quantities given in the inventories throughout the period, e.g. 'unbroken flax', 1667; 'hemp growing', 1666; 'towe' (the separated fibres of flax or hemp), 1667; 'flax and hempe yarne', 1703; '8 slippings of yarne' (skeins or hanks), 1687. It seems likely that the spun yarn would then be sold to the weaver, rather than woven into cloth on the farm itself. The inventory of James Finch, 1664, suggests that perhaps, unlike his contemporaries, he spun the yarn and then wove it into cloth. His inventory lists 'spinninge wheeles and other things' and then 'new linnen sheets and all linnen yarne' valued at £13.18s.0d. However, no looms, necessary for weaving, are mentioned in this or in any other farmers' inventories. Those who did spin flax or hemp sometimes owned considerable

amounts of linen, relative to the value of other items on the inventory. A Ralph Green, in 1667, owned linen to the value of £6, while his sheep amounted to £4 and six silver spoons to £2.2s.0d. 'Tenn pair of sheets and other linnen', belonging to John Barrow nine years later, were assessed to be the same price as his bay horse - £2.10s.0d. But on average, throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, linen in inventories was appraised at between £1 and £2.

'Fower indifferent neighbours of ye parish of Prescott' appraised the goods of 'pottermaker' Thomas Cowley in 1670, and although the inventory is incomplete (due to subsequent damage) we can assume him to have had a concern in dairy farming, and to a lesser degree spinning: his cattle, hay and swine total £11.12s.8d.; 'new linnen cloaf' and twill equal £2.17s.0d., but there are no references to his pot making in what remains of the document. The will and inventory of James Houghton of 1683, claypotter, suggests a similar diversity of interests. Listed along with cows, heifers and stirkes, corn and hay, is a workhouse possibly for clay potting. His will includes 'five yards of fustian and a parcell of Irish Linnen ... and also one spinninge wheele'. It appears that James Houghton was not only a farmer, and periodically a potter, but that the family owned a spinning wheel and produced yarn, yet Houghton died one of the poorest potters recorded. That he chose spinning and pot manufacture is significant only in as much as it indicates the extent to which these industries were on the whole local and small scale. From the little evidence available it seems conclusive that, of necessity, yeomen and husbandmen would combine their farming activities with a small trade that would provide a little extra financial help to support themselves and their families.

Conversely it is apparent that the craftsman or trader in Ecclestone also relied on farming, on a small scale, to support his livelihood. Masons, carpenters, and blacksmiths we know to have possessed several animals, especially milking cows, and to have grown fodder crops and cereals. Thus the farmer was dependent on other trades, while the trader relied also on farming. Their interdependence during this period must have been vital, for the 1720 estate survey shows that the average husbandman in Ecclestone worked a very small holding of land, often of poor quality and only recently taken in from the moors. The necessity of supplementing this livelihood led to a widespread involvement in crafts and proto-industrial activities and these resources of experience were to be drawn on in later periods. However, in the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, markets were insufficiently

developed in this area to allow many individuals to support themselves wholly from non-agricultural pursuits. It is interesting and relevant to note that the inventories of many people include aspects of money lending and borrowing, which will be referred to in detail below.

### *Non-Agricultural Occupations*

Although Ecclestone was primarily an agricultural area, as has been shown, a number of non-agricultural occupations were closely bound up with the farming. The Scarisbrick deeds for the period between 1605-1786 name a large number of tradesmen and others whose primary source of income was not in agriculture. There were thirty-nine yeomen and husbandmen, and forty individuals engaged in various other types of occupation. Twenty-one different trades were named, many of which employed only one or two people.

Those trades which might be expected to be common employed surprisingly few. For example, only one tenant was employed in glass making suggesting, perhaps, that this industry was still in its infancy<sup>62</sup>. By contrast, five were clay potters and another five were employed in shoemaking. In fact the most vital part of the economy appears to be the cloth industry. It has been shown that spinning was common to almost every household in the township. The Scarisbrick deeds name nine tenants connected with weaving and also seven tailors. This would appear to be the most significant form of cottage industry during the period studied and particularly in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Although this gives us a picture of types of occupation and the numbers employed, the figures cannot reveal the interdependence of the agriculture and industry. In order to determine the extent to which tradesmen supplemented their income from agriculture, it is necessary to turn again to the inventories. Those which have been used for this study are any which state an occupation, other than yeoman or husbandman, and those for which no occupation has been named at all. The latter group is by far the largest and so could not be ignored.

The three most valuable 17<sup>th</sup>-century inventories read more like those of wealthy yeomen than of tradesmen. When John Boardman, blacksmith, died in January 1624, he left an estate worth

£448.4s.2½d. He was a tenant of the Ecclestone estate and in 1614 he had taken out a lease on a 'messuage tenement and allotments called *Gluggsmoor* in Ecclestone'. This is situated at the south east end of the estate lands on the south side of the 'Little Dam'. Boardman paid a rent of £4 yearly, making him one of the highest-paying tenants on the estate. His smithy tools were worth £3, but this was by no means his only source of income. He owned dairy cattle (to the value of £18), as could be expected in Ecclestone, and he also farmed a proportion of his land (table 5.4).

	£	s	d
'Barlie in the mowe unthreshen and some in the garner threshen	12	0	0
Oates in the mowe unthreshen and some threshen	5	0	0
fytches unthreshen	0	3	0
Wheate in the garner	0	11	0
hay in the shipon bay	0	30	0
hay in the stable	0	33	4
3 acres of wheat on the ground	12	0	0
total	32	18	4'

**Table 5.4:** Inventory of John Boardman, blacksmith, 1624

This is a total of over £50 in arable and dairying activities which places him, by value of stock, amongst the wealthier yeomen. He also owned thirteen sheep worth £10.3s.4d. and 'Fower treene muggs of saltbutter' worth £4.6s.8d. This is the only inventory in which any reference is made to butter making. It is probable that he was also making cheese for sale although at the time of the inventory he only owned £1 10s. worth. He had the customary spinning wheels, and 'yarne spune and some unspune' worth 2s., probably for domestic use. Despite the strong emphasis on agriculture, it would not be true to say that the smithy provided a secondary occupation, since his income from trade is suggested in the inventory; he is owed £15.9s.5½d. for 'work done'. Money lending also provided a source of income. On his death John Boardman was owed £320.15s.10d. It was common for the wealthier yeomen and traders to lend out large sums of money. George Cockerham, yeoman, was owed £343 in 1693 by 75 debtors. Debts listed in inventories are generally divided into money owed 'by bond', a legally binding agreement, and with or without 'speciality' – a verbal agreement by which repayment was by no means guaranteed. The inventory of Edward Gee, clerk (1660) provides an example (table 5.5).

<sup>62</sup> Though evidence has been found for glass-making at Haughton Green, near Manchester, in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, and a glass-making site at Bickerstaffe, near Ormskirk, may be of comparable date, Ruth Hurst Vose has noted that only two glass houses, one near Warrington and the other near Liverpool, were listed in 1696 (Hurst Vose, 1995, 2).

	£	s	d
'in debts are looked on as to be desperate or never to be recovered			
from Mr Brown (...) by bond	138	9	4
from Mr Raymond by bond	10	0	0
a legacy from one Mr Gee in Manchester	10	0	0
from John Ogden	0	7	0'

**Table 5.5:** Inventory of Edward Gee, clerk, 1660

During the 17<sup>th</sup> century the inventories of tradesmen show a consistent reliance on agriculture. Daniel Winstanley (died April 1683) was a mason, also owning a cheese press and spinning gear, and with more than adequate agricultural interests (table 5.6).

	£	s	d
'two kine one twinter one sterke one calfe	10	0	0
in hay	0	00	5
eleaven sheep	1	10	0
in oate meal	1	10	0
in barly	0	06	0'

**Table 5.6:** Inventory of Daniel Winstanley, 1683

The sheep are an interesting addition and also appear in John Boardman's inventory. Sheep flocks are not common in Ecclestone; in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, three yeomen only are recorded with sheep and two in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They appear with more frequency in the inventories of traders with agricultural interests. It is possible that some of these wealthier individuals were experimenting with sheep farming for wool for the cloth industry. The average husbandman would not have had sufficient capital to invest in such a venture and, indeed, the wool industry never became well established in the township.

There are very few 17<sup>th</sup>-century inventories which indicate self-sufficiency in non-agricultural occupations, as compared with the 18<sup>th</sup> century when these begin to achieve independence from farming. Thomas Gorton (died 1672) was a joiner without any agricultural interests and one of the poorest individuals with an inventory in the earlier period. His 'worketoules belonging to his trade' were worth £1.7s.0d. and 'couper timber' and 'Ashwood' were worth 15s. and 6s.6d. respectively. Out of an estate worth only £10, his clothing was valued at £2 and 'all his books' at £1, the remainder being in personal and household goods. A miller, John Barwick, who died in May 1676, left an estate without any agricultural interests, as might be expected, since milling presumably formed a full-

time occupation. His inventory consists solely of his personal goods and in fact gives no indication of his trade.

The 18<sup>th</sup>-century inventories show a different picture and a much more regular pattern starts to emerge. Over half of the named non-agricultural occupations are in weaving. John Howard, whose inventory is valued at £28.4s.9d., leased a piece of land from the Ecclestone estate in 1708 (DDSc 12/97). The land was a messuage and tenement near Ecclestone Gate which has not been precisely located. The land can be traced back through his family. William Howard had taken the lease in 1662 and it had been previously held by Frances Howard (spinster). The next tenant was Henry Howard, possibly the son of William, and after this it passed to John. The rent in 1662 was 6s.0d. This rent is not exceptionally low by the standards of rents on the estate, but falls at the lower end of a rent group which was growing in numbers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The land was not of a very high quality and was not used primarily for crops. It was not unusual to find yeomen and husbandmen paying even lower rents for poor marginal land around and on the mossland. John Howard's inventory contains evidence of his trade although no cloth or yarn is mentioned (table 5.7).

	£	s	d
'for worke loomes	1	10	0
2 loom sole in the shippon	0	2	0
four milk cowee	10	5	0
two twinters	2	10	0
stirke	0	13	4'

**Table 5.7:** Inventory of John Howard

He owned a cheese press as did most households, but there is little evidence that he farmed the land. No husbandry tools are mentioned but there is £2.10s.0d. worth of hay. This is winter fodder for his cattle (the inventory was drawn up in January) which could possibly have been bought at market. He owned a few cattle for domestic usage, enough to supplement his income from weaving. This inventory seems to be fairly typical of the 18<sup>th</sup>-

century craftsman<sup>63</sup>.

<sup>63</sup> Howard's Farm, on Howard's Lane in Ecclestone, perhaps preserves the family's presence though, if so, the property passed to John Rigby and the house was partly rebuilt. A datestone bearing Rigby's name and the date 1732 was originally set into the brick wall of the west gable. This part of the house had been added to a sandstone structure, itself incorporating a timber-framed building (Philpott, 2000, 55-57).

	£	s	d
In ye chamber over the shopp			
2 chaff beds and furniture	1	2	0
4 seives 3 sacks and twillsheet	0	6	0
In ye shopp one old bed and furniture	0	10	0
an old pair of looms and furniture	0	15	0
in trine wear	0	16	0
in brass	0	17	6
in pewter	0	16	4
3 cows 2 stirkes and a little calf	9	0	0
for a little mare	3	0	0
an old pair of wheelles and an old cart	0	13	0
collar hoarnes and other odd implements in ye stable together with an old plow and harrow	0	5	0'

John Travers, who died in June 1709 leaving goods worth £28.7s.4d., was also a linen weaver. His lease is described in the Scarisbrick Rentals (Lancs RO DDSc/12/56) of 1681. The land has not been located but he paid £21 for a 'messuage and tenements and all rights' for a yearly rent of 32 shillings, which at that period was amongst the highest rents. His inventory is divided into rooms and includes the parlour, the parlour chamber, the shop, the chamber over the shop, the dwelling house and also a stable. The chamber over the shop contained a 'twillsheet', a loosely woven fabric, but there is no other mention of cloth in the inventory except for in the household where there is 'linnen' worth £1.15s.0d.

John Travers' agricultural activities were similar to those of John Howard. He owned dairy cattle but there is no evidence for arable farming, except for a plough. This, apparently, was unused since in June it could be expected that there would be crops either in the ground or in store, and none are mentioned (table 5.8).

The emphasis on dairy cattle and the lack of arable is a common feature of this group. Thomas Fogg, who died in 1732 with an inventory worth £448, was also a linen webster. His inventory is interesting because while he had due debts of £36, and owned almost £100 worth of yarn and cloth, his dairy herd comprised only two kine and three calves. Neither did he supplement his income by growing arable crops. The description of the yarn is

more detailed in this inventory than most (table 5.9).

'English Linin yarne			£47 15s 0d
Irish yarne	9 6 0		tot £57 1s 0d
Linin cloath	15 18 0		
Linin cloath at working	20 00 0		tot 36 18 0
			tot 93 18(sic) 0'

**Table 5.9:** Inventory of Thomas Fogg, linen webster, 1732

His major occupation is clearly in weaving and he appears to have made no effort to develop a yeoman life-style as did his counterparts in the 17th century.

At the poorer end of the economic scale, some tradesmen did still depend on agriculture out of necessity. Peter Arrowsmith, carpenter, who died in 1708, owned tools to the value of £5 and farmed his land as well as keeping cattle (table 5.10).

	£	s	d
'In corn	7	0	0
In Hay	4	0	0
A plow a harrow and geare for a drawing horse	0	10	6
Fower milk cows one calf one mare one swine and poultry	13	0	9'

Some wills and inventories, mainly of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century, give no details of occupations. The values of these inventories varies from £6 to £165. Half are the property of women, widows and spinsters, whose estates vary in value from that of Mary Crane in 1677 at £9.10s.0d. to Elizabeth Cooper's estate of £154.16s.0d. in 1664. An interesting feature of this group of wills without named occupations is, as well as the regular occurrence of

	£	s	d
three oxen £10 10s. 0d. ten cows £25	37	3	4
A bull £1 13 4			
two bullocks coming three year old £4			
two heiffers one bullock coming 2 £3 10	10	10	0
seven calfs £3			
4 sow and 5 pig £1 7s 0d two hogs £1 4s 0d.	2	11	0
18 sheep at 2s/8 a peece £2 8s 0d.			
one horse and one mare at £2 10s 0d.	4	18	0
140 shrave of barley yeilding (sic) 140 measures at 2/3	15	15	0
8 measures of barley 2/3 18 rightly shrave of wheat £15	15	18	0
30 load of hay £12			
halfe a load of vetches 6/8	12	6	8
due from Henry Pickmere	£1	1s	6d
" " Mr Thomas Eaton	0	19	0
" " John Cotgreave	0	15	0
" " John Dale	2	13	8
Tot	£5	8(sic)	2'

Table 5.11: Inventory of Henry Garner 1682

spinning gear, the farming of sheep. Several of the inventories read like those of wealthy yeomen. Henry Garner died in October 1682 leaving an estate of £165.17s.11d. which included the items shown (table 5.11).

John Woodcock's inventory (June 1681) is similar. The total value of his possessions amounted to £127.6s.6d. and the only major difference between the two is that Woodcock was not owed any money on his death. To judge by the quantity of cloth he owned he was apparently involved in textiles (table 5.12).

	£	s	d
'16 yards of woollen cloth	1	12	0
10 slipins of linen yarne	0	8	0
5 pair of flaxen sheets	1	5	0
9 pair of canvas sheets	1	7	0
6 flaxen napkins and 1 table cloth	0	5	0
4 flaxen pillow beares	0	4	0
10 redding napkins	0	3	4

Table 5.12: Inventory of John Woodcock 1681

Generally through the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, there was a movement by craftsmen and tradesmen towards an independence from farming. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a larger number of individuals were making a modest income from other activities with a greater willingness to trust the market as a prime source of income. Although most craftsmen and tradesmen still kept stock for domestic use, the dependence on arable farming seems to have reduced considerably by the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

However, none of these occupations falls within the category of organised industry. All could be, and were, carried out on a family basis or as 'cottage' industry. None of the local traditional crafts of clay and cloth working was to be transformed by the industrial revolution and these had almost died out altogether by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

### The developing industry

During the post-medieval period, industry in Ecclestone largely took the form of small-scale production to provide for local needs. It did not become a significant source of income until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century the pattern which industry was to take had become clear: the urban sector had started to develop and the major industries were established. By using Ecclestone's census returns of 1841 it is possible to see which industries were to become the largest employers. The population at this time amounted to c.6,000 individuals of whom the majority were employed in watch making. Agriculture was the second largest occupation, followed by glass manufacture and coal mining. However, though expected to have been fairly large, the clay and cloth industries did not provide much employment with but forty clay potters and only ten individuals engaged in weaving or spinning (table 5.13). From the late 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the steam-powered mills of south-east and central Lancashire were to become the focus of the textile industry.

Occupations	People
Watch making	205
Agriculture	195
Glass manufacture	113
Coal mining	112
Clay potting	40
Weaving and spinning	10

Table 5.13: Occupations in 1841

### Cotton

There are so few engaged in the cotton trade because in 1840 the cotton mill in Ecclestone had closed. It had been built in 1784-6 by Thomas and Richard Greenall on land leased from Basil Thomas Ecclestone. The partners erected a water-frame spinning factory with four floors, twenty-four spinning frames, five carding frames, two combing frames, three roving frames and two drawing frames. The machinery was turned by a water mill which had necessitated the creation of a channel (the 'Cotton Cut') at a cost of about £1,000, from

the Dams on the demesne near Ecclestone Hill. The yarn depressions at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century resulted in closure of the factory in 1793. It was reopened in 1800 only to close again 40 years later. Greenalls' ledgers reveal that sales were in small quantities of a few bundles at a time, obviously to small-scale 'putters-out' on the domestic pattern (Barker and Harris, 1954, 120).

### *Watch making*

The development of watch making in the 19<sup>th</sup> century is interesting. Ecclestone's industry was built up in the shadow of Prescott, the centre of the watch and clock making trade in England. Individual parts were made to a high standard in specialised workshops throughout the district. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, trade was being lost to the cheaper factory produced watches of Switzerland and America and the industry was in decline. Although in Ecclestone it was clearly still important in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, little evidence has been found to suggest that it was ever of more than local significance. A watchmaker's house still stands on Portico Lane to the south of Scholes Hall. It retains a long gallery window on the first floor of a lean-to which would have housed the former workshop. However, this building is not likely to date from earlier than the 19<sup>th</sup> century. No leases or probate records give occupations such as 'watch maker' or 'tool maker', although one Jonathan Pearson who died in 1725 is described as a 'boddy-maker' and may, perhaps, have been engaged in making clock cases. His inventory contains 'one clock £1 10s 0d', but no other evidence of his trade. Clocks commonly appear in the inventories of the wealthier individuals in the area in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and are valued quite highly.

The Scarisbrick leases do not cover the Portico area where the watch and clock making industry appears to have developed which, perhaps, indicates that the industry was not an occupation of the tenants of this estate. The lack of evidence for watch-making in wills or inventories is less easy to explain. It is possible that, like other crafts, the making of parts was put out as part-time work but never on a sufficiently large-scale to be significant enough to appear in the probate records of the individuals concerned.

### *Glass and coal*

The glass and coal industries employed an almost equal number of people in 1841. St Helens is famous for its glass industry which developed into a large enterprise, using local coal and sand resources, with the opening of the British Plate Glass Company in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup>

century. A lease in the Scarisbrick deeds between a glass maker, John Leaf, and Thomas Ecclestone, made in 1708, is the earliest reference to the industry.<sup>64</sup> There are no inventories from which to gain additional information. However, later evidence is found in the parish registers and, between 1725-1734, six glass makers were named increasing to fifty-three between 1788-1812. Glass making was clearly established by the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and was rapidly expanding as an industry in the second half.

Evidence for coal mining in Ecclestone in the post-medieval period is poor but it seems likely that small-scale open cast working was carried on wherever the coal was accessible. A colliery is marked on the First Edition Ordnance Survey six inch map of 1848 at Gillars Green where on an earlier estate plan of c.1770 the field is called 'Coal Pit Hey', suggesting that extraction had been going on for perhaps some time. The coal accounts for Gillars Green for 1754-1757 (preserved at Lancs RO) deal only with the price of coal and routine affairs. Two colliers in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Robert Tyrer and Thomas Southern, rented land from Thomas Ecclestone on his estate. In a lease of 1665, concerning Denton's tenement in Scholes, the right to dig and take coals is specified. It seems probable that before the need for large quantities of coal to support factory-based industry, coal was extracted on an *ad hoc* basis by tenants and land owners on whose land it was available, as and when it was required. This may account for the lack of evidence for colliers in the records for the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Their absence from the probate records, even in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, may be due to poverty. Since they appear in the Census returns of 1841, a large number of coal miners appear to have lived and worked in Ecclestone.

### *Summary*

Ecclestone in the post-medieval period was a rural community with a small and scattered population that made its living from the land. Farming appears to have been based primarily on dairying, providing a surplus of products for market. Crops were grown as fodder for livestock and for domestic consumption and there appears to have been little

<sup>64</sup> The Leaf family apparently owned a glass house in Warrington and, in 1688, they leased a property with a glass house, probably at Glasshouse Farm in Sutton, a township bordering Ecclestone. Glass was also made at Prescott and Thatto Heath in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century (Hurst Vose, 1995, 2). When the La Rochefoucauld brothers visited Warrington in 1785 they found a substantial glass-making industry with about 30 workmen employed in the process (Scarfe, 1995, 83).

surplus available for sale. Apart from the few wealthy yeoman farmers, the average husbandman farmed a small plot of land, sometimes isolated and of poor quality. It therefore benefited these individuals to carry out seasonal work of other kinds. Naturally they looked towards the local resources of clay, coal, hemp and flax to practise potting, spinning and weaving. Some individuals were able (or forced by circumstances) to depend primarily on non-agricultural occupations for a living but, until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, most maintained their interests in farming as well. However, well before the development of factory-based industry, many individuals in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century were moving away from the agricultural base.

To classify the non-agricultural pursuits, such as clay potting, as industry can be misleading. Here, clay potting was confined to individuals manufacturing vessels on the farm for a very localised market. The spinning of hemp and flax by nearly every cottager in Ecclestone up to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century was again only part of south Lancashire's scattered productivity. The collapse of the short-lived factory-based production of cloth appears to have brought this interest to an end. The mass production of pottery developed in the adjacent townships of Sutton and Prescott (*see J Merseyside Archaeol Soc 5*) and presumably drew on the expertise of the country potters of Ecclestone but no major industry developed in Ecclestone itself. The basis of 19<sup>th</sup>-century industrial development in Prescott and St Helens was coal, which had not until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century been exploited on any scale. This naturally shaped the development towards heavier industry and away from the craft-based trades. In themselves, the markets of the growing centres of St Helens and Prescott became a factor in the survival of Ecclestone's rural economy so that, despite a proportion of the population being drawn into the towns, the agriculture of the township was revitalised by the demands of the urban industrial sector.

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### Abbreviations.

Lancs RO	Lancashire Record Office
Liv RO	Liverpool Record Office