

ECONOMIC HISTORY: INDUSTRY AND TRADES

Of the wide range of trades and industries practiced in Taunton food processing and cloth making are probably the oldest and dominated the town's economy for centuries. Baking, brewing, spinning, weaving, tanning, sawing, shoemaking, dressmaking, tailoring, and smithing were important industries from the Middle Ages. Even before the railway arrived Taunton had good transport links and access to markets and raw materials. In 1821 of 1,706 families 1,281 were engaged in trade, manufacture or craft.¹ Most industry in Taunton was home-based even the cloth industry until the advent of the silk mills and many journeyman and apprentices lived with their employers. Children were apprenticed by their parents or the parish. Woollen cloth, leather goods and other manufactured items were produced by the outworker system rather than in factories even in the 19th century and many workers based in rural areas were dependent on Taunton capitalists and employers. Craftsmen had workshops in their backyards including forges and saw benches where they and their employees would work.²

Some industries were created by gifted designers and inventors like cabinet maker John Steevens, engineer Walter Easton, electrician Francis Murray Newton and car maker James Beech. Early factories have not survived but silk mills were generally clean and heated and provided cooking facilities for workers. Later, shirt and collar factories provided sanitary and refreshment facilities for their mainly female workforce and in the years before 1914 many factories were rebuilt with more attention to light, ventilation and regular inspection. However, 523 factories and workshops were registered in the borough c. 1915 and only 136 factory inspections were carried out.³ The food industry was increasingly mechanised

¹ *Census* (1821).

² SHC, A/ADR,box4.

³ SHC, A/DIF/95/32.

including processed meat and confectionary amid greater concern for hygiene. In the 1960s and 1970s more than 800 people worked in food processing plants in Taunton.⁴

The number of factories and workshops registered for inspection had fallen to 181 in 1952 but rose to 243 by 1972.⁵ Large numbers of small workshops and factories were scattered through the town especially near the railway but by the late 20th century industrial estates were located along the south side of Priorswood Road and at Cornishway in Bishops Hull.⁶

FOOD AND DRINK

Baking

In the Middle Ages bakers paid customary dues to the manor but King John sent his own wheat and baker to superintend the bread baking for his visit in 1205 and two were employed to bake for the bishop's visit in 1218.⁷ Bakers had stalls in the market and bread shops next to the market were recorded in 1305.⁸ Bread was checked by the breadweighers and from the late 13th century bakers were heavily fined for underweight bread, 12 in 1296—7 paying £1 7s.⁹ A bakery in the Three Cups was licenced in 1565 to make horsebread but in 1570 bakers complained that four innkeepers baked.¹⁰ Bakehouses were common and a threat of fire. As bread was brought for sale on the market by rural bakers at least in the early 17th century it would appear that town bakers could not meet demand.¹¹ In 1613 a woman was described as a 'great baker' but her house was rotten and she was ordered to build a stone chimney.¹² In 1652 a baker was accused of keeping a common bakehouse having made no provision for

⁴ Kelly's *Dir. Taunton* (1957), 356; SHC, A/AWT/1; A/APN/2/6; D/PC/stapg/7/3.

⁵ SHC, D/B/ta/4/22/1 (1952).

⁶ OS Map 1:2500, SOM. ST 225 SE (1969 edn) in SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/211/9424

⁷ SHC, T/PH/win 1217—18, 1334—5; BL, Add. MS 30289 (24).

⁸ SHC, T/PH/win 1305, 1320—1.

⁹ SHC, T/PH/win 1285—6, 1287—8, 1296—7, 1298—9; DD/SP/49 (Apr. 1597).

¹⁰ SHC, DD/MT/1/33; DD/SP/48 (1570).

¹¹ SHC, DD/SP/50 (Apr. 1613).

¹² SHC, DD/SP/50 (Dec. 1613).

safe storage of fuel.¹³ Few pauper children were apprenticed to the and. a husbandman accused in 1630 of baking without having been apprenticed was still baking in 1654.¹⁴ In 1719 the bakehouse at Pool Wall Mills was let for £8 a year.¹⁵

In 1798 bakers claimed the assize of bread was outdated as not relating to the type of bread most used and not allowing for the costs of grinding and baking or the high duty on salt. They objected to the seizing of three-day old bread for being underweight, when it would have lost moisture. Their attempt to establish a bakers company did not succeed and in 1799 seven bakers were fined for underweight bread.¹⁶ A baker who went bankrupt in 1815 owed £5 for flour bought at Bradford mills.¹⁷ In 1820 14 bakers were on the electoral register and in 1824 the flour and bread trade was worth £35,000 a year.¹⁸ In 1839 a large bakehouse at East Gate was one of the most highly rated premises in the area and at least eight were recorded in St James parish in 1842.¹⁹ The Eastgate bakery was still in use in 1859 when it had three large ovens and a 90 ft woodshed.²⁰ The number of bakeries and bakers increased during the 19th century, some specialising in biscuits or muffins. In 1841 there were 57 bakers and 24 confectioners but by 1891 there were 86 and 37 respectively.²¹ Some bakehouses were sited in backyards like that built on the back alley off Victoria Gate in the 1860s or one with a very large oven off Station Road in the 1870s.²² In 1886 a three-storey bakehouse was built behind a shop in Bridge Street, which remained a baker's until 2022 and by 1897 the former woollen factory on the corner of Thomas and Railway streets was a large

¹³ E. H. Bates-Harbin, *Quarter Sessions Records, 1646—1660* (Som. Rec. Soc. 28), 185.

¹⁴ Bates-Harbin, *Quarter Sessions Records, 1625—39*, 134; SHC, Q/SR/89/3; D/P/tau.m/13/6/1.

¹⁵ DHC, DD/MK/9.

¹⁶ SHC, T/PH/hmy/3; Q/SR/367/4/21—3, 25—6, 28—30.

¹⁷ SHC, DD/CH/58.

¹⁸ SHC, D/P/tau.m/23/29; DD/SAS/C795/BA/9/7.

¹⁹ SHC, D/P/tau.ja/13/1/8; DD/SAS/C212/13/1, pp. 48—101.

²⁰ SHC, DD/SP/416 (1859).

²¹ Pigot, *London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3); *Pigot Dir.* (1830); TNA, HO 107/972, 1922—3; RG 9/1617—18; RG 10/2370—2, 2374—5; RG 11/2366—8; RG 12/1875—7; *Industrial Great Britain* (c. 1890), 240.

²² SHC, DD/SP/416D/B/ta/24/1/12/418.

bakery and cake factory run by the Adams family who had a shop in North Street.²³ To supply the bakers there was a three-storey grain store in Wood Street by the 1880s and another was built in 1907.²⁴ The George inn's outbuildings in Station Road were used as a grain store c. 1880.²⁵

By 1890 baking was fully mechanised in most bakeries and produced French and other types of bread as well as standard English loaves. A Welsh bakery in Albemarle Road also supplied flour to local grocers.²⁶ There were more than 120 bakers, cake makers and confectioners in 1901, although some of the latter were retailers only,²⁷ and 28 bakehouses c. 1915.²⁸ The Co-operative Society built a large three-storey bakery in Magdalene Street in 1891 and enlarged it several times before moving c. 1960 to a new South West Co-operative bakery in Priorswood Road.²⁹ It was then one of the most advanced in the country producing 200,000 loaves a week as well as confectionary, using automated equipment but employing over 100 people in 1961.³⁰ The Maynard family were bakers from at least the 1750s and also caterers by the 20th century.³¹ They built a large bakery in Upper Wood Street in 1932. In the 1980s they moved to factory in in Staplegrove parish where more than 100 employees made frozen desserts in the early 21st century.³² The Cassanna Cake Company built a new bakery in East Reach in 1946, possibly on the site of the 1920s Tone Valley Cake Company's bakehouse.³³ A traditional bakery remained in business in South Street in the 2020s.

²³ SHC, DD/AY/328; D/B/ta/24/1/21/864; 24/1/25/1687; 24/1/26/1744; TNA, RG13/2276—8.

²⁴ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/21/875; 24/1/38/432.

²⁵ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/SX/7.

²⁶ *Where to Buy: Taunton* (1890), 27, 29, 32, 45; SHC, Grand World's Fair Bazaar programme (1895), 10.

²⁷ TNA, RG13/2276—8.

²⁸ SHC, A/DIF/95/32.

²⁹ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/25/1692, 24/1/28/1821, 24/1/62/1161, 24/1/71/1419; D/R/ta/34/9/3, p. 781.

³⁰ SHC, A/AWT/1.

³¹ TNA, IR 1/52, p. 109, 1/58, p. 164, 1/64, p. 178; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914).

³² SHC, D/B/ta/77/1618; D/PC/b.hl/5/3/15 (1937); *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957), 96, 140; *Som. Business Dir.* (1985), 60; below, retail services.

³³ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1927); *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1929), 27; .SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/107/3240.

The number of confectioners including sugar boilers and ice cream makers increased during the 19th century.³⁴ In 1957 there were three sweet manufacturers, one next to the butter factory north of Wood Street, but they had closed by the 1970s.³⁵

Butter

The largest manufacturer was Wrights who produced butter from c. 1898 at their bacon factory off Kingston Road, employing 14 local men butter-making in 1901.³⁶ In 1919 the company handled up to 6,000 gallons of milk daily, less in winter. In 1945 butter making ceased.³⁷ Cullen and Company run by Charles Blake had a dairy in Portman Street in the 1920s before moving to a factory off Wood Street c. 1937.³⁸ They remained in business, expanding into a neighbouring factory, probably the former sweet manufacturer, until the 1970s. The building survives in commercial use as Kent House behind 46 Wood Street.³⁹

Meat Processing

For centuries meat was obtained from butchers at the market shambles and in the later 16th century there were complaints of polluted water and slaughterhouse blood and filth in the streets.⁴⁰ Bulls had to be baited before sale for meat and there appears to have been a slaughterhouse in Paul Street in 1623.⁴¹ Livestock appear to have been kept on Grasscroft by the river in the 17th century. In 1619 19 butchers were recorded and in 1625 12 men and women were accused of killing animals in Lent.⁴²

³⁴ Pigot, *London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3); *Pigot Dir.* (1830); TNA, HO 107/972, 1922—3; RG 9/1617—18; RG 10/2370—2, 2374—5; RG 11/2366—8; RG 12/1875—7; *Industrial Great Britain* (c. 1890), 240.

³⁵ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957), 356; SHC, A/AWT/1; A/APN/2/6; D/PC/stapg/7/3.

³⁶ TNA, RG13/2276—8; below, this section

³⁷ SHC, PAM 719 *The Horlicks Gossiper* (Feb. 1950), 3—4, 6—10.

³⁸ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1929), 67; DD/ASC/9/5/2.

³⁹ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1929), 266; (1972—3), 376.

⁴⁰ SHC, DD/SP/48 (Apr. 1570, Oct 1572), 49 (May 1595, Oct. 1600, Oct. 1606).

⁴¹ H. Byard Sheppard, *Courts Leet and the Court Leet of the Borough of Taunton* (Taunton, 1909), 28—9.

⁴² SHC, Q/SR/62/103—5; D/D/Ca/243, ff. 190—1; Q/RLa/33.

Despite attempts from the 1790s to get rid of town slaughterhouses they remained behind butcher's shops and in residential areas into the 20th century.⁴³ One by the old police station was licenced in 1858 and despite being condemned as a nuisance was allowed to continue.⁴⁴ A slaughterhouse was built at Rowbarton in 1878 and another in Old Angel Yard, condemned in the 1840s, was among premises demolished c. 1894 to build Corporation Street.⁴⁵ Ten slaughterhouses were registered c. 1915 but only two were licensed.⁴⁶ In 1924 the old tram depot was turned into a pig abattoir, which remained in use until 1939.⁴⁷ The East Reach slaughterhouse was still in use in 1946 and the Wood Street slaughterhouse was converted into an undertaker's in the later 20th century.⁴⁸ By 1952, excluding the bacon factory, there were one borough, one government and two private slaughterhouses.⁴⁹ However, by the late 1960s fewer than 1,000 animals were slaughtered in town each year, except at the bacon factory, and in the 1990s central government took over inspections.⁵⁰

By the 19th century processed meat like sausages was being made although sometimes by bakers rather than butchers.⁵¹ An order against tripe boiling at premises in High Street in 1877 only seems to have moved the business to East Reach where it was complained of in 1889.⁵² In 1897 the Wright family of bacon curers built a large new factory at Rowbarton off Greenway Avenue to produce milk products and bacon and pack eggs and poultry. A butter factory was added c. 1898.⁵³ At first slaughtering was done in a building at Obridge but the company obtained a slaughterhouse licence in 1908 for their Rowbarton site

⁴³ SHC, D/B/ta 31/1/1, p. 499; D/R/ta/34/9/3 pp 269, 418, 444; D/B/ta/13/3/1, pp.168—9; C/PL/2/25.

⁴⁴ SHC, D/B/ta 2/1/4, p. 51; 2/1/6, p. 254; DD/DP/178/5.

⁴⁵ SHC, DD/SAS/C2273/3/12, p. 25; D/B/ta/3/8/1 (1878); A/CNC/1.

⁴⁶ SHC, D/B/ta/4/2/2 (1913); A/DIF/95/32.

⁴⁷ SHC, D/B/ta/4/3/4 (1924), 4/2/3 (1938).

⁴⁸ TNA, IR 58/82608 (1546). SHC, DD/KW/1946/49.

⁴⁹ SHC, D/B/ta/4/22/1 (1952).

⁵⁰ SHC, D/B/ta/4/22/1.

⁵¹ TNA, RG 9/1617; *Goodmans Dir. Taunton* (1864), 103; *Where to Buy: Taunton* (1890), 45.

⁵² SHC, D/B/ta/3/8/1 (1877), 4/2/1 (1889).

⁵³ SHC, D/B/ta/4/3/2 (1898); D/B/ta/24/1/24/1613..

and slaughtered their own pigs and poultry.⁵⁴ They also tinned and exported hams, brawn and sausages. Until 1914 they also sold all kinds of poultry wholesale but the war took away much of their business with the shortage of pigs. In 1919 the company was renamed the West Somerset Dairy and Bacon Company. During the Second World War 800 pigs a week were killed and processed, almost all for bacon although some sausages continued to be made. In 1943 the firm became a subsidiary of Horlicks Ltd who after 1945 closed the dairy business.⁵⁵ Curing continued and c. 50,000 pigs were killed annually.⁵⁶ By the 1970s the business was part of the Brooke Bond Oxo group but kept its Somerwest brand name and remained a major employer.⁵⁷ It closed a few years later and the site was redeveloped for housing. Dorse's bacon curers operated in the 1930s and 1940s at Higher Holway and had a shop in High Street.⁵⁸ In 1983 two meat processors produced frozen beefburgers and boned beef, the latter employing over 50 people.⁵⁹

Cold Storage

Ice cream was made on an increasing scale by confectioners during the 19th century and there was an ice house off Mount Street in 1853.⁶⁰ Greater concern for hygiene in the sale of fish and other perishable foods increased demand for ice. By 1887 an ice warehouse was kept by a fishmonger at East Street and ice continued to be made there in 1931.⁶¹ Taunton Cold Storage and Ice Ltd was established by the early 20th century and had premises in Leycroft Road between 1928 and 1957 but in the late 20th century new cold storage facilities were built at Silk Mills in Staplegrove.⁶² Two Italians were making ice cream in 1901 and ice

⁵⁴ SHC, D/B/ta/4/3/2 (1907—8); D/B/ta/24/1/39/46, 475.

⁵⁵ SHC, PAM 719 *The Horlicks Gossiper* (Feb. 1950), 3—4, 6—10.

⁵⁶ SHC, C/PHH/169 (1967).

⁵⁷ SHC, PAM 1535 *Taunton official guide* [1973]; D/PC/stapg/7/3, 21.

⁵⁸ SHC, D/R/ta/24/1/611.

⁵⁹ *Som. Business Dir.* (1983), 66.

⁶⁰ SHC, DD/AY/27.

⁶¹ *Goodman's Taunton Dir.* (1887); *Taunton Official Handbook and Guide* (1931), 58.

⁶² SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/67/1289; T/PH/pld/2; D/B/ta/13/3/1, p. 386; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957).

cream was made in Wood Street in 1930.⁶³ There were six ice cream manufacturers in the 1950s but only three by the 1960s, two run by Italian families.⁶⁴

Wholesale fruit and vegetable distributors

With the loss of market gardens by the early 20th century wholesalers established fruit and vegetable stores in the town to supply its many greengrocers. Five wholesalers were in business in the 1950s including one of the oldest, Whites, later Taunton Fruit Distributors, of Duke Street, supplying their own shops and other independent greengrocers. The rise of the supermarkets produced a fall in greengrocers from 20 in the 1950s to 13 in the early 1970s. The number of wholesalers fell to three and one had moved to Norton Fitzwarren by 1983 but the Duke Street business still employed up to 20 people. By the early 21st century the warehouses had closed and in 2021 there was only one independent greengrocer.⁶⁵

Malting and Brewing

Increasing quantities of malt were produced in the 13th century and most of the areas malt was ground at the town and Obridge mills where the tollcorn had risen to 138 qtrs by 1300.⁶⁶ Ten brewers broke the assize in 1254—5, probably brewing for alehouses or private households and from 1286—7 they paid £6 7s. to the manor for the assize. Common brewers paid no more than 2s. a year or 1s. if they only brewed for a term. Poor brewers paid what they were able.⁶⁷ In 1314 a son of Elena la Brewster abjured the realm⁶⁸ and a brewer was hanged for counterfeiting in 1473.⁶⁹ A brewer's servant died after falling in a vat in 1512 and

⁶³ TNA, RG13/2278; SHC, DD/AY/160.

⁶⁴ SHC, C/PHH/169 (1952, 1967); *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957).

⁶⁵ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957). 370—1; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—30, 391); *Som. Business Dir.* (1983), 51.

⁶⁶ SHC, T/PH/win 1208—1301.

⁶⁷ SHC, DD/X/HUN/6/2, photos of BL, Harl MS 408, ff. 212—13; T/PH/win 1254—5, 1286—7, 1304—5.

⁶⁸ *SDNQ*, XXXI, 469.

⁶⁹ SWHT, HER 44409; H. Kleineke, 'The Prosecution of Counterfeiting in Lancastrian England', *Medieval Markets and Money* (2016), 215—6.

at least five common brewers north and east of the town were in breach of the assize of ale in 1517—18.⁷⁰ Two in Extra Portam tithing used unsealed measures in 1520.⁷¹ The priory owned a brewery in Canon Street tithing by the 1530s.⁷²

Brewers had their malt from the manor's mills but during periods of drought priority was given to grinding other grain. In the 1550s a brewer in St James parish began malting and grinding malt with a horsemill. In 1607 two common brewers in St James parish including Alexander Hill had their own horsemills and used imported malt, enabling them to undercut other brewers.⁷³ A man paid 6s. 8d. for a brewing licence in Canon Street tithing in the 1580s and 90s.⁷⁴ A maltster in 1598 was forbidden to light a fire in his new building until it had been made safe and three brewers in 1613 were accused of brewing in unfit rooms.⁷⁵ In 1615 alehouse keepers were forbidden to brew beer for sale but must buy it from four men who were appointed common brewers to make beer for 3d. a Winchester gallon.⁷⁶ Barrels were to be marked and poor beer replaced.⁷⁷ Robert Hill, son and successor of Alexander (d. 1613), was accused in 1628 and 1630 of selling beer illegally and another brewer charged 5d. a gallon in 1637.⁷⁸ The retail price of beer was fixed at 3d. a quart until the 1660s when it was raised to 4d.⁷⁹

The 1615 restriction on alehouses selling their own beer was probably short-lived. A farmer had malt and equipment worth £100 in 1635 and in 1644 a former cordwainer had a beer shop and a brewhouse equipped with two mashing vats, a cooling vat and furnace.⁸⁰

⁷⁰ TNA, KB/9/458/50; Hants. RO, M11/59/C1/19/3.

⁷¹ SHC, DD/MT/11/1.

⁷² C. Brett, *Crown Revenues from Som. and Dorset*, supp., 87.

⁷³ TNA, E134/4JasI/Mich27; E124/6. ff. 190—2.

⁷⁴ SHC, DD/SP/407 (1586, 1592).

⁷⁵ SHC, DD/SP/49 (May 1598), 50 (Oct. 1613).

⁷⁶ 6 quarts.

⁷⁷ E. H. Bates Harbin, *Quarter Sessions Records, 1607—1625* (Som. Rec. Soc. 23),

p 144; SHC, DD/SP/52 (Apr. 1637).

⁷⁸ TNA, PROB 11/123/50; SHC, DD/SP/52 (Apr. 1637); E. H. Bates-Harbin, *Quarter Sessions Records, 1625—39* (Som. Rec. Soc 24), 85, 124

⁷⁹ SHC, DD/SP/43/8, 44.

⁸⁰ SHC, DD/SP/1635/132, 1644/65.

Valuable stocks of malt and hops were recorded in the later 17th century and in 1667 two inns were recorded with brewhouses and large numbers of beer butts.⁸¹ A brewhouse was built at the foot of Tone Bridge *c.* 1677.⁸² Many wealthy farmers malted and brewed presumably for a large household and their workers.⁸³ Simon Brocas and his wife sold a brewery with a house in Paul Street in 1696.⁸⁴ In 1716 one wealthy innkeeper collected rainwater in a lead cistern near his brewhouse.⁸⁵ A brewhouse with furnace and lead pump was recorded off East Street in 1798.⁸⁶ Many public and private houses continued to brew their own ale and beer until the mid 19th century mostly on a small scale for their own use, but a few public houses malted and brewed on a large scale in the 18th century.⁸⁷ In 1774 only one brewer was on the electoral register but there were two hop dealers.⁸⁸

Malthouses at the period were relatively small and often behind houses such as that of France Beere who had 400 bu. of barley, dry and green malt in his malthouse in 1695 and whose business was continued by his widow Elizabeth until 1714.⁸⁹ Another woman kept the books for a family malting business until her death *c.* 1691.⁹⁰ William Bidgood built a new three storey house with a two storey thatched brick malthouse 52 ft by 30 ft in 1692—4. He had an estimate of over £100 for a malthouse 40ft by 20ft with an oak and tile roof. He made malt for individual customers wetting up to 400 bu. of barley for a single customer *c.* 1700.⁹¹ Commercial malting was more extensive and several maltsters were recorded in the early 18th century.⁹² The house east of the Three Cups in East Street had a malthouse in its garden

⁸¹ SHC, DD/SP/1664/64, 1665/7, 1666/19, 23, 43; 1667/4, 1680/76.

⁸² SHC, DD/SP/18/48.

⁸³ e.g. SHC, DD/SP/1682/15.

⁸⁴ TNA, CP 25/2/869/2WILLIAM&MARY TRINITY.

⁸⁵ TNA, 11/555/325.

⁸⁶ SHC, DD/SP/411 (1798).

⁸⁷ e.g. SHC, DD/SP/1729/64.

⁸⁸ SHC, DD/HC/6/1/1.

⁸⁹ SHC, DD/SP/1695/38, 1714/10.

⁹⁰ SHC, DD?SP?423 (1691)

⁹¹ SHC, DD/DP/23/8.

⁹² TNA, C 11/2202/7; M. Siraut, *Som. Wills (Som. Rec. Soc. 89)*, 32, 143, 157, 213

from the 1720s to 1790s.⁹³ Sir Benjamin Hammet demolished two malthouses, one in Little Magdalene Lane, after 1780 to create Hammet Street and another in Hunts Court after 1792.⁹⁴ Despite these losses five malthouses were recorded in 1784, seven in 1820 and 12 by 1822, excluding those in Bishops Hull parish, but only three breweries.⁹⁵ A house on the corner of Magdalene Lane and Church Square by the Squirrel had been converted to a malthouse by 1819 but was disused by 1838.⁹⁶ A new malthouse was built in Westgate Street c. 1840 but was disused by 1876.⁹⁷ A malthouse on Kingston Road with a large corn store was disused by 1872 when only five malthouses were recorded.⁹⁸ Malthouses in East Street and Mount Lane were possibly connected with inns but those at Coal Orchard were associated with the river wharves, probably using imported barley. The Cross Keys at 11 St James Street had two malthouses and a brewery in 1842 but of seven malthouses recorded in St James parish three were disused at that date.⁹⁹ There were still 22 people employed in malting but only 10 in 1891. At the same period those employed in brewing rose from 17 to 46.¹⁰⁰ Small malthouses were replaced from the late 19th century by large maltings like the steam-powered malthouse by the railway west of Albemarle Road, a three storey building with a double 15 quarter kiln in 1887 known as Albemarle Mills or Maltings designed by Llewellyns and James of Bristol. It was enlarged later that year to process 60 quarters of barley with two kilns and was run by Ross, Sleeman and Company who had taken over several small maltings.¹⁰¹ It was converted to a plastic factory after the Second World War and demolished in the later 20th century.¹⁰² A four storey maltings with two kilns was built in 1901 on the east corner of Canon Street to

⁹³ SHC, D/CH/91/5.

⁹⁴ SHC, DD/HS/4/2; DD/DP/93/4, 97/1.

⁹⁵ *Bailey's British Dir.* (1784), 454—5; SHC, D/P/tau.m/23/9; Pigot, *London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3).

⁹⁶ SHC, DD/AY/6; DD/CH/58.

⁹⁷ SHC, DD/CWC.ta/unlisted box 4.

⁹⁸ SHC, D/P/tau.m/4/3/10; D/B/ta/24/1/9/266; Morris and Co. *Dir. Som.* (1872).

⁹⁹ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/10/316; SHC, DD/SAS/C212/13/1, pp. 51, 66, 95—6.

¹⁰⁰ TNA, HO 107/972, RG 12/1875—7.

¹⁰¹ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/21/861, 24/1/22/912; 24/1/30/85; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1889, 1894); SHC, A/DIF/116/223 (22496).

¹⁰² SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/225/14295.

serve the brewery. It was retained by Starkey's after they closed the brewery but in 1965 the kilns were removed. It became a warehouse and in the early 21st century was converted into flats.¹⁰³

In 1824 the brewery trade, including retailing, was worth £30,000 a year.¹⁰⁴ Five breweries were recorded c. 1840, but they increased in size, often did their own malting and produced bottled as well as barrelled beer by the later 19th century.¹⁰⁵ Bottles were re-used and brewers had bottle washing facilities.¹⁰⁶ Traditional brewhouses attached to public houses were probably operated by the publican and his household and only for retail sale. In 1877 21 publicans still described themselves as brewers but more public houses were acquired and supplied by commercial brewers.¹⁰⁷ The brewhouse at the Waggon and Horses in East Reach was converted to a clubroom in the 1870s but a new brewhouse was built at the George in High Street in 1884.¹⁰⁸

Two breweries were recorded in East Reach.¹⁰⁹ One was probably begun in the late 18th century by maltster John White whose family built a public house in the 1840s on the site of the Victoria Gate. The brewery closed in the 1860s.¹¹⁰ Mary Street brewery was started c. 1809 by Thomas Jacobs behind his mother's public house, the Bird in Hand.¹¹¹ It was horse-powered in 1854 but by 1872 it was a steam brewery and aerated water factory.¹¹² Arthur Inglefield bought the brewery before 1882 when he entered into partnership with George Hanbury.¹¹³ They took the plant for their Canon Street brewery and sold the Mary

¹⁰³ SHC, A/BUG/5/3/2; D/B/ta/24/1/169/10229, 10234.

¹⁰⁴ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/BA/9/7 (1824).

¹⁰⁵ *Robson's Dir. Som.* (1839); *Pigot Dir.* (1842); *Morris and Co. Dir. Som.* (1872).

¹⁰⁶ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/16/648.

¹⁰⁷ M. Miles, *Perfectly Pure* (2007), 79—99.

¹⁰⁸ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/12/412, 24/1/19/763.

¹⁰⁹ *Robson's Dir. Som.* (1839); Harrison, Harrad and Co., *Dir. Som.* (1859); *PO Dir. Som.* (1861).

¹¹⁰ SHC, D/B/ta/31/5/7; DD/SAS/C212/13/1, pp 71—2; *Pigot, London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3); *Pigot Dir.* (1830); *Robson's Dir. Som.* (1839); *Pigot Dir.* (1842); SHC, DD/DP/69/8; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1861).

¹¹¹ SHC, Q/RLa/19/10; DD/SAS/C795/TN/174; *Pigot, London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3); *Robson's Dir. Som.* (1839); *Pigot Dir.* (1842); Harrison, Harrad and Co., *Dir. Som.* (1859).

¹¹² Miles, *Perfectly Pure*, 81, 90; *PO Dir. Som.* (1861); *Morris and Co. Dir. Som.* (1872).

¹¹³ SHC, DD/CH/110/11.

Street site with a proviso against brewing.¹¹⁴ Most of the buildings survive converted to other uses.

John Clitsome, grocer, maltster, brewer and liquor dealer presumably built the brewery in Jarman's Court before 1789.¹¹⁵ Known as the Taunton Ale Brewery it closed between 1807 and 1823. It was acquired by the market trustees in 1831 and demolished to enlarge the pig market.¹¹⁶ In the 1870s a new Fore Street brewery was built but brewer James Payne was bankrupt by 1886 owing almost £9,000.¹¹⁷

The Middle Street brewery was run by baker and maltster Thomas Durston in 1852 and his widow was still baking in the 1860s.¹¹⁸ The house, bakehouse, malthouse and brewery were sold before 1872 to William Trotman and Company who specialised in bottled ale and porter.¹¹⁹ In 1877 it was taken over by George Hanbury and became known as the Canon Street brewery.¹²⁰ In the 1880s it expanded into two former furniture workshops and in 1882 built an aerated water plant.¹²¹ It acquired and demolished the St James almshouses in 1897 for a new aerated water factory and occupied a site between Middle and St James's Streets apart from two houses. The firm, then Hanbury and Cotching, produced ales, beer and stout and owned many public houses and agencies in towns from Torquay to Cardiff.¹²² A house in Middle Street was used as offices and spirit stores. Brewing ceased in 1921 when the whole complex and equipment were offered for sale but did not reach the reserve price. The site was used as liquor stores until it closed in 1923.¹²³ It was sold to Starkey, Knight and Company with hops, sugar, malt, hogsheads of beer, up to 40 kinds of bottled fruit wines

¹¹⁴ SHC, A/BUG/5/3/6; Miles, *Perfectly Pure*, 81.

¹¹⁵ London Met. Archives, MS 11936/360/554292.

¹¹⁶ SHC, A/CHM/2; A/DJT/2; D/P/tau.m/4/3/9—10.

¹¹⁷ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883); SHC, A/BU/5/3/6; Miles, *Perfectly Pure* (2007), 86.

¹¹⁸ *Slater's Dir. Som.* (1852); SHC, D/P/tau.ja/13/1/8; *Pigot Dir.* (1842); *PO Dir. Som.* (1861, 1866).

¹¹⁹ Morris and Co. *Dir. Som.* (1872).

¹²⁰ SHC, A/BUG/5/3/6.

¹²¹ SHC, DD/KIT/1/13; D/B/ta/24/1/17/657.

¹²² SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/16/635; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883—94); *Industrial Great Britain* (c. 1890), 234; soc.hist., almshouses.

¹²³ SHC, A/BUG/5/3/2, 5; D/R/ta/34/9/3 p 85; DD/HCK/6/2/20.

and spirits, aerated waters, a wide variety of syrups, 56 lb of ginger root, a cooperage, labels and other paperwork.¹²⁴ Starkey's wanted the tied houses but not another brewery and the site was sold again in 1925 with a covenant against the manufacture of intoxicating liquors or aerated waters.¹²⁵ It was mostly cleared for a commercial garage but some buildings were occupied by a small garment factory and a taxi firm.¹²⁶ In the early 21st century part of the site was a post office

The St James's brewery may have its origins in the 17th-century St James Street.¹²⁷ It was held by the Stone family by 1767 and in 1845 they had a house, brewery, two malthouses, warehouse, counting houses, stabling and wharf.¹²⁸ Mary Tegg the last member of the family leased and c. 1885 sold the brewery to John Sloman of the Stogumber brewery with a malthouse and cottages.¹²⁹ Sloman built a new steam-powered brewery but ceased malting but 1889 sold it with a number of local public houses to Sydney and Frank Hatch and it became known as the West Somerset brewery.¹³⁰ By 1895 there was an aerated water factory on site and the brewery produced an average of 2,028 barrels a year.¹³¹ In 1897 it was taken over by Arnolds of Rowbarton to decrease competition and acquire the many tied houses.¹³² They closed the brewery c. 1899 when it had 170 ft of river bank, a two-storey brewery, an aerated water factory, engine, boiler house and 66 ft chimney, an artesian well, two paved cellars 70 ft by 40 ft, a three-storey malthouse, stables, offices, storerooms, a four-bedroom house with gardens and houses on St James Street and in number 4 court.¹³³ By 1910 the brewery was let to the Swansea Hide and Skin company and others and the

¹²⁴ SHC, A/BUG/5/2/2.

¹²⁵ SHC, DD/AY/173.

¹²⁶ SHC, A/BUG/5/3/1; D/B/ta/unlisted (factory inspection cards).

¹²⁷ SHC, Q/SO/7/19.

¹²⁸ SHC, Q/REI/35/25b; Q/Rup/192; Pigot, *London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3); *Pigot Dir.* (1830, 1842); *Slater's Dir. Som.* (1852).

¹²⁹ Pigot, *London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3); SHC, D/P/tau.m/13/1/8; DD/HS/1/4; *Pigot Dir.* (1842); *Slater's Dir. Som.* (1852); Harrison, Harrad and Co., *Dir. Som.* (1859); Wilts and Swindon HC, 1075/001/396.

¹³⁰ Wilts and Swindon HC, 1075/001/396. Kelly's *Dir. Som.* (1894).

¹³¹ Wilts and Swindon HC, 1075/001/396 (1895).

¹³² SHC, A/BUG/5/3/5.

¹³³ SHC, DD/CH/32.

malthouse was a store.¹³⁴ In the later 20th century the brewery was demolished except for the house which became the offices and café of the Brewhouse Theatre, which was built on the site.¹³⁵

In 1876 Stephen Arnold opened the Rowbarton brewery on the site of the 1853 manure works east of Kingston Road. In 1884 a new artesian well provided 2,000 gallons of water per hour.¹³⁶ In 1898—9 having taken over the West Somerset Brewery the firm was incorporated as SW Arnold and Sons Ltd.¹³⁷ In 1927 they merged with William Hancock and Sons of Wiveliscombe to form Arnold and Hancock in 1955 they were taken over by Usher's Wiltshire Brewery Ltd and ceased brewing at Rowbarton, which became a distribution centre. In 1964 Usher's were taken over by Watney Mann who closed the site c. 1980.¹³⁸ The site was cleared for housing.

Two manufacturers of British wine were in business in 1852.¹³⁹ Although cider had been made on Taunton farms and a few retained presses in the 19th century most commercial production was in parishes such as Bradford on Tone and Norton Fitzwarren.¹⁴⁰ In 1824 the cider trade was put at 8,000 hogsheads a year but that was probably the amount sold rather than produced.¹⁴¹ Cider was briefly made at a former cake factory in Rowbarton c. 1914.¹⁴² By the 1930s cider consumption in Taunton was falling and public houses sold four times as much beer.¹⁴³

Ginger beer was produced commercially by 1841¹⁴⁴ and during the later 19th century the production of soda water and lemonade and aerated waters increased, originally at

¹³⁴ TNA, IR 58/82602 (980—1).

¹³⁵ Soc. hist.

¹³⁶ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883—1914); SHC, D/R/ta/34/9/3, p. 440; Miles, *Perfectly Pure*, 93.

¹³⁷ SHC, DD/CH/32, 129/3.

¹³⁸ SHC, A/BUG/5/3/5.

¹³⁹ SHC, A/DIF/79/2; *Slater's Dir. Som.* (1852).

¹⁴⁰ Above, agriculture.; Bradford on Tone, Norton Fitzwarren, forthcoming.

¹⁴¹ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/BA/9/7 (1824).

¹⁴² *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914).

¹⁴³ SHC, QS/LIC/1—5; *Taunton Courier*, 3 July 1937: BNA, accessed 27 Sep. 2016.

¹⁴⁴ TNA, HO 107/972 (St Mary).

breweries. By 1883 John Fewings had established his Guildford Place factory on the stream north of Pool Wall Mills. It remained in the family until it closed c. 1922.¹⁴⁵ Charles Price had an aerated water factory in Saracen's Head yard in 1899.¹⁴⁶ There was a soft drink manufacturer in Palmerston Road in 1972.¹⁴⁷

TALLOW AND SOAP

The name Waxmaker may indicate medieval candle making¹⁴⁸ but most candles would have been of tallow, which was used as an industrial lubricant and in making hard soap for industrial and household use. A large quantity of tallow would have come from the slaughtering of animals for the shambles and chandlers had stalls there. In 1753.¹⁴⁹ A man forbidden to melt tallow in his chamber in 1629 was probably a chandler.¹⁵⁰ Recorded chandlers from the mid 17th century included a man who left his son his soap and tallow furnaces worth £12 and had tallow and soap worth £20 in 1662.¹⁵¹ In 1684 two chandlers leased for £7 a year part of a house in Upper High Street with a shop on the street, a stable converted to a candle and soap workshop and a calender house.¹⁵² Candle Street was recorded c. 1700 in St James parish.¹⁵³ Male and female tallow chandlers and soapboilers took paying apprentices during the 18th century including the Lippincott and Spiller families.¹⁵⁴ Matthew Toulmin built a warehouse or shop in Canon Street probably between 1802 and 1806 for melting tallow for his trade of tallow chandler and took two apprentices in 1807.¹⁵⁵ Two chandleries on the

¹⁴⁵ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883, 1914); SHC, D/R/ta/34/9/3, p. 51.

¹⁴⁶ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1899).

¹⁴⁷ *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3).

¹⁴⁸ SHC, T/PH/hps/1.

¹⁴⁹ SHC, D/B/ta/31/5/3 (1753).

¹⁵⁰ SHC, DD/SP/51 (Sep. 1629)

¹⁵¹ SHC, Q/SR/86/35, 344; TNA, KB27/1669, m.823d; www.waalt.uh.edu/indexphp/KB27 accessed May 2021; Webb, *Som. Wills* (Som. Rec. Soc. 94), pp. 280—1; M. Siraut, *Somerset Wills* (Som. Rec. Soc. 89), 115.

¹⁵² SHC, DD/SAS/C112/17.

¹⁵³ SHC, D/P/ta.ja/2/1/8.

¹⁵⁴ TNA, IR1/45 (1718); IR 1/48, p. 125; IR 1/50, pp. 84, 271; IR 1/54, p. 88; IR 1/64, p. 178; IR 1/72, p. 14.

¹⁵⁵ SHC, DD/SP/416; TNA, IR1/40, p. 107; IR1/72, p. 94.

north side of East Street were very offensive in the early 19th century.¹⁵⁶ There were candle factories near Hunts Court c. 1830 and near the river in 1845, a Chandler in North Street and a manufacturer of soap and candles in East Street in 1864 but a plan for another in East Reach that year was turned down by the local board as the trade was offensive.¹⁵⁷ Wax candles were made in 1842 but with the rise of oil and gas lighting only three chandlers were recorded in 1871.¹⁵⁸

The cloth industry needed soap and a pannier load was the subject of a dispute in 1615.¹⁵⁹ A prosperous soap boiler in 1675 had a newly extended house with a shop with chests of soap and scales and a soap shop with a furnace. Even the ash was worth £10 as fertiliser.¹⁶⁰ Soap making was dangerous and two men were prosecuted in 1677 for erecting a soap house and making 'great fires' next to dwellings.¹⁶¹ The serge industry was a heavy user of soap to clean out the train oil used before spinning and in 1693 97 Taunton clothmakers signed a petition against a proposed soap tax.¹⁶² Two soap makers were on the 1774 poll.¹⁶³ Three manufacturers were recorded in 1822 and four in 1830 when Taunton produced 57,028 lb rising to 66,052 lb in 1832.¹⁶⁴ A soap factory in Little Magdalene Lane was offensive in the early 19th century.¹⁶⁵ Blacking was being made locally in 1891.¹⁶⁶

LEATHER

A by-product of the large butcher's market was a plentiful supply of skins for tanning. It was a regulated trade and the manorial borough officers included three, later two, searchers and

¹⁵⁶ Goldsworthy, *Recollections of Old Taunton*, 10, 16; SHC, DD/TAC/2/3/2 (1829).

¹⁵⁷ SHC, Q/Rup/192; D/B/ta/24/1/5/116; *Goodmans Dir. Taunton* (1864), 30, 106.

¹⁵⁸ *Pigot Dir.* (1842); TNA, HO 107/972, 1922—3; RG9/1617—18; RG10/2370—2, 2374—5.

¹⁵⁹ SHC, DD/SP (Sep. 1615).

¹⁶⁰ SHC, DD/SP/1675/30.

¹⁶¹ SHC, DD/SP/18/49.

¹⁶² SHC, DD/SF/13/2/19.

¹⁶³ SHC, DD/HC/6/1/1.

¹⁶⁴ *Pigot, London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3); *Pigot Dir.* (1830); *Account of all Soap made in each town of Gt Britain 1830—2*, Parl Papers, 3.

¹⁶⁵ Goldsworthy, *Recollections of Old Taunton*, 10, 16; SHC, DD/TAC/2/3/2 (1829).

¹⁶⁶ TNA, RG12/1877.

sealers of leather and two searchers of green skins, who continued to be appointed in the early 21st century.¹⁶⁷ Under an Act of 1563 special courts were held by the portreeves to deal with poor quality leather and damaged hides. In the early 17th century the tryers comprised curriers, tanners and shoemakers and offenders were often rural tanners.¹⁶⁸ Horse hides appear to have been tanned as a tanner was presented for laying horse carrion in the streets in 1635.¹⁶⁹ Hides were still brought to the market in the late 19th century when they were regarded as a nuisance.¹⁷⁰ The Taunton Hide and Skin Market was in St James's Street in 1914 but later a hide market was established at Tangier.¹⁷¹

Tanners and curriers were recorded from the late 13th century¹⁷² and a Taunton skinner took a shop in Bridgwater market in 1354.¹⁷³ They paid a customary 10s. to Taunton Deane manor called martinsgavel so called from the guild of St Martin whose members, presumably country tanners and leather workers, had with burgesses the sole right to buy green skins or leather in Taunton market.¹⁷⁴ Two skinners rented adjoining shops near the corn market in 1354 and one built a second shop on his plot.¹⁷⁵ At least 13 skinners sued in the Common Pleas in the 15th century.¹⁷⁶ A parchment maker was recorded in the 1290s.¹⁷⁷

In 1707 leather trades, including shoemaking, were second only to the cloth industry among new fathers.¹⁷⁸ A currier in 1723 had a graining board and knives in his shop.¹⁷⁹ In 1740 skins were being worked and dressed west of Carpenter Lane, now Mount Street, on a

¹⁶⁷ SHC, DD/SP/48—52; A/CTP/6/6; A/DWX/8/11; A/EDJ/5/1.

¹⁶⁸ SHC, DD/SP/50 (Feb. 1611), 51(1628/9), 52 (1631, 1637), 61/3.

¹⁶⁹ SHC, DD/SP/18/16.

¹⁷⁰ SHC, D/B/ta/4/2/1 (Oct. 1894).

¹⁷¹ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1914); Bishops Hull, econ. hist.

¹⁷² SHC, T/PH/win 1288—9, 1290—1; F. Dickinson, *Kirby's Quest etc* (Som. Rec. Soc. 3), 127; E. Green, *Feet of Fines 1307—46* (Som. Rec. Soc. 12), 149; TNA, CP40/466, image 945d; /621, images 410, 1721; 907, image 1266: at waalt.uh.edu/index.php/CP40 accessed May 2021; *Feet of Fines 1399—1485* (Som. Rec. Soc. 22), 123; SHC, DD/PM/7/2/3; D/B/bw/1375; TNA, C1/27/164., 1472—3.

¹⁷³ SHC, D/B/bw/674.

¹⁷⁴ SHC, DD/X/HUN/6/2, photos of BL, Harl MS 408, ff. 212—13; T/PH/win 1334—5, 1338—9, 1347—8, 1353—4, 1409—10.

¹⁷⁵ T.B. Dilks, *Bridgwater Borough Records* (Som. Rec. Soc. 48), 118—19; TNA, C1/27/164.

¹⁷⁶ TNA, CP40/561, 618, 621, 64, 685, 732, 768, 776, 853, 890.

¹⁷⁷ SHC, T/PH/win 1298—9.

¹⁷⁸ SHC, D/P/tau.m/2/1/2.

¹⁷⁹ SHC, DD/SP/1723/36.

rack field where there was a lime pit and a ditch in which the skins were washed.¹⁸⁰ In 1761 a tanner was accused of failing to pay duties on the hides he had tanned.¹⁸¹ By 1762 a wealthy fellmonger had acquired property and set up two sons as a haberdasher and a weaver in London.¹⁸² In 1774 50 leatherworkers were recorded on a poll mainly shoemakers and curriers but also saddlers and a glover.¹⁸³ However, by 1810 there were 89 shoemakers and 28 others.¹⁸⁴ Curriers including women were active during the 19th century when there were usually up to 10.¹⁸⁵

Although fellmongers and curriers were found in several streets tanning was a business that required water and to be located preferably east of the town.¹⁸⁶ John Ackland established a tannery beside the Stockwell Stream at the north-west end of Tancred Street behind the New Meeting. By 1774 it was leased by John Poole of Over Stowey, tanner, who invested £600 in the business and whose brother Charles Poole, a Taunton currier, was to run it for £42 a year.¹⁸⁷ In 1775 it was released to Charles (d. 1816) whose son Charles (d. 1825) left it to his sister Mary, wife of John Liddon. It was probably managed by William Eeles.¹⁸⁸ In 1827 Henry Cox established a small tannery adjoining Poole's on the north and in 1834 bought 50 ton of oak bark for it but the same year gave up the business.¹⁸⁹ The yard appears to have been absorbed into Poole's, which was acquired before 1839 by Robert Parsons who had a currier's business in East Street by 1822.¹⁹⁰ He bought adjoining land in 1845 and rebuilt his house in East Street, extending its back yard to the tannery, which could be

¹⁸⁰ SHC, DD/DP/44/9.

¹⁸¹ SHC, Q/SR/330/2/6.

¹⁸² SHC, DD/BD/27.

¹⁸³ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/TN/22.

¹⁸⁴ SHC, D/P/tau.m/23/29.

¹⁸⁵ SHC, Q/SR/308/167; *Pigot Dir.* (1830); TNA, HO 107/972, 1922—3; RG9/1617—18; RG10/2370—2, 2374—5; RG11/2366—8; RG12/1875—7.

¹⁸⁶ London Met. Archives, MS 11936/391/608443; *Pigot, London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3).

¹⁸⁷ SHC, DD/SF/2/52/10.

¹⁸⁸ SHC, DD/CH/22; *Pigot, London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3); SHC, DD/CH/74/8, 10.

¹⁸⁹ *Pigot Dir.* (1830); SHC, DD/CH/74/8, 10; *Taunton Courier*, 13 Nov. 1834 (deaths column); BNA accessed 20 Sep. 2021.

¹⁹⁰ *Pigot, London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3); *Robson's Dir. Som.* (1839).

accessed from either East or Tancred streets and by 1861 employed 22 men and four boys.¹⁹¹ In 1864 he built a large bark shed and by 1874 had three and was using steam power.¹⁹² The tannery continued as Richard Parsons and Sons and later Parsons and Harvey until 1888 when Edward Lyne Parsons sold the Tancred and East Street premises separately. The tannery in Tancred Street then comprised three bark houses, the largest 63 ft by 40 ft, a two-storey mill house, warehouses, lime houses and twelve lime pits, eight liquor pits for green skins, an engine house with 90 ft chimney, and two large steam-heated drying rooms.¹⁹³ It was acquired by and amalgamated with French's tannery, which lay along its southern boundary although the two yards were still known as the Taunton and French's in 1901.¹⁹⁴

James French and Son were fellmongers in East Reach in the 1820s and c. 1829 William French moved the business to premises in a court off Tancred Street sometimes called Frenchay or French Hay Place, which he bought that year for £700.¹⁹⁵ He built an office block in 1829 and in the 1840s installed a beam engine, which was still on the premises when they were demolished in 1985.¹⁹⁶ Two of William's sons Edmund and William Charles continued the business and were also woolstaplers, glovers and gaiter makers but by 1861 concentrated on sheepskins. Some of the women making leather gaiters and leggings later may have worked for two glove and gaiter manufacturers.¹⁹⁷ One firm, Martin and Carnes, glovers and legging makers remained in business until 1957 or later.¹⁹⁸

In 1870 the partnership of Edmund and William Charles French was liquidated and the tanyard offered for sale but although they sold off other property they retained the tanyard. Alfred French, son of William, took on the tannery in partnership with William

¹⁹¹ SHC, DD/CH/22; *Slater's Dir. Som.* (1852); *PO Dir. Som.* (1861); TNA, RG9/1617.

¹⁹² SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/5/147; DD/CH/22.

¹⁹³ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883); SHC, DD/CH/22 (1888); DD/SAS/C2273/1/T1/21.

¹⁹⁴ SHC, DD/SAS/C2401/77.

¹⁹⁵ Pigot, *London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3); *Pigot Dir.* (1830); *Robson's Dir. Som.* (1839); SHC, DD/HS/4/2; DD/SAS/C212/MAP/148.

¹⁹⁶ *PSANHS CXXIX* (1985), 29.

¹⁹⁷ *P.O. Dir. Som.* (1861, 1866); TNA, RG10/2370—2, 2374—5; RG11/2366—8; RG12/1875—7.

¹⁹⁸ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1889—1923); *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957).

Stenlake, expanding into the former Parson's yard to the north. Under the business name E. and W.C. French they leased both premises including cottages, steam engine and machinery from Edmund and William and after 1901 from the new owner John Hayman of Holford.¹⁹⁹ In the later 19th century the company usually employed c. 30 male and 50 female workers, the latter probably all outworkers sewing the industrial gloves, which was a major part of the company's output.²⁰⁰ Outworkers from a wide area formed most of the 120 workers recorded in 1875.²⁰¹ By 1891 they were producing chamois leather.²⁰² In 1897 they survived a bad fire that destroyed the boiler and bark houses but they also had buildings to lime and wash skins, dry wool, boil glue, store bark and chamois leather and sort gloves. They acquired a new drying house, boiler, engine house and 75-ft chimney in 1903.²⁰³ In 1910 the tannery comprised offices with domestic accommodation over, a three-storey block of cutting and sewing rooms, a two-storey curing shed, a leather cutting room, stores, bark house, engine house, an old cottage used for storage with stables, a timber drying shed and tanning pits.²⁰⁴ In 1922 besides the tanyard the company owned several neighbouring houses and was extended again c. 1933.²⁰⁵

For much of the 20th century the tannery specialised in producing tanned sheepskin, using both local and imported skins, for industrial gloves, dressing various skins for slippers and gloves and making leather aprons. During the two world wars they made naval and military gloves, women's railway gloves and anti flash gauntlets. The gloves were sewn by outworkers within a 20-mile radius. Only c. 50 men worked on site, mainly log-serving and over 50 as the work was dirty and unpopular with young men. There was no canteen and they

¹⁹⁹ SHC, DD/CH/22; DD/HS/2/25—6; DD/KIT/13/9; DD/SAS/C2401/77.

²⁰⁰ TNA, RG9/1617; RG11/2366—7.

²⁰¹ J Cook, *Report of Several Cases* (Taunton, 1895), 57.

²⁰² TNA, RG12/1875—7.

²⁰³ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/28/1802, DD/SAS/C2401/77; *Taunton Courier*, 24 Feb. 1897: BNA, accessed 12 May 2022. *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1897, 1914).

²⁰⁴ TNA, RG58/82593 (24).

²⁰⁵ SHC, A/DVY/1; D/B/ta/24/1/80/1685; D/R/ta/34/9/3, p. 82.

took their breaks in the boiler room where they could smoke.²⁰⁶ Industrial gloves continued to be a major product but in the later 20th century they specialised in sueded sheepskin for clothing and still employed more than 50 people in 1983.²⁰⁷ However, the business closed in 1985 and the industrial buildings were demolished.²⁰⁸

Gloving

Glovers were recorded from the 14th century and Gloverstreet was recorded in 1360—1.²⁰⁹ A prosperous glover in 1668 had leather skins and gloves valued at over £120 and a standing in the market.²¹⁰ Another in 1683 had 884 pairs of gloves for adults and children made of calf, lamb, sheep, kid, horse and dog skin, an unspecified quantity of black and coloured gloves some with cordovan, oil or chamois finishes and more than 130 natural and coloured skins. He also made purses, pouches, belts, book bindings and leather drawers and stockings and had two market stalls and possibly two resident journeymen.²¹¹ The same year another had gloves worth nearly £60 and used buckskin.²¹² The Gilbert family had a workshop with skins and gloves in 1699.²¹³ Girls and boys were apprenticed to learn gloving in the late 17th and 18th centuries.²¹⁴ A woman currier in 1740 was possibly curing skins for gloves and Elizabeth Newbury glover of North Street in 1830 was presumably putting out and retailing.²¹⁵ Male glovers continued to be recorded but put out work or cut the leather, as sewing gloves was an exclusively female occupation by the 19th century if not earlier.²¹⁶ In

²⁰⁶ SHC, A/DIF/79/1; DD/SIAS/68—70; D/P/wilt/23/41.

²⁰⁷ SHC, A/APN/2/6; PAM 1535; *Som. Business Dir.* (1983), 93.

²⁰⁸ SHC, A/AWI/220.

²⁰⁹ SHC, T/PH/win 1307—8, 1360—1; TNA, CP40/861, image 563; 890, image 1502; 907, image 808: www.waalt.uh.edu/indexphp/CP40 accessed May 2021; SHC, Q/SR/18/54—5, 33/30; 150/11.

²¹⁰ SHC, DD/SP/1668/56.

²¹¹ SHC, DD/SP/1683/25.

²¹² SHC, DD/SP/1683/27.

²¹³ A. Webb, *Som. Wills II* (Som. Rec. Soc. 94), 126.

²¹⁴ SHC, D/P/tau.m/13/6/1; TNA, IR1/48, p. 88; IR1/50, p. 84; IR1/58, p. 4; IR1/64, p. 143.

²¹⁵ SHC, Q/SR/308/167; *Pigot Dir.* (1830).

²¹⁶ SHC, DD/HC/6/1/1; D/P/tau.m/23/29.

1837 women gloving could earn 8*d.* to 11*d.* a day and girls 2*d.* or more.²¹⁷ It was hand work until the late 1850s and silk and cotton gloving continued to be had sewn in the late 19th century.²¹⁸

In 1861 not only were E. and W.C. French producing industrial gloves but Thomas Taylor was a commission agent for cloth and leather gloves employing most of the 193 female glovers and 26 male cutters but at least 34 women were making silk gloves.²¹⁹ By 1855 Thomas Taylor had built a glove factory in Back Bridge Street later renamed Yarde Place.²²⁰ He extended it in 1859 and employed 60 workers in 1871.²²¹ In 1875 he added a two storey block of warerooms to his factory. Of the *c.*600 people he was then said to employ, probably an exaggeration, almost all were countrywomen outworking. In 1881 he only employed nine men at the factory.²²² French's also drew their outworkers increasingly from the countryside and the number of people gloving in Taunton fell from 178 women and 18 men in 1871 to 51 women and 10 men in 1891 by which date most of the women were using machines.²²³ Leather parers and cutters may have worked at the glove factory or for shoemakers.²²⁴ Thomas Taylor bought land off Staplegrove Road, on which Richmond Road was laid out, and sold part on to a builder in 1883 presumably to finance a new factory. By 1894 Thomas and Theophilus Taylor had moved to the new building in Richmond Road, which included cutting and stitching rooms and the Yarde Place factory became a store for furnisher James Alder of Bridge Street.²²⁵ Additional buildings were provided in 1923.²²⁶ Production continued until 1957 or later when the firm moved into china retailing in their

²¹⁷ TNA, HO 73/53/9.

²¹⁸ TNA, HO 107/972, 1922—3.

²¹⁹ *PO Dir.Som* (1861); TNA, RG9/1617—18; RG12/1875—7.

²²⁰ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/1/25.

²²¹ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/1/48; *PO Dir.Som* (1866); TNA, RG10/2374—5.

²²² SHC, D/B/ta/24/110/322; J Cook, *Report of Several Cases* (Taunton, 1895), 57, 60; TNA, RG10/2370—2.

²²³ TNA, RG9/1617—18; RG10/2370—2, 2374—5; RG11/2366—8; RG12/1875—7.

²²⁴ SHC, A/DTR/1; Siraut, *Som. Wills*, 237.

²²⁵ SHC, DD/CH/77/6; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1894—1914); TNA, IR 58/82606 (1378); IR 58/82609 (1659).

²²⁶ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/54/925.

1929 warehouse, since demolished and the factory was used for storage and later as flats.²²⁷

Ewens and Company started work in the First World War and leased Tone Bridge House in 1918. After the building became Deller's café they moved into former warehouses nearby where they remained until the 1970s. They had a small workforce of *c.* 30 including outworkers making high quality fitted leather gloves which could not be produced with machines.²²⁸

Shoemaking

Shoemakers were recorded in the early 15th century.²²⁹ Late 17th-century shoes and offcuts were dumped behind houses in Mill Lane.²³⁰ Many cordwainers in the 17th and 18th centuries had market stalls.²³¹ Shoemakers paid 8d. for a stall in the market and in 1870 they were given standings in the west arcade by the Market House.²³² In 1810 there were 89 shoemakers in St Mary's parish and *c.* 130 marched in the 1814 victory procession.²³³ In 1820 a lastmaker was recorded and a family of heelmakers had recently returned from America.²³⁴ In 1830 34 shoemakers were recorded many of whom would have employed others as in 1831 123 shoemakers were recorded in St Mary's parish alone.²³⁵ In 1841 there were 283 male and female shoemakers and 382 in 1851 of whom over a quarter were women.²³⁶ The proportion of female shoemakers fell heavily from the 1860s partly due to the increasing acceptance of boots for women of all classes rather than soft shoes and pattens for outdoor wear. Three patten makers were recorded in 1822 and two in 1859 but they also made clogs

²²⁷ SHC, A/DIF/116/219; D/B/ta/24/1/71/1443; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957).

²²⁸ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1927); SHC, DD/FIV/1/40; DD/CWC.ta/unlisted acc. no. G/2468; R.P. Elliott, 'Taunton: an urban study', TS Durham BA geog. dissertation *c.* 1966, 19—20; .A/APN/2/6; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3).

²²⁹ TNA, CP40/692, images 562, 1423: at waalt.uh.edu/index.php/CP40 accessed May 2021.

²³⁰ SHC, C/ENAH/7/3.

²³¹ SHC, Q/SR/6/95—6, D/P/tau.ja/13/6/1; DD/X/HYD/2—3; DD/SP/1691/57.

²³² SHC, D/B/ta/31/1/2, 7.

²³³ SHC, D/P/tau.m/23/29; DD/SAS/C795/BA/9/7 (printed insert, 1814).

²³⁴ SHC, D/P/tau.m/23/29.

²³⁵ *Robson's Dir. Som.* (1839); SHC, D/P/tau.m/23/16.

²³⁶ TNA, HO 107/972, 1922—3.

and by 1890 there was one patten and clog maker but it was a sideline to his brush trade. In 1864 only two shoe shops were recorded and 43 shoemaking businesses employed c. 360 people but the increase in factory-produced shoes saw a fall in numbers of shoemakers to 94 by 1891, only two of them women, and probably many were shoe menders rather than makers.²³⁷ John Bale, whose business was established in 1809, still made sports shoes and anatomical boots in the 1890s.²³⁸ Most retailers like Massingham's store at 22—3 Fore Street and his West of England Boot and Shoe Company on The Bridge bought in their footwear even importing from abroad. Smaller firms like Norman's of Hammet Street still employed shoemakers and sold hand-made boots and shoes in 1890.²³⁹ There were 96 shoemakers and repairers recorded in 1901 but during the 20th century shoemaking as a craft disappeared except for repairs and even that declined from 15 businesses in 1957 to six in 1972 and fewer by 2000.²⁴⁰

Saddlery

Saddlers were recorded in the early 15th century.²⁴¹ A saddler in 1725 sold saddles, including an expensive mourning saddle, pillions, everything needed for riding and grooming a horse including whips, saddle bags, dog collars and portmanteaus.²⁴² Several saddlers were at work in the early 18th century notably the Coles family.²⁴³ A few horse harness and collar makers were recorded from the mid 18th century notably the Reeves family who turned to carriage

²³⁷ Pigot, *London and Provincial Dir.* (1822—3); Harrison, Harrad and Co., *Dir. Som.* (1859); *Goodmans Dir. Taunton* (1864), 77; *PO Dir. Som.* (1866); TNA, RG9/1617—18; RG10/2370—2, 2374—5; RG11/2366—8; RG12/1875—7; *Where to Buy: Taunton* (1890), 53.

²³⁸ *Taunton of Today* (1896), iii.

²³⁹ SHC, A/DIF/44; *Where to Buy: Taunton* (1890), 30.

²⁴⁰ TNA, RG13/2276—8; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957), 340; (1972—3), 418.

²⁴¹ TNA, CP40/618, image 654; 705, image 33; 895, image 84: at waalt.uh.edu/index.php/CP40 accessed May 2021; *Cal. Close*, 1441—7, 388.

²⁴² SHC, DD/SP/1725/22.

²⁴³ TNA, IR1/14, p.34; IR1/24, p. 147; IR1/41, p. 325; IR1/46, p. 137; IR1/47, p. 140; IR1/58, p. 164.

building.²⁴⁴ In the 19th century there were usually *c.* 20 saddlers and harnessmakers at work.²⁴⁵ One appears to have made factory belts in the 1790s.²⁴⁶ At least two early 19th-century saddlery businesses were still in existence in 1890.²⁴⁷ Leather breeches were also made especially in the early 19th century.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁴ SHC, DD/DP/59/12; DD/HC/6/1/1; TNA, IR1/20, p. 10; IR1/21, p. 148; IR1/67, p. 114, 162; IR1/68, p. 158.

²⁴⁵ *Pigot Dir.* (1830); TNA, HO 107/972, 1922—3; RG9/1617—18; RG10/2370—2, 2374—5; RG11/2366—8; RG12/1875—7.

²⁴⁶ SHC, D/P/tau.m/23/3.

²⁴⁷ *Where to Buy: Taunton* (1890), 51, 54.

²⁴⁸ Goldworthy, *Recollections of Old Taunton*, 13.

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