

**The Simple Annals of the Poor**

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**Family Life in the West Country  
c1550 - c1650**



**D.P. Kindegaard**

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### ABSTRACT

The century c1550 to c1650, was a period of great change when the last vestiges of the Medieval world gave way to the Modern. I have attempted to explore various aspects of life in several West Country villages at this time: personal details of names, stature, occupations; courtship and marriage; the making of a new family and finally, death. Three 'Case Studies' of families are included in the appendices.

Siston is a former Gloucestershire parish, north of the river Avon, about five miles from Bristol. Brislington is south of the river, about three miles from the city and formerly in Somerset. Their larger neighbours are Bitton, a former Gloucestershire coalmining parish with its two chapelries of Hanham and Oldland; and Keynsham, a small market town in Somerset.

Through the study I hoped to resolve puzzling differences between my genealogical experience and some aspects of academic thought, particularly the apparent condoning by church or village of pre-nuptial sexual intercourse between a supposed 'contract' and a marriage ceremony which resulted in pregnant brides and the 'seasonality' of weddings linked to slackness in the agricultural work cycle.

## INTRODUCTION

This study aims to provide an overview of village and family life in Gloucestershire and Somerset during a period roughly 1550-1650 by dissecting two parishes, Siston and Brislington and taking occasional forays into the territory of their larger neighbours, Bitton and Keynsham. I have used the technique of family reconstitution adopted by Miranda Chaytor<sup>1</sup> in her study of kinship in the Tudor-Jacobean period, transcribing entries from the parish register and other sources on to separate slips and sorting them alphabetically by surname into 'families', a system I have previously used for genealogical research. Apart from plotting family descent, the far from simple regression from known to unknown in a long series of begets, a family historian seeks to put flesh on the bones and set the family within the context of life, times and habitat. The academic historian 'reads' the past fitting trends and statistics into a composite whole from which a conclusion can be drawn. Some academic findings appeared slightly at variance with my twenty year experience of family history and through this study I hoped to set my mind at rest.

I am interested in the notions of 'seasonality' based on the dates when events like baptism, burial and especially marriage took place. Solemnisation of marriage was limited to specific dates within the church calendar, a hangover from before the Reformation. Attempts in 1575 to allow weddings at any time of the year were blocked by the deeply conservative Queen Elizabeth herself. Recent study has

attempted to align marriage dates to work: autumn marrying = arable, spring or early summer marrying = pastoral and non-seasonal = industrial. As marriage entries are for the genealogist the most difficult records to find I wondered if enough reference has been made to the names of those who are marrying. How can marriage 'seasonality' directly relate to pressure of work on the land in a particular parish, when many village men married in other places [unknown], when usually about half the men who married at the parish church came from somewhere else [unknown] and when not a few couples had no apparent connection with the parish at all? As Ann Kussmaul says "parishes did not make decisions about marriage months based on the seasonality of work and risks; individuals did"<sup>2</sup>. Whilst field work by its very nature depends on the regularity of the seasons, the workers moved when and wherever they could find employment. Miranda Chaytor restricted her family reconstruction to those in a limited social group, for "the very poor and mobile are rarely visible long enough to be reconstituted"<sup>3</sup>, a problem for historian and genealogist alike.

Community acceptance of pre-marital sex is another academic preoccupation, which I suggest is equally difficult to prove, yet it is postulated our ancestors turned a hypocritical blind eye to sex outside marriage when they knew a daughter or sister, even a servant for whom there should have been some paternal care, who gave birth to an illegitimate child risked brutal punishment as in February 1616, when Sir Thomas Bridges, JP of Keynsham ordered the mother of a bastard to be

"by the officers.....strip't naked from the middle upwards and whip't until her back be bloody two several times: the first at Pensford the next market day, the second at Cameley the Monday next following" 4

a by no means rare sentence as Somerset records amply testify. Certainly legislation of the time was designed to "terrify", so would not the community attitude have been one of caution? The study has fed on itself, throwing up questions of its own. What finally happened to the mothers of bastards and their children? Here I have drawn tentative conclusions which might offer scope for a larger study. What can be gleaned about a village from male occupations? Did the country even then feed the town with a dribble of young people who went into trade? Statistically, almost everybody was dead by the age of 32, yet decisions were less likely to be taken by the young than today and large quantities of wills exist where the testators were not only parents but grandparents.

The study is arranged in four chapters which explore different aspects of village life with reference to academic theory. Finally several families have been reconstructed using the primary sources below.

Parish Registers, the main primary source for a local study of this type vary wildly in quality and the four registers here are no exception. Siston's register, 1576-1641 was precisely kept by three incumbents and is far above average. Not so Brislington, 1566-1641 which has serious data losses. After an entry for September 1597 a page has been torn out and part of the next four sheets cut away. About half the baptisms 1598-1614 are lost. Burials 1602 to 1611 are



recorded on two loose sheets inserted in the register. No burials survive 1612-1637. No marriages are recorded between 1612 and 1621. Bitton's register runs in unbroken sequence 1571-1674 whereas none exists for Keynsham pre 1628. I have transcribed more than forty Siston wills held at Gloucestershire Record Office. Limitations of time and space have prevented similar work on the large number of Bitton wills from the same archives. Most wills proved in Somerset, including Brislington and Keynsham were destroyed by enemy action during the Second World War [the will calendars tantalisingly survive!] but I was fortunate enough to be given abstracts of Keynsham wills proved at the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, transcribed by my friend John Goulstone. Important series of quarter sessions returns, both in manuscript at Taunton and printed by the Somerset Record Society have provided intimate details of Keynsham and Brislington parishioners whereas I have so far failed to find Gloucestershire equivalents. The invaluable muster roll "Men and Armour for the County of Gloucestershire" collated by John Smith in 1608 supplies a partial census of all the men in the county fit for military service, arranged by parish, name, occupation, approximate age and suitability, judged by stature, to carry certain weapons. Using this unique record I have compared the men of Siston with those from the more populous Bitton. The Somerset Certificate of Musters for 1569 lists parish, name and weapons alone but a useful side effect concerns the changing fashion in weaponry. A 'presentment' which lists the parishioners of Siston in 1674 has allowed me to make a reasoned guess at the population a few years before.

I would not instinctively engage in historical controversy or debate but would prefer to write a parish history. Even this primrose path goes through a minefield for half way through my labours, I discovered Mr R.B. Pugh's tart warning:

"Familiarity and industry may indeed enable a man [sic] to accumulate a valuable corpus of materials for a history but they do not make him an historian and unless he feels that he is in the way to becoming an historian he had better keep his material locked up in his bureau" 6

but by that time it was too late.

#### Footnotes

1. Miranda Chaytor, 'Household & Kinship: Ryton in the late 16th & early 17th centuries', History Workshop Journal, 10, Autumn 1980 p.27
2. Ann Kussmaul, A General View of the Rural Economy of England 1538-1840. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990) p.48
3. Chaytor, 'Household & Kinship' p.35
4. E.H. Bates, Quarter Sessions for the County of Somerset, Vol I, James I. 1607-1625. (London, Harrison & Sons, 1907) [Somerset Record Society, (SRS) Volume 23] p176
5. T.G. Barnes, Somerset Assize Orders, 1629-40, (SRS, Volume 65) (London 1959) p.38
6. R.B. Pugh, 'How to write a Parish History', quoted M.L. Smith, The Local Historian Volume 9 number 5 (1971).

County of Gloucestershire

SISTON

BRISTOL



PARISH OF BITTON

COHAM  
FERRY

BRISLINGTON

The parish of BITTON included  
much of what we now call  
Kingswood and all of St George.

County of Somerset

KEYNSHAM

To Bath



Chapter 1. Villagers.

Seek home for rest, for home is best.

Thomas Tusser 1524?-1580

There is really no such creature, but if he existed at all, the village 'Everyman' would be called John, for this was the bridegroom's first name in a quarter or more of the weddings despite 35 different first names recorded at Bitton, 28 at Brislington, 25 at Siston and 20 at Keynsham. William is the usual second choice, though at Bitton it is just pipped by Thomas. Only Richard, Robert and Henry were likely alternatives. [Fig. 1]

This naming pattern is remarkably confirmed in 1608 by the two hundred and fourteen men from Bitton and its hamlets of Hanham and Oldland who appear in the great Gloucestershire muster roll. [Fig.2] when men from all over the county registered for military service.

Figure 1, Bridegrooms' Names.

	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
	John	William	Thomas	Richard	Robert	Henry	Rest
Brislington, 1566-1641 [177]	24,85	17,51	16,95	10,16	6,21		24,29
Siston, 1576-1641 [79]	25,31	12,66	10,16	7,59		6,32	37,97
Bitton, 1571-1641 [238]	30,67	14,28	15,13	5,46	6,30		28,15
Keynsham, 1629-1645 [77]	29,87	22,08	6,49	11,68	3,89		25,97

William appears to be closing the gap on John at Keynsham. A change in fashion?

Figure 2, Male Names in *Men and Armour for Gloucestershire*, 1608, Bitton with Hanham and Oldland, There were 41 individual forenames made up of

%	%	%	%	%	%	%
John	William	Thomas	Robert	Henry	Richard	Rest
28,50	14,48	11,21	6,54	4,67	4,21	30,38

In all but one case the Bitton men either stated their occupations or were listed as the son of a man in a specific occupation. Over half worked on the land, altogether sixty three husbandmen and nineteen yeomen with their labourers and servants. Slightly less than a quarter were coalminers or colliers, but there were others too in smaller numbers, masons, smiths, carpenters, tuckers, fishermen, wheelers, tilers, with a glover, plasterer, tinker, weaver, miller, joiner, baker, pedlar, butcher, shoemaker and a malt man.

A yeoman held small landed estates worth an annual value of forty shillings. He was eligible to serve on juries and vote for the knight of the shire. A husbandman could be a small freeholder, where title of the land could be passed from father to son, a copyholder who held land for life, by 'copy of the court roll' or a tenant farmer who rented portions of the Lord of the Manor's demesne lands.

Coal had been raised in the Forest of Kingswood since the 13th century, by surface quarrying or by winch and bucket via a vertical shaft sunk to a shallow depth. Generally speaking, colliers owned the copyhold and transported the coal to Bristol by packhorse for sale and coalminers mined but the distinction became so blurred as to be non-existent. Coal was a fuel for the lower orders and in 1631, "dainty dames" of London and probably Bristol too, "would not come into any house or room where sea-coals were burned, nor willingly eat of the meat that was either sod or roasted with sea-coal fire".<sup>2</sup>

The other artisans were present only in the small number which could be sustained by the community. The miller milled for all, the butcher killed and the shoemaker cobbled. The two tilers tiled - there were no thatched cottages here. Work was related to food: the two fishermen trawled the river, supplying a welcome change of diet; clothes; building; mechanics and repairs: the smiths made mining and farm implements as well as shoeing the horses of farmer and collier; the tinker repaired iron goods. There was no need for him to take to the road for the time being whereas the pedlar had perhaps been caught like a fly in amber on a rare visit.

Two who described themselves 'gentlemen' each had a servant but there were only eighteen servants in fourteen households. Each husbandman supposedly had his own servant who slept in a corner of the cottage<sup>3</sup> and other information<sup>4</sup> suggests 78% of all males 20-24 years were in service, yet if this is true where are the servants who belong to the majority of Bitton's husbandmen? Unless they were very young, too young to muster or all female, then sixty one out of the sixty three husbandmen were servantless. Exceptionally, among this group Henry Tucker employed two men. The only others with more than one servant were a carpenter with two and a yeoman with three. Multitudes below the salt, making up extended families were rare in Bitton.

The men were divided into rough age groups: fifty of them "one score years", that is, aged twenty, 137 "about 40" and only 11 between "50 and three score years". They were further sub-divided by stature into suitability as carriers of weaponry. Sixty five pikemen [tall],

69 musketeers [middling], 44 calyvers [short] and 20 [of meanest stature, as pioneers, appendixd sadly as "of little other use".] Twenty had received previous military training, perhaps in the militia or even as regular soldiers.

Twenty nine able bodied Siston men assembled at the same time. Again more than half were in husbandry, though one of the husbandmen, George Flower, was not the perennially struggling small farmer, for he employed three servants and his son, Richard Flower, became Rector of Siston in 1625 after graduating from Oxford<sup>5</sup>! Siston also supplied four colliers and four tailors, who perhaps worked for Arthur Wimboll, the clothier, a miller, a mason and a carpenter. The Lord of the Manor, Sir Henry Billingsley, sent two servants to the muster but did not come himself. Three had been soldiers. Considerably more than half the men were between twenty and forty with more than 62% of middling stature. John Smith, [1567-1641], steward of the Hundred of Berkeley, who compiled the muster roll was quite aware of the meaning of 'middling' in 1608 by looking around him but we can only look out of our own windows. I believe John Smith's middling man was a good deal shorter than one termed of 'average' height in modern times.

The small Siston muster can be compared with a 'presentment' of the village in 1674, which names the inhabitants over the age of twelve years, excluding those at the great houses, Siston Court and Mounds Court and puts the population at 157 persons, 79 male and 78 female<sup>6</sup>. If 40% were children, then Siston had about 220 people and was a little larger than the average or mean size of a pre-industrialised settlement as described by Laslett.<sup>7</sup>

Comparable musters for Somerset have not been published but forty years earlier in 1569<sup>8</sup>, forty two Keynsham men and thirteen Brislington men registered for service. A little under a third of them were, as usual, called John, followed by William and Thomas. These rolls are far less explicit; no attempt being made to balance stature against weapons and no ages given. What is revealed is the modernisation of armoury between 1569 and 1608. Almost half the men were archers with the rest pikemen and billmen and one 'gunner' for each village. By 1608, in Gloucestershire where there were only two 'bowyers' recorded in the whole county, and probably in Somerset too, the antique long bowman of glorious legend had all but disappeared, totally eclipsed by the musketeer!

From the evidence of 1608, 'Everyman' at Bitton and Siston worked on the land as a servantless small husbandman, aged between 20 and 40 and was of middling stature, suitable to handle a musket but without previous military experience. Keynsham or Brislington man cannot be precisely defined but I have no doubt they were similar. There is a Brislington tradition of mixed farming and market gardening with a little coalmining. Quarter sessions often refer to the state of the roads due to the colliers' horses. People from the other three<sup>9</sup> parishes must have sold produce at Keynsham's cattle and cheese market and from their wills, Keynsham men were yeomen and husbandmen, with a few craftsmen.

'Everywoman' was commonly called Joan, but the popularity of the Queen made it almost as likely that her name was Elizabeth. By the



start of the Keynsham register, Mary was in the ascendant and the beginning of the long rise of Sarah can be seen [Fig.3] There were fewer female names to choose from, 25 at Brislington, 19 at Siston, 29 at Bitton, and 23 at Keynsham, but they were more evenly spread.

Figure 3. Brides' names

	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Brislington, 1566-1641[173]	Joan	Elizabeth	Mary	Anne	Agnes	Alice	Ellen	Rest	
	21,97	14,45	9,24	8,09	7,51	6,35	5,78	26,58	
Siston, 1576-1641[81]	Elizabeth	Joan	Agnes	Anne	Katherine	Mary	Alice	Rest	
	18,51	13,58	13,58	11,11	8,64	6,17	6,17	22,22	
Bitton, 1571-1641[237]	Joan	Elizabeth	Anne	Mary	Katherine	Alice	Edith	Margaret	Rest
	19,83	16,45	11,39	9,28	5,06	4,22	3,79	3,79	26,16
Keynsham, 1629-1645[78]	Mary	Joan	Elizabeth	Anne	Alice	Margaret	Sarah	Rest	
	17,94	12,82	12,82	7,69	7,69	6,41	5,13	29,48	

NB, The discrepancies between the numbers of male & female marriages is because of deficiencies in registration.

So Jack went up the hill with Joan, but not always, for the eccentric minority too have their own 'trends'. The use of surnames as Christian names for instance, thus boys called Darkes, Dennys and Harnoyes. Others set no fashions but heard the distant throb of a different drum. One set of parents at Bitton scouring the scriptures for 'something Biblical' came up with 'Nazareth' as a name for their new daughter. Once grown up she might have been courted by a collier called Blaunchidyne but Machute and Elizeus were not unknown. Parnell, a diminutive of Petronilla, achieved a minor vogue at Siston and Bitton, but their parents surely must have been unaware it was a generic term for a priest's concubine and thereafter any loose woman! To compensate, Repentance Rudman was buried at Oldland in 1604. Finally, observe the uncrushable optimism of the aptly named Edward Flitt and Mawdline his wife who had their daughter christened whilst

passing through Siston, "being vagrant persons". They called her Fortune.

Woman was subordinate to man and her role was to bear and rear children. In the house she washed, baked, cooked, spun and sewed but she also tended the kitchen garden and the poultry, milked the cow and worked in the dairy and brewhouse. She would take produce to Bristol or Keynsham market by donkey cart just as the Kingswood and Brislington 'market women' did right up to the 19th century. As a widow, she might well be a farmer in her own right as was Ann Pope of Brislington who figured in a court case in 1657 when a quantity of wheat was stolen from her.

The theft was discovered by Ann's grandson, James Provis, who alerted the tithingman, Thomas Peasley. Householders were bound over as sureties for each other's behaviour and the tithingman took responsibility for a group of ten households. [One tenth of everyone's annual produce, called tithes, was collected in taxes.] James and Thomas, possibly acting on 'information received' went to the house of William Bungie, labourer, where they found "two dozen and seven of wheat sheaves lying over the bedstead." Provis believed the wheat to be his grandmother's and demanded of Bungie's wife Joan, how it came there. She said her children brought it home and when asked where her husband was, she answered that he was gone to Wiltshire to work.

Meanwhile 'Gammer' - grandmother - Pope did some sleuthing of her own, questioning a labourer's wife, Elizabeth Peasley who admitted Joan Bungie "did tempt and intice her to go along with her" and after

wards begged "Pray Gammer Pope, forgive me, for if my husband should know of it, he would even kill me". Ann Pope replied, "I forgive you with all my heart", but later Elizabeth denied she "had a hand in stealing any sheaves of corn". Joan Bungie stuck to her story that her children going to lease [glean] in the fields brought home the wheat and told her "the sheaves were given them and she took them and laid them over the bedstead." Sadly no judgement has survived, but it is interesting to note the absence of the husbands and that the tithingman had the same surname as one of the accused.

#### Footnotes

1. John Smith, Men & Armour for the County of Gloucestershire, 1608. (Gloucester, Alan Sutton, 1980)
2. E.H. Spalding, The Piers Plowman Social and Economic Histories, Volume V, 1600-1760 (London, George Philip, 1931)p 152
3. Peter Laslett, The World we have Lost (London, Methuen & Co, 1965) p. 96
4. Information sheet supplied to H13 seminar group.
5. Joseph Foster, Alumni Oxonienses, 1500-1614, (Eade to Kyte) (Oxford, James Parker & Co, 1891)
6. 'A Presentment made of the Parish of Siston the 7th Day of December 1674 of the names of those persons above twelve years of age in the sd parish' Bristol Record Office (BRO) P/S/V/11a
7. Laslett 'The World we have Lost' p. 54
8. E. Green, ed. 'Certificate of Musters, 1569' Somerset Record Society Volume 20, (London, 1904), p. 78-79
9. C. & J. Greenwood, Somerset Delineated (1822) & Rev Mr Nightingale, Topographical & Historical Description of the County of Somerset (1813)
10. E.G. Withycombe, Oxford Dictionary of English Christian Names (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1976) ,p.244,
11. Somerset Record Office (SRO) Q/SR 95 II

Chapter 2. The Farmer goes courting.

It was a lover and his lass with a hey and a ho and a hey nonino  
Shakespeare, As You Like It, V.iii.18

All, whatever their primary occupation had a plot of land and an animal or two for subsistence. From haymaking in June to the harvesting of corn in the last breath of summer every person, man and woman, boy and girl helped out on the land, just as they did still in Queen Victoria's time when my young aunt struggled to carry great stone jars of cider to those thirsting in the fields. For this was the busiest time, but there is always something to do in the country. A sixteenth century agricultural calendar for November instructs the diligent husbandman to fatten the hog, set garlic and peas, thresh the wheat, small quantities at a time, "lest fustyness take it", lay down straw to rot for compost and sweep the chimney. Finally,

Get home with thy brakes\* ere all summer be gone  
For tethered up cattle to sit down upon,  
To cover thy hovel, to brew and to bake  
And to lie on the flooring where cover ye make,  
Now saw out thy timber for board and for pale  
To have it well seasoned and ready for sale,  
Save slabs of thy timber for stable and sty,  
For horse and for hog the more cleanly to lie.

\* bracken,

During this period of comparative idleness weddings were celebrated with November first choice in all the parishes except Keynsham where it occupied second place, [Graph 1] impressively confirming Wrigley and Schofield [Graph 2] who noticed a glut of late autumn weddings in 'mixed farming' parishes which included "pasture farming types: stock keeping with corn-growing, sometimes with

dairying"<sup>3</sup>. Whilst couples might have chosen November anyway because of the lull in the fields they were pushed in that direction by church dogma.

Advent marriage doth deny  
But Hilary gives thee liberty  
Septuagesima says thee nay  
Eight days from Easter says you may  
Rogation bids thee to contain  
But Trinity sets thee free again,<sup>4</sup>

which effectively barred almost all December and much of the first five months of the year though the clerks of the four parishes largely ignored May prohibition.<sup>5</sup> Periods bordering Advent and Lent were least popular with only four marriages in March, [two each at Oldland, one of Bitton's chapels, and Keynsham], and eleven in December. [Appendix 1] Whilst there is little sign of a pre-Lent rush, there is a post-Lent bulge. The church allowed weddings throughout the summer and up to Advent. Thus, generally speaking with the harvest safely in, John Farmer arranged for the banns to be called in his parish church on three successive Sundays to allow friends and neighbours chance to object and then, one November morning, he called on Joan and hand in hand they went to plight their troth. Weddings in particular parishes can be counted to 'prove' that a seasonal lull in work influenced choice of marriage dates as much as church prohibition. The trouble with this bucolic vision, is that John often did not marry in his own parish but went elsewhere and married a girl from another community where a different work pattern may have existed.

Marriages are "entered in our parish registers with greater care and regularity than either baptisms and burials"<sup>6</sup> but even so, the

marriage records of individuals are notoriously difficult to find, particularly those of men. The wedding may have been in the next parish, the market town or another county. At least half of all bridegrooms married 'outsider' women in parishes other than where they worked after which the bridal pair might or might not go 'home' to the husband's parish. Often the first inkling that a marriage has taken place at all is a baptism in the parish register. The child might have been born nine months after the marriage or it might not. It might not even be the first child. Without a marriage date it is impossible to say whether the marriage fits in with notions of slackness of the work cycle, especially as men's work took precedence over that of women.

Eighty three marriages took place in Siston, 1576-1641, and concerned 166 people, including four brides and three grooms whose names are illegible. Thirty of the bridegrooms came from local families, that is, people with the same surname appear elsewhere in the register. Fifty bridegrooms were strangers, for nobody else of their surname makes an appearance. A few male strangers settled down in Siston after the marriage as evidenced by the baptisms of their children. There were 54 brides who came from Siston and twenty five 'strange' women. Thus Siston brides who married in their own parish church correspond almost exactly to the number of 'stranger' bridegrooms who married there. These men could have come from anywhere. After the marriage they departed with their brides for an unknown destination. The marriage seasonality of a parish should therefore be measured most particularly in the terms of those bridegrooms who lived locally and who married locally. These thirty

marriages compare favourably with the trend shown in graphs 1 and 2 with a high in April but with October and November reversed. It seems therefore that it makes little difference whether the grooms were local or not. Marriage trends seemingly prevailed over a wider area than just the parish.

January	1
February	2
March	0
April	5
May	2
June	3
August	2
September	4
October	6
November	5
December	0

The Brislington picture is more confused for 18% of the bridegrooms were 'strangers', whose surnames did not appear prior to their marriages, but who subsequently settled down and brought up families in the parish. Almost 52% of Brislington grooms were local men and 27% were 'strangers' who departed after their marriage. The names of the rest were illegible. Local brides accounted for 56% with just over 40% coming from outside and the remainder illegible. Nevertheless, more than 100 marriages which produced children must have taken place elsewhere at an unknown date.

When a marriage record cannot be found in the parish register, a marriage licence may have survived. A licence, obtainable from a bishop, allowed a wedding to take place at once, denying one's neighbours the thrill of hearing the banns read out in church beforehand. Marriage by licence was therefore considered more upmarket. Bonds issued to William Gleson, gentleman, of Brislington to

marry Elinor Wickham, spinster of Keynsham in July 1618<sup>7</sup> and William Tibbott of Keynsham, husbandman, with Ann Wickham of Brislington, January 1624,<sup>8</sup> [a family affair, for William Gleson was a bondsman], survive whereas the Keynsham marriage register does not.

Other licences<sup>9</sup> issued to Brislington people, dated February 1628, June 1628, April 1636, did not result in Brislington marriages and these may have taken place in Bristol, Beckington, or Wells, the homes of the other parties to the licence. In June 1630, two men, Thomas Slade and Thomas Daniel obtained licences to marry the same girl, Susan Deane,<sup>10</sup> perhaps the belle of Brislington Common. Tom Daniel won her and they married at St Luke's where a child was baptised thirteen months later. There were more shenanigans when William Daniel, junior, sought to marry Alice Bradley, a widow, in September 1632. She seems to have dithered or had taken up with another man. Somewhat irked, the groom took out an injunction that

"the said Alice...[is]...not to marry with any man other than William Daniel, son of Andrew, till the said Daniel be called". "

William and Alice finally tied the knot at Brislington in January 1633 and had a child early in 1636. It may be seen from these few cases that more than a quiet working period might influence timing. A study of marriage licences in conjunction with parish registers could perhaps distort seemingly proven marriage patterns.

Brevity rules the parish register of the Tudor/Jacobean period. A marriage record contains no more than the couple's names and the date. The woman's name need not even be given at her own wedding. An



entry like one at Bitton in 1654 which reads dourly "Samuel Davis was married" though rare, is far from unique. In a Nottinghamshire register the brides' names were omitted for a period of over forty years!<sup>12</sup>

Canon Law decreed a minimum nuptial age of fourteen for males and twelve for females but whilst teenage love affairs inevitably occurred, young marriages were relatively rare. John Stevens [16] and William Zelwode [17] at Brislington and Mary Cottle [17] at Siston were the youngest people to marry. It is obvious the issuing clerk thought William Edmunds of Kingsweston in Gloucestershire a trifle immature when he sought a licence to marry Joan Pope. William proudly proclaimed he was

"24 years of age and hath lived from his father since he was 21 and hath maintained himself without help from his father."<sup>14</sup>

This was a couple who could definitely not expect the old man to retire and donate them his farm in exchange for food and shelter! They married at Brislington in April 1627 and departed. William was indeed youngish for the average age for first marriage was between 27 and 28 at Brislington for both men and women and at Siston, 29 for men and 26 for women. Brislington supplied the oldest first time bride and groom, Agnes Whippey, aged 52, who married a widower, and John Maynard aged 45.

We suspect crudity in our ancestors, so there is an idea that 'the worthy husbandman' who needed to produce strong sons and daughters as working assets would not purchase a pig in a poke. If

such cynicism was current the result might well be a majority of children conceived before marriage and a welter of discarded barren women. Whether rejects or not, 'lone women' there certainly were and their presence is explored later. Conversely, we should expect to find no childless couples, but they are far from unknown.

Brides who can be checked for pre-marital pregnancy are relatively few. It has already been shown that up to two thirds left their own villages after the wedding. Their offspring would be christened in the parish church near their new home. It would be impossible to follow even a tiny minority from one parish to an unlimited number of new parishes, even supposing every single parish register from the period has survived and it cannot be known whether these women were pregnant or not. A similar number of men looked outside their own parish for a bride and were married in the woman's parish [usually unknown]. Just as 'seasonality' cannot be confirmed without a wedding date, neither can pre-marital pregnancy.

The evidence for pregnant brides therefore rests on the minority of couples who were not only married in a particular parish but also baptised their [presumed] first infant in the same parish. It must be reiterated that a baptised child is not necessarily the first of the union. The marriage register of twenty years hence or the discovery of a will may often turn up previously unsuspected offspring. Baptism was never compulsory.

It is possible to categorise Siston's 143 couples as: those who married, stayed in the parish but were childless; those who married

elsewhere [date of marriage unknown] but produced children in the parish and those who married and baptised children in the parish. Only twenty nine couples were in the last category. Of these 8 [27.6%, or 5.6% of the total number of couples] baptised a child less than nine months after marriage, though five others were quite possibly unknowingly expectant on their wedding day too. [Appendix 4]

Eighty one Brislington brides with children can be identified. Of these, 63 brought children for baptism after more than nine months of marriage. The children of 18 couples [22%] were baptised as follows: one month after marriage [2], after two months [1], three months [3], four months [1], six months [3], seven months [3], eight months [2], nine months [3]. [Appendix 4]

Even with such slender evidence it appears that in a pre-contraceptive age, pregnancy must have been looked on pragmatically as a likely consequence of serious courting and wise families took precautions to protect a woman before a man could be considered as a suitor, not only an intention to marry but equally importantly being in a situation to do so. Alexander Walter of Brislington made enquiries about a man calling on his sister Joan and found he was already married. William Hall, "disappointed of his purpose" and ordered off the premises began a campaign of verbal abuse against Alexander in which ten other village men became involved who swore to Alexander's good name. Joan Walter's feelings were not reported. <sup>15</sup>

Whilst blind eyes may have been turned once a couple had an understanding, I cannot believe sex was actively encouraged.

'Bundling' is, I suggest, a fiction. I have never come across a single primary reference in two decades of research. Some couples, women in particular, for as daughters of Eve they were held most responsible for the outcome, were prepared to take chances and some were not; some believed they were 'safe' once marriage arrangements were under way, though this could end in more than tears. In 1619 Robert Ford, a Keynsham tanner, was ordered to pay one shilling a week to the overseers while Elizabeth Taunton, the mother

"shall keep the child without receiving any allowance or in default pay 6d weekly..... and whereas it appeared there were divers motions of marriage between the parties and they have received punishment by the ecclesiastical laws, corporal punishment of the said Elizabeth is foreborn". <sup>16</sup>

No stigma seemingly applied if the couple married but harrassment of a lone pregnant woman began as soon as pregnancy was apparent and continued even *in extremis* during labour as in 1618 at Brislington when Bartholomew the son of Elizabeth Simunds was born, after which Agnes Newman the midwife reported "Thomas Rysse is the father". <sup>17</sup> If coercion to marry still failed 'The Act' was invoked whereby both parents could be punished financially and physically, although I found only one case where the man also suffered physical punishment. <sup>18</sup> <sup>19</sup>

The nub of the problem was that maintenance of an illegitimate child might be at the ratepayers' expense. By 1638, the authorities, perceiving "a greate increase of bastards that are chargeable to parishes" ordered Justices of the Peace to take

"speaciall care that the mother of such bastards, of whome there can be noe doubt and alsoe the reputed fathers, whoe are the undoubted fathers of such bastard children.....shall receive their corporall punishment as well as give security for the indemnity of the parish where such bastard was borne that others may be terrified from committing the like offences and that the mothers in such cases...be sent to the house of correccion and remayne there their full tyme according to the statute." <sup>20</sup>

Although women of Bitton and Brislington still continued to give birth to accidental children, this draconian legislation may help to explain the decrease in illegitimacy rates noted by Lawrence Stone as <sup>21</sup> falling from the modest level of under 4% in the Elizabethan period to a suggested under one half per cent at the height of Puritan control in the 1650's but so many parish registers were not kept up during the Civil War/Commonwealth period the apparent fall may be due to under-registration.

Bastardy was never the desperate problem the authorities thought. The illegitimacy rate in the parishes examined was 1.91% at Bitton, 1573-1652, 0.52% at Siston 1576-1641, 2.99% at Brislington 1566-1641 and 2.17% at Keynsham, 1628-1641, [Appendix 5] even less than the figures recorded at Ludlow in Shropshire, 1590-1640, [3.8%] and at <sup>22</sup> Kerry, Montgomeryshire 1620-49 [6.06%]

Illegitimacies by decade

	Brislington	Bitton	Oldland	Keynsham
1571-1580	4	2	0	no records
1581-1590	3 [incl twins]	2	0	"
1591-1600	3	1	2	"
1601-1610	2	4	6	"
1611-1620	2	1	0	"
1621-1630	3	1	5	"
1631-1640	2	4	3	7
1641-1650	no records	4	1	2

Maybe registers which show few or no illegitimacies should be rejected, for a strong minded parish priest could have terrified "cowering culprits"<sup>23</sup> into leaving the village, a possible description of life at Siston where only two bastards are recorded, a baptism and a burial, during the whole period. Elsewhere too, women did not wait for physical punishment or humiliating admonishment in church. In 1612, Sir Thomas Bridges requested a discharge for John Woolley of Keynsham, "the child being since dead and the woman runne away....in regarde he is a very poore fellow"<sup>24</sup>. [Compare the sympathetic tone of this memorandum with the same magistrate's punishment of a woman in 1616!]

In absolute contrast to John Woolley's 'cap in hand', William Panter junior's antics in 1617 caused pandemonium across two counties. Panter had made Anne Turner of Keynsham pregnant. He and his father aimed to rid themselves of her by engaging a certain Thomas Symons to take her to Wales or Ireland. It is a measure of Anne's terror at her plight that she agreed to go along with the plot. En route the child was inconveniently born at Aust where they were waiting for the ferry. Symons was arrested and taken to Gloucester gaol. A hapless Midsomer Norton tithingman, Peter Parsons, [remember villagers stood surety for each other's good behaviour and responsibility was vested in the tithingman], who had accepted a fraudulent pass from Panter which gave the girl's name falsely as Anne Sloper was also taken into custody and conveyed under guard to Gloucester Castle. The Panters absconded and a warrant was issued "to bring them also before the justices to be dealt

with according to the law." It was not the first time they had been in similar trouble. In 1616, William junior had been "conveyed away" by his father to avoid paying maintenance for Katherine Fryn's child. Panter senior was at that time ordered to produce his son or else take responsibility himself. It would not be altogether surprising if Agnes Panter whose illegitimate child was born at Brislington in 1605 was of this family. Scandal did not harm the elder Panter's career in local government. In 1621 he appeared in an intestacy case, described "overseer of the poor of Keynsham".

The fate of poor Anne Turner and her child is unknown. The baby may have been an unwanted bundle passed hand to hand until relieved by a pitiful end, like the "mayde child found dead in a stawle of John Maynard",<sup>27</sup> buried at Brislington in February 1596. With the child was discovered a letter from William Cavell of Bath to Phillippe Price of 'Bristleton' but the contents were not revealed.

Martin Ingram, in his study of Wylve and Keevil in Wiltshire,<sup>28</sup> found that "even women who had given birth to bastards were subsequently able to marry", though the range of possible marriage partners was substantially reduced, an opinion not confirmed here. It was very seldom indeed that the unmarried mothers of Brislington, Siston, Bitton and Keynsham married; fewer than those who were buried shortly after the birth. About three quarters of them disappeared along with their children. [Appendix 5] [Out of the forty eight illegitimate children baptised in the above parishes, eleven were buried in infancy, one survived to be married in her parish of origin,

three suffered an unknown fate [their surnames are not recorded] and thirty three disappear from the record.]

	Bastard Bearer	married	buried	disappear	unknown
Bitton*	20	2	1	15	2
Brislington	17	1	1	14	1
Siston	2	0	1	1	0
Keynsham	6	0	1	4	1
Total	45	3	4	34	4

\*NB. There were 17 more bastard births at the Hanham and Oldland chapelries but I have not yet undertaken a detailed study of these children and their mothers.

The disappearance of unmarried mothers and their children is also noted by Maureen Duffy, the novelist, in her splendid factual family history *Inherit the Wind*. It is my contention that they swelled the ranks of vagrants, another section against whom a huge legislation was aimed.

Seven wandering women gave birth at Brislington,<sup>29</sup> [they and their children are not included amongst the named illegitimates] from 1567 when "a poore woman's child was delivered at Puxley's house" to 1617 when "Sydrach, the child of a woman, a stranger, at John Whippey's" was christened. The "child born at Beresbridge of a woman who came thither by chance", was baptised February 14 1591 and buried the next Thursday "after the woman went away to be purified". 'Churching', the thanksgiving of women after childbirth, could have been performed at St Luke's, so was the woman's departure a ruse to abandon her child? Or does 'purification' have a more sinister connotation: surely not a ritual scourging, so soon after confinement? They came from near or far. Lawford's Gate in Bristol or "out of Gloucestershire" like the exhausted wanderer who arrived at Ric Ithell's house in 1593. Her



child was christened Mary and the woman was buried the same day. The child of a vagrant woman who had only one leg was christened in 1600.

Behind the christening or burial of a child in the parish register is the invisible presence of the mother. A burial at Bitton of "an Irish child" in June 1632 and the baptism of another in July may suggest the presence and departure of one Irish woman and the arrival of another heavily pregnant, soon after. Or both children may belong to one wandering family who had found summer work in the parish. Thomas, the son of Thomas Cowle, "a poore walking man" christened in Bitton in December 1610, had a mother, an invisible walking woman, who had given birth by the roadside. The christening at Brislington in 1630 of "Martha Sampson, daughter of Richard, a traveller, late of High Wells", indicates a party of at least three, for Mrs Sampson, who gave birth was as usual omitted. At Oldland in 1606 when the curate "buried a man child of a strange woman" she told him the tragic tale of six previous children she had lost. Tradesmen travelled with pregnant wives: William Williams, of Bradford on Avon, christened at Brislington 1607 and Mary Chick, whose un-named mother was "brought to bed" in Bitton, in 1610, were both children of roving glass carriers.

In January 1619, Wells magistrates ordered "that Elizabeth Zealy whose child was born at Keynsham while she was travelling that way shall be forthwith sent to Hutton where the child was begotten." <sup>30</sup> Though the babies of vagrant women were willingly baptised, neither they nor their offspring were welcome to burden the rates a minute longer than absolutely necessary. Like single men, many of them

displaced soldiers, and families, they were often whipped and branded,<sup>31</sup>  
then harried as fast as possible, in the direction of the next village  
and the next, until one village was forced to bury the wanderer at  
parish expense.

Courting could clearly have dangerous results. At the most  
extreme the desperate act of Elizabeth Hobbs who on August 11, 1604  
was hanged for "murtheringe her childe begotten in adultery".<sup>32</sup>

Happily, courtship was more likely to end with a wedding. The  
couple rarely had new clothes but sported sprigs of flowers or herbs  
and the bride received a ring. Afterwards guests brought food and  
drink to a bride-ale which could become ribald, with a fiddler or two  
and

"such a rennynge, leapyng and flyngyng amonge them,  
then there is a lyftinge up and discoveryng of the  
damselles' clothes...that a man might thynke they were  
sworn to the Devel's Daunce. Then must the poor bryde  
kepe foote with all dauncers and refuse none, how  
scabbed, foule, droncken rude and shameless soever he be"<sup>33</sup>

but not of course if the couple were Puritans, for they were sober of  
dress and habit and even despised a wedding ring as "a Relique of  
Popery and a Diabolicall Circle for the Devel to Daunce in".<sup>34</sup>



MARRIAGE CEREMONY  
(ROXBURGH BALLADS)

### Footnotes

1. Dorothy Hartley & Margaret M. Elliott, Life & work of the Peoples of England in the 16th Century, The Agricultural Calendar, 'November', (London, Batsford, 1925), p. 20
2. E.A. Wrigley & R.S. Schofield, Population History of Great Britain. 1541-1871 (London, Edward Arnold, 1981), Table 8.6. p.304
3. Kussmaul, 'General View of the Rural Economy', p. 14
4. Charles Cox, The Parish Registers of England, (London, Methuen, 1909) footnote on p.80
5. Two weeks of January and depending on Easter, possibly 3 weeks in February, all March, 2 weeks of April; 2 weeks Rogation in May.
6. Cox, 'Parish Registers' p.76
7. SRO, Wells Marriage Licences
8. ibid
9. ibid
10. ibid
11. ibid
12. Cox, 'Parish Registers' p.90, 13. ibid p.77
14. SRO, Wells Marriage Licences
15. SRO: Q/SR 2.8.1.1607 (1608) [Appendix 5 shows that Alexander was wise to be cautious.]
16. Bates 'Quarter Sessions Records' SRS, Vol 23 p. 262.
17. Parish Register of Brislington.
18. The Act of 18 Elizabeth
19. Bates 'Quarter Sessions Records' SRS Vol 23, p. 211 (July 1617, Nicholas Ruddock & Katherine Canker whipped through Glastonbury with "two fiddles playing before them to make known their lewdness in begetting a base child upon the Sabbath Day, coming from dancing")
20. Barnes 'Somerset Assize Orders' 1629-40, p. 38
21. Lawrence Stone. The Family. Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800 (London, Penguin, 1988), p. 389
22. Laslett, 'The World we have Lost' p.134

23. ibid
24. Bates, 'Quarter Sessions Records' SRS 23 p. 69.
25. ibid p 176, [see my note 4 in Introduction]
26. ibid, pp. 163, 221, 308
27. Parish Register of Brislington
28. Martin Ingram, Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 310
29. Parish Register of Brislington
30. Bates, 'Quarter Sessions Records' p. 246]
31. John Pound, Poverty and Vagrancy in Tudor England, (London, Longman, 1986) p. 45,
32. Parish Register of St Augustine's Bristol. Adultery' was the blanket word for all acts of sexual immorality.
33. Christine Bloxham & Mollie Picken, Love and Marriage, quoting Anon, 'The Christen State of Matrimony, 1543' (Exeter, Webb and Bower, 1990) p.103
34. ibid, p.51

Chapter 3. Parents and Children.

Our life shall live, and later life renew,  
Edmund Spenser 1552? - 1599.

The baptismal data hints at periodic crisis, rising and falling according to the harvest. [Appendix 2]

	Brislington	Siston	
1582 - 1592	112	65	
1593 - 1602	67	41	disastrous harvests 1594-7
1603 - 1612	46*	47	bad harvest, 1607; drought 1610
1613 - 1622	89	70	distress amongst poor 1617
1623 - 1632	108	75	bad harvests 1628-31
1633 - 1641	121	55	bad harvests 1637-1638

\*not a true reflection of actual birthrate due to data loss.

These famine conditions meant that Brislington's birthrate did not regain its 1592 level until 1632. Siston had attained the 1592 level in the decade ending 1622 but had declined again by the end of 1641. The birthrate at Bitton lessened in the ten years to 1602, improved 1603-1612, declined 1613-1622. It rose significantly in the following decade and remained static for ten years after which it declined again up to 1641. Oldland is markedly different. The birthrate trebled 1593-1602, decreased slightly in the following two decades, then almost doubled up to 1632. The reason for the increase in baptisms is industrial. Loss of the Crown lease to Kingswood Chase owing to a bureaucratic error had allowed speculators to lay claim to the land, and issue dubious leases to mining 'adventurers'. The result was a spectacular 'coal rush'.

The pattern of baptisms which "probably accurately represents the seasonal distribution of births"<sup>2</sup> differs marginally in the four parishes plus Oldland, from Wrigley & Schofield's findings in that the peak is reached in March rather than February although the nadir in

both sets is in July. [Graphs 3 & 4] Prior to mass contraception, midwives even in the 20th century, were aware of 'the human breeding season' which meant they delivered most babies in the spring.

Many first babies were conceived in the balmy evenings of early summer, 44% of Brislington births, supposing birth and baptism to have occurred within days of each other, were in the first three months of the year. At Siston, over a third of first births were in the first quarter.

In most cases, John and Joan had little time to settle into married life before a child lay in the cot. A study of childbirth<sup>4</sup> showed that where brides could be traced from their marriages to the baptism of their first child, over a third produced a baby within twelve months of marriage and between two-thirds and four-fifths, had done so within two years, both poles of which research are represented by Brislington and Siston where a considerable number of childless couples can also be discerned.

	12m & under %	under 2y %	2-3 %	3-4 %	4y+ %	no children %
Brislington	35,52	13,16	3,94	6,58	21,05	19,73
Siston	55,55	8,34	13,90	0,00	2,77	19,44

If the number of registered baptisms over any given period are divided into the number of marriages, the quotient gives a rough idea how many births each marriage must have led to. The figure is generally less than five.<sup>5</sup> A neat conclusion, confirmed at Brislington: 667 children baptised, 179 marriages: a birthrate of 3.79 children per

marriage and at Siston: 383 children baptised, 83 marriages, a rate of 4.61 children per couple, yet the people of the marriage register differ significantly from those who brought children for baptism.

People as individuals and not as statistics do not have an 'average' number of children. Some have one child and some have ten. In Brislington and Siston children were distributed amongst couples as follows:

Parents with Children	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Brislington	31.18	21.60	10.05	11.06	8.54	4.52	3.01	5.52	.50	0
Siston	33.60	21.87	11.72	10.93	9.38	2.34	3.13	3.90	2.34	.78

The two sets of figures are remarkably close with about a third of the couples having only one child, although many families were transients; they arrived in the parish, baptised a child and appeared no more. The Siston data is based on 128 identifiable couples who produced the 383 children, an average of almost three children per couple; however one hundred of the couples were the parents of 200 of the children. The remaining 28 couples had 183 children, thus less than a quarter of the couples were responsible for just under half of the children. Brislington is less easy to interpret owing to data loss and because in several large families, the Hedges, Macys, Daniels, Newmans, the use of common male given names amongst the fathers and the absence of the mothers' names at baptism make it impossible to distinguish particular couples with any degree of accuracy. I have therefore omitted them altogether and have based the figures on the remaining 199 couples and their 582 children. Like Siston, the average is just short of three children per couple and yet again less than a



quarter of the couples were the parents of nearly half the children. It would appear that in both villages there was both substantial mobility and a dependable breeding pool of static fertile couples.

Of the 383 Siston children, 90 died under the age of ten.

	under 6 mths	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Siston	55	11	10	7	2	1	1	1	1	1
Brislington	45	12	6	3	5	2	3	1	1	3

Despite the Brislington drawbacks, a similar trend to Siston can be detected with by far the greatest number of infants dying under the age of 6 months.

The high rate of infant mortality and the universal concern that souls of infants might return to their maker with the taint of original sin, led to midwives being licensed by the bishop to baptise a child if there was any risk of its death before a priest could arrive. The midwife had to be a communicant of the Church of England, recommended by her vicar and by matrons who knew of her skill and her "life and conversation". She swore to be "diligent, faithful and ready to help every woman travailing of child, and not to forsake the poor woman to go to the rich and in no way exercise any manner of witchcraft, charms, sorcery or invocation." <sup>6</sup> The Puritans' Millenary Petition, whose plenipotentiaries caught King James in 1603 when he was on his way south to claim the kingdom objected to the midwives' privileged position <sup>7</sup> and in 1604 it was decreed that baptism was to be administered only by clergy and not by midwives or any other woman. For the time being, Richard Pope's twins born at Brislington in March

1581 were "christened by the mydwives, and buried the same day." The name of the mother was not recorded but it seems she recovered.

Apart from baptism and burial, children were usually officially ignored. The Siston census of 1674 specifically excludes those under twelve.<sup>8</sup> Omission itself though, hardly proves Edward Shorter's breathtaking proposition that "In traditional society mothers viewed the development and happiness of children younger than two with indifference."<sup>9</sup> Examples of this wickedness are

"swaddling, the leaving of infants for long periods alone, the widespread practices of putting children out to nurse, the lack of emotion at children's deaths...practices which continued among the working classes .....even into the nineteenth century".<sup>10</sup>

Swaddling had persisted since the birthday of Jesus Christ and such banding probably helped a mother carry the baby to work rather than leaving him. Wet nursing could be a safer option before any real alternative to breast feeding existed. A father left with a dead wife and a live infant would have no alternative than to seek out a wet nurse; overwhelming economic pressure might force a family to this drastic step but Shorter believes "These women did not care and this is why their children vanished in the ghastly slaughter of the innocents which was child rearing".<sup>12</sup> But... we suffer "from a lack of attitudinal data which relate to the mass of the population."<sup>13</sup> Quite. The unlettered masses left no personal documentation but people in a slightly higher social bracket allow us to glimpse parenting nothing like Shorter's nightmare vision. Florence Smyth's children in 1637 are endearingly called "our infantri".<sup>14</sup> Early in the next century, little

Samuel Trotman of Siston Court aged twelve months, is clearly doted on. Writing to his father in law, Trotman senior says "Samuel grows bravely and begins to want a playfellow. His Mammy says she thinks 'tis time enough yet",<sup>15</sup> which also seems to hint at contraceptive knowledge.

With remarriage common, many children would have had a step-parent and step siblings. Cinderella and her Ugly Sisters were obviously the products of two marriages and in some versions of the story there is a stepmother too. The 'wicked stepmother' may have been the more familiar 'ogre' for widowers were twice as likely to remarry as widows; at least thirteen men remarried at Siston but only six women. A 'comfortable' widow was a good catch but poor widows with dependent children were not an attraction. Joan Whopper's last child was sixteen when she remarried at Brislington, but Joan Alley's youngest was only eight. Joan was a member of the prosperous Peacock family which may have helped. Jack, of the Beanstalk had a widowed mother and consequently their poverty was dire.

Once children were sufficiently grown they became part of the family economic unit, but only one son could inherit the copyhold. The rest might be forced into labouring for others, probably in another parish, unless other arrangements were made. In the short period 1604-<sup>16</sup>1627, 42 Siston boys and young men became apprenticed to a wide variety of Bristol master craftsmen as weavers, clothworkers, smiths and shearmen; tailors, carpenters, joiners, feltmakers, mercers, wiredrawers and notaries public; a barber surgeon, shoemaker bellfounder, butcher, haberdasher, pewterer, glover and pinmaker.

Perhaps Brislington was less well to do - parents had to find the youth's "apparel and washing" for seven years, as well as pay for the apprenticeship - and only sixteen of its sons in the same period went to Bristol as coopers, carpenters, brewers, clothworkers and joiners with a shoemaker, freemason, baker and tailor. After his term, the apprentice became a master of his craft and as a free burgess of Bristol could vote in elections. More often than not he was lost to the village community forever as was his sister who went into service or married a man from another parish.

Generally husband and wife had less time together than nowadays once the young had fled the nest. The average length of marriage from wedding day to the death of one partner was about seventeen years, which agrees with Lawrence Stone's median length of marriage among the bulk of the population from which he deduces modern divorce to be a "functional substitute for death"<sup>17</sup>. But this varied of course among individuals. Two couples at Siston were separated by death after less than a year of marriage but two others were together for 41 years and 50 years respectively and Margaret Flower, who died in 1687 aged 87 lived in "Holy wedlock" with the vicar of Siston, Richard Flower, for 57 years.

### Footnotes

1. John Latimer, Annals of Bristol in the 16th & 17th Centuries (Bristol, 1900) p.107 & pp 34, 41, 64, 85, 102, 135
2. Wrigley and Schofield Population History of England , p. 289
3. ibid.
4. Orwell [Cambridgeshire], Wimbledon [Surrey], Cuckfield [Sussex] and Kirkham [Lancashire] in a Study by P.E.H. Hair quoted by Keith Wrightson, English Society, 1580-1680 (London, Hutchinson, 1982) p. 104
5. Laslett 'World we have Lost'p.102
6. Cox, 'Parish Registers' p.56
7. Roger Lockyer, The Early Stuarts, (London, Longman 1989), p. 101-3.
8. BRO P/S/V/11a
9. Michael Anderson Approaches to the History of the Modern Family p. 59 quoting E. Shorter, The Making of the Modern Family, (1976) (London, Macmillan, p 59
10. ibid. p.60
11. ibid., quoting G.D. Sussman, The end of the Wet Nursing business in France 1874-1914 in 'Family History II' [1977]. p 61
12. ibid p. 61
13. ibid p. 60
14. Anton Bantock, The Earlier Smyths of Ashton Court. (Bristol, Malago Society, 1982)
15. BRO, Haynes family correspondence (1722)
16. BRO, Bristol Apprentices Roll. 1604-1627.
17. Lawrence Stone, 'Family Sex and Marriage in England'p.46

Chapter 4. The Grim Reaper.

Death borders upon our birth, and our cradle stands in the grave,  
Joseph Hall, 1574-1656

Death's lurking shadow presided over childbed and cradle, hovered over the growing child and carried off the adult. Winter claimed young and elderly alike. Plague struck with monotonous irregularity: recorded in Bristol 1544-5, 1551-2, 1565, 1575, 1602, 1645<sup>1</sup> corrupting the usual rhythm of life and death.

"Burials....occurred more frequently in the first four months of the year and relatively infrequently in the summer, usually reaching a minimum in July"<sup>2</sup>. These findings are confirmed for January to April but slightly less people died in Brislington during the last four months of the year than in summer, a pattern repeated at Siston. The July minimum applied to Bitton and Brislington whilst Siston's and Keynsham's burials reached their nadirs in May and August. [Graphs 5 & 6]

	1st 4 mths	2nd Four months	last four months	July lowest
Brislington	109	96	91	yes
Bitton[incl Oldl]	469	367	429	yes
Siston	105	80	73	no[May]
Keynsham	114	77	94	no[Aug]

There were 91 burials at Brislington,<sup>3</sup> 1583-1592, the peak decade for death, which includes 15 in 1591, twice the average, and 13 in 1592 at a time of trade depression.<sup>4</sup> The disastrous famine years of 1594-97<sup>5</sup> are reflected in another high ratio of loss, rising to

thirteen in 1597. Most telling of all is the massive increase to 28 burials recorded in 1575, when the Annals of Bristol make bleak reading. "This year began the plague to be very hot about St James's tide and there died about 2,000 persons", starting at the July Fair and continuing its ravages for six months. Nineteen of the Brislington deaths in 1575 occurred from July onwards but the register makes no mention of a visitation of plague, even though in the same year two deaths by unnatural causes merited additional information: George, a stranger, who drowned in a well and John Magge who "was opened and the Coroner sat upon him."

At Bitton an increase in burials from 69 in the decade ending 1572 to 332 by the period 1632-42, again reflects a population swollen by the mining 'squatters'. The chapelry at Oldland where "the several services" were "entered promiscuously" buried its own dead from 1588 up to the beginning of 1611 when a frustrated clerk wrote in the register "Yf Anie one Doth find himselfe grived for that these Burialls are here eraste let them goe to Bitton where they shale have it Registred fast." It seems the parishioners took the hint, for apart from 1619/20 no more burials were entered at Oldland until 1678.

There is no hint that plague travelled east to the colliers' shanties in 1575 but 34 burials in 1622 between November 3 and December 29 suggest a local epidemic of some kind. Whole families were vulnerable once infection visited, as in June 1592 when three servants of Mr Bassett, a Bitton gentleman were buried within days of each other and in two days in February 1628, the wife, daughter and son of George Robins along with their 'nursechild' from Bristol all died.

Siston recorded only 30 burials during the famine years 1592-1602, 17 less than in the previous decade, but there were only 41 baptisms, 24 fewer than 1592-1602. Nevertheless the total of baptisms to burials was 383 to 258 during the whole period.

Apart from vagrants, various visitors died in Siston: Thomas Grubham from Bridgwater in 1612, John Clast, an Irish preacher travelling to London in 1606 and John Joanes, another Irishman, who came from Waterford in 1630, [the numbers of Irish on the roads merits a study of its own]. A sawyer from Newbury was attended to the grave in 1617 by his mate from Hungerford. Foul play was suspected when a man was found dead in the brook in 1615. Neither his name nor a possible culprit was ever discovered.

As with marriage, a burial is often the only time a particular surname appears in the register. People rarely died in the place they were born and it is difficult to trace an adult person from cradle to grave. Therefore we cannot know the average age at which people died. [Ages were never recorded in these registers]. Gregory King's information only shows that life expectancy from birth to death was 32 years but a labourer did not wake up on his thirty second birthday thinking 'Oh dear, I'm an old man, I shall probably die tomorrow'. Life expectancy at 32 was probably at least another quarter of a century. It is clear that many willmakers were grandparents which suggests, [given relatively late marriage], they were at least fifty years old.



Tudor/Jacobean society's underlying attitude towards women shows in burial registers. Burial could be the only time a woman was mentioned by name and often, even then only in terms of her relationship to a man, usually her father or husband but perhaps her brother or even her son in law. If she was a servant, to her master. If her master was dead, she was recorded as the servant of his widow, who was elevated to the 'next best thing' to a man. [Queen Elizabeth herself filled the role of 'honorary man'!] A woman depended on men and marriage not only for economic survival but also for status and prestige. [Mild outrage is conveyed when "Elizabeth Cutt *alias* the wife of John Britton" was buried.] Single women were 'unnatural' and a burden to their families. Consider the vulnerability and touching gratitude of a spinster, Mary Gunning, of Cold Ashton, born about 1600, who leaves a legacy to her brother

"as a token of my love and thankfulness  
to him, he haveing alwayes been very kind  
unto me and very tender and carefull of me".<sup>12</sup>

There were 135 female burials at Brislington, 365 at Bitton [1572-1636], 136 at Siston and 147 at Keynsham. At Brislington, two of these were abandoned children and at Bitton, thirty were described 'child' with no parents named. Most of those defined 'daughter' [50 at Brislington, 70 at Bitton, 65 at Siston, 43 at Keynsham] were also probably children but without knowing their ages it is impossible to say how many. To ensure a listing of adult women, 'daughters' have been subtracted from the totals along with the children to ensure a listing of adults only.

		wife of %	widow %	sister of %	mother in law of %	servant of %	lone woman %
Brislington	83	44.57	14.45	1.20		6.02	33.73
Bitton	265	49.06	10.56	1.51	.75	1.51	36.60
Siston	71	49.29	19.71				30.98
Keynsham	94	45.74	24.46	1.06			28.72

Thus, between 59% and 70% of the women who died were [or had been married. Of these, in Brislington and Siston about threequarters had predeceased their husbands and in Bitton the death rate of wives is even higher at 81%. Only eight women at Brislington and five at Siston definitely died during or from the effects of childbirth - a surviving child was baptised - but if the child was miscarried, pregnancy related deaths cannot be detected. [Natural causes of death are never entered.] The higher number of wives' deaths at Bitton is perhaps due to deprivation amongst the poor mining community. Improvement can perhaps be discerned at Keynsham where there is a later start.

The second largest group comprises undefined lone women, who we might suppose led miserable lives, without status, just above the survival threshold. There are surely too many for all to be "the nubile unmarried [with] a fair proportion of servants"<sup>13</sup>. Could they be the discarded non-providers of strong sons already alluded to? Alas without their props as adjuncts of their male relations or as staff of an employer, nothing is known about them except their names.

In three out of the four parishes, women's burials accounted for about half. In Bitton the proportionally larger number of male burials may reflect single men who came to the coalfield in search of work. Men were not 'the husband of' or 'widower'; their measure, if only

occasionally, was their occupation: shepherd, farmer, butcher, clerk. In 1577, Edward Tibbett, buried at Bitton, was "the farmer of Siston" as if he was the only one. The title 'Sir' can mean a knight or a clerk, like Sir Thomas Sweatenam, Siston's vicar, buried in 1581. Apart from young sons [and one who was the "son in law of old Biggs"], only servants are defined against another male and like maidservants they usually had no surname: "Harry, Mr Barret's man, buried July 4, 1612."

Towards the end of the period simplification occurs, with name and date only recorded for both sexes alike, possibly cutting down frills as a sop to radical Puritanism. Unfortunately, the registers lose in interest as a result. Monumental inscriptions generally continue in the traditional vein. Mrs Phillippa Bridges who died aged 34 in 1628, leaving seven children is commemorated in Keynsham parish church as the wife of Edward Bridges, esquire and the daughter of Sir George Speke, Knight of the Bath. She was so exemplary a woman that she was almost a man "a female Joseph for her father's love".<sup>14</sup>

Wills were left by the better off. Of forty eight Siston wills<sup>15</sup> extant between 1541 and 1650, thirty seven were made by men, four who stated no occupation, twelve yeomen, twelve husbandmen, four gentlemen, a gardener, clothier, mason, cook and the vicar, John Honiborne, whose disposal of "my goods, cattell, chattells, moveable and immoveable" included

"the wayn scotte of the windows of the  
parsonage wherein I now dwell of myself  
formerly bought and paid for"

which he was determined should not be commandeered by the diocese after he had gone to his maker. Ten widows and a singlewoman, Jane Strange of the Mound's Court family made wills. None had an occupation. [Wives, who had no separate property from their husbands, rarely left wills.]

All the wills commence with several lines of religious preamble:

"Principally I commend my soule unto the handes of my mercifull God the Creator and giver thereof, And to Jesus Christ my only saviour and Redeemer, And to God the holey Goaste my sanctifier hoping through the meritts of Jesus Christ to have free pardon and forgiveness of all my sinnes and to be made partaker of Eternal Bliss....." <sup>16</sup>

and so on and so forth.

Execution of the will was a family affair. Wives were chosen at executrices by nineteen of the Siston men and ten named their sons as executors. In two cases wife and son were chosen jointly. Two named daughters and one each father, mother or brother. Only one appointed a friend. The women preferred male relatives, brothers, a brother in law or sons as executors, but several chose daughters alone or jointly. One woman named her three grand daughters and another her daughter and a niece. Except in six cases, male overseers were appointed where women were involved.

Some people whispered their wishes on their deathbed like Joan Briant who <sup>17</sup> "sickond" at Bitton in 1607 and William Cottle, a Siston yeoman, who died unexpectedly at Highworth in Wiltshire in 1620 whilst visiting his elder daughter, the wife of a weaver. To his son in law, Edmund George he left the bay mare on which he had ridden to

Highworth, with the bridle and saddle, plus his cloak and all other clothes "except his breeches which he gave to his son John." He left his younger daughter among other things a woodpile and a sow with five piglets.<sup>18</sup>

Keynsham wills confirm mixed farming rather more interestingly than the quest for marital seasonality. The testators left ricks, 'minged' corn, grain, measland and peasland, wheat, wains, drags, with oxen and plough harnesses, barley, hay and grazing; livestock, "a brown nag and ten fat ewes", "five kine and fodder to feed them this winter", mares, sheep, lambs, geese and other poultry. At Siston, heifers called Mynion and Dandye, and "Brandyrou, the best pig" were disposed of. Joan Bishop of Cold Ashton in 1580, fretted about 20 sheep being overwintered at Siston by Edward Tibbott, [still living at Bitton at least to 1633 and presumably the son of 'Edward the farmer' mentioned above], for which she owed him 10d each [about 83 pence altogether in today's money]. She also left a penny loaf to every poor person who attended her funeral with a party for the "recreation and contentation" of the neighbours. William Poole, a carrier of Keynsham, 1617, sadly gave "one of my best horses" to Katherine Monntine, "whom if it had pleased God I should have married".

Fitches of bacon and cheeses were welcome gifts as were clothes, "my best riding suit" or "my best fryse gown" [frieze, a coarse woollen cloth]. "Mourning gowns" were provided by the seriously well to do. Parents who knew they would not live to see their children grow up left poignant instructions. Joan Hendry, a Keynsham widow, in 1645 hoped the three men she appointed overseers "would prove fathers

to my fatherless children". Some testators reached out disagreeably from beyond the grave. Elizabeth Atwood, a Siston widow in 1644 left money to her overseers for her grandchild, "of tender years, having special care of her education in the fear of God". John Pinkard in 1653 left his daughters Joan, Mary and Jane £5 each at marriage provided "they be dutiful unto their mother and match with her consent and approbation" otherwise 12d [5p] each. The sting directed by Thomas Holebin, baker, in 1620 is so mean that I wonder if it is a mistake and should read in reverse. He left Joan Ball £30 "....if she shall marry my apprentice Thomas Hodges but if she refuses £50."

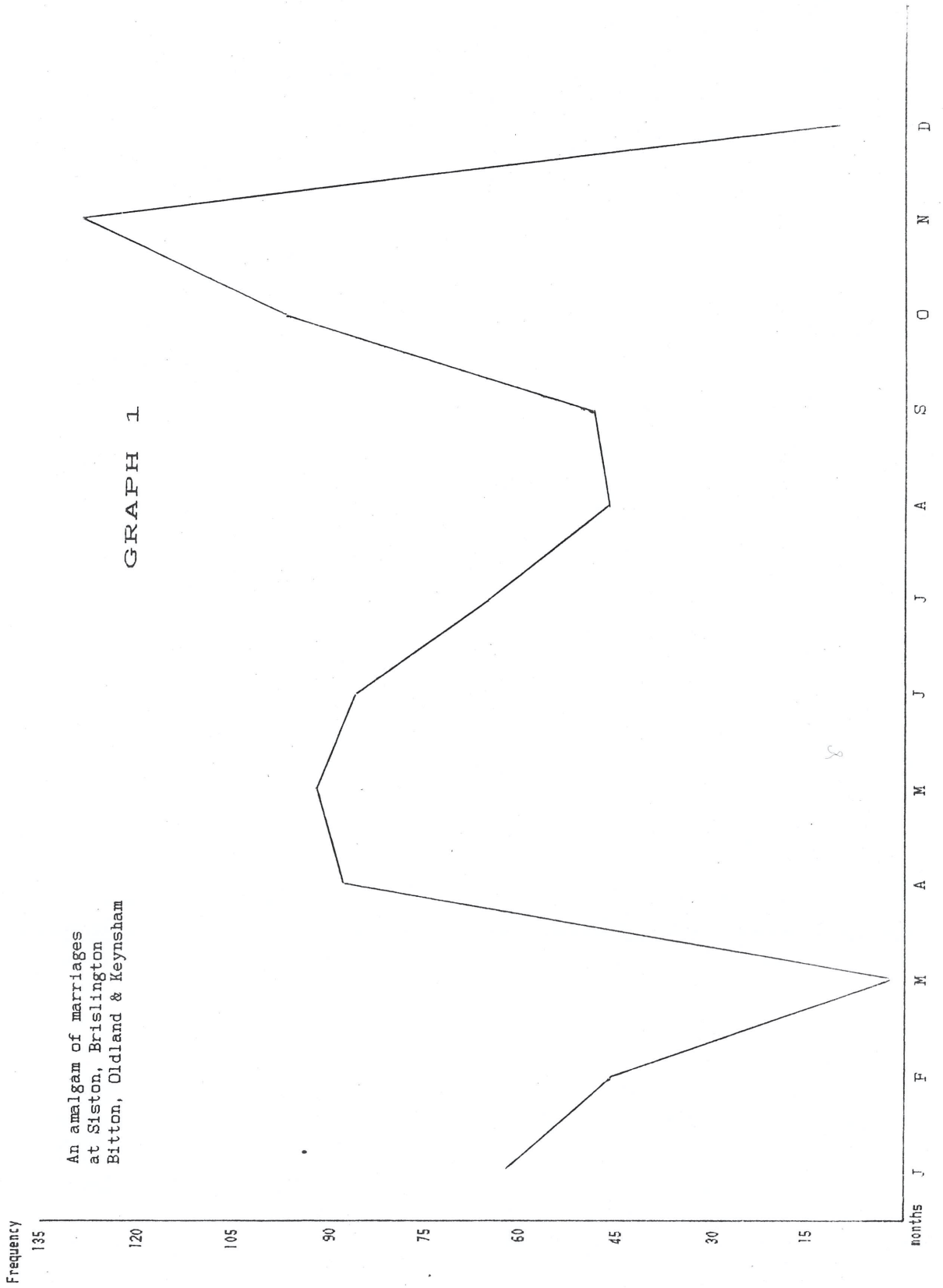
#### Footnotes

1. Paul Slack, Impact of Plague in Tudor/Stuart England (London, Clarendon Paperbacks, 1989)
2. Wrigley & Schofield, 'Population History of England', p.294
3. Serious data loss blights investigation of Brislington burials. No burials are recorded in 1566, 1567, 1576-1580, 1601, 1612 and 1613-1641. The average is taken of years where burials are actually recorded.
4. Latimer, 'Annals of Bristol in the 16th Century', p.99
5. ibid, p 107

6. Avon Reference Library, (ARL) Braikenridge collection, MS B9076 quoted Slack, 'The Impact of Plague in Tudor & Stuart England', (London, Clarendon Paperbacks, 1985)
7. Latimer 'Annals of Bristol in the 16th Century' p. 62
8. H.T. Ellicombe, Curate of Bitton, comments written 1825 and included in the printed edition of the Parish Register of Hanham and Oldland, Parish Register Society, 1908.
9. Parish Register of Hanham and Oldland
10. Laslett, 'World we have Lost' p. 931
11. Chaytor 'Household & Kinship', p.26
12. John Goulstone, 'The Gunnings of Cold Ashton', unpublished Mss (refers to a Will at the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, [PCC] dated 27 December 1673, proved 1679)
13. Laslett, 'The World we have Lost' p.99
14. John Collinson, 'History and Antiquities of Somerset', (1791)
15. Wills at Gloucestershire Records Office (GRO)
16. ibid, will of [George Flower, yeoman 1.1.1637
17. Parish Register of Bitton, 1607
18. Wills, GRO
19. Public Record Office (PRO), PCC Wills, collected and transcribed by John Goulstone, unpublished Mss1

An amalgam of marriages  
at Siston, Brislington  
Bitton, Oldland & Keynsham

GRAPH 1





GRAPH 2

Marriages  
After Wrigley & Scofield  
Fig. 8.3. p299

Frequency

200  
175  
150  
125  
100  
75  
50  
25

months

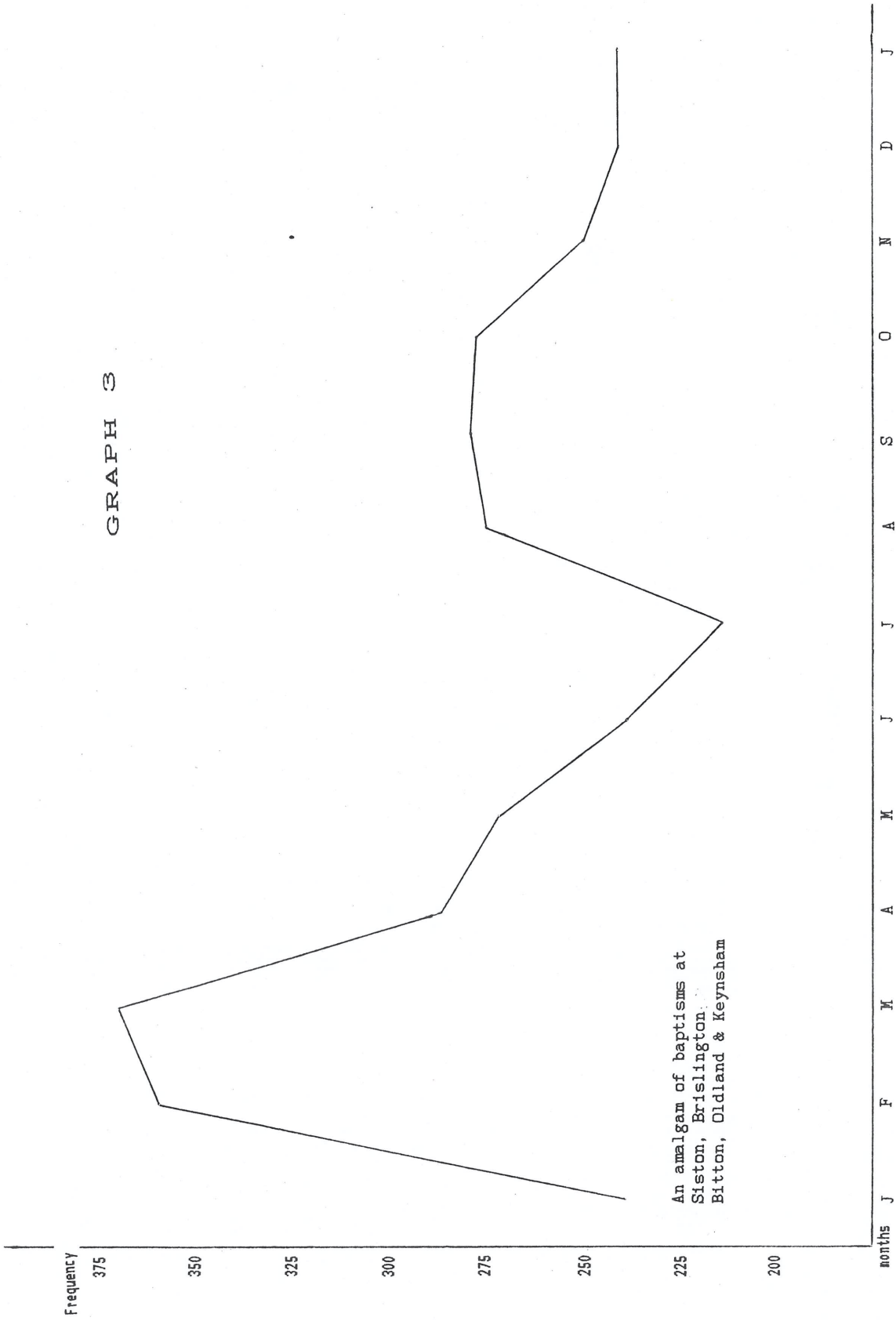
J F M A M J J A S O N D

1540-1599

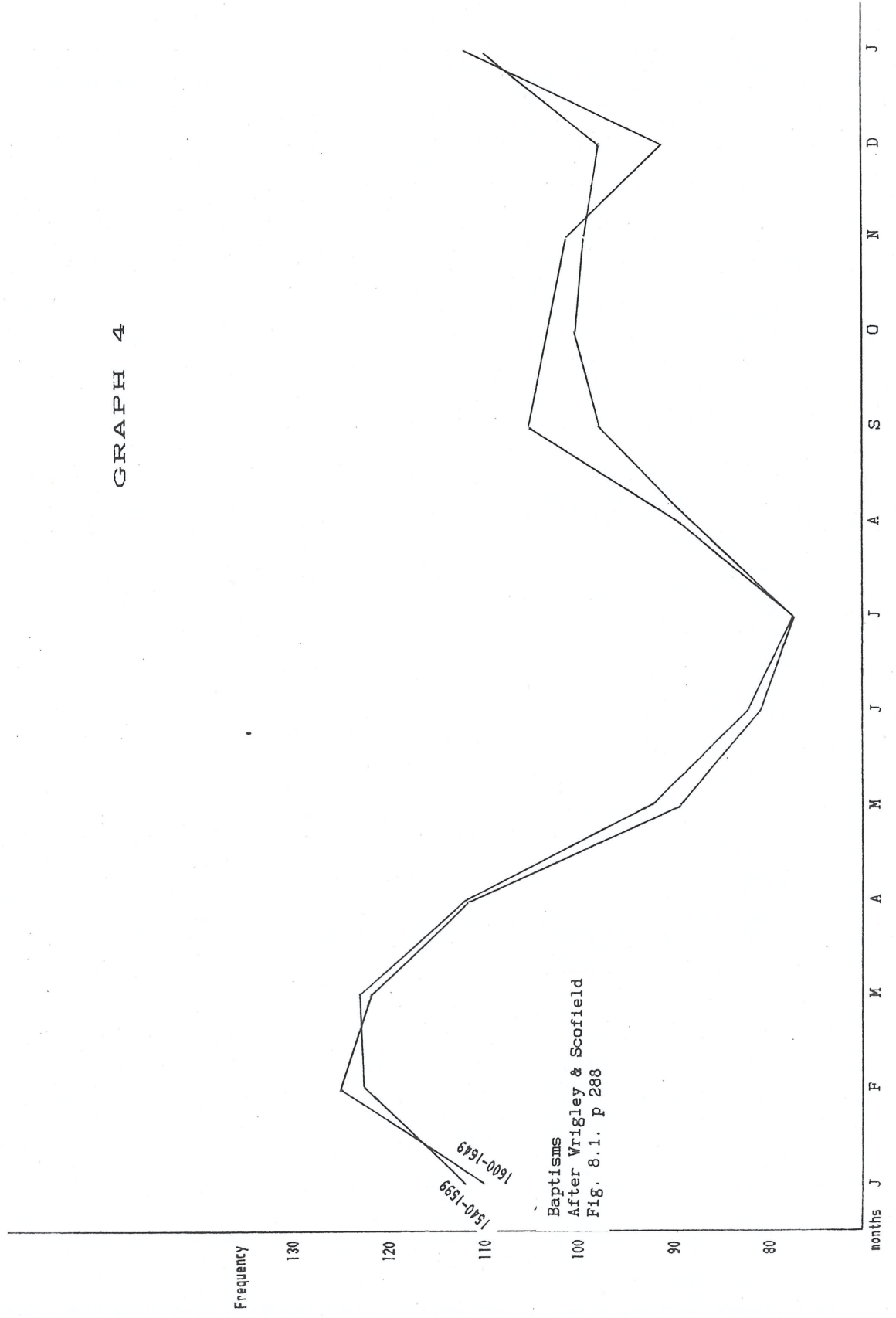
1600-1649



GRAPH 3

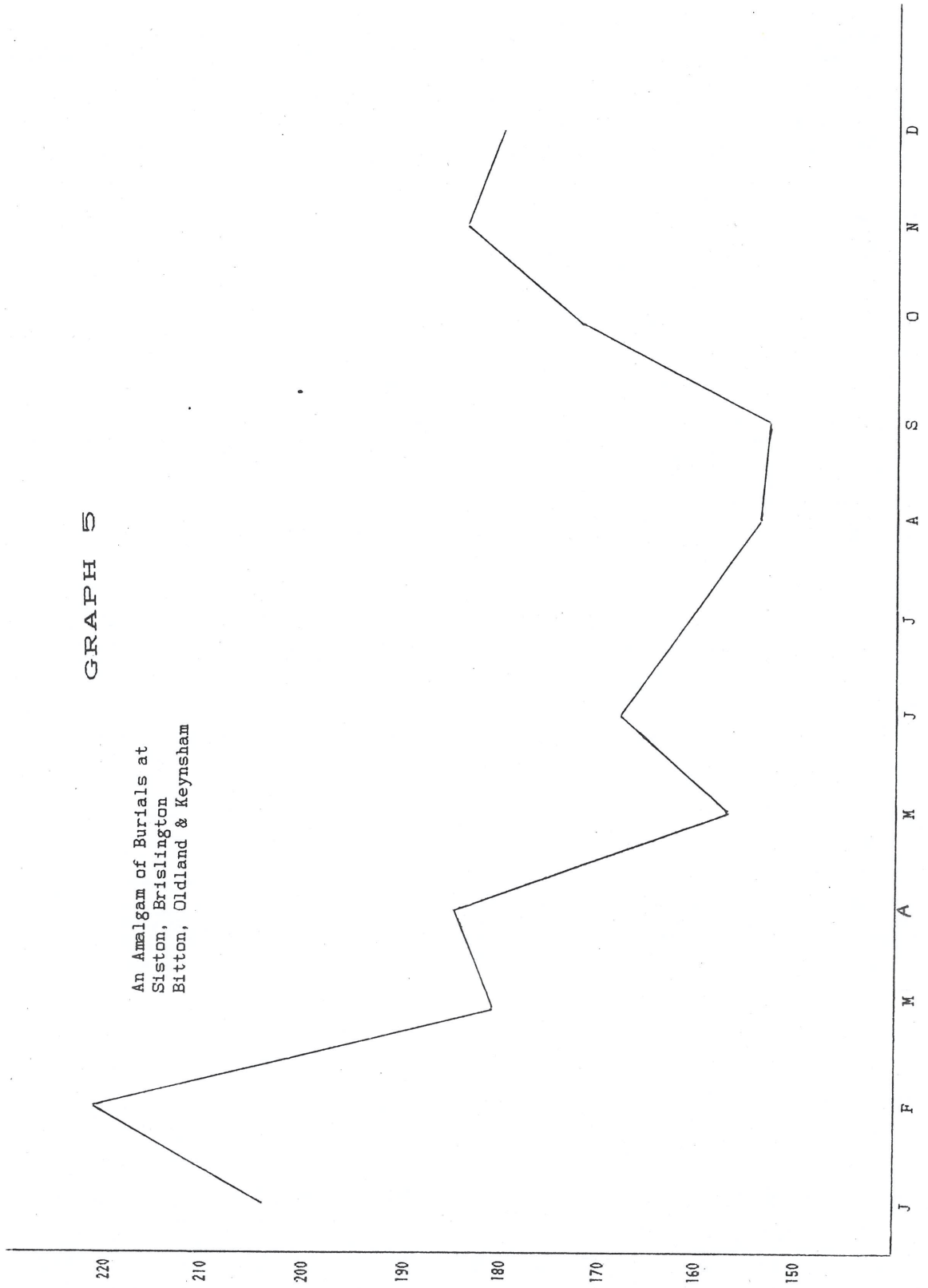


GRAPH 4

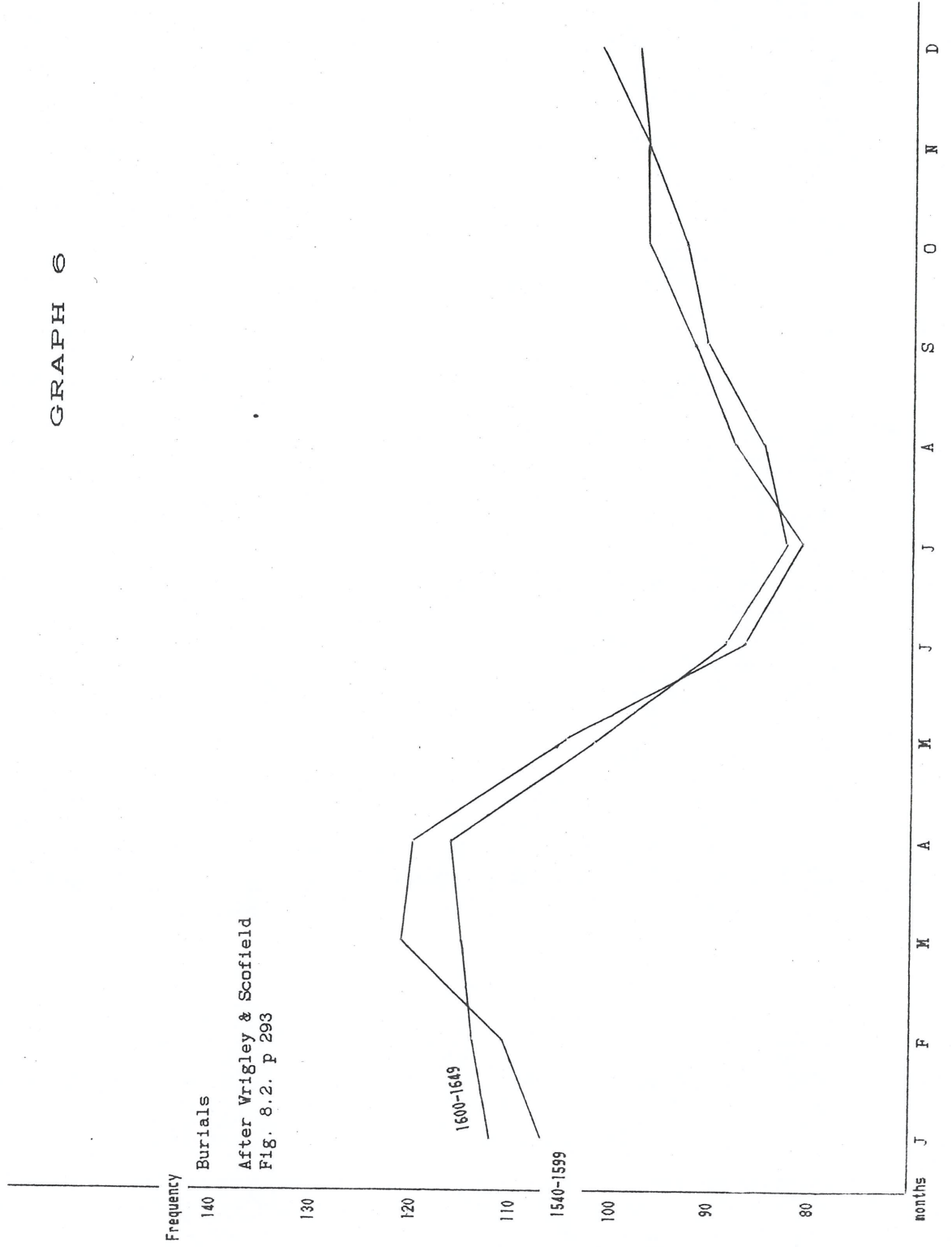


GRAPH 5

An Amalgam of Burials at  
Siston, Brislington  
Bitton, Oldland & Keynsham



GRAPH 6



Conclusion: Change.

This overview has attempted to give a flavour of family life during a century of change between the Reformation and Civil War. As the musket swept away the longbow, so the last of the Catholic faithful, Keynsham's stubborn little pocket of recusancy, a yeoman and two husbandmen, gave way to ultra Puritanism. Robert Wastfield, a Brislington potter, harangued the vicar for "False Worship"<sup>2</sup>. Another Brislington man, John Williams, was in Ilchester Gaol in 1629 for speaking "High and Haynous words against the King's Majesty"<sup>3</sup> and worse still, a boy was killed in the village in 1637 during an anti-taxation riot.<sup>4</sup>

A happier, albeit modest change was an admission of the existence of woman in some quarters as a separate entity. The vicars of Siston [1605], Keynsham [1628] and Brislington [1634] conceded that a baptised or buried child had a mother as well as a father and her Christian name was registered accordingly. Bitton had still not come to terms with such radicality by 1674. In any case, sadly, this small gain was balanced by the loss of the midwife's right to baptise and as we have seen women were viciously punished for bearing illegitimate children.

The idea that most people never strayed from their native villages is an enduring falsehood. The successful Siston artisans and farmers [see Appendix 7] of the Case Studies were all born elsewhere but stayed to found dynasties. The unsuccessful small artisanry, landless

labourers, moved on, marrying here, baptising a child there, dying somewhere else. Even in successful families, one or two children might stay where they had been brought up but most would disperse. Service or marriage to 'stranger' men would claim the girls, the quest for work or apprenticeship, the boys.

Unmarried mothers moved on too, joining the vagabondage of the roads but couples who married after conceiving a baby were not so cruelly ostracised. As to weddings, evidently November suited the majority, church and laity alike and getting married because there was nothing much else to do seems recognisably human: not so much 'when shall we?' as 'we may as well', though as to this habit giving an insight into types of farm work, I remain dubious. I am still worried by the numbers of marriages which were outside the community.

Bereavement was on a devastating scale. William Cottle and his wife buried three children in April 1589; Robert Bullock lost his wife and three daughters in 1608. Such grief could surely only be borne if accepted as the imprenetrable will of God. Life went on. The Cottles baptised a new son in June 1589 and Robert Bullock remarried.

The people of the villages behaved according to custom, fashion and the restrictions of their times, but their individual humanity is never in doubt. Joan Philpot, the wife of the vicar [!] of Brislington was admonished by the bishop's court in 1616 for fighting [in church] with a female parishioner. In humble penance she stood before the congregation at St Luke's, clad head to foot in a white sheet. On the

same day, and it can only have been deliberate, her rival, Jane Seward, brought her latest child for baptism.

The Vicar of Siston who briefly escaped to Oxford University and thereafter spent his whole life in the sticks, wrote the following in 1625: "Memorandum. The Jeffryes and Tukers of Warmley are Rogues, Whores and Theives and What not that is wicked". According to the parish register they were baptised, married and buried like everybody else with no hint of anything untoward.

#### Footnotes

1. Somerset & Dorset Notes and Queries, Volume V, pp 112-4
2. E. H. Bates-Harbin, Quarter Sessions Records of Somerset, Volume III, Commonwealth 1646-1660. (SRS Vol 28) (London, Harrison, 1912), p.xli
3. E.H. Bates-Harbin, Quarter Sessions Records of Somerset, Volume II, Charles I 1625-1639 (SRS Vol 24) (London, Harrison, 1908) p. 95
4. ibid, p.275
5. SRO D/D/Ca/196
6. Parish Register, Siston.



APPENDICES

61 January the twenty seven anno domini 1578  
in the town of Siston

In the name of god among Robert bullock of the parry of siston in the  
parish of gloster mason being sick in bodie but of god & of his remembrance  
thank be to god do make my last will and testament in manner and  
form followinge first I bequeath my soule into the hands of all  
mighty god my maker & redemer and my body to be buried in christia  
buriall of siston y<sup>e</sup> into my daughter martha my best flockbed & one  
boulster one covered one blanket one sheet and my spere mor for & my  
cross in the parlor & the subbert in the hall and to her some samuel  
ten shillings & to her some James & fairer painter platter  
of iron & you to my some samuell for his shillings of current english money  
and my best yorke and lost and waistrs and shere and two bands  
and to his some samuell ten shillings and to some daniell one  
patter platter to my my graue & silver  
I to you <sup>some</sup> my daniel forty shillings of current english money  
one bedstead one flockbed one covered one blanket & my  
leaf book and a little kistell & one platter on potterise one saucer one  
bandell shir one saucer bords and two dyne stoles & my new  
best yorke and lost and shere and a bot of  
I to you to my some James of for his shillings of current  
money and one flockbed and a bedstead one boulster one covered  
one blanket one square bord with a frame and two dyne stoles and  
the two best shir saving one and my posnet & one platter one  
permer one shir adel shir & the biggest brooch saw one and to harrieh  
and a brum fado and a pilla and my bible and my cloaks and my  
shawe and my best hose and shere and a shute and the offer my  
made to his sisters.

I to you to my two some abadias and zepharias all my work  
and shir equal to be divided betweene them and my will is  
that all this money and goods shall be delivered and paid within year  
after my dease to my some abadias bullock into whose you all the  
residue of my goods and shir my finuxall expens being  
discharged by abadias bullock whom I make and ordain to be my  
sole and sole executoure of this my last will and testament  
in witness whereof I haue here unto put my hand and seals  
the day and yore above written

Robert Bullock

Called and Delivered  
in presence of

marks of Lurxia allin  
at Bullock

Jan 27 AD 1638/9

Robert Bullock of Siston, Mason

Sick in body, soul to Almighty God etc.

Daughter Martha best flock bed and one boulder, one coverlet, one blanket, one sheet, & my --- in the parlour and the cubbert in the hall. To her son Samuel ten shillings and to her son James a fair pewter platter

My son Samuel forty shillings, my best jerken and hose, & waistcoat and shirt and two bands and to his son Samuel ten shillings and his son Daniel one pewter platter being my grandchildren

My son Daniel forty shillings, one bedstede, one flocke bed, one peelee, one coverlet, one blanket and my best crocke and a littel kittell and one platter, one pottinger, one saucer, one candel stik, one tablebord and two joynd stools and my next jerken and hose and a coffer.

To my son Zephaniah forty shillings, one flock bed and a bedsted, one boulder, one coverlet, one blanket one square bord with frame, two joynd stooles and the biggest kittle saving one and my posnet, one platter, one pottinger, one candlestick and the biggest crock save one and two barrels and a paile and my Bible and my cloake and coate and my best hosen and the coffer which was my sister's.

Two sons Obadiah and Zephaniah all my working tools equally divided between them. All money, goods to be delivered within one year after my decease.

Residue to son Obadiah after funeral expenses and to be executor.

Signed by Robert Bullock

witness Lurxeria [?] Allin [mark]

Obadiah Bullock

Transcription of the will of Robert Bullock of Siston.

APPENDIX 1

MARRIAGES

Marriages at Brislington 1566-1641.

Decade	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Total
1566													
1572	3	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	1	1	9
1582	3	1	0	0	2	1	2	5	1	5	0	1	21
1592	5	0	0	2	2	1	2	1	0	2	7	0	22
1602	0	1	0	2	3	5	1	0	1	1	2	0	16
1612	6	1	0	2	8	2	5	4	3	0	2	0	33
1622	1	2	0	3	2	1	2	0	1	3	6	0	21
1632	0	2	0	6	1	3	3	0	1	5	5	1	27
1641	5	2	0	4	5	2	0	3	2	6	1	0	30
Total	23	10	0	19	23	15	17	13	10	22	24	3	179

Distortion. 4 August marriages took place in one year, 1577

Marriages at Siston 1576-1641.

Decade	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Total
1576													
1582	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	1	4	1	0	11
1592	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	5	2	0	14
1602	2	1	0	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	12
1612	0	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	0	12
1622	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	1	0	1	4	0	11
1632	0	0	0	3	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	6
1641	0	3	0	0	0	3	0	0	7	2	2	0	17
Total	3	7	0	10	9	11	1	3	10	14	15	0	83

Marriages at Keynsham 1629-1645.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Total
5	3	2	7	7	13	7	5	4	3	8	2	64

Marriages at Bitton 1573-1641.

Decade	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Total
1573													
1582	3	0	0	0	2	1	1	1	3	4	8	0	23
1592	3	4	0	2	4	7	3	0	1	4	11	1	40
1602	2	3	0	5	4	4	2	1	0	4	5	0	30
1612	7	3	0	4	2	5	6	1	4	8	8	1	49
1622	2	1	0	0	2	1	6	3	3	2	7	0	27
1632	1	1	0	10	3	6	3	0	1	5	2	0	32
1641	1	4	0	5	8	3	1	3	1	6	4	0	36
Total	19	16	0	26	25	27	22	9	13	33	45	2	237

Distortion. It is interesting to note the large upsurge in April weddings in the decade ending 1632 and the corresponding decrease in November in the last 2 decades. It would be interesting to know if this pattern continued as the proportion of the population engaged in coalmining increased after the Restoration.

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Marriages at Oldland 1586-1641.

Decade	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Total
1586													
1592	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	1	1	8
1602	3	3	1	2	6	0	2	2	2	9	5	1	36
1612	4	3	1	7	8	7	3	3	2	5	10	1	54
1622	2	1	0	5	3	2	4	1	4	4	7	1	34
1632	0	2	0	7	4	2	3	3	1	4	4	0	31
1641	1	1	0	5	6	8	6	6	3	3	9	0	48

Distortion. By the end of 1641, although there was a still a November high, marriages were far more evenly spaced, again I suggest due to the influence of coalmining.

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APPENDIX 2

Baptisms

Baptisms at Brislington 1566-1641.

Decade	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Total
1566													
1572	3	7	4	5	5	5	3	6	4	5	4	3	54
1582	6	5	10	3	4	8	5	9	4	2	10	4	70
1592	8	17	14	8	14	1	14	9	7	5	7	8	112
1602	4	10	5	4	3	3	4	6	8	8	6	6	67
1612	10	7	4	2	4	0	0	1	3	2	8	5	46
1622	8	9	10	12	7	9	6	5	5	9	6	3	89
1632	7	12	16	6	6	5	14	8	9	13	5	7	108
1641	16	15	15	10	13	11	9	7	5	11	1	8	121
Total	62	82	78	50	56	42	55	51	45	55	47	44	667

The decade 1603-1612 is distorted because of severe data loss.

Baptisms at Siston 1576-1641

Decade	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Total
1576													
1582	4	1	4	2	1	1	1	4	5	4	2	1	30
1592	4	10	4	3	4	3	4	9	9	8	4	3	65
1602	5	6	0	3	3	2	1	8	3	6	1	3	41
1612	6	7	4	5	2	3	1	5	5	4	1	4	47
1622	4	11	9	8	5	5	5	1	6	5	3	8	70
1632	7	10	8	4	4	6	2	6	8	7	6	7	75
1641	9	7	4	3	2	5	5	5	3	5	4	3	55
Total	39	52	33	28	21	25	19	38	39	39	21	29	383

Baptisms at Bitton 1573-1652

Decade	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Total
1573													
1582	9	9	11	9	4	9	4	7	8	10	8	13	101
1592	11	20	8	13	8	6	5	9	6	12	11	6	115
1602	8	13	9	9	13	8	9	10	11	6	5	3	104
1612	6	11	10	14	7	10	15	10	20	11	10	11	135
1622	9	7	18	12	10	11	3	14	6	11	9	13	123
1632	13	11	16	22	23	11	11	10	12	10	13	13	165
1642	21	14	18	15	21	10	7	10	15	8	11	12	162
1652	15	14	20	11	8	3	13	14	12	11	12	8	141
Total	92	99	110	105	94	68	67	84	90	79	79	79	1046

Distortion in decade 1613-1622. Baptisms missing 1616/17 apart from two undated in March.

Baptisms at Oldland 1584-1641

Decade	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Total
1584													49
1592	7	4	8	3	5	5	3	0	3	6	3	2	144
1602	8	13	24	10	11	17	7	21	13	5	8	7	133
1612	16	11	14	11	9	7	14	12	5	10	14	10	140
1622	7	12	20	19	7	10	6	12	8	13	16	10	262
1632	27	31	27	19	21	21	14	19	21	26	15	21	219
1641	13	24	23	13	21	20	13	19	22	21	15	15	

Total 78 95 116 75 74 80 57 83 72 81 71 65 947

Adjustment: 35 baps in decade ending 1641 where no mth shown 35

Total 982

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Baptisms at Keynsham 1628-1641

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Total
28	31	33	29	27	23	16	19	30	23	32	24	315

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APPENDIX 3

Burials

Burials at Brislington 1566-1641.

Decade	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Total
1566													
1572	1	5	6	2	7	2	1	1	2	4	0	4	35
1582	3	2	4	9	3	1	4	7	6	3	2	6	50
1592	8	12	5	9	5	8	8	6	9	9	6	6	91
1602	11	3	9	5	7	6	3	9	5	8	3	4	73
1612	2	7	1	5	7	6	1	4	4	2	4	4	47
Total	25	29	25	30	29	23	17	27	26	26	17	24	296

Distortion. No burials 1566, 1567, 1574, 1576-80 incl, 1601, 1612-1639. Year 1575 28 burials when average number of burials for years when recorded about 8, so 20 above average in this one year.

Burials at Siston 1576-1641.

Decade	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Total
1576													
1582	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	2	3	0	0	1	9
1592	5	5	1	6	2	3	7	5	3	6	2	2	47
1602	3	8	4	3	1	3	2	1	0	0	1	4	30
1612	2	7	5	4	1	3	5	5	2	4	4	1	41
1622	5	5	0	6	3	4	2	6	3	1	2	4	41
1632	1	2	4	4	3	3	2	0	2	5	3	2	31
1641	7	6	9	3	4	5	4	3	5	6	3	4	59
Total	23	33	23	26	14	24	20	22	18	22	15	18	258

Burials at Bitton 1572-1642.

Decade	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Total
1572													
1582	9	5	5	6	4	3	6	8	3	7	5	8	69
1592	8	14	3	6	6	17	4	4	11	8	12	6	99
1602	6	10	5	6	9	5	8	5	5	5	7	8	79
1612	17	14	7	5	8	4	5	9	9	7	5	12	102
1622	7	15	15	5	9	11	8	7	7	10	36	28	158
1632	26	27	28	26	21	28	16	24	13	26	28	17	280
1642	31	34	32	31	26	20	27	20	30	25	29	27	332
Total	104	119	95	85	83	88	74	77	78	88	122	106	1119

Distortion: 3 of the June burials in decade ending 1592 were in one household, all servants of Mr Bassett.



Burials at Oldland 1586-1611.

Decade	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Total
1586													19
1592	2	2	2	1	0	2	0	1	2	7	0	0	52
1602	6	8	2	8	6	6	4	1	4	3	2	2	70
1611	10	8	9	3	5	8	2	10	2	2	9	2	141
Total	18	18	13	12	11	16	6	12	8	12	11	4	146

5\*  
146

\*5 burials Jan-Mar 1619/20; apart from these dates all burials were at Bitton.

Distortion. Thomas Morgan and his two sons accounted for 3 out of the 6 burials in August 1604.

Burials at Keynsham 1628-1641.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Total
34	23	25	32	20	17	24	16	23	24	19	28	285

APPENDIX 4

Brides and Grooms married at Siston who baptised children in the parish

Names.	Date of marriage	Date of baptism	Pregnant	Duration of marr
Richard Tyrre/Katherine ---	27, 1,1580	26, 1,1582	no	2 yrs
Robt Packer/Christian Taylor	1,11,1585	13, 8,1586	no	9 mths +
James Luton/Ales Snythe	29, 4,1588	11, 9,1588	yes	4 mths +
Frank Shingles/--- -----	26,10,1589	31, 5,1590	yes	7 mths
Tobie Luton/Joan Geale	18, 6,1590	25,10,1590	yes	4 mths
John Alley/Joan Peacock	7, 2,1592	13, 8,1592	yes	6 mths
John Fowles/Joan Strange	25, 4,1600	1, 2,1601	Possibly	9 mths +
Ralph Peacock/Katherine Clement	29, 5,1600	3, 4,1608	no	8 yrs
John Rose/Elizabeth Luton	5,11,1604	6,10,1605	no	11 mths
Edward Haskins/Kath Taylor	30, 9,1606	13, 9,1607	no	11 mths +
Robt Bullocke/Agnes Strange	3,11,1606	18,12,1608	no	2 yrs +
John Browning/Elizabeth Luton	1, 7,1611	5, 4,1612	Possibly	9 mths
Walter Isaake/Ann Barrett	28, 4,1617	8, 3,1618	no	10 mths +
Lyson Hopkins/Ann Honiburne	1,11,1618	21,10,1619	no	11 mths +
John Powell/Anne Ponting	24, 4,1620	4, 2,1621	Possibly	9 mths +
Wm Cottle jnr/Agnes Cottle	26, 4,1619	26,12,1621	no	2 yrs +
Andrew Haskins/Kath Sawyer	16, 6,1620	23,11,1622	no	2 yrs +
Giles Shellard/Ann Whiten	26,10,1626	23, 9,1627	no	11 mths
John Walter/Edith Whiten	7, 4,1627	20, 1,1628	Possibly	9½ mths
Henry Ponting/Alice Dimocke	16, 4,1629	2, 2,1630	Possibly	9 mths +
John Peacock/Ann Jeffrey	2, 6,1629	19,12,1630	no	1½ yrs
Wm Davis/Elizabeth Chaumers	6, 9,1633	5, 1,1634	yes	4 mths
Ezekiel France/Iddie Farnell	27, 9,1633	15,12,1633	yes	2½ mths
John Lawford/Elizabeth Strange	2, 2,1634	17,10,1635	no	1½ yrs +
Zeph,Bullocke/Mary Hickers	18, 2,1637	10, 1,1638	no	11 mths
William Hulbard/Sarah ---	4, 9,1637	21,10,1638	no	1 yr +
Wm Peacock/Kath Tucker	5, 2,1638	26, 1,1640	no	2 yrs
John Farnoll/Elizabeth Hedges	12,11,1640	18, 6,1641	yes	7 mths
George Jeffrey/Elinor Tucker	17, 9,1640	11, 3,1641	yes	5 mths +

APPENDIX 5

Mothers of illegitimate children.

Brislington

Name	Date	Father named	Status of father	Mother reappears in parish register	child reappears in parish register	Repeater
Margaret Roch	1571	Yes	Married	Yes	Buried[1571]	Yes [2 ch]
Margaret Roch	1574	Yes	Married	No	No	Yes
---- Taylor	1574	No	not known	No	No	No
Johane -----	1577	Yes	not known	?	?	?
Elynor Horne	1587	Yes	Married	Buried[1591]	Buried[1591]twins	No
Kath;Fishpole	1588	Yes	Married	No	Buried[1590]	Yes*
Joan Woodman	1595	Yes	Married	No	No	No
Sara Pupford	1597	No	not known	No	No	No
Agnes Orchard	1600	No	not known	No	No	No
Alice Vowles	1605	Yes	Unmar	No	Buried[1605]	No
Agnes Panter	1605	Yes	Unmar	No	No	No
Joan Puxley	1616	Yes	Unmar	Married[1619]	No	No
Elizabeth Simunds	1618	Yes	not known	No	No	No
Agnes Harford	1621	No	not known	No	No	No
Agnes Wastfield	1621	No	not known	No	No	No
Alice Phelps	1624	Yes	Unmar	No	No	No
Alice Pope	1636	Yes	Married	No	No	No
Alice Stevens	1637	Yes	not known	No	No	No

\* she had a child when she arrived in Brislington. He was buried there 1587

Keynsham

Name	Date	Father named	Status of father	Mother reappears in parish register	child reappears in parish register	Repeater
Anne England	1631	no	x	yes	buried 1632	yes
Jone Whippy	1632	no	x	buried 1632	no	no
Margaret Robbins	1633	no	x	no	no	no
Alice Biggs	1633	no	x	no	no	no
Anne -----	1634	no	x	unknown	unknown	unknown
Margaret Rawlins	1637	no	x	no	no	no
Anne England	1638	no	x	no	no	yes

Bitton

Name	Date	Father named	Status of father	Mother reappears in parish register	child reappears in parish register	Repeater
Edith Wyddin	1577	no	x	no	no	no
----- Groomes	1577	no	x	no	no	no
Alice Hawkins	1583	no	x	no	?	no
Ann Davis	1589	no	x	married Thos Crabb, 1595	no	no
Annis Woodhouse	1590	no	x	no	no	no
Ann Harding	1601	yes	widower	no	no	no
Mary Kite	1604	yes	married	no	no	no
Jane Bright	1607	yes	x	no	no	no
Frances Riner	1608	yes	married	no	no	no
----- Jones	1612	yes	x	?	mar 1643?	?
Elizabeth Underhill	1622	no	x	no	no	no
Ann Hawkins	1634	no	x	no	bur 1652?	no
Joan Pateridge	1634	no	x	no	no	no
Katherine Wastfield	1637	no	x	no	no	no
Susanna Bright	1638	no	x	buried 1638	no	no
Alice Odam	1640	no	x	?	no	?
Mary Cope	1641	no	x	no	bur 1643	no
Joane Browning	1643	no	x	no	no	no
Jeane James	1644	no	x	no	no	no
Elizabeth Crew	1654	no	x	married T. Dangerfield, 1664	bur 1659	no

[? There is a peculiar entry in the baptisms June 26, 1643, which reads "Richard Odam, spurious daughters [sic] of ----- Odam]

APPENDIX 6

Seasonality of first births.

	Brislington	Siston
January	5	6
February	14	3
March	7	2
April	3	2
May	6	3
June	5	1
July	2	0
August	4	1
September	3	3
October	5	5
November	3	1
December	1	4



THE CONFINEMENT  
(ROXBURGH BALLADS)

## APPENDIX 7

### FAMILY RECONSTRUCTION

How do 'real' families compare with the foregoing? When attempting family reconstruction within the parish there are two criteria: there must be sufficient information and the family must have remained static long enough to provide that information. Many parish register entries are like those of the Dyke family of Siston: James son of James baptised September 10, 1587 and William son of James baptised April 14, 1589. There are no further baptisms for the family, no burials and no marriages. It is clear that they came to Siston, stayed a couple of years and moved on. [In keeping with general findings however, the mother's name remains a mystery.] 'Static' families had a little more social standing and financial stability than the poor itinerant labourer. Two <sup>RECONSTITUTED FAMILIES</sup> are from Siston: the Peacock/Alley family and the Bullock/Strange/Wimboll/Clark network; and one from Brislington, the Ithells.

#### The Peacock/Alley family.

Ralph Peacock first mentioned in Siston when appointed joint overseer, with Robert Strange, to the will of John Webb, husbandman of Siston, proved Gloucester January 4, 1589. [John Webb made his wife executrix but provided two male overseers.]

#### MARRIAGES:

Six marriages took place in Siston, of these two bridegrooms came from other parishes [Richard Blackford and William Candell]. They took their

wives away with them after the ceremony for neither surname appears again.

Four marriages were in other parishes, full names, places and dates unknown:

Ralph Peacock = Helene  
Katherine Peacock = .....Jones  
William Peacock = Rebecca .....  
John Peacock = Mary .....

Known marriage dates: February, 3, May 2, June 1

Pre-marital pregnancy: One bride, Joan Peacock was three months pregnant.

Known length of married life:

Ralph Peacock/Katherine Clement = 14 years  
Joan Peacock/John Alley = 20 years

Known ages at marriage: 21 years [John Peacock]

Remarriages: 2. Joan Alley to William Candel [7 years after husband's death] and William Peacock and Katherine Tucker [one year after wife's death]

MALE OCCUPATIONS: Husbandman, [2] Yeoman [1]

ILLEGITIMACY: There were no illegitimate children born

CHILDREN AND FAMILY:

Known number of children born/baptised into families:

Ralph Peacock/Helene: 4 children  
John Alley/Joan Peacock: 8 children  
Ralph Peacock/Katherine Clement: 4 children  
William Peacock/Rebecca: 3 children  
William Peacock/Katherine Tucker: 4 children  
John Peacock/Mary: 1 child

Ralph PEACOCK = Helene [Elinor] .....  
 husbandman bur [widow] 22.1.1611  
 overseer will of John Webb, husbandman 1589  
 cw 1609  
 bur 27.2.1610  
 WP 1610

Richard Blackford = Isabel John ALLEY = Joan Peacock = [2] William Candel  
 mar 14.2.1603 husbandman at muster 1608 bur 23.11.1612  
 20-40 'musketeer'  
 bur 23.11.1612  
 Ralph = Katherine Clement Hugh Katherine = ..... Jones  
 b ? b ? b ?  
 n May 29 1600 yeoman  
 collier 1608 bur 30.12.1614 WP 1606  
 husbandman 1619  
 cw 1620  
 bur 13.6.1625

*JUDITH, wd of BURKETT,  
 Som (PCC will  
 1633)*

Edward Parnell James Elinor Robert John = Mary  
 bp 13.8 1592 bp 6.11.1595 bp 20.2.1597 bp 6.1.1600 bp 23.1.1603 bp 20.4.1605  
 app. 12.3.1606 bur 2.2.1596 as tailor  
 bur 15.10.1635  
 Joan  
 bp 15.10.1635

John = Ann Jeffrey Helen Anne William = Rebecca JONES = [2] Katherine Tucker  
 bp 3.4.1608 bp 17.2.1611 bp 26.12.1613 b ? widow of Oldland  
 mar 2.6.1629 bur 20.2.1635 app as shoemaker 1619 [discharged] mar 5.2.1638

Susanna Anne  
 bp 14.2.1608 bp 14.1.1611  
 bur 25.6.1609

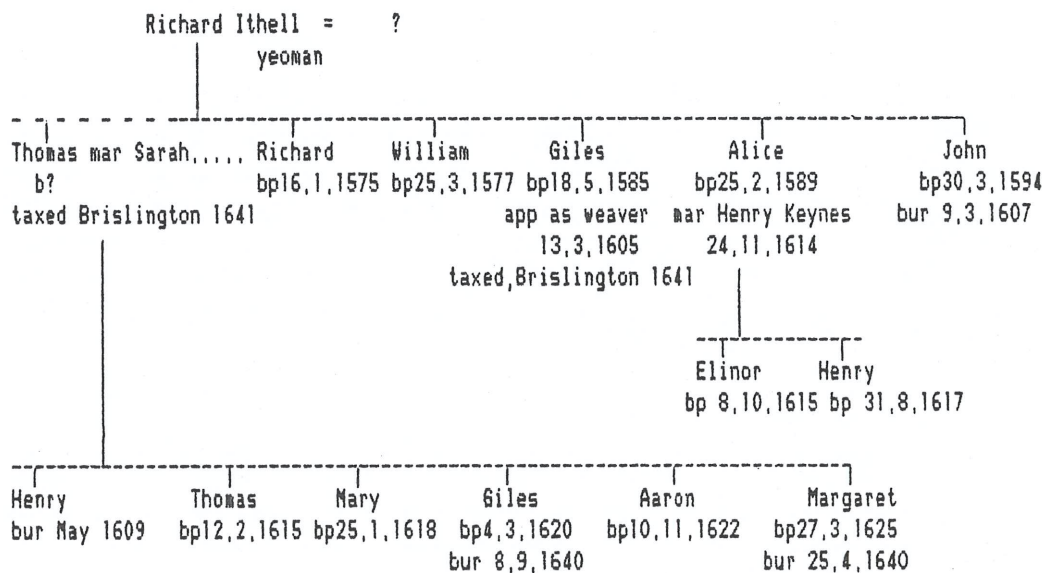
Susanna Thomas Katherine John Anne  
 bp 19.12.1630 bp 27.12.1632 bp 17.11.1635 bp 16.9.1638 bp 1.3.1642

Rebecca William Hannah Ralph Ann William John  
 bp 27.9.1632 bp 24.8.1634 bp 6.11.1636 bp 26.1.1640 bp 6.3.1642 bp 19.1.1646 bp 21.2.1647  
 bur 8.12.1639 bur 8.1.1637 all bp at Oldland

The ALLEY Family of Siston

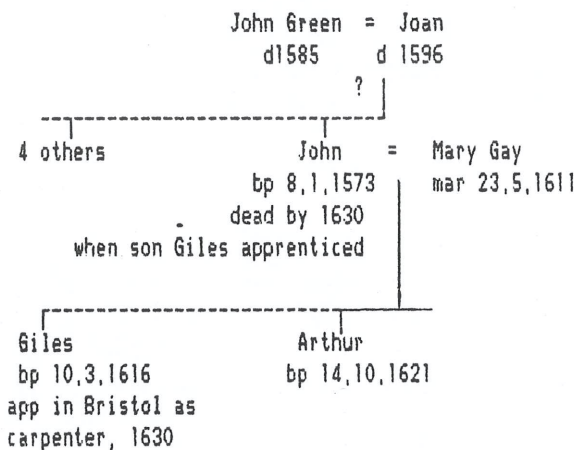


The ITHELL Family



(SOPHIE DO GILES FIELD  
bp. Oldland Belton. 1-11-1747)

The GREEN Family



Months when children were baptised: January [4], February [4], March [2], April [2], August [2], September [2], October [1], November [3], December [3]

Number of children who died under 10: 3mths, [died February], 1 yr 4 mths, [died June], 5 yrs [died December]

Apprenticed: Edward Alley, in Bristol as tailor 1606 [did not return]  
William Peacock, in Bristol as shoemaker, 1619,  
discharged 1620, returned.

DEATH AND BURIAL:

Died unmarried: Hugh Peacock possibly about 30? Ann Peacock aged 21.

Dates of known burials: January [2], February [3], June [2], November [1], December [2]

Wills:

Hugh Peacock, will proved at Gloucestershire, 1608 [father Ralph Peacock as executor, no overseers]

Ralph Peacock, will proved at Gloucestershire, 1610 [son Ralph Peacock as executor, no overseers]

The Bullock/Strange/Wimboll/Clark network

The Bullock family are not mentioned at Siston prior to the burials of Edith, wife of Robert Bullock and their three daughters in 1606. Robert remarried less than four months later. He attended the 1608 muster, 'about 40, suitable as a musketeer'.

Robert's second wife Anne or Agnes Strange was the daughter of Thomas Strange, a yeoman who died 1597. Her mother Anne remarried Robert Mudwell, yeoman, in January 1598/9. Robert died eleven months later. Obadiah Bullock, the son of Anne Strange and Robert Bullock

married Elizabeth Strange, the daughter of Walter Strange of Abson. They were second cousins once removed. Through the Stranges, the Bullocks were related by marriage to the Clarks, the Holbins and Arthur Wimboll whose sister Agnes was Robert Bullock's third wife.

Arthur Wimboll and his wife Joan first first appear in Siston at the baptism of their daughter Margaret in 1600. It is clear from Arthur's will that they had previous children perhaps baptised at Hawksbury Upton where Arthur had property. He appeared at the 1608 muster, aged about 40, and tall, suitable as a pikeman.

#### MARRIAGES:

Five marriages took place in Siston: Robert Bullock's second and third and the marriages of his sons. The fifth was the second marriage of Anne Strange, Anne Bullock's mother, to Robert Mudwell.

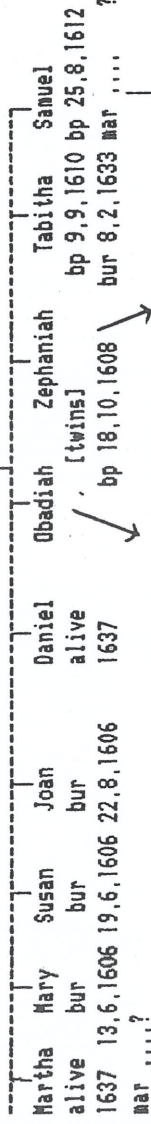
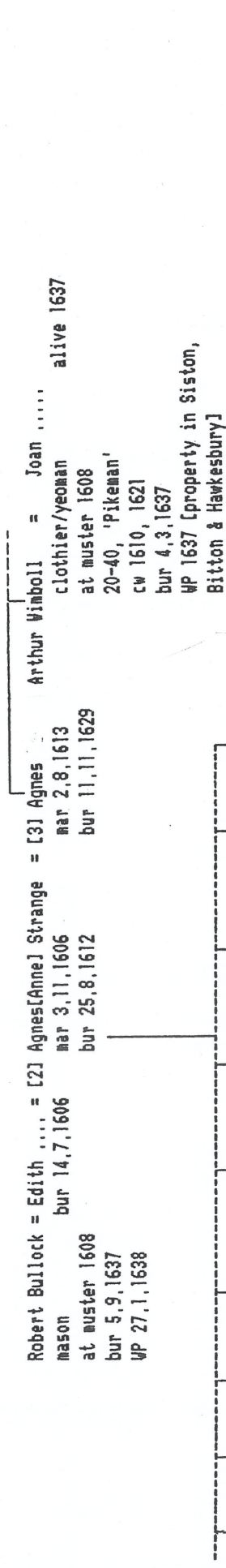
Eleven couples married elsewhere, names [where known] are from wills.

Robert Bullock/Edith  
Martha Bullock/ ?  
Samuel Bullock/ ?  
Thomas Strange/Ann  
Arthur Wimboll/Joan  
Edith Wimboll/Thomas Dangerfield  
Arthur Wimboll, jun/Anne Clark  
Katherine Strange/Richard Clark  
Robert Clark/Cicely Wickham  
Eleanor Clark/Thomas Holbin  
Eleanor Holbin/John Seabourne alias Plomer

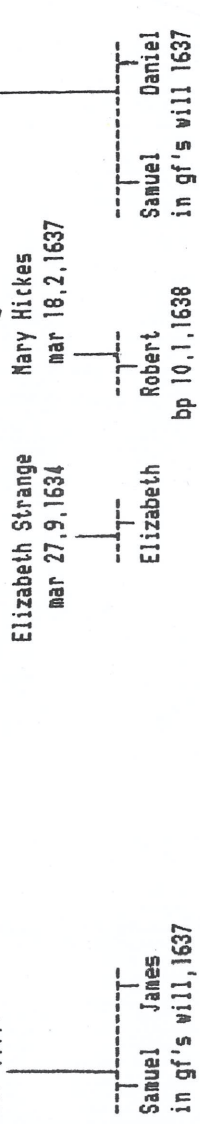
Marriage months: January, February, August, September, November.

Pre-marital pregnancy: None.

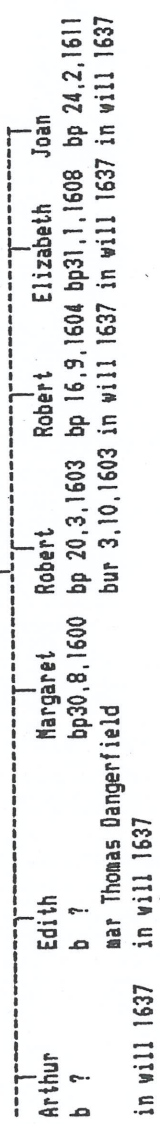
Known length of married life: 5 years and 16 years [Robert Bullock's 2nd and 3rd marriages, respectively four months and one year after previous wife's death]



The WIMBOLL Family of Siston

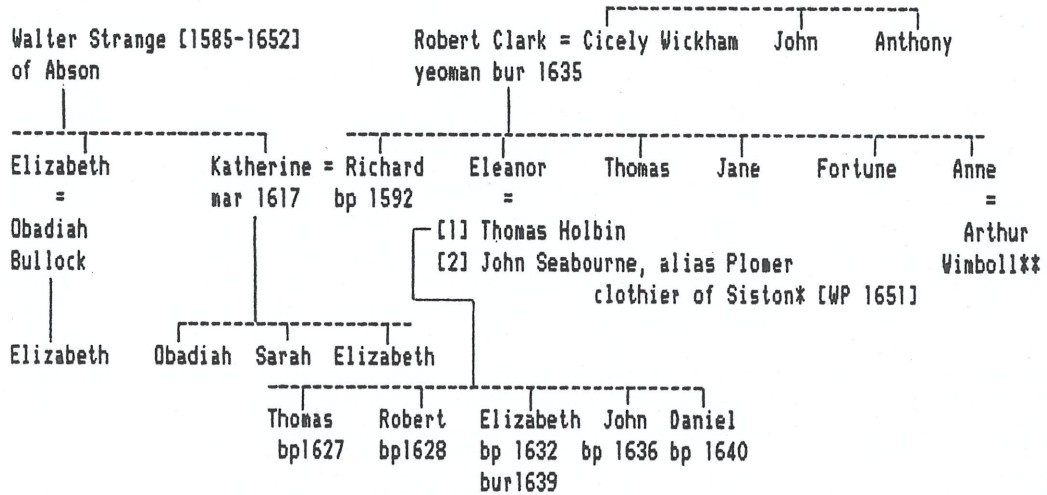


The BULLOCK Family



Nathaniel Margaret + 3 more, unnamed, in will of  
 Godson of bp 1.2.1621 bur 1.2.1623 of grandfather, Robert Clark  
 Robt Clarke,  
 his grandfather.  
 In gf's will, 1635

BULLOCK Family connections.

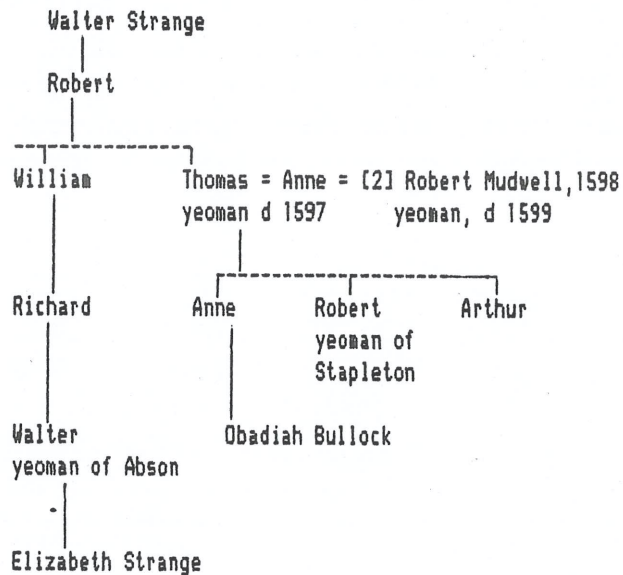


\* He had children from his first marriage living at Alderley in Gloucestershire, Eleanor Clark Holbin presumably met him through her brother in law, Arthur Wimboll junior, whose family were also clothiers.

\*\*Robert Bullock's third wife Agnes Wimboll, was the aunt of his daughter in law's sister's sister in law's husband. The yeomanry and skilled artisanry formed a close knit group who intermarried.

\* ZEPHANIAH BULLOCK of POBLOW, haberdasher / MARTHA NEWELL, same  
20-12-1754 - WELLS MAR HC.

STRANGE descent showing relationship between Obadiah Bullock and his wife Elizabeth Strange:



Known ages at marriage: 26 and 29 years [Obadiah & Zephaniah Bullock]

MALE OCCUPATIONS: Mason, Clothier [2], Yeoman [4]

ILLEGITIMACY: None

CHILDREN AND FAMILY:

Known number of children born/baptised into families:

Robert Bullock/Edith: 5  
Robert Bullock/Anne Strange: 4 [including twins]  
Obadiah Bullock/Elizabeth Strange 1  
Zephaniah Bullock/Mary Hickes 1  
Samuel Bullock/ ? 2  
Arthur Wimboll/Joan 7  
Arthur Wimboll jun/Anne 3  
Robert Clark/Cicely Wickham 6  
Thomas Holbin/Eleanor Clark 5  
Thomas Strange/Anne 3

Months when children were baptised: January 3, February 2, March 3,  
August 1, September 5, October 3

Number of children who died under 10 years old: Robert Wimboll aged 7  
mths, Elizabeth Holbin aged 7, [Tabitha Bullock aged 13]

Apprenticed: None

DEATH AND BURIAL:

Died unmarried: Not known

Dates of known burials: February 4, March 2, June 2, July 1, August 2,  
September 1, October 1, November 1, December 2

Wills: Robert Bullock, proved Gloucester, 1638, son Obadiah as  
executor, no overseers.

Arthur Wimboll, proved Gloucester 1637, wife and son Robert as  
executors: no overseers.

Robert Clark, dated 1635 but not proved until 1657, wife as executrix with two brothers in law as overseers.

John Seabourne alias Plomer proved PCC 1651, daughter Hester as executrix with two overseers.

Robert Mudwell, proved Gloucester 1600, wife Anne as executrix, no overseers.

#### The Ithell and Green families of Brislington

Wills supply much additional family data not found in the parish register, for example, unexpected children, married names of daughters, grandchildren. The loss of the Brislington wills therefore makes family reconstruction very difficult.

Richard Ithell and his wife were obviously kindly souls. Beggars sheltered at their house like the tragic "woman out of Gloucestershire" who gave birth and died there in 1593, likewise the "certain impotent man" thought to have come from Bradford on Avon who died in 1598.

Despite their substance, the name of Richard Ithell's wife is never revealed; they married outside Brislington some time before 1575 as did his probable son Thomas to Sarah...

Their daughter Alice aged 25, not a pregnant bride, married a 'stranger' bridegroom in Brislington. They stayed [or Alice twice brought the children for baptism from elsewhere] for nearly three years after their marriage and then went away for good.

The Green family is a tangle of loose ends and includes five different John Greens paired with various wives, known only through burials, who had sons called John, including in one case, John the

elder and John the younger. The parentage of John who married Mary Gay is based on deductive reasoning and if he is the John baptised in 1573 then he was 38 when he married. Mary's baptism is not at Brislington although there are other Gays resident.

Marriages took place in November and May

Months when children were baptised: January 3, February 2, March 5, May 1, August 1, October 2, November 1

Children were buried aged 13, 15 and 20.

These two families are tied not by marriage but by scandal. On June 18, 1616 Thomas Ithell was summoned to the court of the Bishop of Bath and Wells accused of impropriety with Mary Green, the wife of John Green. They were spotted under a hayrick by Sarah, Thomas's wife and other neighbours confirmed "they have been seen in the evenings very late together in sheep folds and in the mornings very early when they converse suspiciously". Thomas "protested his innocence with great vehemence". He claimed they were discussing the penning of sheep, but he was found guilty and admonished. [D/D/Ca 196 SRO]

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#### CONCLUSIONS:

The experiences of these families in general comply with the majority. The average length of married life, based on four marriages is 13.75 years whilst known age at marriage, based on four men and one woman is 27.8 years. Only one bride was pregnant and there were no



known illegitimacies. There were five remarriages in the registers, though it is also known from wills that Eleanor Holbin's marriage to John Seabourne was a second for both. More than half the baptisms took place in the first quarter of the year. On average, they had about four children. Whilst most of their children survived infancy some were still sadly lost at older ages. We do not know the ages of the children nor the name of the disease which carried off Robert Bullock's wife and three children between June and August 1606. Like the majority, they were [just] more likely to die in the first four months of the year.

Only in one respect is there still a vexed question in my mind. The timing of marriage. The marriage dates of these couples do not conform to a seasonal peak in November and look more like a pre - Lent rush and a post-Lent bulge and it should still be remembered that 18 couples married in other parishes, dates unknown.

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