

RURAL INDUSTRY: **Some evidence of the Weaving Activity in South Newington, 1540-1851**

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This short piece, investigating weaving in South Newington, is based mainly on primary sources, probate and deed documents with some information drawn from the *Victoria County History*. It is my intention to trace the history of weaving in the village, simply from these documents, from 1540 until it died out in the nineteenth century.

There is a good water supply in South Newington provided by the river Swere. Indeed there were two water mills recorded in the Domesday survey.¹ The Milcombe Mill, separately recorded in the Domesday survey, is a third of a mile downstream from the South Newington Mill on the old parish boundary, almost within South Newington.² While the water provided the power for fulling mills, the growing of crops such as hemp and flax and the rearing of sheep by most households provided the raw materials for the growth of a weaving trade.³ How early in the village's history weaving took place is not known. It was probably on a very small domestic scale to begin with, providing yarn and cloth for family needs with the surplus being sold in local markets. The growth of this 'industry' is indicated in probate and deed documents of the period from 1540 to 1851.

The Oxfordshire Record Office Probate Document index, for South Newington village, records that the majority of occupations in the village in this period were those of husbandman and yeoman. However, there were also a variety of other trades and occupations. Some of the documents between 1540 and 1715 relate directly to weavers and the allied trades. Many inventories and some wills of husbandmen, yeomen and even gentlemen, suggest some involvement in weaving or the production of yarn for weavers. Some examples of these are:

- Margar[e]t Hadlonde, who in her will of 1560 left '*half the curat (overseeing?) of her loombe [to] William Gylles and Tho[ma]s Sprootleye with others*' [183.382].⁴

¹ *VCH* Vol. XI, *Wootton Hundred (North)*, p.154.

² *VCH* Vol. IX, *Bloxham Hundred*, p.72.

³ *VCH* Vol. XI, *Wootton Hundred (North)*, p.151.

⁴ Quoted probate documents are from Oxfordshire Record Office Wills and Inventories.