

Émigré tapestry weavers in Elizabethan London: people and products

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This article is concerned with a single interest group of craftsmen, tapestry weavers. Their presence has scarcely been recognized amongst the many other skilled workmen who came to Elizabethan London, driven by warfare from their homelands in the Low Countries. Information in official documents about the 'strangers', as contemporaries called them, is combined here with such personal material as survives and is used first to set this group into the context of wider patterns of émigré settlement and then, briefly, to look at the group's relationship to Sheldon's tapestry venture at Barcheston, previously thought to be unique. Many in London were employed by Queen Elizabeth in the Great Wardrobe, while others set up independently, with varying degrees of success. Indications of an embryonic tapestry weaving industry are evident. It is, however, harder to assess their products, few of which are documented.

Records of obviously foreign names born by men described as tapistre weavers or arris workers, resident in London, should long since have signalled the possibility that a further imported skill might be recognized amongst the range of luxury trades which, like those of glaziers, gold- and silversmiths, carvers in wood and stone, miners, printers, engravers and painters, were so much in demand in the increasingly wealthy society of Elizabethan England.¹ The documented settlements of 'stranger' cloth weavers in south-east England are well known,² yet the existence of the separate, even more specialized textile workers, tapestry weaver or arris worker, has scarcely been suspected; but for a brief account, it has never been fully investigated.³ The 'discovery' in the 1920s of a workshop held to have been set up by William Sheldon in his manor house at Barcheston in 1570 supposedly directed by,

¹ In particular as artists, L. Cust, 'Foreign artists of the reformed religion working in London c 1560–1660', *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London*, vol.7, 1903, 45–82 and Roy Strong, *The Elizabethan Icon: Elizabethan and Jacobean Portraiture*, London 1969; as engravers and printers, Arthur M. Hind, *Engraving in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries*, Cambridge 1952; as carpenters, E.M. Jourdain, *English Decoration and Furniture of the early Renaissance (1500-1650)*, London, 1924; as silversmiths, W. W.Watts, *Old English Silver*, London, 1924; as glassmakers, Eleanor S. Godfrey, *The Development of English Glassmaking 1560-1640*, Oxford 1965; Benno M. Forman, 'Continental Furniture Craftsmen in London 1511-1625', *Furniture History*, vol vii, 1971, 94-120. 2. *The New Draperies in the Low Countries and England*, ed. N.B.Harte, Oxford, 1997.

² *The New Draperies in the Low Countries and England*, ed. N.B.Harte, Oxford, 1997.

³ Wendy Hefford, 'Flemish Tapestry Weavers in England: 1550-1775', in *Flemish Tapestry Weavers Abroad*, ed. Guy Delmarcel, Leuven University Press, 2002, 43-61, hereafter, Hefford; now on-line.

and employing, English men has helped to obscure the prospect that the trade was also practised in London.⁴

What follows is a study of that émigré artisan group based on such personal details of the tapestry weavers' lives as can be garnered from a range of documents beyond those relating generally to the stranger settlers of Elizabethan England between 1559 and 1619 – roughly from the accession of Queen Elizabeth to the establishment of the weaving venture at Mortlake.⁵ Known to his contemporaries as 'Doche', represented here by the word 'Dutch', the group embraced a number of different peoples – Flemish, Walloon, French and German. The clearly identifiable people total 110 to which 15 less certainly identifiable practitioners should be added. Those for whom it is possible to construct at least an outline biographical sketch are far fewer – some 25 or so, of whom 14 left wills. It is a small sample, easily dismissed perhaps by statisticians.⁶ Tapestry weavers formed only a small percentage of London's calculable stranger population which rose from 4000 to 7000 between 1550 and 1600⁷ and a still smaller, and ever diminishing, percentage of London's entire population, reckoned to have been around 70,000 in 1550 and 150,000 by 1600.⁸

This study aims to ask, and attempts to answer, the questions of who they were, why they came, how they lived, how they dealt with, and reacted to, the difficulties of living in a foreign country in which they were often regarded, and treated, with contempt, hostility and opposition. It investigates the question of what they did and endeavours to assess their contribution to the economy of their host country. It also shows how the behaviour of these 'single-interest' craftsmen

⁴ E. A. Barnard and A. J. B. Wace, 'The Sheldon tapestry weavers and their work', *Archaeologia*, lxxviii, 1928, 255-318, henceforth Barnard and Wace; Hilary L. Turner, 'Tapestries once at Chastleton House and their influence on the image of the tapestries called Sheldon', *Journal of the Soc of Antiquaries*, 88, 2008, 313-46, henceforth 'Tapestries once at Chastleton...' on-line at <http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/pdfs/NEWPP41Chastletonrevision.pdf>

⁵ Wendy Hefford, 'The Mortlake Manufactory 1619-1649', in T. P. Campbell, *Tapestry in the Baroque*, Metropolitan Museum, New York, 2007, 171-201.

⁶ M. Backhouse, *The Flemish and Walloon Communities at Sandwich during the reign of Elizabeth I*, 1995, 131-34.

⁷ These contemporary figures are from E.F. and R.E.G.Kirk, eds., *Returns of Aliens dwelling in the City and Suburbs of London from the Reign of Henry VIII to that of James I*, 10, 4 parts, Publications of the Huguenot Society of London, 1900, i, 479, ii, 139, iii, 439.

⁸ S. Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds: structures of Life within Sixteenth Century London*, Cambridge 1989, 50, 61, henceforth Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds*.

compares with, or differs from, the sociological conclusions reached by others using more general statistics derived from those same records.⁹

The influx of successive waves of ‘Doche’ men in the second half of the sixteenth century was in part a response to repeated invasions of the Low Countries by the armies of Philip II king of Spain prompted by the hope of firmly establishing Catholic governance.¹⁰ But the settlement in England of men from these areas was not a new phenomenon. Flemings practising a variety of trades had settled in and around London from the later years of the fifteenth century.¹¹ More particularly, tapestry weavers were essential to the repair and maintenance of the royal collection of tapestries, already sizeable by the time of king Henry VII and known to have increased to around 3000 items under his son, Henry VIII.¹² The dates of this survey have been determined chiefly by the survival of the accounts for that work, done in the Great Wardrobe, the largest single employer of the stranger tapestry worker.¹³ But, though these records survive in a nearly continuous run from 1559 to 1639, they are dull and uninformative. To recreate the lives and fortunes of the émigrés it is necessary to look at a far wider range of sixteenth century documents. They consist of four classes of official records; those of the English government, of the Dutch church, and of parochial records and probate records. Each category has its imperfections, the weakness common to all of them being that no one set is complete. Add to that the difficulties experienced by the compilers of spelling foreign names round which it is clear that they frequently found it hard to get their tongue or their pen and which the bearers probably had equal difficulty in spelling in a foreign alphabet and it becomes clear that the documentation is often as treacherous as it is revealing.

⁹ C. Littleton, ‘Social interactions of aliens in late Elizabethan London: evidence from the 1593 Return and the French Church consistory ‘actes’’, *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London*, 26 (2) 1995, 147-159; Lien Bich Luu, ‘Assimilation or segregation: colonies of alien craftsmen in Elizabethan London’, *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London*, 26 (2) 1995, 160-172.

Much of the background to émigré life is described by Andrew Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities in London*, Clarendon Press 1986, hereafter Pettegree, *Protestant Communities*; and A. Pettegree, ‘“Thirty Years On”: progress towards integration amongst the immigrant population of Elizabethan London’, in *Rural English Society 1500–1800: essays in honour of Joan Thirsk*, J Chartres and D Hey, eds. Cambridge 1990, 29-41. Laura Hunt Yungblut, *Strangers Settled Here Amongst Us*, Routledge, 1996, passim; hereafter Yungblut, *Strangers*.

¹⁰ J. Israel, *The Dutch Republic; its Rise, Greatness and Fall, 1477-1806*, Oxford, 1995.

¹¹ Sylvia L. Thrupp, ‘Aliens in and around London in the Fifteenth century’, in *Studies in London history presented to Philip Edmund Jones*, ed. A.E.J.Hollander and W. Kellaway, London, 1969, 251-272. J.L. Bolton, *The Alien Communities of London in the Fifteenth Century*, Stamford 1998.

¹² T. P. Campbell, *Henry VIII and the Art of Majesty*, New Haven, 5, 14, 89, 90-2, 213; Hefford, ‘Flemish Tapestry Weavers’, 43-45.

¹³ TNA LC 9/53-103; Hilary L Turner, ‘Working Arras and Arras Workers : Conservation in the Great Wardrobe under Elizabeth I’ *Textile History*, 43(1), May 2012, 43-60, on-line. See also note 65.

The first category embraces tax records, grants of denization (naturalization) and the lists compiled on the orders of the Privy Council, anxious, as were those they ruled, about the strangers settling in numbers inflated by rumour. The subsidies granted by parliament at irregular intervals were collected by a levy at a variable rate on lands and goods not, as now, on income.¹⁴ The rate for strangers was double that paid by natives or those naturalized; if their goods fell below the taxable limit strangers were required to pay 4d for every member of the household over sixteen. Yet the tax records, which one might expect to be the most accurate and revealing, are in fact the least helpful.¹⁵ They are not comprehensive and, even where the records do survive, they provide no more than an indication of relative wealth. Tax was raised from those judged by their neighbours to have sufficient means to pay, not equally from everyone; absence of a name does not necessarily mean a man was not well able to support himself.

At least as confusing are the lists of foreign residents, some of them requested on a regular basis by the Privy Council and others compiled by the Dutch Church. The more useful, because they include personal information, are six lists submitted to the Privy Council, one at some point in 1568, the two surveys of May and November 1571, two lists dated to 1583 and the *Returns* of 1593, undertaken specifically to discover how many Englishmen were employed by strangers.¹⁶ Each required slightly different information and none was executed with uniform attention to the details requested, so that their value is of variable quality. The lists drawn up by the Church consist of little more than names, frequently only males, presumably the head of the family. The most useful are those of 1559-61; 1567; a list of admissions compiled between 19 July and 4 November 1585; and two surveys of September 1588 and October 1594.¹⁷ Each list probably served contemporaries for more than one purpose, but for us they are the record of those who brought with them letters of recommendation from their previous congregation abroad. There are also the

¹⁴ For a complete account of Elizabethan taxation see M. Jurkowski, C.L. Smith and D. Crook, *Lay Taxes in England and Wales*, PRO Handbook, no.31, 1998; some remarks on the difficulties of tax records are set out by R.G. Lang, *Two Tudor Tax Assessment Rolls for the City of London, 1541 and 1582*, London Record Society, 29 for 1992 (1993), hereafter Lang; Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds*, 166-7.

¹⁵ Lang, *Two Tudor Tax Assessment Rolls*, p.xxxvi, (1582); Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds*, 16-7.

¹⁶ Kirk, *Aliens*, iii, 330-439; i, 402-479; ii, 1-139; ii, 258-314; ii, 314-353; Irene Scouloudi, *Returns of Strangers in the Metropolis 1593, 1627, 1635, 1639*, Publications of the Huguenot Society of London, Quarto Series, 57, London 1985, 5, (hereafter Scouloudi, *Returns*).

¹⁷ Kirk, *Aliens*, i, 269-287; 317-365, 367-377; ii 378-389, 410-414, 462-474.

formalities of births, marriages and deaths; most of the weavers regularly attended the Dutch Church for which only baptismal and marriage records survive.¹⁸ Occasionally information is found in the registers of Anglican parish churches. The Dutch Church acted not only as a guarantor of the good character of its members, but also as a kind of mini-parliament for sorting out the disputes between its members and a social security network. Its consistory records¹⁹ give us an insight both into the tittle-tattle of daily life in a small community and into the more solemn correspondence with churches elsewhere in England and abroad.²⁰

Records of denization - the process of naturalization - are less consistently helpful. In theory at least strangers were not entitled to work in England. A long list of statutes, of 1523, 1529, 1540 and 1563, placed restrictions on their activities.²¹ Although some craftsmen acquired citizenship with its privilege of, and potential for, economic independence by accepting the regulation of their activities by the appropriate livery Company,²² no tapestry weaver is known to have been admitted to the Weavers' Company. The tapestry worker who sought independence was wise to apply for the letters patent for naturalization which, on payment of a small fee, gave him rights to own property from which he could 'exercise his trade'.²³ Not every man would have needed this permission; few working in the Great Wardrobe and none of those arriving from the 1580s onwards bothered to complete the formalities. It is, therefore, an uncertain guide to the existence of a workshop. Where permission was granted, it implies self-employment, but its absence may not preclude independent trading, especially when it is borne in mind that only 42 letters patent of denization

¹⁸ Printed by W.J.C. Moens, *The Marriage, Baptismal and Burial Registers 1571–1874 of the Dutch Church of London*, Lymington, 1884, arranged alphabetically, henceforth Moens, *Registers*.

¹⁹ *Kerkerads-protocollen der Nederlandsche Vluchtelingen-Kerk te Londen 1560-1563* (Resolutions of the Council of the Dutch Church in London 1560-1563) ed. A.A. Van Schelven in the publications of the *Historisch Genootschap*, Utrecht, third series no. 43, Amsterdam 1921, henceforth K-P I; *Kerkerads-protocollen der Hollandische Gemeente te Londen, 1569-1571* (Resolutions of the Council of the Dutch Church in London 1569-1571), ed. A.Kuyper in publications of the Marnix Society, series I, part I, Utrecht 1870, henceforth K-P II; A.J. Jelsma, and O. Boersma, eds. *Acta von het Consistorie van de Nederlandse gemeente te Londen 1569–1585*, Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis, The Hague, 1993, henceforth Jelsma, *Acta* + number.

²⁰ J. H. Hessels, *Ecclesiae Londino-Batavae Archivum, Epistulae et Tractatus cum Reformationis tum Ecclesiae Londino-Batavae Historiarum illustrantes*, 4 vols, Cambridge, 1889, henceforth Hessels, *Ecclesiae Londino-Batavae*.

²¹ Scouloudi, *Returns*, p. 49-50.

²² Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds*, 42-43; F. Consitt, *The London Weavers' Company*, Oxford, 1933.

²³ William Page, *Aliens in England 1509–1603: letters of denization and acts of naturalization*, Publications of the Huguenot Society of London, 8, Lymington, 1893, (henceforth Page, *Aliens*), supplemented by subsequently edited volumes of the Patent Rolls, *Calendar of Patent Rolls*.

were issued annually between 1509 and 1602, an impossibly small percentage of the true numbers working to suggest rigorous application of the law.²⁴

Finally there are the twelve wills proved in the courts of the bishop of London, either the Commissary²⁵ or the Archdeaconry Court²⁶ which dealt with overlapping areas of the diocese; sometimes, but not always, the probate value is found in the pages of the Act books of the respective courts. Two other wills are found in Surrey probate records.²⁷

The position of the strangers

From these records emerge the names of one hundred and twenty-five men, probably not the true total. They were described either as orris or arris workers or as tapestry weavers. Looking at this small group may seem to be an exercise of limited value since they formed such a small proportion of the total stranger settlement. For some we have no more than a name; in other cases identity is bedevilled by a confusion of spellings (e.g. Anthony von der Muelen is also found as Fraindemillion, Fraindemill and ends up as FrumtheMill; John Davelieu is also Deflue, Dayfelowe and Danelu; there is further conflation of terminology when the same man is indifferently described as a silkweaver, an aurris or orris worker (strictly speaking, a maker of gold lace, but equally possibly the result of phonetic spelling of arras), an arris worker, a tapestry weaver and a coverlet maker in contexts where it is clearly the same man doing the same job. Others are said to be ‘maker of arris cloth’ or ‘tapestre’ worker. Elsewhere the confusion of spelling can either conceal the same person or conflate two separate individuals while the anglicization of a name it would have been as simple to leave in the original (eg Hans = John = Johannis; Jan = John = Johannis; Joos = Jois = Joos = Josse = Jeyes = Jocosus) may give to birth to men who never existed.

²⁴ Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds*, 42. See also Page, *Aliens*, lii-liiii.

²⁵ London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), London Commissary Court, ex-Guildhall, 9171 (Registers), 9168 (Act Books). References follow *Testamentary Records in the Commissary Court of London*, vol III 1571-1625, ed. Marc Fitch, Index Library British Record Society, vol.97, 1985.

²⁶ LMA, London, Archdeaconry Court, ex-Guildhall, 9050 (Registers), 9051 (Act Books). References follow *Testamentary Records in the Archdeaconry Court of London*, vol I 1363-1649, ed Marc Fitch, Index library British Record Society vol.89, 1979.

²⁷ LMA, Surrey Probate Records, van der Meulen, Peterson.

When, in 1568, lists of strangers were submitted to the Lord Mayor of London, Sir Thomas Rowe, part of their purpose was to counteract the fear that jobs were at risk because rumour said that there were more strangers in London than natives. In the 1550s and early 1560s London was buzzing with rumours about the number of strangers in the City. In 1550-51 the figure was said to be as high as forty to fifty thousand; in 1559 an envoy from the Dutch church at Emden recorded the more reasonable ten thousand settlers,²⁸ but by 1562 the Spanish Ambassador heard that figure was forty thousand.²⁹ Even though they were current at home and abroad, the figures were not, of course, accurate, indeed they are scarcely plausible. Attempts to calm fears by announcing the true facts, at least as they were known to the English government, were made on more than one occasion; Archbishop Grindal authorized the use of the very public Paul's Cross for the purpose late in 1561.³⁰ The effect of such repeated rumblings, however, was that the government ordered periodic surveys which act like a localized census. Even contemporary records gave relatively low totals; in 1568 it was 4,106 (of whom 3288 were Dutch), in November 1571 4631 (of whom 3643 were Dutch), around 7%; modern reckonings suggest that in 1582 1840 aliens could be counted for tax³¹ which suggests a total population of 7,360 if multiplied by 4, and in 1593, 7113.³²

The strangers might not have been popular, but, in these numbers, they were certainly not a serious threat. Nevertheless, petitions were raised against them repeatedly, sent either to the Mayor and Aldermen of London or to the Privy Council.³³ Whatever the trade, the complaints were usually very similar; that the strangers refused to observe the same working hours imposed on the rest of the artisan class within the City; that they employed their children; that they practised a trade without serving proper apprenticeship; that they moved their workshops beyond the City boundaries and so beyond the City authorities and that they refused to teach the English the secrets of their trades.³⁴ By the end of the century the strangers were even

²⁸ Pettegree, *Protestant Communities*, 279.

²⁹ *Calendar of State Papers Spanish, 1550-52*, 278.

³⁰ Pettegree, *Protestant Communities*, 280.

³¹ Lang, xxxvi.

³² Scouloudi, *Returns*, p. 5.

³³ Summarized in Scouloudi, *Returns*, 25-26 and in Pettegree, *Protestant Communities*, 285-6, 290-92.

³⁴ London's citizens in 1571 and London-born weavers in 1595 advanced similar grievances, R.H. Tawney and E. Power, eds., *Tudor Economic Documents*, London 1924, i, 308-310; Consitt, *The London Weavers' Company*, 312-14.

blamed for the increasingly high rents payable in the metropolis.³⁵ Their shortcomings, from dress to diet, were all pilloried in contemporary drama.³⁶ Whatever her subjects felt, however, Queen Elizabeth's government did nothing to discourage the steady settlement of immigrants. Despite popular resentment, it was not entirely against English interests to harbour so many. Moreover, a sufficient number of Englishmen, amongst them William Cecil, the Queen's Secretary, recognized that the strangers possessed manufacturing skills which the English lacked, skills which provided the luxury goods which inflation-based, increasingly downward spreading wealth made available to a wider and socially lower group of men. It was acknowledged that the 'good workmanship of all artificialities is most comely seen in strangers', while the amount of money paid for foreign-made goods and the idea that Englishmen could be taught, by strangers, to make them, was also a topic of debate amongst the chattering classes of mid-sixteenth century England.³⁷ When the religious upheavals of the Reformation on the continent made England seem a haven of peace and tolerance, it was in government interests to encourage the settlement of men whose new skills were probably more welcome than their new, and radical, views on religion.

Arrival

Exactly by what means the men with which this article is concerned reached England is unknown. In the late 1560s the pleas of cloth weavers to be allowed to come to England are found in the Calendars of State Papers.³⁸ The coming of some groups was not a spontaneous exodus with everything left to chance, but a matter of careful, premeditated negotiation with the English authorities, with conditions made and accepted on both sides. But, unlike the deliberate fostering of the cloth weaving industry and the specific invitations to groups of men in those trades to settle in

³⁵ Pettegree, *Protestant Communities*, 282-83.

³⁶ Pettegree, *Protestant Communities*, 284-89.

³⁷ Tawney and Power, *op.cit.*, ii, 182-86; E. Lamond (ed), *A Discourse of the Common Weal of this Realm of England*, Cambridge, 1893, 63-4; quoted from Luu, 'Assimilation or segregation:', (note 9), 167.

³⁸ *Calendar of State Papers Domestic, 1547-1580*, (hereafter *CSPD*) p. 293, 296, printed in full by M. Le Baron Kervyn de Lettenhove, *Collections de Chroniques Belges Inédites, vol 23, Brussels, Relations Politiques des Pays Bas et Angleterre sous le regne de Philippe II*, vols iii, 1885, p. 476-77; iv, 1886, pp.717-719.

Sandwich, Maidstone, Stamford and Norwich,³⁹ the tapestry weaver seems to have come on his own initiative. They arrived from different towns, at different times, at differing ages and with varying levels of experience. Of the total of 125, thirty-five are no more than a name. Of the ninety about whom something is known, nineteen came from Brussels, the same number from Oudenarde, three from Bruges and one each from Aelst, Diest, Emden, Liège and Ypres.⁴⁰ For some, these towns were their birthplace, for others it was the most recent place in which they had found work. Unlike the English craftsman who was not used to acquiring experience beyond these shores, some of the émigré tapestry weavers had led peripatetic lives, accustomed, even expecting, to seek work in the established centres where demand arose and, with a transportable skill, free to pursue the best opportunities in a craft where, when one door closed because of the completion of a commission, the weaver had to hope that another would open, even if not necessarily in the same place.

Nevertheless, to a certain extent, the huge influx into London in 1566-7, an exodus caused by the duke of Alva's attacks on the towns of the southern Low Countries, of strangers practising many diverse crafts, amongst them tapestry weavers, must have been planned; simply to accommodate such large numbers arriving simultaneously would have required considerable organization. The earliest Privy Council survey, of 1568, included both the newest arrivals and those already established. The latter often occupied a house to themselves, or shared with people of a related craft. For the newcomers, space in a single house might be split up between five or more families and their children, or by a crew of bachelors; for the émigrés seeking any roof over their heads, living twelve, fifteen or even twenty-five to a single property was not uncommon at least in the first few years after their arrival. Such a house was described as 'pestered', meaning over-crowded and thus potentially unhygienic and a source of plague.⁴¹ The inhabitants might not be of the same nationality or practising the same skill.⁴² The sharing of cramped quarters by men with differing occupations suggests billeting; the gathering together of similar crafts

³⁹ *Cal Pat Rolls 1560-63*, p.336 Sandwich; *Cal Pat R 1566-69*, no.347 Maidstone; *Cal Pat Rolls 1569-72*, no.108, Stamford.

⁴⁰ H. Goebel, *Wandteppiche, Die Germanischen und Slavischen Landen*, part three in 2 vols, Leipzig, 1933, part I, 169, offered some suggestions about 12 weavers' birthplaces on the basis of personal names; only two can be confirmed. Biographies of all recorded weavers at http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/p34_learn_index_pdfs.htm

⁴¹ Luu, 'Assimilation or segregation:', 162.

⁴² Kirk, *Aliens*, i, 390, 391.

might have implied an existing network of mutual support based on pre-existing, trade-based alliances. The host families might be English, or they might themselves be strangers, in which case there might already be a connection to the trades he housed, as, for example, John Bayworth the cloth worker, selling bays made in Sandwich.⁴³ Some were sheltered by merchants, amongst them the skimmers Michael Towerson⁴⁴ and Geoffrey Walkedene,⁴⁵ who traded overseas and must therefore have had contacts. Michael Griffin, merchant of Rostar, clearly made additional income as a landlord; his house, with twenty-four inhabitants, was noted as being 'very much pestered'. He expected a rent of 40s from John Vercord for a single room for himself and his family.⁴⁶

Opportunity knocks

The English Elizabethan census maker expressed the situation succinctly when he recorded two reasons for the presence of 'strangers' in his midst. 'Strangers', which meant people born overseas and possibly owing allegiance to a foreign power,⁴⁷ came 'for religion' – that is, they sought to escape persecution (at worst) in their own territories or to find freedom to practise their own brand of Protestant thinking. Alternatively, because of the continuous fighting in the Low Countries, they came 'for their livelihood'. Of course, this applied to men of every trade, but it is illustrated also from the careers of tapestry weavers who, while all practising the same skill, adopted different approaches to finding work, which, up to a point, reflected their differing motives for coming.

There were three avenues by which tapestry weavers might practise their skills and earn their living. For the lucky few a private employer catered for their needs; the majority worked, for a time at least, for the Queen in the Great Wardrobe; others chose to set up independently. Hindered rather than helped by local prejudice and by

⁴³ Kirk, *Aliens*, iii, 348.

⁴⁴ The Towerson family are documented in the IGI (International Genealogical Index) for London; a Michael Towerson married a Margaret Fleming in 1565, and was probably related to the cloth importer, William.

⁴⁵ The second largest exporter of cloth in 1559, TNA SP 12/6/52; quoted from G. D. Ramsay, *Gregory Isham, Mercer and Merchant Adventurer*, Northamptonshire Record Society, xxi, 1962, p. xxx n. S.W. Rawlins, ed., *Visitation of London 1568*, Harleian Society, vols 109-110, London, 1963, 31-2.

⁴⁶ Kirk, *Aliens*, i, 390, iii, 379.

⁴⁷ For a discussion of the legal status of 'stranger' and 'foreigner' see Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds*, p.42-3.

the disabling measures applied to foreigners, isolated through lack of language, and always working against an ambivalent background of complaints, whether about their dress, diet, speech or work, it is nevertheless to this group that we must look for the origins of an industry.

In the first group, those with a patron, two men stand out – Richard Hyckes and Peter Wallys. On condition that he trained men to weave arras, tapestry and a number of other cloth fabrics, William Sheldon offered Hyckes premises rent-free, backed up by a scheme of loans for those he trained; Sheldon certainly also briefly employed at least one stranger, Henrick Camerman from Brussels.⁴⁸ Peter Wallys, Walloe or Walley, first mentioned as sharing a house with twenty-three others, found his own, corporate, patron.⁴⁹ After six years in London, he was entrusted with the training of boys thought suitable amongst the inmates of Christ's Hospital, the City's refuge for its orphaned or abandoned children, and also for those whose parents could not afford to bring them up.

Surprisingly, the engagement of a 'stranger' to teach the tapestry trade to certain boys was neither the Hospital's or the City's first venture of the sort.⁵⁰ In January 1575 the Court of Christ's Hospital (made up of its Governors, all of them City officials) assigned to Peter Wallys, 'tapestrie maker noe denison, a room, rent free, in this hospital to exercise his facultie and take two of the children to order them thereunto during one yeare from this presente'.⁵¹ In fact the agreement was not reviewed until November 1577 when Peter and the Governors signed a new and much more adventurous contract. For sixteen years Peter was to take two boys every four years, maintain them in his house and 'perfectly and expertly to teach them all his science of tappestrie makinge and all manner of knowledges and thinges thereunto apparent'. He was to bear all the cost of their maintenance and, when the term was completed, they were to serve him for a further eight years. If one of the pair died, another was to take his place. Peter undertook to live within three miles of the City;

⁴⁸ Hefford, 'Flemish Tapestry Weavers', 43; H. L. Turner, 'Finding the Sheldon weavers: Richard Hyckes and the Sheldon tapestry works', *Textile History*, 33 (2), 2002, 137–61, esp. 142-47; henceforth 'Finding the weavers'.

⁴⁹ Kirk, *Aliens*, iii, 351; he should not be confused with the merchant, Pieter van der Walle, Kirk, *Aliens*, i, 276, 283 387-88; ii, 155 191, 232 325, 341; ii, 203, 204; tax exemptions in 1590s. Buried 1597 in St Stephen Colman Street, Registers LMA, Mss 4448/1, fo 97v.

⁵⁰ An unsubstantiated reference in L. Picard, *Elizabeth's London*, London, 2003, 128, suggesting that this move was ordered by William Cecil does not seem to be correct.

⁵¹ Court Minute Books, Christ's Hospital, Guildhall Library, London, Mss 12806/2, fol 118v.

he was to receive his rent of ten shillings and the costs of enlarging his house 'for his more ease'. The contract was ratified the same day before the Council of Aldermen.⁵²

From the point of view of the history of tapestry weaving in England, the interest of the scheme is enhanced because the Childrens' Admission Books tell us both the names and the background of his apprentices.⁵³ Hospital practice was to keep a record of each child's whereabouts from the date of his admission; it included his age and parentage or the circumstances of his finding, his foster mother, his return to the Hospital (presumably for his education), and his final departure to apprenticeship, service or, more rarely, to higher education sponsored by a City Company. Peter trained a total of seven boys, from very different backgrounds. Amongst them were the sons of a fletcher, of the late porter of Bridewell, of a grocer, of a merchant taylor and of a haberdasher.⁵⁴ None of the Hospital boys was apprenticed to Wallys directly; presumably his stranger status excluded the signing of the articles which instead seem to have been drawn up with an Englishman.⁵⁵

The success of the workshop, for that is what must have resulted, is uncharted. Its existence is not obvious from the entry on the 1593 *Returns of Aliens* when Walley was described as householder, Dutchwoman (*sic*) born in Ieper (Ypres), with two sons born in England, dwelling in England 18 years, no denison with one English maid servant;⁵⁶ he gave the length of his legitimate, but not his actual, years in England. His workshop was clearly still in existence in October 1603 when Wallys made a nuncupative will.⁵⁷ Wallys had therefore secured himself a workshop in rent-free premises and a succession of assistants. But he had done more than fulfill his obligation to train Englishmen; two of his apprentices went to work in the Great Wardrobe, Thomas Awsten after little more than a month's apprenticeship since the first payments to him are recorded in the year 1587/88, joined, in 1606, by William Clay. Both remained there until 1639/40.⁵⁸

⁵² Guildhall Library London, Mss 12806/2, fol 194; LMA, COL/CA Repertories of the Court of Aldermen, vol. 19, fol 268.

⁵³ G.A.T. Allan, *Christ's Hospital Admissions 1544-1599*, London, 1937.

⁵⁴ Allan, *op cit.*, 114, 131, 138, 149, 152, 167, 212.

⁵⁵ C. Manzione, *Christ's Hospital of London 1552-1598*, London, 1995, 171.

⁵⁶ Scouloudi, *Returns*, no. 1126.

⁵⁷ LMA, Commissary Court London, ex-Guildhall, 9168 19.438; 9171 15.281.

⁵⁸ TNA LC 9/79 - 103; LC 9/95 - 103.

The Hospital's scheme, closer in spirit to that of William Sheldon than to the similar, but much later, venture established for orphans in Paris,⁵⁹ appears to be an instance where Englishmen stretched out a helping hand to their co-religionists, albeit on condition that Englishmen were trained. Two others who acted in this way, but to their own advantage, were noblemen. The earl of Sussex employed Denijs van Alsloot, while the earl of Pembroke made use first of Thomas Frenchemann and then of Michael Ots.⁶⁰ Absence of records for noble households may explain why there do not appear to be others. How valuable such a position might be is open to debate since, like Peter Wallys, the lives of van Alsloot and Ots also touched on the royal repair shop within the household department known as the Great Wardrobe. Van Alsloot acted as serving head, deputizing for Richard Hyckes in the years 1580- 1584, while Ots worked from 1574 till the year of his death, 1587.⁶¹ Although it was not a manufacturing workshop, nevertheless the Wardrobe was easily the most regular, as well as the largest, single employer of émigré labour.

Mixed motives: the arrasworkers of the Great Wardrobe

The Great Wardrobe, part of the royal household, had been situated since 1445 in the liberty of Baynard's Castle within the City of London.⁶² Amongst its departments was a team of men charged with the care of the three thousand tapestries accumulated by English monarchs over the centuries;⁶³ the arrasworkers were responsible for repairs, the tailors, usually Englishmen, for relining. Its head, the Queen's arrasmaker, was a royal appointment, paid a daily wage and an annual fee of £10. He was re-imbursed for the materials he provided.

The Wardrobe had long been manned by Flemings in the absence of a tapestry weaving tradition in England and it was certainly predominantly Flemish in make-up

⁵⁹ R. Weigert, *French Tapestry*, trans. D. and M. King, London, 1962, 95.

⁶⁰ W. Schrickx, 'Denijs van Alsloot en Willem Tons in London in 1577', *Artes Textiles*, Centrum voor de Geschiedenis van de Textiele Kunsten, Ghent, viii, (1974), 47-64; NAL Special Collections KRP.D.30, Kirk *Aliens*, ii, 299, 386 (as Hoots).

⁶¹ TNA LC 9/72-75; LC 9/66-78.

⁶² D. Loades, *The Tudor Court*, London, 1986, 38.

⁶³ Campbell, *Henry VIII and the Art of Majesty*, 5-6, 89-92; M. Hayward, 'Repositories of Splendour: Henry VIII's Wardrobes of the Robes and Beds', *Textile History*, 29 (2) 1998, 134-156.

in the middle of the sixteenth century.⁶⁴ Its long series of records, near continuous from 1559-1639, note the names of those engaged, the number of days worked and the pay due.⁶⁵ Seventy-one men worked there between 1559 and 1619; a further twelve were recorded between 1619 and 1639. Men were employed 'at will' and for a variable number of days. Their wage rarely fell below £10, but equally, it rarely went above £11.10.0. In contrast to wage increases seen on the open market, the daily rate varied not at all throughout Elizabeth's reign and because the value of money was decreasing, the real value of the wage was dropping. It rose to 14d. only in 1607.⁶⁶ Length of stay varied; eleven men chose to return to the work and served for more than thirty years, nine for periods between twenty and thirty years, nine for up to ten years, ten for around six or seven. Twenty-one stayed less than five years. Only one, John Nightingale left for known reasons and can be found in subsequent contexts.

They worked under the direction of two stranger heads, Thomas White from 1557-1570 and Richard Hyckes from 1570-1609. Thomas White, who held the title from 1557, was the son of a stranger of the same name and had started work in the Tailors as early as 1536.⁶⁷ He had accommodation very close to, possibly even within, the Wardrobe; his will reveals that besides his wages and perquisites, he had also run a shop.⁶⁸ White was succeeded by Richard Hyckes, aged around forty-five when he was designated to succeed White in January 1569, a year before the arrangements with William Sheldon at Barcheston were finalized.⁶⁹ The opportunity was taken to revise working conditions.⁷⁰ Hyckes' renewed patent of 1575 is the clearest instance when the already common obligation to train Englishmen was laid on a tapestry weaver.⁷¹ Its effects were seen in the employment in the Wardrobe of

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http://yourarchives.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php?title=Arras_Men_The_Men_Employed_1558-1639

⁶⁵ TNA, LC 9/51 for 1539; BLib, Stowe Ms 571 fol 28, for 1552, an isolated book dated to 1557, LC 9/52. The arrasmens' accounts run from 1559, near continuous until 1603 and intermittently until 1639; the audited set, AO 3/1106 - 1122, plugs many of the gaps. A further set is in E 351. Hilary L Turner, 'Working Arras and Arras Workers : Conservation in the Great Wardrobe under Elizabeth I' *Textile History*, 43(1), May 2012, 43-60. The documents, organization and work of the Great Wardrobe is briefly outlined in http://yourarchives.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php?title=Arras_Men and in <http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/pdfs/WorkingArras.pdf>

⁶⁶ TNA LC 5/50 fol 309.

⁶⁷ *Cal Pat R* 1557-58, 129; TNA LC 5/32, fol 340.

⁶⁸ LMA, London Archdeaconry Court, ex-Guildhall 9050 3.259v-261.

⁶⁹ Turner, 'Finding the weavers' and 'Tapestries once at Chastleton...', 332; *Cal Pat R* 1566-9, no. 2573; TNA C 66/1060, m 7. Hyckes at first worked through deputies.

⁷⁰ TNA LC 5/49, fol.330.

⁷¹ *Cal Pat R* 1572-5, no. 3269; TNA C 66/1136, m.16 and verso for resignation.

apprentices trained at Barcheston.⁷² Richard's son Francis would follow his father, even though the latter was still living, from 1588 to 1609 when both men, after service totalling forty years, were relieved of the post.⁷³ It passed to another Englishman, trained by Richard Hyckes, Ralph Canninge; he in turn was succeeded by his son, William.⁷⁴ The succession in the headship was mirrored also in the personnel, to which apprentices of both Hyckes and Peter Wallys were recruited.⁷⁵

When in 1559 we catch a first glimpse of 'the arras men' only eight men were employed.⁷⁶ In the course of the next decade, however, numbers rose to a steady twelve employees, the number at which it remained, whatever the volume of work, for the rest of the century. Four of White's team had been employed in the reign of Henry VIII – Nicholas van Cam; Francis Beaver,⁷⁷ Henry Wells and Henry Morrells. Wells was paid for work in 1538/39 and, like Morrells, taxed in the 1540s;⁷⁸ whether they had defied Mary's injunction to leave, or had stayed through the turbulent years of the Catholic queen's reign (1553-58), is unknown. They obviously thought a Wardrobe position advantageous to exploit. Wells remained in the Wardrobe until his death in 1574, but had means sufficient to purchase a lease which he bequeathed to his wife.⁷⁹ It looks as though he, with another former Wardrobe employee, Anthony van der Vynnen, jointly directed the workmen from 1570-74, and they may have had their own workshop from which they could supply the necessary materials, the task of the head man.⁸⁰

Morrells was born in Brussels, sought work first in Oudenarde and then in England; he later went to Antwerp before returning, aged fifty or so, to London, where he died.⁸¹ He held strong opinions, and became heavily involved in the early

⁷² Men from Barcheston were Alforde, Canning, Diston, Mumford, Dowler, Huckvale, see n.64.

⁷³ *Cal Pat R* 1572–5, no. 3269; TNA C 66/1060, m 7, verso.

⁷⁴ TNA LC 5/50, 198–200.

⁷⁵ For Wallys' apprentices see Thomas Awstine and William Clay, <http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/pdfs/NEWPP39Emigre1GtWardrobe.pdf>

⁷⁶ Beaver, Lome, Molyneux, Derick, P and J. Holland, Arnold vanderBoam, and van der Vynnen, the only one to reappear, served for one year. Claes and Nicholas van Hover served two years, Raes and Panne for three, Povir for four.

<http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/pdfs/NEWPP39Emigre1GtWardrobe.pdf>

⁷⁷ Van Cam was employed 1535/36, 1537.38, 1538/39; Beaver in 1537/38, 1557/58.

<http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/pdfs/NEWPP39Emigre1GtWardrobe.pdf>

⁷⁸ Wells was employed 1538/39 and taxed 1540; Morrells taxed in 1540s. See

<http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/pdfs/NEWPP39Emigre1GtWardrobe.pdf>

⁷⁹ LMA, Commissary Court London, ex-Guildhall, 9171, 16.193; and idem 9168 13.87.

⁸⁰ TNA LC 9/62-65.

⁸¹ See <http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/pdfs/NEWPP39Emigre1GtWardrobe.pdf>

disputes amongst the Dutch congregation over the appointment of the radical Haemstede as minister, pressing his points in petitions to the consistory on several occasions late in 1560.⁸² In April 1563 he participated in a debate on the human nature of the Deity (expressed in the consistory records by the Greek word *anthropomorphosin*) against an obstinate member of the congregation;⁸³ in the same month he stood, but lost, in the annual elections for office.⁸⁴ The continuous disputes over the nature of their beliefs and consequently over the suitability of one minister over another seem to have driven him out of the church, at least for a time and, in a list of 1568 he, like Wells and Soillot, was said to be frequenting the English church.⁸⁵ He later returned to the fold and in February 1570 he spoke up for an Antwerp man who sought admission to the London congregation.⁸⁶ Childless despite four marriages, he probably died early in October 1574.⁸⁷

Three younger men, John Davelieu, Jacob von Aken and John Soillot, were all born in Brussels. Davelieu and van Aken had both worked in Antwerp before coming to England, where they stayed fourteen and twenty years respectively, before returning, to become ministers.⁸⁸ John Soillot, aged twenty-six when he came, had worked only in his home town; he would spend the rest of his life in England.⁸⁹ All three had a strong commitment to the Church. Their ambition was not a workshop but God's service.

John Davelieu arrived in 1564, the first year in which payments to him were recorded.⁹⁰ He was listed (as Danelu) as a member of the Dutch Church in 1567, already a deacon; exceptionally for the formulaic lists of 1571 Davelieu was picked out as 'having a care for Goddes' word'.⁹¹ He was an exceedingly active member of the congregation and the range of duties he performed, and of cases where his help was sought, from supporting the applications of new members to mediating in disputes and quarrels, is revealed by the fact that few pages of the consistory records go by without his name appearing. Davelieu almost certainly came to England 'for

⁸² Background to these controversies in Pettegree, *Protestant Communities*, 164-181; K-P I, 60, 66, 76.

⁸³ K-P I, 305.

⁸⁴ K-P I, 305.

⁸⁵ Kirk, *Aliens*, i, 386.

⁸⁶ K-P II, 84, Jelsma, *Acta*, 175, 180.

⁸⁷ <http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/pdfs/NEWPP39Emigre1GtWardrobe.pdf>

⁸⁸ <http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/pdfs/NEWPP39Emigre1GtWardrobe.pdf>

⁸⁹ TNA, LC 9/53, f. 54v, Mich 1559-60; AO 3/1106..

⁹⁰ TNA LC9/58, 59,61-69.

⁹¹ Kirk, *Aliens*, i, 373.

religion'. He never applied for denization status, and it may have been with some relief that, under orders from the Church in Flanders, he abandoned the Wardrobe, to return to his native land, to Oudezeel.⁹²

Jacob van Aken seems also to have made use of employment in the Wardrobe as a means to his ultimate goal, that of serving the Church. Born around 1534 at Brussels in Henegou (Hainault) he arrived in England in February 1559, aged 24, 'for religion'.⁹³ His first stay was relatively brief; he left again in December 1560, handing over his lodgings, and, presumably, his rent to Morrells.⁹⁴ It was probably at this time that van Aken married, Lyvien who gave him two sons, Jacob born in Brussels and Abraham in Antwerp. He returned to England in May 1563.⁹⁵ He served for the next fifteen years in the Great Wardrobe.⁹⁶ At the end of August 1578 John Soillot accompanied by a Jacob van Alven, otherwise unidentified and possibly a mistranscription for van Aken, were welcomed on a visit by Jacob Regius, the minister at Ghent.⁹⁷

John Soillot arrived in 1559 with his wife, son, servant and pattern book,⁹⁸ which might suggest that his intention had been to set up independently. After twenty-one years service in the Great Wardrobe, during which he became notorious for taking time off, increasing difficulties with his sight forced retirement.⁹⁹ He subsequently entered the ministry and served as a much loved minister both in London, Maidstone and Halstead, Essex, until his death in 1598.¹⁰⁰ Astonishingly, pejorative comments were made about the level of his spoken English as late as 1583.¹⁰¹

But men served in the Wardrobe for a variety of reasons. Arnold Baerd had also been in England before the first payments to him in 1557, possibly since 1548, and he too had maybe already seen that it would be possible to set up a workshop for

⁹² Hessels, *Ecclesiae Londino-Batavae*, III, ii, 571 and II, no.170.

⁹³ Kirk, *Aliens*, ii, 86; K-P I, 91.

⁹⁴ TNA LC 9/53, 54; K-P I, 93.

⁹⁵ K-P I, 412.

⁹⁶ TNA LC 9/57-69; Kirk, *Aliens*, ii, 86, i, 478, iii, 388.

⁹⁷ Hessels, *Ecclesiae Londino-Batavae*, II, no. 170, para 8, where the name is taken to refer to Jan Celosse, an entirely different man.

⁹⁸ TNA LC 9/53-71; Kirk, *Aliens*, i, 402; ii, 20.

⁹⁹ Jelsma, *Acta*, 2254, 2259.

¹⁰⁰ Hessels, *Ecclesiae Londino-Batavae*, III, i, 700; J.J. Van Toorenbergen, ed. *Acta van den Colloquia der Nederlandsche Gemeenten in Engeland 1575-1609*. 2 vols., Utrecht, 1876, i, 57, 64, 65-69, 78; Hessels, *Ecclesiae Londino-Batavae*, III, i, 750, 767; III, i, 975, 981, 982, 988.

¹⁰¹ Hessels, *Ecclesiae Londino-Batavae*, II, 204.

himself.¹⁰² This was probably his plan when, in 1563/4, he applied for his denization.¹⁰³ He must have been successful, for by 1571 he was described as 'howseholder'; in 1576 his goods were assessed at £5.0.0 on which he paid 10s. and a further poll tax of 4d each for Anne his wife and Jacob his father.¹⁰⁴ He later moved across the City, leaving the streets round the Wardrobe for Bishopsgate where, in 1580, he made his will. He had in the meantime also made his fortune, leaving the sum of £300 to his one surviving son, Jacob, besides making provision for his wife and his father.¹⁰⁵ Baerd must have made the transition from weaver to negociant.

For some, the Wardrobe was only a temporary staging post, as it was for those for whom religion had been their motive in coming. Some were perhaps also running their own workshop, so that employment in the Wardrobe may have acted as a safety net. For one, Gerard van der Lynden, it was a convenient haven; he was wanted in Antwerp for murder.¹⁰⁶ For most, however, it was simply a safe refuge; John Willimetts, who entered in 1580, just had time in 1593 to make his will, leaving goods and cash to relatives in Emden, before plague killed him as it had already killed his wife.¹⁰⁷ But others, like John Nightingale, were simply not happy; the circumstances of his departure throw light on working conditions in the Wardrobe and indicate why he, like others before him, left and set up for himself. Whether or not they would become capable, or be given the opportunity, of weaving pieces on a large scale, they took the chance of being able to supplement, possibly very considerably, their annual income.

Free Spirits: the self-employed

At Michaelmas 1578, John Nightingale, a recent arrival from Oudenarde, was recruited to the Wardrobe workers; he completed 132 days, rather less than the others.¹⁰⁸ He found conditions not to his liking; he and a fellow townsman, Anthony van der Meulen, already twelve years in the Wardrobe, took their complaints against

¹⁰² TNA LC 9/52-57; Kirk, *Aliens*, i,319.

¹⁰³ Page, *Aliens*, 21.

¹⁰⁴ Kirk, *Aliens*, i, 477; ii, 88; ii, 183.

¹⁰⁵ TNA PROB 11/65; first identified by Hefford, 'Flemish Tapestry Weavers in England', 47; the further information available confirms her opinion.

¹⁰⁶ See <http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/pdfs/NEWPP39Emigre2Independents.pdf>

¹⁰⁷ See <http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/pdfs/NEWPP39Emigre1GtWardrobe.pdf>

¹⁰⁸ TNA LC 9/70.

their more senior co-worker, John Soillot, to the Church consistory in April 1579, roughly the end of the number of days Nightingale would have worked. John Soillot did not deny the accusation of his fellows and admitted that he had caused annoyance to others in the community by not staying as long as they did in the royal workshop, while receiving the same wage. He pleaded that his absences took place only with the consent of the Master and that those absences were not for his own good, nor for his personal financial gain nor for 'loose pleasures', but were in the service of the community, a fact also known to the Master. Two other men said they had also heard the complaints; an investigation was promised. When the matter was heard two weeks later, the complainants expressed the opinion that Soillot's behaviour should lead to the ending of his link with the Wardrobe though they also confessed that they themselves did not always do their job as they should. Their admission earned them a reprimand. The court then informed Soillot of what had passed. Possibly to their astonishment, his reply was that he would like to be freed either from his duties to the Church or, because of the opinion of his colleagues, from the Wardrobe; He said that he knew that he could not do both jobs nor do either properly. Van der Meulen and Nightingale were then recalled and told that all parties were to work together in good faith and, since the elders were not sufficiently familiar with routines in the Wardrobe, those differences must be resolved by the parties themselves.¹⁰⁹

Anthony van der Meulen stayed on, despite already having his own workshop. Within two years Soillot would, effectively, retire because of increasing blindness. Nightingale left immediately, and seems to have set up for himself. There is, however, considerable difficulty in disentangling his history from that of the several other Nightingale families, the variants being Nachtegael, Nyghtingal and Nittigale. Their menfolk are listed as Hans, Jan, John = (Iohannes), Jean, Jeyes, Joos, Joice, Joyce, (latinized as Jocosus) or Josse, the various forms of the same name not always attached to men practising the same professions.

A John Nightingale, described as a 'tapestre' weaver in one list of 1583 and as an arras worker in the other, is probably not only the same man but also almost certainly the former Wardrobe employee since both lists anglicize names; both were recorded as inhabitants of Langbourne Ward.¹¹⁰ In July 1593 a Joyce Nightingale,

¹⁰⁹ Jelsma, *Acta*, 2254, 2259.

¹¹⁰ Kirk, *Aliens*, ii, 270, 336.

describing himself as a tapestry worker, wrote his will.¹¹¹ He left £5 each to two cousins abroad and £4 to the poor of the Dutch church. He appointed his brother, John, as executor to whom he bequeathed half of his suite of tapestry hangings measuring eighty ells in length. The other half, together with his goods and chattels which totalled £25 8s 0d, were to go to his wife Perren (Perynken) in trust for his son Elias. Despite the fact that neither his wife's name nor his profession was noted, it seems probable that it is John-Joyce, tapestry weaver, who was the owner of the workshop identifiable from the *Returns* of April-May 1593. That survey names a Jeyes Niyghtingall (*sic*) and his wife, described as 'howseholder, no denizen, of the Dutch church'.¹¹² He was said to keep one English apprentice and to set one English person to work. In other words, he had a journeyman and an apprentice, both of them English.

Nightingale's supporter, Anthony van der Meulen, also named in the 1593 *Returns*, however, was a more cautious operator. When he arrived from Oudenarde in 1566 he seems to have gone straight into a job in the Wardrobe; the first payments to him were recorded from Michaelmas 1566.¹¹³ In 1571 he was described as a 'howseholder', indicating that he had assumed the obligation, and had the means, of paying rent for his own premises.¹¹⁴ In 1579, after thirteen years in steady employment, Anthony applied to become a denizon;¹¹⁵ he may already have been working for himself, for in October 1576 he was assessed for tax - though only at the minimum level - together with his wife and their man, Cornelius.¹¹⁶ He was one of the few Wardrobe employees to be assessed.

He also moved - across the river Thames to Southwark, a move which would take him further from the authority of the City regulatory authorities, and allow him to open a workshop, probably in a larger property at a cheaper rent. In the 1583 lists he was described as a coverlet weaver, not the work of the Wardrobe, in the ward of Bridge Without (=Southwark).¹¹⁷ The workshop must at first have been moderately successful; he was assessed for tax in 1589 on goods valued at £3, a fairly average

¹¹¹ LMA, Commissary Court London, ex-Guildhall, 9171, 18.88v; 9168, 14.274. See also <http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/pdfs/NEWPP39EmigreIGtWardrobe.pdf>

¹¹² Scouloudi, *Returns*, no.820.

¹¹³ TNA LC9/59.

¹¹⁴ Kirk, *Aliens*, i, 478, ii, 87.

¹¹⁵ Page, *Aliens*, 241.

¹¹⁶ Kirk, *Aliens*, ii, 183.

¹¹⁷ Kirk, *Aliens*, ii, 291.

assessment; by 1593 the assessment dropped to £1 on which he paid 5s 4d.¹¹⁸ But the Returns give no information about the workshop; perhaps his son worked alongside him. Early in 1594 he wrote his will and died soon after.¹¹⁹

Other tapestry weavers too were recorded in the *Returns* of 1593, compiled on orders from the Privy Council specifically to discover how many strangers employed Englishmen. Despite being extensively damaged, the document is a useful source from which to identify stranger workshops. It reveals some run by men who had set up shop without coming anywhere near the Wardrobe and apparently without seeking to work with other known weavers. The most specific example is Joyce Offielde, born in Bruges. The *Returns* show that he came in 1572. Nevertheless, it was not until December 1583 that he took out denization papers, probably marking the start of his own independent venture.¹²⁰ He is found as a ‘maker of arras cloth’ in 1583 in Aldersgate Ward;¹²¹ in 1593 he was recorded as living in Algate Street in the parish of St Botolph in Aldersgate Ward Without, an address at which he was assessed for the minimum poll tax again and again until 1604 when it was noted that he had departed.¹²² He was still alive in 1619.¹²³ He must have been moderately successful for by 1593 he ‘kept’ one Englishman and ‘set to work’ three others, meaning that he employed one journeyman and three apprentices. Yet despite this moderately large enterprise, his eldest son Edward, born in England, went into service in the Wardrobe in 1606, aged 22, remaining there at least until 1633.¹²⁴

Less clearly defined is the widow Margaret Knutte, described in 1593 as a tapestry worker born in Ghent. By then she had only been in England for eight years, yet had a family of five, all born in England. Their ages ranged from nineteen to one year, so almost certainly three must have been step-children. Was she, now widowed, trying, with the help of one stranger and two English servants (apprentices), to keep her husband’s workshop, possibly in existence from 1568, going for the benefit of his son, then aged fifteen?¹²⁵ The marriage is unrecorded, but it is possible that her husband should be identified with the John Knodd noted in 1568 sharing a house with

¹¹⁸ Kirk, *Aliens*, ii, 422, 446.

¹¹⁹ LMA, Surrey Probate Records, DW/PA/51593/204.

¹²⁰ Page, *Aliens*, 182; Scouloudi, *Returns*, no.826.

¹²¹ Kirk, *Aliens*, ii, 284, 334.

¹²² Kirk, *Aliens*, iii, 25, 60, 97, 121.

¹²³ LMA, London Archdeaconry Court, ex-Guildhall, 9051, 5.101, as Vander Rizen.

¹²⁴ The childrens’ ages were given in the Returns of 1593, but not recorded in Moens, *Registers*; TNA LC 9/95-101.

¹²⁵ Scouloudi, *Returns*, no.646; this interpretation emerged from conversations with Wendy Hefford.

two others, Giles Deflue and Adrian Molyneux, all of them from Oudenarde.¹²⁶

Should Knodd also be equated with the John Knotte alias Freveryke who paid 40s for his denization in 1564 and the Jan Knode of 1576 paying tax not only for himself, but also for three servants in the parish of AllHallowes Steyning, Aldgate ward? Is he, as Gnudde, the man who married Mayken van Middeldoncke from Antwerp in October 1573, mother of the nineteen year old?¹²⁷ Or does the brief record of 1593 reveal a previously unknown workshop?

Mention of these individuals in a badly damaged document, no longer complete, is a matter of chance. It must once have recorded many more men found also in other sources. A second wave of immigrants arrived in the mid-1580s, following the Duke of Parma's re-conquest of the southern parts of the Low Countries which meant that the Spanish grip on the territories was virtually irreversible. Most, but not all, of them came from Brussels, and appear in three lists, written within two years of each other. Together with information from a wider variety of sources fifteen names emerge between 1582-83 and November 1585. Matched with the survey of 1593 it becomes possible to trace a large influx of men, and an apparent increase in the number of small workshops.¹²⁸

In 1583 a group of men, all identified as 'Tapestre workers' is listed in Brode Street ward.¹²⁹ Headed by Nicholas Morrens and then bracketed together, very much as though they lived if not in the same house then at least very close together, are a further seven names - John de Pentione, Harman Gillett, Jaques Vadevest, John Vadevest, Joste Shelnies, Philip de Brier and John Wageman. Some are repeated lower down together with two other names, Anthony van der Brugghe and Cornelius de Puillmy(?). Though many were accompanied by their wives, no children were recorded. To them should be added a Nicholas Maryce of Tower Ward, John Wakerman of Dowgate ward and Harman Sloten in Algate Ward.¹³⁰ Some of these men may have returned home quite quickly because only four seem to have been admitted to the Dutch Church between July and November 1585; Joys Shillantes (for Shelnies), John Wageman and his wife, Cornelius van Pamele (Puillmy) with his wife

¹²⁶ Kirk, *Aliens*, iii, 348.

¹²⁷ *Cal Pat R 1563-66*, 165, no. 826; Kirk, *Aliens*, ii, 165, 4d for himself and 12d for 3 named Dutch servants; Jelsma, *Acta*, 1559.

¹²⁸ Kirk, *Aliens*, ii, 258-353; ii, 378-389; Scouloudi, *Returns*.

¹²⁹ Kirk, *Aliens*, ii, 318.

¹³⁰ Kirk, *Aliens*, ii, 325, 339, 320.

and mother, and Herman Gebot and his wife who can probably safely be assumed to be Harman Gillett. It also adds two other names, John Staffeneye with his father and Severin Moestincke, both of Brussels.

Only three of the group emerge clearly; Harman Gelot, Severin Moestincke and John Wageman.

As he fell victim to the plague of 1603, Harman Gelott thought it worthwhile to make his will; he described himself as an arrisworker born at Brussels.¹³¹ He seems to have prospered. He was in a position to give £10 to the poor of the Dutch congregation in London and left his goods to his wife if she were still alive. If she were not, his goods were to be divided between his brother's widow, also resident in London, and his wife's sister, in Brussels. Unusually, one of his executors was 'honest Severin Moestincke arrisworker', the other his 'cosen' John Johnson. He also took the precaution of protecting his overseas interests by appointing two other executors, one of whom was a Geraerd van der Linden.¹³² The will was proved on the last day of December 1603.

Severin Moestincke seems to have been rather less successful. He and his wife Elizabeth were noted in 1593 and amongst the Dutch congregation in October 1594 when they were resident in 'Long Southworck'.¹³³ In 1598 John Soillot left him 'half his book of patrens'; the other half went to Harman Gelott and the possibility that the men were partners should not be dismissed.¹³⁴ Moestincke may have moved to Aldgate by 1600, where they still were in 1617-18 when they were said to be poor people living in Aldersgate without.¹³⁵ By 1625 he had moved again, to Stepney where his will was proved by his executor, the merchant Joos de Neve, in November of that year.¹³⁶ By then his wife was dead and his goods and chattels passed to his niece, Elizabeth Lennaert, married to John Laen and then to their children or, if there

¹³¹ LMA, London Archdeaconry Court, ex-Guildhall, 9050, 5.441; 9051, 4.245. For family relationships, see <http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/pdfs/NEWPP39Emigre2Independents.pdf>

¹³² Whether this was the former Wardrobe employee, or the man listed by H. Goebel, *Wandteppiche*, 1923, i, 602 as having a weaver's mark, and whether either is identical with F. Donnet, 'Documents pour servir a l'histoire des ateliers de tapisserie de Bruxelles, Audenarde, Anvers jusqu'a la fin de XVIIe siecle', *Annales de la Societe Royale d'Archeologie de Bruxelles*, 1897, 11, 48-84, esp.p. 80, or another man bearing the same name is unknown. Nevertheless, it is an odd coincidence. <http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/pdfs/NEWPP39Emigre2Independents.pdf>

¹³³ Scouloudi, *Returns*, no. 805; Kirk, *Aliens*, ii, 474.

¹³⁴ TNA PROB 11/ 91.

¹³⁵ Hessels, *Ecclesiae Londino-Batavae*, III, i, 1486; Kirk, *Aliens*, ii, 163, 171.

¹³⁶ LMA, Commissary Court London, ex-Guildhall, 9171, 24.627v; 9168, 17.245.

were none, to the poor of the Dutch church. Laen is probably to be identified as Jacques Lens, 'aris maker' born in Bruges who had arrived in London via Paris about 1610 and in 1618 acknowledged James I as his sovereign.¹³⁷ He worked first in the Wardrobe of the Prince of Wales and later moved to the King's Wardrobe.¹³⁸

But many more men than those for whom some attempt at a brief biography is possible make sporadic appearances, and the incomplete state of the records means both that there may be many more weavers than we know of and that much more information might once have been a matter of record. Some, who briefly appear very clearly, sink without trace.¹³⁹ Anthony van der Vynnen's activities are unknown between 1559 and 1571 when he returned to direct his former colleagues in the Great Wardrobe.¹⁴⁰ Conversely, Lawrence Vitans escaped all mention in records for nearly twenty-six years, from 1567, the year in which he arrived, until 1593,¹⁴¹ while, though William Depovir's arrival went un-noted, his burial, as a 'stranger', in July 1568 coincides with the last year of payments to a William Pover in the Wardrobe where he had been since 1563.¹⁴² The van Howte brothers John and Peter, also written as Haute, who worked consecutively for a year each in the Wardrobe, John in 1579-80, Peter from 1580-81, are probably the same men as those named in tax lists,¹⁴³ indicating another successful, but concealed, workshop. Morysius van der Hove, born in Diest, arrived in 1568 with his wife and his servant (= apprentice); he was probably already a Master weaver. Nothing is known of his activities until he came to the notice of the Church consistory.¹⁴⁴

On the other hand, possession of a transportable skill, and a willingness to move where opportunity arose, together with length of experience and standing within the craft, may well account for the brief stays of some who appear only once in the records. It was almost certainly conditions in London which decided Giles Steegelbont to return home; in that name we should probably recognize the Master

¹³⁷ Kirk, *Aliens*, iii, 210.

¹³⁸ TNA AO 3/1120, 1121. I owe this information to Hefford, 'Flemish Tapestry Weavers in England', 50.

¹³⁹ See <http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/pdfs/NEWPP39Emigre2Independents.pdf>

And

<http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/pdfs/NEWPP39Emigre3Orris.pdf>

¹⁴⁰ See <http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/pdfs/NEWPP39Emigre1GtWardrobe.pdf>

¹⁴¹ Scouloudi, *Returns*, no. 1116.

¹⁴² W. Bruce Bannerman, ed. *Registers of St Mary Somerset*, part II, Burials 1557-1853, *Harleian Society*, 60, London, 1930, 5.

¹⁴³ TNA LC 9/71, 80; Jacob de Hante, Kirk, *Aliens*, ii, 332, iii, 373, 39; Pieter Hautes, Kirk, *Aliens*, ii, 411.

¹⁴⁴ Kirk, *Aliens*, iii, 382; ii, 93.

Gilleis Stiegelbaut who, together with Adrian Happart, lost tapestries in the 1567 troubles at Oudenarde and instigated compensation proceedings.¹⁴⁵ While Happart may have stayed,¹⁴⁶ Gilleis found it distasteful to find himself reduced to living in one room in a shared house, together with his wife, two sons and a daughter. It would scarcely have been conducive to tapestry production on the scale to which he was accustomed. He departed, to re-establish himself successfully since his sales to an Antwerp *negociant* are recorded ten years later.¹⁴⁷ With him may have come, and with him may have returned, other members of his workshop, represented by names listed once only, in 1568. Men might return home but only one man, Peter Torytan, had tried to settle in another English town, in York, before moving to London.¹⁴⁸ Although the invitations from Sandwich, Maidstone, Canterbury, Colchester, Halstead, Norwich and Stamford all listed tapestry weaving amongst the skills wanted, again only one man, otherwise unknown, moved from London to Maidstone.¹⁴⁹

Conditions of life

One measure by which the émigrés' material success may be judged, criteria otherwise hard to find, might be changes in living conditions. While the phrase 'in the house of' was a frequent description of living conditions for newcomers in the 1568 survey, weavers in steady employment in the Wardrobe, or those who had previously been in England, often had a house to themselves.¹⁵⁰ They must have been men of means. The survey of May 1571 appears to reflect a similarly comfortable position, when some of the 1568 newcomers, now living in a different parish, were described as 'howseholders'.¹⁵¹ In the *Returns* of 1593, where twelve out of fourteen men listed

¹⁴⁵ Kirk, *Aliens*, iii, 380; A. Pinchart, *Histoire Generale de la Tapisserie dans les Flandres*, II, Société Anonyme de publications periodiques, Paris, 1878-85, 100-101.

¹⁴⁶ Kirk, *Aliens*, i, 375. For a discussion of identity see <http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/pdfs/NEWPP39Emigre3Orris.pdf>

¹⁴⁷ F. Donnet, 'Les Tapisseries de Bruxelles, Enghien et Audenarde pendant la Furie Espagnole', *Annales de la Societe Royale d'Archeologie de Bruxelles*, 1894, 8, 442-476, esp. p.450.

¹⁴⁸ David Palliser, *Tudor York*, Oxford, 1979, 131.

¹⁴⁹ *Cal Pat R 1566-69*, no.347, Michael of Orley, 'arrace worker'.

¹⁵⁰ For biographies of Baerd and Soillot.

<http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/pdfs/NEWPP39Emigre1GtWardrobe.pdf>

¹⁵¹ For Anthony van der Meulen's biography

<http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/pdfs/NEWPP39Emigre1GtWardrobe.pdf>

are said to be ‘howseholders’, most had come relatively recently, in the 1580s; only two had been here longer.¹⁵² Whether the newer arrivals had come with savings or had made good fairly quickly is hard to establish. Use of the term ‘howseholder’ might denote purchase of a lease rather than ownership of property, but the word was recognized and used as an acknowledgement of status, the first step on the way to prosperity when a man had the means to acquire premises and open a shop.¹⁵³ Noticeably, those known to have had a workshop lived either close to or outside the walls, often on the fringes of the more prosperous central City wards,¹⁵⁴ to achieve which many moved house more than once, a barometer of success and token of their decision to stay. Others lived in the poorer areas which bordered the river on the west side of the City – which would, of course, have been advantageously close to the Wardrobe premises. The independent Baerd and Nightingale, however, inhabited the merchant quarters of Bishopsgate and Gracechurch Street, while Anthony van der Meulen, together with Staffney and Moestincke, lived in Southwark, heavily populated by Flemings. Moestincke, in line with his declining fortunes, moved house steadily further eastwards.

It seems, however, to have been a closed community. The tapestry weavers, apparently not cooperating or collaborating with each other, do not seem to have made contacts, whether for business or family reasons, in the English community either. There is no record of a stranger weaver marrying an English woman, and the only daughter whose marriage we know of, Hesther Soillot, married Hans Kettelbouter of Brussels.¹⁵⁵ It may well have been considered politic to marry within one’s own nationality rather than into London families for, in the capital and mingled in roughly equal proportions, there was both prejudice against, and confusion about, the legal status of children, sufficient to deter mixed marriages.¹⁵⁶ Betrothal was a solemn affair, taking place and witnessed in the Dutch church. The elders held themselves responsible for ascertaining that both parties were free to wed. When, in 1561, Van Aken had briefly left England, an appeal was made to him to contact in Brussels the father of a prospective bride to get his consent to the wedding of his

¹⁵² Scouloudi, *Returns*, nos. 492, 1116.

¹⁵³ Kirk, *Aliens*, ii, 462-474; Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds*, 244-50 for the use of the word householder as a rank within a livery Company.

¹⁵⁴ Pettegree, *Protestant Communities*, 18; Yungblut, *Strangers*, 26-27.

¹⁵⁵ Moens, *Registers*.

¹⁵⁶ Pettegree, *Protestant Communities*, 288.

daughter, already living here.¹⁵⁷ In December 1600 the minister at Dordrecht wrote to London on behalf of Jan Berents, who had left London and returned to Dordrecht. Berents sought to remarry there, but needed an attestation from the London Dutch Church that his first wife had died before he could do so; amongst those who knew of the death, he said, were ‘Severrin von Brussel, tappessery wereker’.¹⁵⁸ The majority of stranger weavers arrived as married men. In cases where a bachelor chose to marry, it is hard to tell whether the brides were women already in London or whether the majority were drawn from a wider cousinship resident abroad. Like the men, the women were always identified in the marriage registers of the Dutch church by their place of birth, a piece of information which might be years out of date and not, for our purposes, a reliable guide. Even in cases of re-marriage, it is only a little easier to decide whether the second partner was already in London; thus the widows Vots, Lusse and Baerd, were already here, but whether John Soillot or van der Meulen’s successive wives were daughters of London residents or not is far from clear. Arrangements were often purely practical. John Soillot married four times, the last occasion when he was around sixty and nearly blind. In 1594, Anthony van der Muelen’s widow, his fourth wife, was left with five children, one an infant. She married again almost immediately, taking Pieter van der Moliijn, a neighbour and possibly a relative of her late spouse. Anne Baerd’s second husband, the merchant Michael Corselis, may have benefited considerably from her inherited fortune. Step families, with children from both sides, were common in the days of frequent death in childbirth, but childless marriages – or marriages where children did not survive into adulthood - seem to have been almost as common.

The same closed ranks are evident also in the names of baptismal sponsors recorded regularly in the Dutch church registers,¹⁵⁹ where the majority of children were christened. Even where the names are not immediately recognizable as close family, they were always strangers, though rarely, it seems, fellow weavers. No instance of an English god parent is recorded. It is equally frustrating to find that legatees and witnesses are seldom identifiable; nevertheless they too were drawn largely from within the community. Often paying more attention to the disposition of

¹⁵⁷ K-P I, 108-110, 115.

¹⁵⁸ Hessels, *Ecclesiae Londino-Batavae*, III, i, 1486.

¹⁵⁹ Moens, *Registers* did not transcribe these names; the original mss are now LMA, ex-Guildhall, London, Mss 7381.

his soul than of his worldly goods, the will was usually written in the weaver's mother tongue; it is the translated and notarized copy that was copied into the appropriate district register. With one exception, Michael Ots/Makeard, the will was written within days of the testator's demise, and every surviving example, even the 'written nuncupative' will of Peter Wallys, was signed by the testator, though not always by his witnesses, often chosen from his apprentices or his house servants. Many of the latter are hard to identify because they were not described by profession and few were eminent enough to appear in other records. Some were fellow weavers; van der Meulen, Soillot, Harman von Bell and Staffeney all acted in this way; others are identifiable as the Church elders. The only people who consistently made their profession clear were the notaries. By and large, however, we are left without the means to trace social networks, whether of support or friendship.

Only three wills exceed the £100 mark.¹⁶⁰ Arnold Baerd's legacy of £300, apparently all in cash not goods, is exceptional, nearly twice that of Richard Hyckes' total of £161.0.0, divided between little more than twenty pounds in goods and chattels, the rest being the rents from a lease of three lives. Anthony van der Meulen left £118 in cash. John Soillot, weaver turned minister, estimated that he would have £50, while William Alford of the Great Wardrobe left £48. The lowest probate value was Wallys' £6.17s. 5d. Although he had been in England for more than thirty years, Peter Peterson's assets in 1621, his wages from the Prince's Wardrobe, were only just enough to offset the monies he owed. On the whole the probate value or the level of wealth which can be estimated from the will's internal evidence are both low. Nevertheless, that value may not be a true indicator of the real standard of living. The inventories of Richard Hyckes in 1621, of Humphrey Hill of Barcheston in 1596, John Higgins of Bromsgrove in 1603/04,¹⁶¹ and the testamentary dispositions of Thomas White, William Alforde and John Soillot suggest more than basic comforts.

Six out of the twelve stranger testators gave money for the poor of the Dutch Church and three of these also gave to the poor of the parish in which they died.¹⁶² The childless Thomas White gave both to the poor girls of St Andrews by the Wardrobe for their marriages and to the prisoners in every London gaol. White is also

¹⁶⁰ Wills are cited in full in the biographies for all men named http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/p34_learn_index_pdfs.htm

¹⁶¹ Turner, 'Finding the weavers', 155, 147, 157n.55, 148.

¹⁶² Wells, Baerd, Nightingale, Soillot, vander Meulen, Gelott and provisionally, Willimetts.

the only man to make bequests to English men ‘his gossips’ Thomas Clarke and Richard Lokes, and to men in the Wardrobe – Anthony Walker the clerk and Edward Graveley, a future clerk. The prime concern was to provide for dependents, and more rarely for distant kin. Few had money enough to spare for gifts to friends other than their overseers and executors. Though Willimett and Gelott did give to family overseas, ties to relatives at home or to their home towns do not seem to have remained strong. Only glimpses of prized possessions stand out from the more frequent bequests of money, clothes, furniture or leases. Touches of luxury are few; van der Meulen’s furniture; Nightingale’s tapestries, Soillot’s books and his pattern book which he had, presumably, brought with him nearly forty years earlier. Only one man, Wells, left his loom. Had the inventories survived, the picture might look very different.¹⁶³

Little suggests that most of the tapestry weavers made a very profitable living or that they led an easy or a comfortable life. It is only from tax assessments that we learn that Anthony van der Meulen had three maids, Margaret Knutte, Peter Wallys, John Willimetts/Willmott, the Tierentyn brothers and Lawrence Beedall, a tapestry seller, one each.¹⁶⁴ Few tapestry weavers, however, were considered by their neighbours to be wealthy enough to contribute to payment of a tax subsidy and thus figure in tax lists above the minimum tax band – Baerd, van der Meulen and Wallys. The contributions to maintain scholars or to sustain other needy communities hardly ever came from tapestry weavers. Baerd contributed 6s. 8d annually for three years for the upkeep of a student at Cambridge or elsewhere, and John Soillot in 1576, and later in his will, made provision for £3 to help support a poor student.¹⁶⁵ Similarly, a request from a foreign town for assistance following disasters met little response from tapestry weavers; the only contributors from the weaving community were the widow Baerd and Michael Ots.¹⁶⁶

Succouring its own poor illustrates only one aspect of the church’s functions. Though it might extend charity and commiseration, it also dispensed discipline. In its role as a peacekeeper, mediator, conciliator and sounding board, it might become

¹⁶³ C. Richardson, ‘The Material Culture of Stranger Life’, *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London*, 28, no. iv, 2006, 495-508.

¹⁶⁴ Scouloudi, *Returns*, 57 for Beedall.

¹⁶⁵ Kirk, *Aliens*, ii, 205, 203, TNA PROB 11/91.

¹⁶⁶ Jelsma, *Acta*, App ii, p.791; App. iv, p.797; v, p.801.

more intrusive. When it does, it is the consistory meetings which provide a vivid picture of personal circumstances. To it men brought their problems, their only place of resort in a city in which many must have been isolated because of lack of language, and uncomfortable enough to feel the inclination to be economical with the truth about their real length of residence.¹⁶⁷ Written in the mother tongue, the discreet phrasing of the records rarely disguises the bitter, angry or disillusioned tone of the discussions.

Problems might be of several sorts. Symon Theouthens and his brother Peter discussed their difficulties about working in London.¹⁶⁸ Nightingale submitted his complaints against John Soillot's behaviour in the workplace for arbitration.¹⁶⁹ John Davelieu's diplomatic manner, so valuable in church affairs, failed him in his relations with his wife. In 1570 he admitted that Angel did lots of things without his knowledge including borrowing money without returning it. They were reprimanded and adjured to make up their differences. Not long afterwards Davelieu was again troubled by her unspecified behaviour and sought advice.¹⁷⁰

Several years later, in July 1578, Angel was again creating mischief and again received a summons to appear before the consistory. She had created a situation which was public knowledge by 'misbehaving' with Francis Cordier, possibly the butcher of that name.¹⁷¹ John Soillot declared that he had heard tales of bad language and drunkenness, which of course Angel denied. Although she professed herself ready for reconciliation she refused to conform to the custom which required her to confess her wrong in public. She managed to defer this for several weeks, claiming that she had made an attempt, which had been rebuffed, to apologize to Cordier; she made it clear she was not prepared to offer him recompense of any sort. Each refusal, there were four in all, earned her a talking to in private and by the time she consented to make a public admission, she may no longer have much cared because her husband had already departed for the priesthood abroad. Nevertheless, her indignity must have been final when, having agreed, three months later, to join him, she was given 'for her comfort' thirty shillings travel allowance from the church's coffers.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁷ For the ambivalent attitudes of Londoners see Yungblut, *Strangers*, 44-51, 85-94.

¹⁶⁸ Jelsma, *Acta*, 2982.

¹⁶⁹ Jelsma, *Acta*, 2254, 2259.

¹⁷⁰ Jelsma, *Acta*, 509,674,697.

¹⁷¹ Jelsma, *Acta*, 2059, 2064, 2066, 2096, 2098, 2111.

¹⁷² Jelsma, *Acta*, 2136, 2192.

More serious conduct also came to the consistory's notice. Inevitably Morysius van der Hove's cantankerous behaviour – as a drunk and as a heretical Anabaptist adherent – came to its attention, because it might affect the whole community.¹⁷³ He was eventually persuaded to promise that he would reform his private life and abandon his heretical associates, a matter of importance because in spring 1575 the Privy Council rounded up a group of five Anabaptists, two of them Dutch, who were subsequently executed at Smithfield. The danger to the community's relations, and reputation, with its host country, let alone the integrity of its religious convictions, were at stake.¹⁷⁴

Products and Purchasers

Tapestry is a fragile medium, and its survival rate is low.¹⁷⁵ Even where a tapestry survives, it is rarely signed or documented in any way, making a certain attribution impossible. It is, furthermore, hard to distinguish articles which could have been made in London from imported products, partly because the strangers had served apprenticeships abroad and brought with them knowledge of styles current in the major weaving centres, partly because nothing is known definitely about the capabilities of the émigré weavers, whether of their skills or of their organization. One possible approach in attempting to establish the strangers' work, open to criticism as containing a hypothetical element, is to examine tapestries where an Englishman was the indisputable first owner. These items, mostly small, suggesting in turn that they might reasonably be regarded as products woven in England, include an initialled piece whose owner is identifiable and four small armorials where the coat of arms was set in a floral ground. Two of the latter, together with four much larger items also bearing coats of arms, have long been regarded as products of Sheldon's venture at Barcheston, in the belief that it was the only tapestry weaving workshop in sixteenth

¹⁷³ Jelsma, *Acta*, 999,1004,1071,1081,1115,1117,1123.

¹⁷⁴ Hessels, *Ecclesiae Londino-Batavae*, II, 141,191; III, 344, 420, 636.

¹⁷⁵ S. Levey, 'Fitted for Survival: what the selection made by survival reveals', in *Textiles Revealed*, ed. Mary M. Brooks, London, 2000, 79-88.

century England.¹⁷⁶ The evidence adduced above radically changes that picture, so that it is time also for a re-assessment of its supposed products.

The owners of the smaller armorial tapestries all belong to the ‘middling sort’, the kind of person going up in the world both socially and financially. Anthony Walker, clerk in the Great Wardrobe, asked for his newly granted coat of arms to be placed at the centre of a floral field (280 x 195 mm), at the bottom of which was a woven date, 1564. Already under-clerk in 1552, and head clerk by 1557, by his death in 1590 he was a rich man.¹⁷⁷ Responsible for payments to the Queen’s arras workers, he would have had little difficulty in finding a weaver to execute a small-sized order. Two slightly larger pieces (481 x 475 mm), of similar design, possibly survivals from a set of six, were woven for Henry Sacheverell, possibly an illegitimate son of the once powerful Derbyshire family, apprenticed into the Vintners’ trade in London in 1568.¹⁷⁸ Displayed in the Victoria and Albert Museum so that both sides can be seen, it was originally a costly piece woven with gold thread and silk as well as wool, now rather out of shape because of the loving restoration of centuries. A more personal choice was made by one of the two Robert Camockes, father and son mercers in Sleaford. A print-based figure of Judith was enclosed by an arch supported on hexagonal pillars above which were the initials, C R/I. It was framed on either side by rigidly arranged flowers, using virtually the same selection in the same positions, and enclosed by a border with lion heads in the verticals and hunters in the horizontals (930 x 620 mm). Whether it was a wedding present for his daughter in law, named Judith, or the gift of his son to his wife, is uncertain, but the evidence suggests a date around 1600.¹⁷⁹ The awkward style of the flowers, and the tapestry’s small size, might suggest a London rather than a commission executed abroad.

¹⁷⁶ Barnard and Wace (See n.4). Discoveries in 1919 at Chastleton House marked the start of the story of the Sheldon workshop, V& A Archives and Registry, MA/1/W/1719, Whitmore Jones; further VAAR references are in Turner, ‘Tapestries once at Chastleton...’, notes 15,17,27,84,143. See also <http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/pdfs/NEWPP41Chastletonrevision.pdf>

¹⁷⁷ Walker was under-clerk by 1552, BLib, Stowe Ms 571, fol.25; will proved May 1590, TNA PROB 11/75. The *Inquisition post mortem* revealing his wealth is TNA C 142/ 230/29. For the grant of arms, W.H. Rylands, *Grants of Arms*, Harleian Society, 66, 1915, London, 265. The tapestry is in a private collection.

¹⁷⁸ Initials HS/P identify the probable first owner as Henry Sacheverell and his wife Petronilla (Wheler). Wace’s identification, Barnard and Wace, 298, cannot be correct. Henry was born in 1619 and died in 1638 (tomb in Morley church, Derbyshire), thus predeceasing his father who, in any case, had augmented his arms so that they differ from those woven in the tapestry. Burrell Collection, Glasgow 47.17, V&A T.195-1914, http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/p8_tale_sacheverell.htm

¹⁷⁹ TNA PROB 11/105; gift to parish church, formerly Crag 2/8a, private deposit, Lincolnshire Archives, whereabouts now unknown.

For all the armorial tapestries stylistic parallels can be found amongst products which are undoubtedly of continental origin. All contain obviously derivative elements and none of these pieces is particularly skilled work. It would not have been too difficult for the master of a small workshop to collect together existing print sources to provide the basis of a pattern to be copied by one of the many 'peynters' resident in London.¹⁸⁰ The Sacheverell and Judith tapestries both drew their flowers, probably literally, from one of the many plant books in circulation from the Plantin press in Antwerp;¹⁸¹ Judith herself was copied from a print by Wierix.¹⁸² Though little of this material originates in England, much of it was likely to be available from the stationers' stalls in St Paul's churchyard.¹⁸³

Still derivative, though larger, better woven and rather more ostentatious, is a cloth of estate bearing the royal arms on a paled ground, green and white, the Tudor colours (1.980 x 2.440 m). Into its floral borders, closely related to styles originating in Enghien, were woven the arms of Great Yarmouth and of the Gryce family.¹⁸⁴ Claimed as the work of king Henry VIII's arrasmaker, Jan Mostincke from Enghien, for Gilbert Gryce, a bailiff of Great Yarmouth in 1542, it was more probably commissioned by his son, William (c.1535-1593). A lawyer, he was the protégé of the earl of Leicester, High Steward of Yarmouth, through whose influence Gryce was four times selected as the town's MP; it was through the earl's favour also that he enjoyed two large land grants and later the post of Clerk of the Stables.¹⁸⁵ Though the arms are those used by both king Edward VI and queen Elizabeth, the occasion for the tapestry's use was probably the queen's visit planned for the summer progress of 1578, the only royal visit of the century.¹⁸⁶ For Gryce, the chance of displaying a tapestry bearing the royal arms, in the town where his own arms would be recognizable and would, without doubt, catch the eye of his patron who would

¹⁸⁰ Kirk, *Aliens*, indices, under professions.

¹⁸¹ F. de Nave and D. Imhof, eds. *Botany in the Low Countries (end of the 15th century-c 1650): Plantin-Moretus Museum Exhibition*, The Stedelijk Prentenkabinet, Antwerp, 1993.

¹⁸² Probably from J Wierix, illustrated in M. Mauquoy-Hendrickx, *Les Estampes de Wierix*, 4 vols, Brussels, 1984, i, plate 7, no. 67.

¹⁸³ P. Blayney, *The bookshops in St Paul's Cross churchyard*, London, London, 1990.

¹⁸⁴ Guy Delmarcel, *Tapisseries anciennes d'Enghien*, Mons, 1980, 22-3; Burrell Collection, Glasgow Accession number 47.4.

¹⁸⁵ Biography in P.W. Hasler, *Members of the House of Commons, 1558-1603*, III, HMSO London, 1982, incorrectly names Gryce as High Steward; as clerk of stables *CSPDom* 1547-80, 611. Jan Mostincke was Henry VIII's arrasmaker from 1529-1542, Campbell, *Henry VIII and the Art of Majesty*, 213,252, not, as Goebel 1933, *Wandteppiche, Die Germanischen und Slavischen Landen* part i, 523, in 1606.

¹⁸⁶ C.J. Palmer, *Continuation of Manship's History of Great Yarmouth*, London, 1856, 173,

certainly accompany the queen, might well have been irresistible.¹⁸⁷ Gryce had a taste for tapestry; his will divided six arras cushions between his three daughters and gave his arras-furnished bed to a son in law.¹⁸⁸ All were woven with his arms.

Larger pieces, however, presuppose greater resources on the part of the Master, both in space to work, men to weave, cash to cover essential outlay and pay a designer, resources hard to match up with the evidence of small workshops presented here – unless indeed there was some collaboration between them. Nevertheless, strong candidates for an origin in London are the set of the *Four Seasons*, now at Hatfield House, but bearing the arms of Sir John Tracy of Toddington, Gloucestershire and, it has been said, a woven date, 1611.¹⁸⁹ The Bruges mark recently found on two of them is not necessarily a clue to their place of origin.¹⁹⁰ Stylistically, they do not belong with the securely identifiable Bruges repertoire, but nothing would prevent a weaver born there, later working in London, from putting the mark of his birthplace into the tapestries, perhaps to impress his patron or perhaps, like so much else in this set, to convey a message to those who could read it. There were certainly men in London who might have executed this commission. Other London-woven examples are likely to include the four tapestries telling the story of *Judah and Tamar*, together with the companion piece showing the *Judgement of Paris*, all found at Chastleton House, Oxfordshire in 1919.¹⁹¹

More contentious, because their quality and their close affinities with styles which could be those of established continental ateliers raise the question of the strangers' capabilities, are the origins of four large armorial tapestries, and a floral hanging, lacking a sixteenth century provenance, now at Sudeley Castle, Gloucestershire. Two are table carpets. In one (2.28 m x 4.98 m), with a woven date of 1564, the central roundel depicts the arms of the Lewknor family of West Dean, Sussex, supported by two chubby youths; other shields occupy roundels on either side

¹⁸⁷ Norfolk Record Office Y/C4/272, fol. 58v-59.

¹⁸⁸ TNA PROB 11/81.

¹⁸⁹ A.F. Kendrick, 'The Hatfield Tapestries of the Seasons', *Walpole Society Annual*, ii, 1912, 89-95; Joan Kendall, 'The Four seasons tapestries at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire', *Text*, 39, 2011-12.

¹⁹⁰ Conservation report at Hatfield House, together with correspondence from Hilary L Turner identifying the mark of the type illustrated in Guy Delmarcel and Isabella van Tichelen, 'Marks and signatures on ancient Flemish tapestries', in *Conservation Research Studies of Fifteenth to Nineteenth Century Tapestries*, L Stack, ed. Studies in the History of Art 42, Monograph Series 2, 57–68, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, 1993, 57–68. See also Hilary L Turner, 'A case of mistaken identity : the "Sheldon" *Four Seasons* tapestries at Hatfield House re-considered', *Emblematica* 19, 2012.

¹⁹¹ Turner, 'Tapestries once at Chastleton...' 313-46, one is pictured at http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/p14_discoveries_jdgmt_paris.htm

and a further fourteen are placed in the borders. The field consists of rambling plants.¹⁹² On the second carpet, bearing a geometrical pattern in yellow, blue and green very similar to designs found on painted walls, three separate wreathed medallions at the centre contain the arms of three generations of the Luttrell family. Commissioned by the widowed Lady Margaret of Dunster, Somerset, the arms of still earlier ancestors were distributed, unevenly spaced, in twelve irregularly shaped shields in the border (1.93 m x 6.66 m.). These tapestries were commissioned by families distantly related, and are strangely similar, if not in strict appearance, at least in concept. Both families chose not only to commemorate their lineage in expensive tapestry rather than, as was more common, in vellum rolls, but at a point after the death of the eldest son without heirs.¹⁹³ Both pieces were once claimed as Sheldon products; they have subsequently been seen as continental work. But since it is clear that by the 1560s there were sufficient weavers in London capable of weaving such items, just as still earlier there is evidence suggesting the weaving of armorials for the royal or for ducal households, there is no reason why both these tapestries should not have been woven by strangers in London.¹⁹⁴ Closer to hand, making it easier for a patron with a modest purse to check on progress, their services would have been cheaper than sending a pattern to a workshop abroad.

The floral hanging now at Sudeley Castle (1.855 m. x 4.765 m.), once part of a set, almost certainly bore a coat of arms above which the owner added initials, his own and those of his wife, B/I*F. They are now unidentifiable because that centrepiece has been excised by a later owner and replaced with fragments from an already mutilated companion piece.¹⁹⁵ The arms were flanked by Judith with the head of Holofernes and her maid; left and right, in carefully counter-balanced roundels, stood the three theological Virtues, Faith, Hope and Charity (left) and three of the four cardinal Virtues, Temperance, Justice and Prudence (right). All these elements were

¹⁹² E.A. Standen, 'The Carpet of Arms', *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 20, 1962, 221-31 (JSTOR).

¹⁹³ William Wells, 'The Luttrell Table Carpet', *Scottish Art Review*, vol xi no. 3, 1968, 14-18; Maxwell Lyte 1908, I, 66-141; the Sackville pedigree, on vellum, is displayed in the British Galleries at the V&A, V&A MSL/1981/41.

¹⁹⁴ Campbell, *Henry VIII and the Art of Majesty*, plates 4.12, 6.22, 7.9-11, 12.11.

¹⁹⁵ Wace had reservations about the origins of this tapestry, Barnard and Wace, 300-02. It went to Sudeley in 1845, Hill Court, Gloucestershire, catalogue in Sudeley Castle archives, *Catalogue of Household Furniture, Hill Court, 22 April 1845* and following days, by Mr Harril; lot 59. My thanks to Mrs Jean Bray, Archivist at Sudeley, for this information. For the context of this tapestry see <http://www.kentarchaeology.ac/authors2/HLTurner/HLTurner01.html> H.L. Turner, 'Transplanted: a floral tapestry-woven table carpet once at Knole, Kent'.

set amidst flowers and birds, each derived from printed material. Three tapestries woven for the earl of Leicester show his arms at the centre; one is now displayed at his own castle of Kenilworth, Warwickshire. In the largest and most decorative (2.90m x 4.77m), now hanging in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, the arms are flanked by medallions showing fountains, continuing an older tapestry tradition of fountains amidst flowers, updated by use of drawings by Vredeman de Vries. The foliage and large flowers twining upwards, and the selection of birds in the foreground, follow patterns familiar from Low Countries' ateliers, and, even more certainly than the Sudeley hanging, should probably be regarded as imported work.¹⁹⁶ But for a brief, and ambiguous, reference to the involvement of Richard Hyckes with the earl, the matter would probably never be in doubt.¹⁹⁷ Even the four tapestry *Maps* showing the counties of Oxford, Warwick, Worcester and Gloucester, carrying the arms of the Sheldon family at Weston, Warwickshire, and bearing, separately, the names of Richard and Francis Hyckes, are quite possibly products woven, if not in London, at least with the help of skilled weavers normally resident in the capital.¹⁹⁸ All these are elaborately designed and skilfully executed tapestries, far beyond the level attained by pieces which are stronger candidates for more local execution.

The tapestries most commonly found, without marks of ownership and so probably stock items, are square, roughly 500 x 500 mm; they depict a biblical scene, often combined in a pictorial narrative in six episodes – for example the Prodigal Son.¹⁹⁹ Such pieces may have been cupboard carpets or cushion covers, intended to decorate a bed or to be propped against the back of a settle, as they are shown in fifteenth century Flemish pictures.²⁰⁰ Still smaller items, for example the scene of the

¹⁹⁶ Burrell Collection, Glasgow 47.1, 2; Leicester armorial in V&A T.320-1977,

http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/p15_discoveries_leicester.htm

¹⁹⁷ Jane Clark, 'A set of tapestries for Leicester House in The Strand: 1585', *Burlington Magazine*, 125, no. 962, 1983, 283-4, (JSTOR) The evidence is ambiguous, and was unknown in the 1920s.

¹⁹⁸ H. L. Turner, "'A wittie devise": the Sheldon tapestry maps belonging to the Bodleian Library, Oxford', *Bodleian Library Record*, 17, no.5, 2002, 293-313, esp. 306; Turner, 'The Sheldon Tapestry Maps: their Content and Context', *The Cartographic Journal*, 40 no1, June 2003, 39-49 (JSTOR); Hilary L Turner, *No Mean Prospect: Ralph Sheldon's Tapestry Maps*, Plotwood Press, 2010. Gloucestershire section at <http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/guides/maps/sheldon.html> ;Warwickshire Map at <http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/pdfs/WarwickshireTapestryMap.pdf> and <http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/Web/corporate/pages.nsf/Links/D9E72D711175B668802572E3002EDAD5>

¹⁹⁹ Hilary L.Turner, 'Tapestry strips depicting the parable of the Prodigal Son; how safe is an attribution to Mr Sheldon's venture at Barcheston ?' *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 37, 2008, 183-196.

²⁰⁰ National Gallery, London, follower of Robert Campin, c.1405, accession nos. 6514 and 2609; Master of Liesbon, accession no. 256 1854; Maitre de Flemalle (1410-1440), Annunciation, Musées Royaux, Bruxelles, Inv 3937.

Nativity which hangs at Fenton House, London (National Trust),²⁰¹ or the representations of *Judith* in the National Needle Museum, Redditch and at Packwood House (National Trust), may have been bought as a gift, with or without an ulterior motive. On similar size pieces inscriptions expressing the same sentiment, one version in Latin, the other in English, (*non donum sed donantis animum*, the gift is small/goodwill is all), make it clear that whatever the occasion, this must have been the purpose.²⁰² Another piece looks very much like a valentine, several centuries ahead of its time.²⁰³ Its borders, surrounding a heart set on a floral ground, bear the inscription 'The Hart lives where it loves'. Other tapestry woven items include a single example of a bed valance, its purpose to conceal the rings on which the bed curtains hung, sweet 'bagges', book covers and even glove gauntlets.²⁰⁴ But, though most such pieces came to light in 1920s England, without earlier provenance, and were well suited to production in London's small establishments recorded in the 1593 *Returns*, only use of English might suggest manufacture here. Nothing certainly declares an English origin.

Demand for this kind of article is hard to estimate. Etienne Perlin, a French visitor to England in the late 1550s, observed that benches in the parlours of English inns were scattered with cushions.²⁰⁵ Ten years later, the first thirty prizes for the winners of the one shilling lottery tickets proposed a choice between tapestry or linen articles, to a specified cash value.²⁰⁶ In 1598, Philip Hentzner, Councillor to Duke Charles of Munsterberg, travelling through the south of England, was struck by the fact that 'their beds are covered with tapestry, even those of farmers'.²⁰⁷ Inventories

²⁰¹ A similar example of the *Nativity* is at

http://archives.getty.edu:30008/getty_images/digitalresources/tapestries/0181948.jpg
Hilary L Turner, 'Some small tapestries with Judith and the head of Holofernes: should they be called Sheldon?', *Textile History*, 41(2), 2010, 161-81; one example is <http://metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/120044504> Standen 1985, no. 121; another http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/p26_views_judith.htm

²⁰² Similar words appear at the end of the dedication to William Stanley, earl of Derby, by Richard Barnfield, in his *Cynthia*, 1595 and in Shakespeare's *Pericles*, Act iii, scene iv.

²⁰³ Sale, Christie's South Kensington 23 November 2005, lot 3, illus; exhibited *Tudor and Stuart Textiles 1485-1688*, 10 Dec 2008-20 Feb. 2009, New York, no. 5.

²⁰⁴ The valance V&A T.117-1934, http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/p7_tale_valance.htm
Wace in Barnard and Wace, 299-300; A.J.B.Wace, 'A pair of gloves with tapestry-woven gauntlets', *Embroideress*, no.42, 1932, 990-994, figs 1336-7-9, where Wace infringed his own earlier criteria by which Barcheston work might be recognized. V&A T.145 & A.1931, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O78748/pair-of-gloves/> and Bible front: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O78862/book-cover/>

²⁰⁵ W.B. Rye, *England as seen by Foreigners*, London, 1859, 11-12.

²⁰⁶ L.C. Ewen, *Lotteries and Sweepstakes*, London, 1932, 34-65.

²⁰⁷ Rye, *op.cit.*, 110.

confirm that this was indeed the case. A quarter of the beds in the Unton's house at Wadley and nine out of twenty-three beds at Sir Thomas Boynton's residence at Barmston, Yorkshire, had such covers.²⁰⁸ There is, however, seldom any indication where such items were made. It is pure chance that cushions 'of Flanders work' were listed amongst the possessions of Southampton merchants in the early 1550s and that 'oversie work' is described in northern inventories.²⁰⁹ Furthermore, it is hard to tell whether the strangers were only engaged in fine work; a report of investigation into a smuggling ring which operated between London, Germany and Spain seems to suggest that tapestry was produced on a wide scale and exported from England to, of all unlikely places, Spain.²¹⁰ Antwerp despatchers were required to certify that their goods did not originate in England.²¹¹ Records to fill out this picture of an export industry are no longer extant; its existence, however, would explain why so many weavers could survive in London for long periods of time.

Conclusions

William Harrison's backward-looking glance at changing England, written in the 1570s, reported the old men who told him of three things 'marvellously altered within their sound remembrance'. They mentioned first the increased number of chimneys and secondly 'the general amendment of lodging'. Thirdly, they observed that even the least farmer did not regard himself as successful unless he had six or seven times his yearly rent in savings, together with 'a fair garnish of pewter on his cupboard, 3 or 4 feather beds, so many coverlets and carpets of tapestry, a silver salt, a bowl for wine (if not a whole nest) and a dozen of silver spoons to furnish up the set.'²¹² Harrison's observation suggests demand for tapestry products at lower social levels, so that it must have seemed reasonable both to the Governors of Christ's Hospital and to William Sheldon at Barcheston that their plans should meet with success. Insofar as both Peter Wallys and Richard Hyckes can be shown to have trained Englishmen,

²⁰⁸ J.G. Nichols, ed., *The Unton Inventories relating to Wadley and Faringdon*, for the Berkshire Ashmolean Society, London, 1841; G. Poulson, *The History and Antiquities of Holderness*, 2 vols, London, 1840, i, 215-22.

²⁰⁹ E. Roberts and K. Parker, eds. *Southampton Probate Inventories 1447-1575*, Southampton Record Series, 34, 2 parts, 1991-92, Rye, England as seen by Foreigners, 83; J. Raine (ed), *Wills and Inventories from the Registry of the Archdeaconry of Richmond*, Surtees Society, 26, 1853, 154-5, 201.

²¹⁰ R.H. Tawney and E. Power, eds., *Tudor Economic Documents*, London, 1924, iii, 132-3.

²¹¹ F. Donnet, 'Documents pour servir à l'histoire des ateliers de tapisserie de Bruxelles, Audenarde, Anvers jusqu'à la fin de XVIIe siècle', *Annales de la Société Royale d'Archeologie de Bruxelles*, 11, 1897, 48-84, esp. p.53 and 354-368.

²¹² William Harrison, *Description of England*, (1577) ed. George Edelen, Cornell, 1968, 201-02.

those expectations were met, albeit to only a limited extent. But the numbers of Englishmen practising the craft are far lower than the numbers of stranger weavers recorded.

Written data can determine the origins and outline the lives of those in the stranger community, but it is much less easy to establish the means to the achievement, or even the achievement itself. The émigré's own success was probably less than he had hoped for, even though he was engaged in an apparently unregulated industry, and free to set his own standards as he had not always been in his homeland. It seems possible that the stranger weaver misjudged his market, believing that conditions in England would more closely mirror those with which he had grown up. The arrangements by which a weaver might sell his 'off the peg' stock are unknown; no London merchant's warehouse inventories survive.²¹³ The stranger also had to compete with the obvious preference of the wealthy to shop from the established weaving centres, which could be satisfied by placing an order with one of the larger London foreign merchants with contacts abroad or with one who imported tapestry.²¹⁴ The few surviving Port Books recording the duty on imports paid by the alien merchant reveal steady imports of tapestry of varying quality, and even of cushions.²¹⁵ It is also clear that every man believed himself a judge of quality and any one sent abroad, for example on a diplomatic mission, was thus transformed into a potential agent for his employer.²¹⁶ Letters in the early seventeenth century to the long suffering William Trumbull, the English agent in Brussels, show that amongst his less official duties was to run around workshops on behalf of the rich and powerful.²¹⁷

Competition aside, however, the main reason for the failure of the émigré community to establish a lasting trade has to be the absence of a son living long enough to take over the workshop started by his father. Only six weavers are known to have had sons who survived into adulthood – Soillot, Baerd, Offeild, van der Meulen, Knutte and van der Driesche - but only three are known to have followed

²¹³ J. Denucé, *Antwerpener Teppichkunst in Quellen zur Geschichte der Flamischen Kunst*, iv, Antwerp, 1936, 30-36.

²¹⁴ Amongst others, the earl of Sussex, TNA PROB 11/68.

²¹⁵ TNA E 190/5/5; E 190/8/2; E 190/9/5; E 190/11/3.

²¹⁶ For Salysbury, BLib, Ms Cotton, Galba C.VIII, fo. 72, 76; for Keynell, *CSPD 1595-97*, 485,496,548; Michael Moody, *Addenda CSPD 1580-1625*, no.97.

²¹⁷ Hist Mss Comm, Report on the Manuscripts of the Marquess of Downshire at Easthampstead Park, Berkshire, *Papers of William Trumbull the Elder, 1605-10* (eds E K Putnell and A B Hinds), 75, London, 1936, .ii, 3 and 434; 2 and 27; 100; 214-5 and 232.

their father's trade, and to do so all of them entered the Wardrobe; John Soillot Jnr from 1574 to 1582, Edward Offield from 1606, and, less certainly, Edward van der Driessche. They had presumably opted for security of employment, for only Offield had the opportunity to continue to run the workshop set up by his father. English born, there should have been no legal obstacles to his continuation of the business.

By the second decade of the seventeenth century it is clear that for several, probably for the majority, life in England no longer offered opportunities. Peter Peterson, who had lived here for more than thirty years, died in 1621 both owed and owing. Severin Moestincke was listed amongst the poor of his parish in 1618. The London tapestry weaving community was certainly not regarded as strong enough, or perhaps talented enough, to provide men to work at the planned manufactory at Mortlake.²¹⁸ When the story of the Elizabethan immigrants was repeated there, it was on a larger scale, better organized and, at least at the start, better financed. Meanwhile, the return of peace, first to France and later to the Low Countries, had made a life of exile less attractive and reduced the flow of immigrants; conversely, it encouraged purchases abroad. It left in England an isolated community, less and less able to find the livelihood it had sought, impoverished and scarcely integrated, or with a secure base for entry, into its host society. Unlike their compatriot merchants, who of course they may have supplied, tapestry weavers were not comfortably off.²¹⁹ Unlike the settlers at Southampton,²²⁰ where the predominantly mercantile burgesses extended privileges and responsibilities in near equal measure, or at Norwich, where an atmosphere of cooperation and an appreciation of mutual benefit seems to have prevailed,²²¹ the London tapestry weaver went unrewarded and unappreciated. His was not amongst the many skills adopted and absorbed by English craftsmen. The stranger tapestry weavers who had arrived in the 1560s and 1580s had succeeded, just, in making a living. It seems they did not really make their mark.

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²¹⁸ Hefford in Campbell, *Tapestry in the Baroque*, 171-2.

²¹⁹ Pettegree, *Thirty Years On*.

²²⁰ A. Spicer, 'A process of gradual assimilation; the exile community at Southampton', *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London*, 26, no. 2, 1995, 186-98.

²²¹ J. Miller, 'Town governments and Protestant strangers', *Proceedings of Huguenot Society of London*, 26, no. 5, 1995, 577-589.

