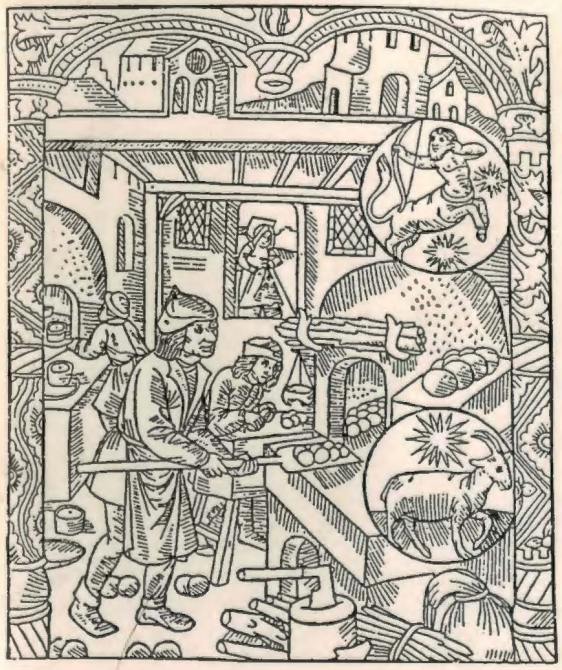
COVENTRY AND COUNTY HERITAGE

18

THE BAKERS' COMPANY OF COVENTRY

A Review of Bakers and Baking in Coventry from the 13th to the 19th Century

Phillip Willcox



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THE BAKERS' COMPANY OF COVENTRY

A review of bakers and baking in Coventry from the 13th century to 1900

PHILLIP WILLCOX

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Mrs Mary Hulton who first introduced me to the Bakers' Company records - what began as a mild interest developed into full scale research into baking history in Coventry, and to a considerable collection of information about the Company, plus the personal histories of approximately 1400 individual bakers over the period from around the middle of the 13th century up to the end of the 19th century. A full copy of my researches will be placed in the Coventry Record Office for the benefit of anyone else interested in this subject.

To my wife Mrs Jean Willcox for generous assistance and the benefit of her own researches into the Smiths' Company. To many friends for advice and help, and in particular to David Rimmer (Coventry Record Office). Iain Soden (Coventry Museums Archaeology Unit), Mrs Jean Shuttleworth (for information on wills and inventories), Mrs Mary Montes (for editorial guidance) and last but by no means least Anthony Divett, who has shared his own researches into many medieval documents and has encouraged, advised and helped throughout.

The baking equipment illustrations are the work of another talented friend, Tony Clench.

Finally, a note of personal regret. The late Dr Arthur Gooder was a highly respected historian and member of the Coventry branch of the Historical Association. He will be sadly missed by many people. His death earlier this year came as a profound shock to me for it was only two days beforehand that we had discussed a number of matters of historical interest to us both. I hope that it will not be thought presumptuous if I dedicate this modest offering to his memory.

PHILLIP WILLCOX
1992

CHAPTER 1 - EARLY HISTORY UP TO 1660

The baker says "This is the staff of life,
The comfort of both man and wife".
The brewer cried "You stupid elf,
For this is the very life itself".

This little piece of doggerel can be seen set into the windows of some public houses and inns and, whatever view we take of the respective merits of their claims for their products, there is no doubt that in both forms their constituents, grain and yeast, were staple items in the diet of our ancestors for many centuries. Baking is thought to have been one of the earliest of the crafts to form trade guilds, but it is not until the Middle Ages that we start to find any record of trade guilds in this country in London and other major towns. In this early period when surnames were being adopted, the Baker surname is found both in Coventry and the surrounding villages indicating that the trade of baking was widespread.

The Bakers' Company of London is one of the oldest of the London livery companies, dating from between 1130 and 1155 according to the Pipe Rolls (the account rolls of the King's Exchequer)[1]. There are no known surviving contemporary records to prove just when a bakers' guild was formed in Coventry, and in fact there are no known surviving guild records for any organisation in Coventry from before the late 14th century. The earliest known Merchant guild in Coventry was formed in 1340 when some wealthy merchants provided £1000 to obtain a royal licence from Edward III to found the Merchant Guild of St Mary. Other Guilds were formed but eventually with amalgamations there emerged the Corpus Christi Guild as the junior body and the Holy Trinity Guild as the senior. Membership lists and accounts show a variety of trades for their members[2]

The social and religious functions of these guilds provided meeting points for the wealthier merchants and traders and over the periods of their existence they were a powerful force in the civic life of Coventry. The formation of new guilds was felt to be such a threat to the position of the Merchant Guilds that in 1413 the Trinity Guild obtained a Declaratory Patent from Henry V that "thenceforth there should not be any new Guild erected" in Coventry.[3] The Corpus Christi Guild eventually merged with the Trinity Guild in 1535, but all these guilds were dissolved in 1547 by Edward VI. Various traders also formed themselves into City Companies, e.g. the Weavers, Mercers, Drapers, Butchers, Bakers, Smiths etc for all of whom some company records survive and are held by the City Record Office.

On Tuesday 16 June 1908, Alderman Fowler on behalf of Thomas Windridge, 87, Gosford Street, Coventry, (the then Secretary of the Coventry Master Bakers'

The Maces of the Bakers' Company

Association and himself a baker) handed over to the city "the Books[4], Banner, Sword, Maces and other property of the Ancient Fellowshippe of the Bakers in the City of Coventry".[5] From these papers, the City Leet Books and other records held by the Coventry Record Office, can be built up a history of baking in Coventry across the centuries.

The Bakers' rules say that their Fellowship was "established at sundry Great Leets holden in the same City from the sixth year of the reign of King John" (1204). Leets (or portmanmoot etc[6]) were held in Coventry prior to that year so this is taken as the year in which the Bakers claim to have formed their Fellowship. Coventry was a leading town during the Middle Ages and events in London would soon have been reflected here, so the dating of 1155 or earlier for the London Bakers' Company and the fact that the all important Assize of Bread and Ale[7], enacted in 1266 by Henry III, has the phrase 'at the request of the Bakers of our Town of Coventry' (which suggests some organisation and some degree of influence either to put the request to the King or to be given credit for it), are significant pointers. They make the claimed date of 1204 feasible, despite there being no known surviving contemporary record to confirm it.

By the year 1204, the English were still only part way through the transition from a largely oral tradition to written records so that the lack of a surviving particular record from that period is not surprising.[8] This is not to say that the Bakers were the earliest trade organisation in Coventry - other trades could just as well have had their own organisations at that time. The fact that the Merchant Guilds had the exclusive use of the title 'Guilds' does not mean that the various trade companies necessarily were founded after those guilds. Those trade groups could have been in existence already and simply called themselves City Companies or Fellowships, terms which were interchangeable. Indeed, against the background of the early Medieval methods of trading control, it would be surprising if there had not been such coming together of traders to protect their own interests. Some groups like the Drapers were prosperous organisations but many of the smaller city companies like the Bakers never became wealthy, and there were others which faded away as trading conditions changed.

The company controlled its own members, setting rules for conduct, recruitment of apprentices and servants, the making of freemen, the election of Masters and assisted the Mayor and his officers in the checking of weights and measures. In turn the Mayor made regulations to control the trading companies and set the local Assize of Bread and Ale.

The earliest mention of any individual baker in local records is of Geoffrey de Wilnhale in 1240-1250, who had a bakehouse in Cook Street. In the late 1260s

Henry the Baker was a witness to a document about an oven in Cheylesmore Lane.[9] Martin the Baker both witnessed and is mentioned in a deed concerning property next to his in Market Place in the early 1270s, and Ralf the Baker similarly witnessed a deed for Property in Market Place in the 1270s. Then documents in the early 1280s again mention Henry the Baker, who was a bailiff of the town and a person of substance holding many properties, with a bakehouse in Bishop St and a messuage in West Orchard, and a Robert de Chilton with a bakehouse in West Orchard. In the same period the Hundred Roll for Coventry refers to a Margery Pake holding a furnace or bakehouse as did Master Robert de Leicester. There were also Geoffrey Le Pestoure (baker) and a Reginald Le Pestoure. Any or all of these people could well be the Coventry bakers who asked for the reenactment of the assize legislation for bread in 1266!

On 20 November 1291 Richard Oysel and his wife Alice objected to the wall of a house being built too near to their bakehouse in Market Place, and for the Period from 1290 to 1300 there are references to the Prior's bakehouse in Slepers' Lane and Thomas de Polesworthe's oven in Cheylesmore Lane - the latter however may not have been a bakehouse oven. In 1301 Thomas de Solihul, a baker in Coventry, received 2 cottages in the road leading from Broadgate towards St Michael's Church. The castle bakehouse with adjacent land opposite the church of St Michael (now the site of 22 Bayley Lane) was granted by Elias Despenser to Walter, son of Terry of Coventry, and later in 1348 Walter granted to the Prior of Coventry a bakehouse adjacent to Earl Street, which probably is the same property.

Sometime before Christmas Day 1378, the Rolls record that Alice, the wife of John Smart, a barber, assaulted William Walsheman, a baker, "beating wounding and maltreating him". It is not known why she did it nor what punishment was meted out to her, but she sounds to have been a formidable woman! Then comes what seems a fairly innocuous entry for petty theft in 1378-9 when John de Shrewsbury, a baker, stole 3 lamphelles (lambskins) worth 6d from a Gilbert Skynner. Worse is to come, for the ensuing entries show that John was tried on 7 April 1380 and sentenced to be hanged for "feloniously killing William Togod a tailor".

Thomas Baxter, a servant of John Cook a baker in Gosford Street, and Thomas de Torpeley were arraigned for helping Shrewsbury to escape from Coventry, knowing that he had committed the felony. Also tried but acquitted was John Kidderminster alleged to have "received the aforesaid John knowing he had committed the felony". Since he was acquitted, presumably he was able to show either that he did not receive John or that he did not know of the offence. Sadly the records available do not make it clear whether John de Shrewsbury first fled, then

Excavations 1989/90 near St. Mary's Hall, Coventry showing Castle Ovens

was recaptured and brought back to Coventry for his trial, or if he made his escape after the trial.[10]

The Coventry Rolls for 1374 record that the Commons (the town citizens) of Coventry rose and cast loaves of bread at the Mayor Adam Botoner as he sat in St Mary's Hall, either for not setting the Assize of Bread properly or for failing to control the quality and weight of the bakers' bread.[11] An individual offender could have been punished or his products boycotted without such a demonstration, so there must have been widespread dissatisfaction! In 1379, the bakers asked for a statement of prices and weights under the Assize of Bread, the suggestion being made that the mayor and his officers were not setting the assize properly.[12] 1387 saw the Commons of Coventry rebelling and again throwing loaves of bread at the Mayor Henry Keel in St Mary's Hall, presumably for the same reasons as before. How the Mayors on those occasions dealt with the problem and who was at fault is a matter for conjecture. In a later example from 1477 the Mayor, John Simmons, punished the bakers for making and selling bread that was under weight, this time clearly a widespread problem.[13]

In 1449, during the reign of Henry VI, a record was made of the memberships of the Coventry Craft Companies who were providing armour etc for the defence of the city.[14] There were 23 trade groupings, plus some miscellaneous journeymen, with a total membership of 586, including 19 bakers. Unfortunately no total population figure was given.

Although the first Coventry Leet Book is a fruitful source of names for bakers across the 15th and 16th centuries, in most cases apart from a few addresses to go with those names there is little other detail to fill out their lives. However, there is one man for whom quite a history can be built up. Amongst the nineteen bakers listed as members of the Bakers' Company in 1449 is the name of John Smyth. The records of the Trinity Guild reveal that on 8 March and 21 August 1458 he supplied bread and flour to the Guild for special breakfasts in St Mary's Hall.[15] These meetings were working meals held both for social and for business purposes, the collecting of rents for the properties held by the Guild and the making of rules etc.

He reappears in the Leet Book in 1461 as a collector in the Much Park Street ward for contributions to the costs of the Earl of Warwick in fighting the Lancastrians. 1468 sees him collecting towards the costs of entertaining Queen Elizabeth, the wife of Edward IV. There is a step up for him in 1469 on appointment as a Captain for the Much Park Street ward in the defence of the city. In 1470 he is again collecting and also donating to the cost of soldiers in the skirmishes that year at Exeter and Nottingham. 1471 not only shows him as a collector for the Gosford Street ward presumably because of the tenancy of Trinity Guild property in

Gosford Street, but also as a contributor to a loan to King Edward IV. What is significant is not only the ability to produce money for such a loan but that the description afforded to him is not simply "baker" or "bacster", as in previous lists, but "Jantelman"! In 1474 he is made responsible for the provision of fire fighting equipment, and in 1477 he would have been one of the bakers punished by the Mayor, John Simmons.

Then in 1484 he was one of the 2 Masters of the Bakers' Company in its dispute with the Mayor and Council which led to the bakers going on strike and leaving the city en masse "the morrow after Candlemas Day" to stay in Baginton outside the city where the Mayor had no jurisdiction.[16] Unfortunately for them, they eventually had to give in and return to the city when they were fined for their misconduct.

In 1485 he is mentioned as one of the persons who sent provisions for the entertaining of King Henry VII after the Battle of Bosworth. His name is not in the list of bakers who sent provisions to Bosworth Field for King Richard III though a baker named Laurence Beke supplied both sides with provisions - and continued in business thereafter.[17] Smyth was then a tenant of the Trinity Guild for property in Gosford Street having vacated earlier premises in Spon Street. John Smyth's last mention is on appointment to the Jury which considered a dispute about St John's Hospital fields in 1495. Since his earliest mention was in 1449, (when to be a baker in his own right he must have been at least 21 or 24) he then would have been around 70 years of age, a long life for that period.

For the decade starting with 1520, a series of counts were made in 1520, 1522, 1523 and 1525 which give a clearer picture of the size of Coventry at that time. The first of these was done when the Mayor, alarmed at the shortage of grain in the city, had a Dearth Census made of all persons, grain and malt in Coventry on 10 October 1520. This lists 6601 citizens including 43 bakers and 68 brewers in the city.[18] The figures for stocks of grain etc in each ward show that the bakers were spread throughout the wards of the city rather than there being a specific concentration of them in any particular ward or street. On the figures quoted, the brewers could have brewed ale for up to 16 weeks, whilst the bakers could last for about 10 weeks in the supply of horsebread but, far more seriously, for only a few days in supplying bread for human consumption! The Mayor, John Bonde, and his friends managed to obtain further emergency supplies for the city.

Many of the entries in the 1522 Muster Rolls[19] do not show the trades of the persons listed, and only 23 persons are noted in those Rolls as being bakers. By making analyses of and comparisons with the records of the Corpus Christi Guild across the early 16th century, the 1523 Census and the Subsidy Roll of 1525 it has been

possible to identify with reasonable confidence [17] bakers at 1520, 35 bakers and 1 cakebaker at 1522, 27 bakers and the 1 cakebaker at 1523, and 21 bakers and the cakebaker at 1525.[20] The spread across the wards at 1522 was as follows

	Pop.	Bakers	
Broadgate ward	552	1	
Much Park St ward	719	4	
Smithford St ward	406	3	
Cross Cheaping ward	884	3	(+ 1 cakemaker)
Spon St ward	627	3	
Earl St ward	707	6	(+ 1 apprentice)
Jordan Well ward	354	1	
Bishop St ward	1018	5	
Bailey Lane ward	459	1	
Gosford St ward	875	8	
Totals	6601	35	

Most or all of the bakers known for 1522 also could have been in business in 1520 so we may have names for 36 of the 43 counted in that Dearth Census. On a population of 6601, the average number of potential customers per baker is only 153 which would mean a very poor profit return for them. The known areas of the Jordan Well, Bailey Lane and Broadgate wards make their single entries seem unlikely, and whilst the untraced 7 might have been bakers who left the city between 1520 and 1522, it is more likely that the Dearth Census figure of 43 includes a few confectioners as well as bakers and that in the Jordan Well, Bailey Lane and Broadgate wards there are some other bakers not yet identified. As traders with their livelihood tied to specialised premises the desire to hold on and ride out the recession then gripping the city would have been strong. However, the steady reduction in the number of names traced from 1522 to 1523 to 1525 could support the idea of the economic decline of Coventry over that decade.[21]

Both Ralph Proffett and Ambrose Rowse were bakers who owned Property and who acted for others as executors. In 1574 they joined with a miller named Robert Swyft in an armed attack on Stifford's Mill, Coventry where they threw out the miller John Drayton, who was leasing the mill from Sir Humphrey Ferrers. What they hoped to accomplish by this action is not clear. The Record Office has documents establishing Sir Humphrey's title to the mill and the formal complaint about their actions.[22]

Coventry had a further census of grain and population in 1587 when its population was recorded as 6,502.[23] No reliable total figures are available for the rest of the

16th century or the 17th century up to 1660 for either the population of Coventry or the bakers who served them. Coventry remained a depressed city for much of the 16th and the 17th centuries up to the Civil War, when the city declared itself for the Parliamentarian cause and remained a centre of resistance against the Royalists.

Although records for the period leading up to and during the Civil War and the Commonwealth are sparse, several bakers from the Willcox family involved themselves in city affairs around that time. Edward Willcox was a Warden of the City in 1632, Sheriff in 1644 and served on the Grand Enquest from 1648-1654, dying in 1655. William Willcox first comes to notice as a churchwarden at St Michael's Church in 1621, gets himself fined for illegally selling ale in 1629 when he was a warden of the city, was Sheriff in 1638, in the Grand Enquest in 1648 and became Mayor in 1651. The first Nicholas Willcox had an interest in land at Canley through his wife and he became a Warden in 1651 and Sheriff in 1659. There was also a Thomas Willcox but he contented himself with being simply Master of the Bakers' Company.

Another Master of the company in this period was Ralph Phillips who was Chamberlain in 1652, Sheriff in 1658 and Mayor in 1663 and in the Grand Enquest thereafter. As Mayor he was "taken by a Pursuivant to the King at Oxford by reason of a false information". Whilst this might have been an allegation of some anti-royalist action, it is more likely to have been a claim of a breach of the Corporation Act of 1661, under which membership of municipal bodies was confined to those who received Communion by the rites of the Church of England. Whatever the reason, he argued his defence so well that he was acquitted and "came off with Credit".[24] He died on 22 November 1687 aged 80 years and there is still a memorial for him and his wife Anne at Holy Trinity Church.

CHAPTER 2 - THE CRAFT OF BAKING

Grain has to be ground into flour before it can be used for baking. In Britain for centuries either water or wind power operated the grinding wheels. The Domesday book lists many water mills throughout the country and in this area there was at least one water mill in Coventry with others at Baginton, Ryton, Binley and Radford. The Hundred Rolls of 1279 show 9 water mills in the city, 8 in the Earl's Half and 1 in Cheylesmore. Windmills came later but did not entirely replace the water mill which continued in use where ever a steady current could be obtained.

In 1444 Robert Milburne made a gift of his mills to Trinity Church.[1] Will Perkyns, a baker, was required in 1512 to mend his mill dam at Crowe Mill[2], and Leet Book entries for 1541 identify the Priory Mill, Bastell Mill (between Cook Street and Gosford Street gates) and White Friar Mill.[3] In addition, there were several water mills in the villages around Coventry. A Leet Order of 1549 required the Bakers of Coventry to take their corn only to the Millers of the city at a charge of 8d a quarter, whilst the Millers were to give priority to the Coventry bakers rather than outsiders.[4] By 1897 only the water mills at Allesley and Spon End were still in existence, but there had been others at the bottom of New Buildings, at the bottom of Cox Street, at the bottom of Brick Kiln Lane, at the Charter House, another on the site of the then sewage works, and one by the filter beds, one by Whitley Abbey, another a mile further down the Sherbourne, and one at Baginton Mill. The twelfth and last of the mills was on the Radford brook at Naul's Mill.[5]

The reason for so many local flourmills in Coventry and in the surrounding villages was that grain could be stored for longer than ground flour, which tends to turn rancid in a relatively short time because of the oil from the germ which has been crushed by the milling. Weevils and mites attack flour making it more sensible to grind the grain at frequent intervals and to keep sacks of the grain in reserve - provided that the mice and the rats were kept away!

For centuries the miller did not sieve the wholemeal which he obtained from grinding the grain. The baker or other customer expected to do this himself, and kept a close eye on the weights delivered to and collected from the miller. In theory, the miller did not keep any part of the grain or flour, and he was paid a fee simply to grind the individual amounts of grain which his customers brought to him. Theory, of course, is one thing but practice can be another! There was grave suspicion of all millers as a Coventry Leet Book entry for 1474 shows. Apart from requiring them to have only authorised weights and measures and setting the rate of reward, it orders

> " . . . nother that he water nother chaunge no mannes corne to geve hym the wers for the better, nother he schall have no hogges, gees ne duckys at his

> Mille, nor no maner of Pultre but iij hennes and one Cokke . . . . "[6]

It was only during the 18th century with changes in the pattern of local agriculture, the concentration of wheat growing in certain areas and better transportation facilities that millers began to buy in their own wheat in bulk and to sell both the flour and the by-products. By the end of that century it was unusual for bakers to send their own grain to a mill for it to be ground and returned to them.

Prepared yeast is a comparatively modern development. Originally bakers either obtained barm (brewers' yeast) from brewers or they made their own by fermenting a mash of malt grain. In such circumstances it is not surprising that in Coventry as in other areas bakers often were prosecuted for illegally making and selling ales or beers - for example Richard Lynill in Gosford Street, Robert Rowson in Little Park Street, Richard Chambers, William Willcox, George Freeman all in 1629 and later Nathaniel Shewell in 1684.[7]

The Burton on Trent brewing industry developed rapidly during the 18th century and, with easy reach via the roads through Tamworth and Lichfield, provided a ready source of yeast for bakers. In 1721 the Bakers' Company made an order against paying brewers' servants for fetching Barm. In 1781 the company reimbursed William Denston Senior "for Barm that was lost coming from Burton" and in the year 1787-88 the company made a special purchase of barm from Burton for the use of its members. The use of a brewer's yeast for baking, instead of the strains which in more recent years have been specially selected and developed for baking, is said to impart a better flavour to the bread, but no doubt this is all a matter of personal taste. It was common practice for bakers to save some fermented dough from one day's baking for use as a starter (or leaven) for the next day.

When a mixture of flour, water and yeast was made it was allowed to lie until the fermenting action was at rest. The length of time it was left depended on the type of bread being made and the method preferred by the baker. A 'long' dough could require a fermentation period of up to 12 hours and usually would be prepared in the evening to be ready for the final stages of breadmaking early the following morning. This gave the yeast ample time to develop its full powers of fermentation and took not more than a pound of yeast to a 280 pound sack of flour. A 'short' dough, which needed a more rapid fermentation, could take as much as five pounds of yeast for the same quantity of flour. Generally speaking, the longer the fermentation period the better the taste of the bread and the longer it will keep before going stale. All baking from the Middle Ages to the early 19th century would have been by the traditional 'long' dough method.

The greater quantities of yeast for the 'short' dough method were supplied by

wholesale methods of yeast production and represent the more modern methods of commercial baking, in which the shorter baking times need constant temperature control throughout the baking process, rather than the gradual cooling which takes place in a traditional oven.

From the earliest times Coventry obtained its supply of water from streams, springs and wells but had conduits and pipes which provided a rudimentary distribution system. An agreement dated 2 August 1429 between Richard Hampton, plumber, and the Mayor of Coventry sets out charges for the supply of water from the town water system.[8] Anyone holding a 'pistrenum commune' (a common bakehouse) in any ward was to pay in any quarter twopence for the supply. Brewhouses were charged at the same rate, which seems odd since one would expect a brewer to use more water than a baker. In fact from 1444 onwards several orders were made by the Leet forbidding brewers to collect water from the conduits.[9] However, water is needed to make the dough, and tools and ovens have to be washed so that a supply of water is vital to a baker.

Early ovens had a baking chamber, roughly of a 'beehive' shape, made from stone blocks or bricks, heated by burning wood in it. The ashes were raked out and the dough put in to be baked by the residual heat in the body of the chamber. The opening was closed by a stone slab or a metal door or even a thick wooden door - in the Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery there is a carved oak oven door, with the figure of a mermaid combing her hair, dating probably from the seventeenth century. The Romans had developed chimneys to improve draught in ovens and to carry away steam and they had dampers to control the heat but such refinements were rarely incorporated into the ovens in use in England until centuries later.

The Coventry Hundred Rolls for 1279 tell us that Coventry Castle, just to the north of the present Earl Street, had a bakehouse. A study of early documents shows that the entry between St Mary's Hall and 22 Bayley Lane once was called "Bachouse Lane".[10] In 1990 excavations by the Coventry Museums Archaeology Unit, adjacent to the site of 22 Bayley Lane, revealed traces of two ovens which it is believed were in that castle bakehouse. These are the earliest known baking ovens in Coventry. Both of them contained charred grain and ashes but one also had in it pieces of pottery which had been subjected to heat on many occasions, suggesting that the ovens were used for general cooking as well as baking. The bases of two circular ovens of approximately the same size (36 inches internal diameter) dating from the mid 13th to 14th centuries were excavated at Ernsford Grange,[11] where they had served a Cistercian community. Although the roofs have not survived intact, it is clear that at both sites these were beehive ovens.

Baking Oven in kitchen
Kenilworth Castle

French Rural Bakery,
Early 19th Century

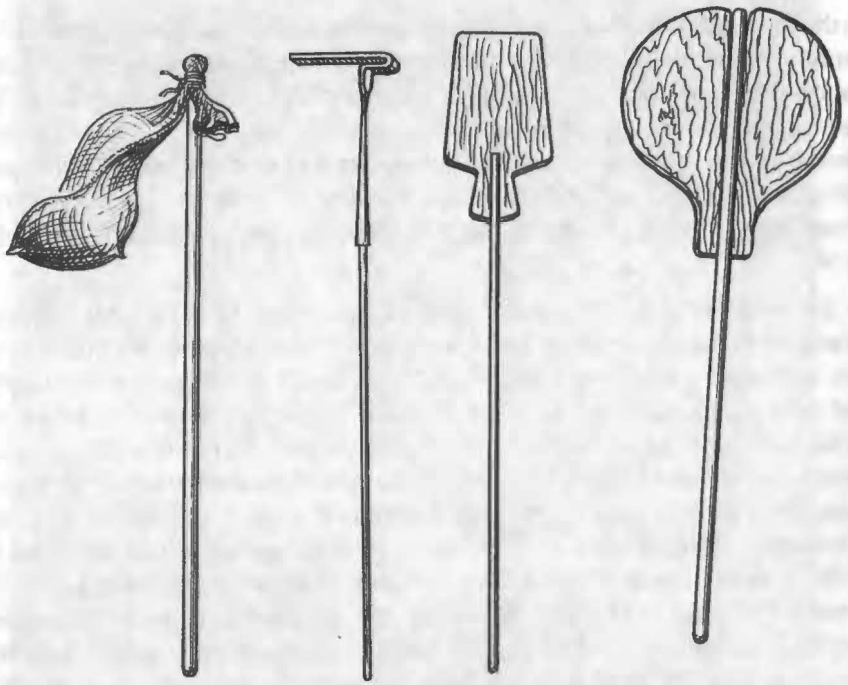
In the kitchens of Kenilworth Castle are the remains of two ovens, probably 14th century, of increased size approximately 55 inches in diameter and 30 inches high, the one being of brick and stone the other mainly of clay tile construction. Twin ovens were common practice, one being used for baking which needs a steamy atmosphere in the early stages whilst the other was used for pies and pastries for which a dry heat is required. A French woodcut of 1480, showing two identical ovens being used in a bakery in this way, is reproduced on the front cover of this book.

In the towns only the wealthier persons could afford to build large substantial structures and to incorporate their own ovens. The smaller houses in towns were less well constructed , there was a fire risk with such houses built closer together, and their occupants, who had other skills and whose occupations absorbed much of their day, had neither the means nor the time to bake their own bread and so came to rely on specialist bakers. A surviving example of the domestic baking oven was discovered in the wall of the back kitchen of a small farmhouse at Taliaris, Carmarthen. Built of brick with a curved oven roof approximately 24 inches high at the crown, it has an internal floor diameter of about 36 inches and dates from around 1790, yet is of the same design and dimensions as those excavated in Bayley Lane and Ernsford Grange.[12] This type continued to be built in both larger private homes and in commercial bakeries, until the early 19th century, though gradually there were increases in the size of the commercial ovens to produce greater output and profit. Some beehive style ovens continued in use in places right through into the 20th century.

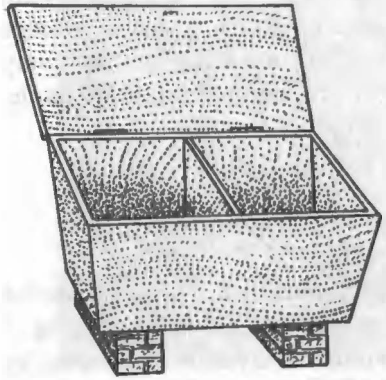
Not every property would have been suitable for use as a bakery and the construction of the oven was a skilled and expensive task. These ovens were built by local craftsmen from brick, clay being the best available material for storage and radiation of heat. The low curved interior roof of such a clay oven is a very efficient radiator of the heat generated by the wood burnt therein. When the bakehouse at Greyfriars Gate had to be repaired in 1526 it cost[13] -

Pd for bricks for an oven	-	20d
Pd for quarte of lyme	-	2s
Pd for a mason to make theym	-	20d

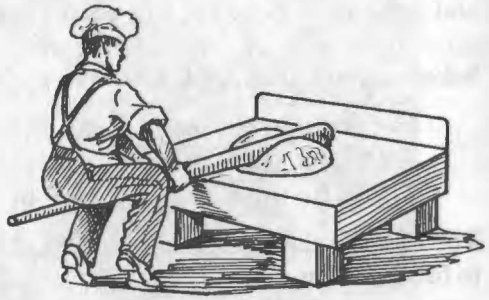
The 1266 legislation on baking and bread included provision for the wood needed to fire the ovens. In the Corpus Christi Guild Accounts for 1498 is the granting of permission to William Tyleat 'bacar de Coventre' to build a new woodhouse by his premises in Much Park Street at a cost of £4.17.1d, presumably a structure to house his store of wood and faggots.[14] Wood was preferred as the fuel inside an oven even in later centuries when coal became more readily available.



A Scuffle, Rake and Two Peels



A Trough



Baker using a Brake to Knead the Dough

The 16th century Corpus Christi Guild rent statements, and the inventories held at Lichfield of the estates of Coventry bakers, provide details of the bakery equipment then in use.[15] A typical baker would have had -

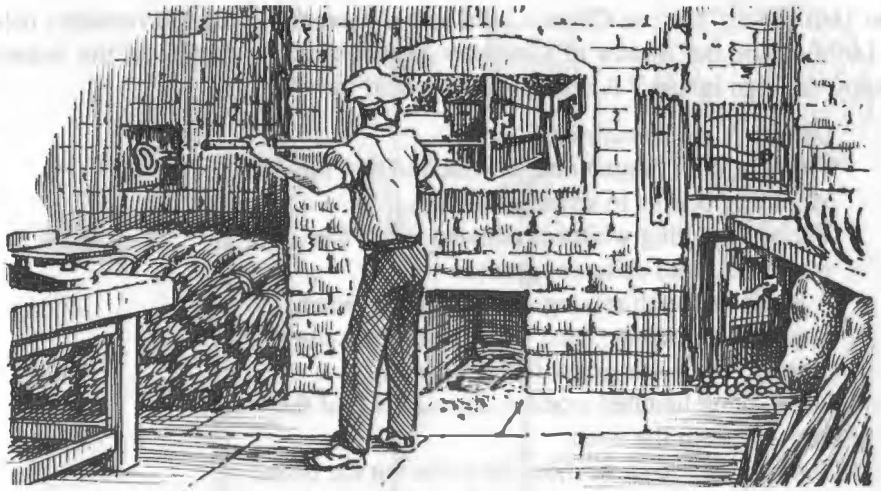
Usually 1 but sometimes 2 ovens.
Troughs, with hinged lids, in which to mix the dough.
Moulding boards to shape the loaves.
Various boulting whitches (sieves) to sift the wholemeal into different grades.
A brake (a dough mixing aid) set over a bench.
Cupboards, shelves, tubs, pans, measuring equipment.
Storage places for grain, flour and wood.
Peels - long handled wooden shovels to feed the loaves into and from the oven.
Scratchers (rakes), scuffles (to clean out the oven).
A piped water supply.

In earlier centuries bakers who had boulted their own meal, especially those who sold the whiter finer loaves of bread, would have had bran to sell for people's horses and pigs. With limited output and fixed prices and weights the average baker would not get rich, though it usually was reckoned to be a fairly steady trade. The more prosperous bakers must have had other property, interests or adventures in trade or like Thomas Astylyn in the 16th century moved on into a more lucrative trade.

The industry of bread making changed little in character from medieval times until the introduction of machinery during the 19th century. Bakery premises in 1815 were much the same overall size as they had been in the 13th century. Between 1815 and 1830 the beehive oven was giving way to the side flue oven, a brick built structure with a tiled oven floor. With the introduction of separate firing chambers, coal came into general use as a fuel, the flue being used to draw the heat across the baking oven.

There is a rebuilt example of such an oven in the Black Country Museum, Dudley. Although the ovens had become bigger, the flour came ready dressed so there was no boulting of meal on the premises.

So what did the average baker in the early 19th century have to do to produce a batch of bread from his oven? The first step was to put 1cwt of flour into a wooden trough. Then enough warm water was added to 5 imperial gallons of yeast to bring it up to blood heat, and three and a half pounds of salt dissolved into it. This mixture was added to the flour, which was worked by hand in the trough until it was quite free from lumps. The surface was levelled and sprinkled with flour, it was covered



Interior of a 19th Century Bakery

and allowed to ferment for 12 hours - this was called the sponge. Warm water containing another three and a half pounds of salt and 3cwt of flour then was added and the whole worked (kneaded) into a uniform dough. This was covered again and allowed to ferment for an hour and a half. When it had swelled and was sufficiently spongy (called 'proof') it was ready for dividing, weighing and shaping into loaves.

In the meantime, the oven had been prepared by firing 3 or 4 faggots, or bundles of wood, evenly across the floor of the oven down to ash so as to heat the interior as evenly as possible. Faggots often were cut from furze bushes and great skill was needed in handling them as the varying degrees of dampness in the twigs made it difficult to maintain accurately the heat of the oven. After the fuel had been burnt to cinders and had ceased to smoke - usually this took about 2 hours - the ashes were raked out and the oven was wiped with a damp sack tied to a pole (a scuffle) to clean it and to leave a little steam.

From experience the baker could tell by looking at the bricks of the interior whether or not the oven was ready for baking. If the oven was not hot enough there would be soot on the bricks, but if they glowed the oven was just right. A variety of methods were used to check the temperature. A handful of flour might be thrown in and scattered over the floor of the oven - if the flour turned brown at once the right temperature had been reached. (This was a technique also used by cooks with the old fashioned ranges.) Tests could be made by striking sparks on the floor of the oven with a stick. Sometimes pebbles were used, either loose or

built into the oven, which changed colour with the heat. According to one old baker an alternative test was for the baker to reach with his bare arm into the hot oven - if the heat was sufficient to make the hairs on his arm stand up the oven was at the right temperature for baking.

The prepared loaves were then introduced into the cleaned oven by means of a peel. The interior of an average commercial oven in the early 19th century was 11 feet by 9 feet (3.35 by 2.74 metres) and held about 140 to 150 full size loaves. The largest loaves were put to the back to allow them longer to bake and when the loaves were all in the door was shut and the bread baked for about 2 hours. So a baker might have spent 16 hours or more, a lot of that time in hard physical labour and all of it in a hot, dusty and smoke laden atmosphere to produce 140-150 loaves, whose weight and price was fixed by law. Ovens in earlier centuries were much smaller and the output of loaves and the profit would have been correspondingly reduced.

Most bakers preferred to have their bread freshly baked for the morning trade and this involved either work late into the evening or overnight. The choice of timing was not always left to the baker, the Coventry Leet complaining in 1657 (during the period of the Commonwealth) that bakers frequently baked their bread so late on Saturday nights the poor people had to collect their fresh bread on Sunday, "the Lorders Day". To ensure proper regard for Sunday the Leet ordered that baking should be completed by "Eight of the Clock at night" on a Saturday so that the poor people could fetch their bread that same night![16]

Bread may be regarded as the staff of life but with it forming the major part of one's diet, other tastes could and did offer welcome variety. Before the invention of chemical raising agents and baking powders, yeast had to be used to make cakes and buns. Bakers made bread, buns and cakes from the same dough simply adding raisins, currants, lard, butter, sugar and spices as they thought fit. Recipes for spiced fruit cakes can be traced back to Elizabethan times.[17] No documentary evidence has been found yet to show just when bakers began to specialise in confectionery. The earliest known in Coventry is Alice Grene in 1522, who is shown in the Census as a cakebaker. Most bakers would have continued to bake both bread and cakes. The Company rules make no reference to cake making, but a 1729 document refers to the charging of fees to customers for the baking of pasties, spice puddings and tarts.

The recipes for the Coventry Holycakes are not known but, by inference from various Leet orders, must have contained fruit, spices and butter. The earliest mention is in 1475, an order directed at bakers, and then in 1520, 1522 and 1529, the last stipulating that licences were needed to make spiced cakes with butter. In

London and other towns from 1592 there were orders restricting the making and selling of spiced cakes, buns and biscuits to the Friday before Easter, at Christmas or for use at funerals. The intention seems to have been to control the sale of items which did not conform to the weight restrictions of the Assize of Bread. There were further attempts during the reign of James I but without success. Gradually the taste for sweeter confections grew and so did the number of specialist confectioners. In 1700 the Leet ordered that, due to the disorders caused by the "great concourse of people assembled every markett day in the Cross Cheapeing" because of the Gingerbread and fruit stalls, those stalls were in future to be set up in Hay Lane and Bayley Lane instead.[18]

The Assize of Bread drawn up in 1266 was based on earlier versions dating from Anglo-Saxon times, and continued a system of selling loaves of bread at set prices but allowing the weight to vary by reference to the cost of wheat, so that as the cost of wheat went up so the weights of the set price loaves reduced. There were three main types of penny loaf. First the so called white loaf, made from flour boulted as finely as possible, then came the wheaten loaf, made from more coarsely boulted meal, which was half as heavy again as the white loaf, and thirdly there was the penny loaf of household bread, the largest and heaviest of the three made from unboulted meal, or what we would class as a rough wholemeal bread. In 1329 the respective weights of these 3 kinds of penny loaf when wheat was about 6 shillings a quarter, were -

White Loaf	3lb 13oz
Wheaten loaf	5lb 12oz
Household Loaf	7lb 11oz

There were also rougher breads made from mixtures of rye meal and wheat bran, even some without any wheat flour at all. Gervase Markham in "The English Huswife" (1615) describes ". . . the coarsest Bread for man's use: you shall take of Barley two bushels, of Pease two Pecks, of Wheat or Rye a peck, a peck of Malt". This was intended for the "hind servants". Such bread had much in common with the pease-meal bread for horses but also eaten by the poorest people. The fine white bread loaves were known as paynemaynes and these are mentioned in the Leet Book in 1457 when a feast was prepared for the Queen (the redoubtable Margaret of Anjou, wife of Henry VI) when she came from Kenilworth to Coventry to see the pageants. The menu included:

> "300 paynemaynes, a pipe of Rede wyne, a dosyn Capons
> of haut grece, a dosyn of grete fat Pykes, a grete panyer full of Pescodes and another panyer full of pipyns and Orynges and 2 Cofyns of Counfetys and a pot of grene Gynger".[19]

Not many people could have had access to that single pot of green ginger!

Official tables of the required weights for loaves of the various kinds were prepared and circulated but mistakes were made in these in the last quarter of the 16th century. Apart from the wastel or fine loaf, there were 6 other kinds of bread in use. Two formulae could be deduced from the statute without difficulty, but the directions for the remainder were ambiguous, and excessive weights were listed. There was an outcry from bakers in general but it was not until 1597 that the government was persuaded to correct the errors.

There were fines for selling bread which was underweight. Thus skill was needed to judge the right weight of the sponge to place into the oven to produce a loaf of a set weight. A little over weight would be on the safe side of the law, but of course too much over weight would drastically cut the profits of the baker's trade. It is no wonder that from time to time bakers were punished for selling bread that was too light. Modern methods of flour production and the precise temperature regulation possible in ovens enable close control over the variable factors which affect the results of baking, yet even in February 1976 the Guardian published a letter from a retired baker E. S. Gaskell saying "that the final weight of a loaf of bread is in God's hands as much as the baker's".

As an added complication, bread dries out steadily so for the baker it was essential to get his bread weighed when it was fresh. In 1775 in response to difficulties which had risen from the application of the new Bread Act (31 George II, 29), the Bakers' Company obtained a legal opinion that bread which had been baked and weighed satisfactorily on the Saturday, but which was not sold until the following Monday, could still be lawfully sold on that Monday despite the fact that by then it was below the legal weight limit.

Local officials were given the task of ensuring that bakers adhered to the appropriate weights. From 1355, the Mayor oversaw all regulations of weights and measures in the City of Coventry. There are numerous references in the Leet Book to such control and to the weights to be used in the city. In 1430 the Mayor sent to London for weights made "according to the weights of the Exchequer".[20] They were of 14lbs, 6lbs, 2lbs and 1lb, and may seem an odd combination but our ancestors did not have weighing machines which give a readout of the weight of an article. A balance arm with two pans, with separate weights to counterbalance the goods being weighed, was the system in use. The ingenuity of our ancestors can be judged by considering this set of weights, for with them it is possible to weigh in whole pounds any weight from 1lb to 23lbs.

The volume of grain was measured in strikes, heaps, gallons, quarts and potells. The Leet for 1432 required all strikes to be the same[21], and in 1434, in the time of

King John, specific measures for strikes and half strikes were delivered to the city to be kept in the Mayor's almery.[22] When the King visited Coventry in 1451 these measures were resealed and approved.[23] In 1466 new measures were ordered, all to be marked with the seal and delivered free to sellers of oats, meal etc.[24] 1474 saw the introduction of specific weights and measures legislation at national level, and the Leet Book sets out the rulings at length.[25]

The method prescribed in the Assize of Bread 1266 for set prices with variable weights had produced many difficulties over the centuries, milling and trading methods had changed, and the system was becoming unworkable and unenforceable during the 17th century. As a result, in 1710 the Statute of 1266 was repealed and a new set of temporary regulations drawn up. These were made permanent in 1714. They gave magistrates the option of setting the Assize either by the price of corn or by the price of meal and flour.

A further complication was that two distinct systems for the sale of bread were set up. Bakers could continue to bake and sell their bread by weights which changed according to the price of flour or they could choose to bake to standard weights with the price fixed by the weight of the loaf. The first method continued to be known as Assize Bread with the second called Priced Bread. Once a method had been chosen it had to be adhered to, the baker could not change backwards and forwards.

In 1815 the Assize laws were repealed for London and 10 miles about, the bakers being allowed to sell bread at any price provided that the loaves were of certain standard weights. In 1822 even this restriction was removed. In Birmingham, Manchester and Newcastle the Assize had been suspended before 1815, and bread there was cheaper than in London, a factor which undoubtedly influenced the politicians in their desire to implement the doctrine of free trade expounded by Adam Smith. Nevertheless, it is as well to remember that under the Assize system there could not be any competition in prices, only in the quality of the bread sold.

The abolition of fixed prices in 1815 transformed the baking trade into one of the most depressed and overcrowded trades of the 19th century. By 1850 throughout the country there were thousands of bakers struggling to exist in the face of intense competition. With bread being sold at or below the cost of flour the incentives for adulteration were strong and there is evidence that pulverised gypsum, alum, whiting, finely ground Derbyshire stone and burnt bones were used to eke out the flour.[26]

The repeal of the Assize did not apply to the whole of the country until 1836, when laws were introduced which allowed bread to be of any weight as long as the weight was clearly stated. The adulteration of food continued and by 1850 had

reached major proportions in many of the basic foods, especially those sold cheaply. Alum was found in the majority of flour and loaves, together with boiled potatoes, and carbonate of ammonia. Sulphate of lime, chalk and even the highly poisonous copper sulphate were used as whiteners in flour. Rye, barley, pea and bean meal and indian corn were used to eke out the wheat.[27] In Birmingham in 1853 it was said to be almost impossible to obtain a pure loaf.

There were some voluntary attempts to supply pure food, notably from the Cooperative movement, but it was not until 1860 that the first Adulteration of Foods Act was passed. This was too vaguely worded having been weakened by compromises in the face of opposition and lobbying by food manufacturers. It had all the failings of permissive adoption and proved to be ineffectual. After storms of criticism, parliament passed a further Adulteration of Foods, Drink and Drugs Act in 1872, followed by the Sale of Food and Drugs Act 1875 which cleared up misunderstandings and stopped loopholes. Within a decade the quality of basic foods had much improved. For bread in particular subsequent analyses showed rapid improvement with the eradication of virtually all adulteration.[28] In 1878 the Weights and Measures Act was passed which clarified some of the terms and weights in use, though it was not until 1916 that wartime regulations decreed that bread was to be sold only by weight in units or multiples of one pound, thus reversing the old Assize system of fixed prices in favour of fixed weights.

There was growing awareness of the need for better flours and bread, and a recognition that white flours were in some ways lacking. In 1885 a flour formula was invented which came to be known as Hovis (from the Latin for 'strength of man') and which, with national advertising, into the 20th century became the leading branch of brown flour and bread.

CHAPTER 3 -
THE COMPANY'S PLACE IN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CITY

For the ambitious man, it was an advantage to belong to a trade company. Coventry was governed by a Mayor, a recorder, four magistrates and a body of twentyfour (called the "Grand Jury" or "Grand Enquest") who met daily to supervise their officials and to conduct the city's business. The twentyfour (some but not all of whom were alderman) originally were drawn from the Trinity Guild and the Corpus Christi Guild. The craft fellowships provided entry at the lowest level into these organisations and so into the hierarchy of civic power.

The masters and officials of those trade fellowships could be elected to the junior Corpus Christi Guild, and office holders in the Corpus Christi Guild could be elected Mayor. From the Corpus Christi Guild they could advance to the Trinity Guild, whose members often became the aldermen and sheriffs of the city. The Master of the Trinity Guild was second only to the Mayor and each Mayor, two years after the end of his mayoralty, by custom became Master of the Trinity Guild. The ancient double-seated chair in St Mary's Hall was so made to seat both the Mayor and the Master of the Trinity Guild.

Many bakers became town officials, though most served only in a minor capacity, as collectors of levies and taxes in the Middle Ages or as constables in the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries. Few of them went on to higher civic offices. The usual route for those who did advance was by starting as Guardian/Warden or Chamberlain. There were 34 bakers amongst those who filled these offices from 1492 to 1834, 22 went on to become Bailiff/Sheriff, but only the following seven eventually reached Mayor -

1529 Thomas Astylyn
1540 Thomas Gardenour
1595 Robert Bedford
1625 William Burbage
1651 William Willcox
1663 Ralph Phillips
1834 George Eld (Junior)

Thomas Astylyn started his trading life as a baker but later became a clothier and merchant, for we find him mentioned in both trades across the years. On the election of Thomas Gardenour as Mayor on 25 January 1540, the Leet Book noted that because he was a baker, 2 extra assistants were appointed to assist him in assessing the price of victuals.[1] Whilst it is true that there was legislation in 1511 (3 Hen VIII Cap VIII) which made such a provision, the Act specifically exempted three places from its effect - London, York and Coventry! Despite that exemption,

it seems that no-one was prepared to trust a trader in foodstuffs to oversee his own trade.

The City Companies and the Merchant Guilds maintained monopoly privileges - the right of trading in the city, of setting up any business or opening a shop, all depended upon membership of these organisations - so the City Leet closely controlled their trading practices. Throughout the Leet records there are many regulations imposed on bakers and other traders.

In 1421, the Mayor John Leeder set out in detail not only the types of loaves to be sold in the city but also the punishments for bakers who did not meet either the weights or a good standard of bread.[2] There was legislation in 1436 intended to control the kinds of rules imposed by Craft Companies on their members, and from 1514 onwards there was a series of Leet Orders requiring scrutiny of trading company books. The primary purpose of that examination was of reviewing the fines and trade practices of the companies rather than an audit of their finances, though some of the company accounts bear endorsements from city officials that all had been found to be in order.

From 1445 bakers were allowed to "bake and sell above the market 6 pence in a quarter" because they were prevented from buying corn in the Monday and Friday markets. Since bread was sold at fixed prices this order really means that they were allowed to reduce the weight of the loaves they sold by this factor.[3] In 1473 this order was varied, still allowing them to bake lighter loaves, but the bakers were not allowed to buy corn in the market until 2 o'clock in the afternoon.[4] In 1484, this allowance was further refined so that as the price of wheat varied so did the rate of the extra allowance.[5]

There were restrictions on hucksters, and on the places at which bread or grain could be sold. The charges for the grinding of corn were fixed, standard weights and measures were provided, and penalties were imposed for underweight bread. From 1513 bakers were not allowed to operate inns as well as their bakeries.[6] The Leet imposed several conditions on a number of trades, all designed to keep the crafts separate and to forbid anyone carrying on more than one kind of trade. By 1520 the Mayor was choosing one of the two Masters of the Baker's Company. The date of commencement of this practice is not clear, the Leet simply recording in 1520 that the Mayor was to choose one of the Masters of the Butchers' Company "as is usid with the phelishippes of Bakers and Fyshmongers".[7]

In 1522 the Leet made an order preventing bakers, butchers or victuallers from being members of the Grand Jury.[8] Thomas Gardenour must have been an exception for in 1524 he served on the Grand Jury, though there is no trace of any baker doing this again until 1546 when Thomas Owers is elected. After that there

was a gap of 100 years before another baker got a seat on that body. From 1545 the Mayor took over the punishment of offending bakers from the Master of the Bakers' Company.[9]

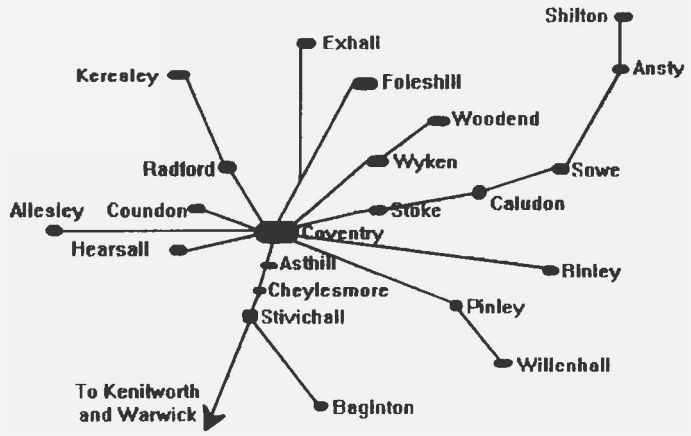
Contrasting examples from the Leet Book show the effect that harvests had on the trade of baking. In Coventry as in many towns Holy Cakes traditionally were given to the churches. In 1475, a period of reasonably settled weather and harvests, the Leet ordered that "no Smalle Cakes" should be given, fines were stipulated to prevent this practice, and the bakers warned of the rule so that they could in turn tell the people ordering the Holy Cakes.[10] In 1520, when there were serious shortages of all kinds of grain, the gift was restricted to one cake of maximum size and the making of any cake or bun in addition to the Holy Cake was forbidden.[11] Again in 1522 the Leet ordered that the wheat for the Holy cake could not be bought in the market before "the ower of a leven of the cloke", with the alternative that the Common Sergeant of the City was to do the purchase instead.[12] Thus if the best quality wheat was wanted for the Holycake (and such wheat would go early in the day) it had to be bought through a civic official! That way there could be control of the quantity of grain purchased. In 1529 it was necessary to get a licence from the Leet before spiced cakes with butter in them could be made.[13]

As well as restricting the activities of the Bakers, the Leet supported them by controlling on similar lines the activities of traders from outside the city or of persons coming into Coventry to set up in trade. The country bakers were allowed to come into Coventry to sell their bread on specified days so long as it was first inspected,[14] with their unsold bread having to be left at certain places in the city for "sale to the comen people". The Leet Book and the Bakers' Company rules refer to "the bakers of the country" or to "foreign bakers", terms which are alternatives, the term "foreign" then meaning anything outside the immediate boundaries of local responsibility. Early records for Coventry mention the Foreign of Cheylesmore, and in the Coventry Leet Book there are occasional lists of the "fforeynes", for example [15]

Styvechale and Astull	Sowe and Caludon	Anstey
Wyken and Wodend	Coundon and Radford	Exhall
Shilton	Weston	Folshull
Stoke and Whitley	Pynley and Byggyng	Kerusley

Although some the spellings have changed with time, most of these are recognisable as being now merely subdivisions of the present City of Coventry. They were all then outlying villages (and some still are) from which bakers could have delivered their wares to Coventry with comparative ease, particularly since there are several references to bakers who were coming to Coventry over the much longer journey from Warwick!

THE COVENTRY AREA (Not to scale)



The 1574 rules of the Warwick Bakers' Company allowed its members to take bread outside Warwick to Coventry on Wednesdays and Fridays, to Southam on Mondays and to Rugby on Saturdays.[16] Why the Coventry bakers were not able to meet the total demands of their city for bread, and to exclude the outsiders altogether, is uncertain. The national assize regulations controlled both the price and the weight of the bread being sold, so that in terms of price there was no advantage to the citizens of Coventry to be obtained from getting bread supplies from outside the city.

For the country bakers, however, apart from being an additional source of customers, travel to Coventry would have meant extra profit if they could get their grain and/or their milling done more cheaply than in Coventry. In particular if grain was cheaper in Warwick, the required size of a penny loaf there would have been bigger than in Coventry. A Warwick baker would be able to get more Coventry sized loaves out of a given quantity of grain than he could the Warwick sizes, and hence even more profit to offset the time and trouble of travelling to Coventry with his wares. For the citizens of Coventry, perhaps those earlier occasions of dissatisfaction with their own bakers stayed in their memories and competition for them in terms of additional sources of supply or quality was thought to be a good thing! Alternatively, were the Coventry bakers able to obtain enough grain to fully satisfy the needs of the city? Perhaps such outside help to feed its citizens was essential. Exactly when this practice ceased is unclear but it seems to have been during the 18th century.

CHAPTER 4 -
MILITARY REQUIREMENTS, PAGEANTS AND FAIRS

As noted in Chapter 1, by 1449 there were 22 City Companies plus a grouping of journeymen in existence in Coventry.[1] They formed the basis of the city's military organisation, and in that year had 594 men to call on and various arms for them in case of need. The Coventry Leet Book records several instances of monies and soldiers being raised from the trade companies for military actions.

The 1522 Muster Rolls show the military equipment which then had to be supplied. Of the 35 bakers and 1 confectioner identifiable in the Rolls, 17 of them were judged wealthy enough to supply various items of equipment.[2] In all they supplied the following -

2 horses
Harness for 11 men, plus a half harness
3 Bows
2 Salets
4 Bills
3 Poleaxes

Eighteen bakers were liable to military service, though two of them were noted as being allowed named substitutes. Eight were to serve as archers, six with a bill, and one with a poleaxe, whilst the other three were not specifically allocated weapons.

The change in methods of war over the 16th and 17th centuries is clearly demonstrated by documents for the cost of the trained City Companies. In 1638 the equipment held by the various companies was listed[3], the Bakers' Company having 2 suits of armour, a musket, sword, belt and bandoliers - the bows, bills, etc had gone and the emphasis was on armour and firearms. This equipment was held by William Burbage, a baker who had been sheriff in 1615, mayor in 1625, and churchwarden at both the St Michaels and Holy Trinity churches. The Bakers Company paid ls 6d of a total training bill for £1 16s 0d, on 9 May 1639. This bill[4] was spread amongst 14 of the trade companies, the smaller companies (the Bakers, Carpenters, Dyers, Cardmakers, Cappers and Barbers) all paying at the same rate whereas the larger companies (the Mercers, Whittawers, Drapers, Girdlers, Tailors, Shearmen, Corvisers and the Smiths) paid at higher rates.

The 17th century accounts records of the Bakers Company include payments of a shilling a day for two days annual training, service and upkeep of a trained soldier, the storing and cleaning of his armour, and the purchase of muskets, bandaliers, powder, shot and swords. In 1671 that trained soldier was a Richard Archer. The regular upkeep of the soldier and his equipment ceased in 1696,

though there are some specific references to a trained soldier in 1713/14. After 1696 the scale of the payments and the notes with the entries show clearly that the armour etc was used simply for ceremonial purposes in town processions and at the fairs.

The Craft Companies took a prominent part in the civic ceremonies and pageants. For example, the Leet Book in 1445 lists the companies participating in the "Ridyng on Corpus Christi Day and for Watche on Midsomer even" - including the Bakers' Company.[5] In 1677-8 the Bakers' Company took part in the Great Fair procession with one boy, his sidesman and a streamer with their arms depicted thereon[6], and by 1847 the Bakers were ranked 12th in the order of procession with their "Streamer, Master and Followers".[7]

W. G. Fretton, writing in 1894 says that the first Godiva procession was introduced in 1678, when the "lady" was played by a youth named Swinnerton, and that the Bakers' Company took part. There is no specific mention of this event in the Bakers' accounts, the year 1678 including only a one shilling payment for "bearinge the Armour at faire", and in fact there are such references to the fair from 1663 onwards. Fretton contrasts this event with a Godiva procession on 2 August 1892 when bakers, then known as the Master Bakers' Association, again took their place still headed by the original Bakers' Company banner.[8]

Apart from the pageants and processions, the trade companies augmented the civic welcomes for royal or other important visitors. The 1687 accounts of the Company baldly state that they spent 12 shillings when King James II came to Coventry on 1/2 September 1687. In contrast the Smiths' Company put on a display, which cost them £4. 1. 8d, with their members dressed in their gowns. Previously all the trade companies had been summoned to a meeting at Samuel Denham's (see Chapter 7) on 27 August 1687 by the Mayor to discuss the arrangements for the royal visit.

In the 18th century for ceremonial purposes the company had their streamer with some ribbons, and a coat, waistcoat, breeches and little sword and belt "for the follier", plus 2 feathers for his cap as well as gloves and shoes, whilst the boy who held the end of the streamer was supplied with a frock and cap, and the "man who waits on the follier" had a sword and belt. The 1721 account includes the payment "to LieueTennancy for Drums and Collours for seven years - 10s 6d", an annual charge of 1s 6d which at that date must have been for taking part in the city processions.

Sacred plays produced by the Craft Companies were an especial feature of Coventry life in the Middle Ages. Without Bakers' records before the 17th century, the part the Bakers' Company played in them is not known, other than for a reference in the Leet Book for 1507 which contains the following order -

"Med that it is ordeyned at this lete that the Craft and Feliship of Bakers shalbe contributaries and charged from hensforth with the Craft and Feliship of Smythes, and to pay yerely to them toward theyre pagent at Corpus Xpi tyde 14s 4d, and so to contynewe from hensforth yerely."[9]

The Smiths' Company performed "The Condemnation and Crucifixion of Christ". A few examples of the expenses are -

Paid for 5 schepskens for gods cote and for makyng	3s
Paid to John Croo for mending of herrods hed and a myter and other things	2s
Paid for sowyng of Dame P'cula Wyff Shevys	3s
Paid to Wattis for dressing of the devil's hede	7d
Paid for mending Pilatt's hatt	4d[10]

Although the Smiths Company had a larger membership than the Bakers' Company (in 1449 over twice as many members, a ratio which seems roughly to have been maintained in later years) and was the wealthier of the two companies, the cost of such performances was high. Presumably even the Smiths' Company was finding the cost too onerous by itself. A smaller trade Company being ordered to join with a larger in the production of a joint play was not unusual. The Leet Book contains other instances of enforced liaisons between the various craft companies over this period. How long there was cooperation between the two companies is not known, but performances of the sacred plays lasted only until 1579 during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.

CHAPTER 5 - APPRENTICESHIP AND THE FREEDOM OF THE CITY

Before one could become a freeman it was necessary to serve a term of apprenticeship learning the particular trade. The Statute of apprentices 1563 (commonly known as Queen Betty's Law) encoded some long standing practices. Inter alia, it provided for a seven year apprentice term up to the age of 24, (later reduced to 21 years) and required servants who changed jobs to have a certificate from their previous master. A travelling craftsman without a certificate legally was liable to a whipping. There were two main categories of apprentices, the normal (those bound by their own parents or families) and the pauper (arranged by the overseers of the poor).

Examples of both types are found in the Bakers' Company records. Whilst some apprentices were the sons of bakers, many came to Coventry from out of town, their places of origin often linked by the main roads of the county, particularly the Fosseway and the Coventry-Birmingham turnpike, or in the east by roads leading to Daventry and ultimately to London. An appreciable number of those from outside Coventry were pauper children. Only the 18th and 19th century apprenticeship records are detailed enough for a comprehensive review of the origins of the apprentices. The noticeable change in the 19th century is the great reduction in recruitment from outside Coventry.

	18th Cent	19th Cent
Relatives of existing Coventry bakers	58	78
Others from within the city of Coventry	69	86
Origin not stated, probably Coventry	34	2
From villages close to the city (Baginton, Bubbenhall, Berkswell, Binley, Corley etc)	25	5
From other Warwickshire towns and villages	71	22
From Leicestershire	9	3
From Northamptonshire	6	1
From Staffordshire	7	1
From Worcestershire	2	1
From Derbyshire	2	1
From Gloucestershire	1	-
From Huntingdonshire	1	-
From London	2	2
Total number of apprentices	287	202

Conduct and health of apprentices, terms of indenture and documents, restrictions on transfers from one master to another with the consent of the Company Masters

and Ancients required, evidence of indentures for previous service, the prevention of enticement of other mens' servants, all are covered in the rules of the Baker's Company. The rates levied by the Bakers' Company for giving their approval and for registration were -

On signing on as apprentice - 2/6d to 1725, then 10/- to 1783, 10/6d to 1785 and 13/- thereafter.
On transfer of an apprentice - 2/6d to 1725, then 10/- to 1737, 12/- to 1785 and 13/- thereafter.
On becoming a freeman - 7/6d to 1725, then 10/- to 1730/1, 12/- to 1774, 16/4d in 1775, then £1/2/- to 1783, and £1/5/- from 1784 onwards.

The indenture payment made by the parents/guardians of the would be apprentice to the proposed master varied considerably. In the first half of the 18th century for bakers it ranged from £6 to £12.[1] Apprenticeships usually ran from the age of 14 for a term of 7 years, but for pauper children, who often were younger than 14, their term of apprenticeship would run to the age of 21 at the least.

The Joseph Eld indenture of 1698 is a good example of the kind of agreement entered into by the apprentice and the master.[2] He was bound to William Townsend from 29 September 1698 for a term of 7 years, and was to learn the trade of a baker from Townsend and be kept with meat, drink, washing and lodging throughout that term. For his part he was not to waste his master's goods, he was forbidden to marry, nor was he to fornicate nor contract himself to any women. He was not to use alehouses or taverns nor to play cards or dice or any other unlawful game. He could not be absent from his master's service day or night and he must serve faithfully throughout. Stern conditions indeed, especially for a young man and for a term of 7 years! Nevertheless he survived, prospered, became a Master of the Bakers' Company and his descendants contributed much to the life of Coventry over the 18th and 19th centuries. His great grandson, George Eld (Junior), was Mayor of Coventry in 1834-35 when he redesigned the Mayor's Parlour in St Mary's Hall.

The Coventry Leet provided controls over apprentices and their masters and a forerunner of some of the conditions set out for Joseph Eld can be seen in 1492 when the Leet Book records that -

> Also that no Tapster nor other persons frohensforth resceyve nor favour eny mannes prentes or servaunt of the Cite in his house ther to spend eny money or to company with eny woman of evell name, or other person of sadde disposicion, or other person diffamed, agenstthe will of his maister, uppon the peyn to lese at every defalt 6s 8d.[3]

The Bakers' Company rules also stress some of these aspects, their first rule stating that no member "...shall set on worke any servaunte or servauntes which are or shalbe at any tyme infected with scabbes, or any other owtwarde sores, or whiche are detected of whoredome, or common Drunkards, to make any manor of Dowe, of whyte wheaton or rye, for so long tyme as they be so infected and detected and not reformed..."

The earliest known apprentice in Coventry was a Will Sprag, son of John Sprag a husbandman, formerly of Ingleton in Staffordshire who on 8 July 1494 was apprenticed to Roger Bret of Coventry, a baker, and went to live with Bret from Holy Cross Day (September 14th) for a term of 8 years. There is a subsequent note made that Sprag took the oath to the freedom, which would have been around 1502, but there is no later reference to him at all as a baker in Coventry.[4] He could have remained in the city trading as a freeman or perhaps, like so many in later centuries for whom there are records, he went back to his place of origin or some other town to set up in trade as a baker. His master Roger Bret(t) was a member of the Corpus Christi Guild at least from 1490-1504,[5] tenanted property in the Earl St Ward in 1522,[6] when he had another apprentice John Fawben, but had died by the time of the 1523 Census which shows only his widow Agnes in Earl St.

From time to time apprentices were assigned to other masters, most frequently on the death of their existing master, but also if the master gave up the trade, became a bankrupt, a runaway (usually from debts), or a criminal. The 1522 Muster Rolls show Thomas Barlie of Jordan Well Ward as a runaway baker who fled the town ("Fugit Vill"), though it is odd to then see him also recorded in the 1523 Census lists as a resident with his wife. Perhaps he had decided to return. The Coventry Bakers' records include instances of masters assigning apprentices to an ex-apprentice of theirs who had become a freeman and had set up his own bakery.

Unsatisfactory apprentices (with behaviour problems or the breaking of the conditions of their indentures) also were reassigned. Occasionally the master himself might be unsatisfactory in his treatment of the apprentice, as for example George Dixon, a baker in Hillfields, who on 4 November 1846 had his apprentice Jonathan Weaver taken from him because he was being neglected and mistreated.[7] For that period, there are no specific Bakers' Company apprenticeship records, nor has any trace of the unfortunate Weaver been found in the subsequent city apprenticeship registers, so what happened to him is not known.

Women were not trained as apprentice bakers nor in earlier centuries were they normally members of the Bakers' Company. A Leet order in 1535 required Alice Grene, a cakebaker, to pay an annual fee to the Bakers' Company but it does not say that she was to be a member or a freeman.[8] She must have been successful at

her trade for the order by the Leet undoubtedly was prompted by a complaint from the Bakers' Company. She seems to have been a person of some substance, a freeholder in cross Cheaping, a widow with 1 child and a maidservant, and she has a tenement in Bishop Street.[9] However the Bakers' Company did not enjoy her fees for long - she died in 1538.

Masters' widows could continue their deceased husband's trade but usually could not or did not themselves train male apprentices. The rules of the Warwick Bakers' Company provided for a widow to continue her late husband's trade as a baker for so long as she remained a widow and had an apprentice or servant "that can skyll of baking".[10] The Coventry Bakers' Company rules make no mention of this point but their records show some male apprentices as having been apprenticed to widows after their husband's death, so presumably either their practices were not hard and fast on this issue or those widows, like the Warwick widows, already had skilled apprentices or journeymen to provide the required training and expertise.

A 1729 document[11] lists as members 5 women, Katharine Butteris, Eleanor Merry, Prudence Musson, Martha Hands and Jemima Winterton (all widows of bakers) who were practising bakers and who did have apprentices, as did other bakers' widows in other years. An important distinction was that although these widows were members of the Bakers' Company and were allowed to carry on the trades of their deceased husbands, they were not freemen of the city and they did not have civic privileges that came with that status. The numbers of women traced as trading as bakers in Coventry are -

16th century 1	(A cakebaker)
17th century 6	(All widows)
18th century 12	(All widows)
19th century 48	(Includes some single women in the second half of the century)

During the 17th century 2 men were made 'love brothers' of the Company. They were accepted by the Company as trained bakers, but they had not served an apprenticeship in Coventry. They became members of the company and allowed to trade in the city but they did not have the status or privileges of freemen.

On completion of his term of apprenticeship, the worker either became an employed journeyman or, if he could afford to do so, he became a "freeman" and a citizen of Coventry, and was free to exercise his trade in the city, to buy and sell, to vote in parliamentary elections and to use certain pasturage rights over the common fields of Coventry. Only self employed freemen became members of the Bakers' Company, with permission to trade as bakers. On becoming a freeman,

the candidate had to swear oaths which pledged his future loyalty not only to his company but also to the local and national government.

Apprentices were not members of the Company, nor were the employed journeymen members either, though if they had completed their apprenticeships satisfactorily they would have been entitled to become both freemen and self employed. Presumably they could not finance their own businesses or were not sufficiently skilled or were not ambitious enough to take the step into self employment. The Leet Book contains several references to journeymen being in fellowships but there the term is used as a general label for craftsmen and not as indicating a separate organisation of qualified workmen who were simply employees.

The apprenticeship records of the Bakers' Company over the 18th century show that many of the apprentices who completed their terms and were eligible to become freemen did not do so in Coventry. Either they remained as employee journeymen or else they moved out of the city. A number of them can be found in business as bakers outside Coventry in later years, but this still leaves the following who must have failed as apprentices and left the trade or who stayed on as employees -

18th century 120
19th century 87

Whatever the reasons for certain apprentices not becoming freemen of Coventry at the end of their terms, it means that we cannot be certain at any one time of the total number of people who were engaged (as self employed masters, employed journeymen and apprentices) in baking in Coventry. The average baker is thought to have had 2 journeymen and 2 apprentices. On that basis in 1520 for example the 43 bakers would have had 172 assistants, a total of 215 people engaged in baking to serve a city with a population of 6601.

Although there are some civic apprenticeship records from 1722 these are not thought to be complete or to be reliable. What should be the comprehensive Apprenticeship Enrolment Registers date only from 1781. The Coventry Elections Act 1781 was passed by parliament in an effort to stop gross irregularities in the swearing in of freemen from all over the country in order that they could vote for Corporation candidates at parliamentary elections. This legislation undoubtedly is the reason for the retention of the Apprenticeship Enrolment Registers from that date - they would provide evidence that the freemen had served their proper terms within the city of Coventry.

There are no obvious traces of any irregularities in the Bakers' Company records prior to 1781 to show that they were involved in providing "false freemen". All

those made freemen through the Bakers' Company during the 18th century had served proper apprenticeships in this city except for 18 men who bought their freedom for a fee of £10. A check made on their subsequent activities shows[16] of them in business as bakers, as active members of the company, acting as Masters and taking apprentices. Of the remaining two, one became the clerk of the Company for at least 1780-86. Only a John Hubbard remains untraced as being connected with baking, and he became a 'freeman' well after the introduction of the Coventry Elections Act 1781.

All the entries in the Registers relating to bakers and their apprentices from 1781 to 1900 have been copied and analysed, and compared with other sources of information. Excluding the widows of deceased bakers (see above), there were the following independent bakers for whom no record has been found of any apprenticeship within this city -

18th century	35
19th century	332

Either many bakers' apprentices were not registered with the City Council or a considerable number of experienced bakers came into the city in the rapid expansion during the 19th century. A further alternative is that many of those included in trade directories were not bakers in the full sense but merely retailers of bread and confectionery made by someone else.

CHAPTER 6 -
THE SURVIVING RECORDS OF THE BAKERS' COMPANY

Two sets of rules are contained in a slim black leather bound volume[1] which has an impressed decorative medallion in its front and back covers. Each set is written on parchment and each was once a separate set of pages, though, since the pages were written out to much the same shape on both sides of the parchment, it must have been intended from the outset that they would be put into folders or books. The two sets have been trimmed to shape, roughly stitched together and then bound into one volume.

Twentysix rules in the first set are all in the same hand, with elaborate first letters to each paragraph. Probably they were written out for the Bakers' Company by a professional scribe sometime in the latter half of the 16th century. There was a change of hand for two more paragraphs, with a further change for the final paragraph. The signatures of members should have followed so the remainder of that page was left blank, as were the next five pages, but no signatures were entered. This first set was seen and endorsed by Thomas Potter, Mayor of Coventry on 25 October 1623. Clues as to the dates of the original rules can be drawn from their wording, and using the references to various people and events it can be seen that the rules were written out in the order of their adoption by the Company.

The second set of rules within the book is on a different grade of parchment, and the style of the writing puts this set to a date later then 1623. Not only are there textual differences, but a number of the rules in the first set have been omitted. The Company accounts book[2] contains some later orders and rules dating from 1672, which were not incorporated into this second set, and the new Rule 19 refers to the bakers of the country coming into Coventry on Fridays, this being a further restriction on them introduced by the Leet in 1660.[3] Thus the second set of rules must have been written out sometime between 1660 and 1671. Whether or not the second set was ever dated or inspected is unknown, because immediately after the end of this set the remainder of the page has been cut out.

There is a partial version of the second set of rules (only numbers 1 to 20), on a roll of parchment[4], with a number of minor textual differences and changes of spelling which both clarify and tighten the rules. Possibley this roll was the set in regular use at meetings.

The rules can be summarised as follows. Two Masters were elected annually to rule the company. An assembly of "the most Auncyent men" (not less than 13 nor more than 17 in number) nominated the candidates, putting forward four names

Front Cover of Rule Book

Pages from Rule Book

to the Mayor who chose the senior Master.[5] The junior Master was selected by the elders. He was often a recently elected freeman, chosen to give him experience, and if he refused to serve he was fined 40 shillings. The senior Master usually was a more experienced and longer serving member of the Company. Anyone who was elected a Master of the Bakers' Company would have been involved in extra expense, for although some of the costs of office were met by the Company, this was never a rich organisation and the Masters had to meet many items themselves. The retiring masters each year had to provide a dinner at their own expense to all the members of the Company, an obligation often running to over 30 people.

An assembly of six or eight of "the Auncyentes" of the Company was to levy fines on members who broke the rules. Attendance was required at all lawful meetings of the Company as well as at the wedding or burial of a member of the Company, unless a member was sick, out of town or had special permission to be absent. Company business was not to be discussed with other persons to the detriment of the Company. There were methods to resolve disputes between members, with the Masters to arbitrate or give permission for the parties to go to law, whilst unpaid debts owing to a fellow member baker were heard and decided upon with powers to fine the debtor 40 shillings or to ban him from baking and selling bread in the city. For debts owed by innkeepers to bakers again the masters were to arbitrate and, if they were unsuccessful, all members were to be banned from dealing with those innkeepers. Old rules 2 and 23 are omitted from the second set. They were dignity clauses, being intended to stop ex-masters and the wives of members carrying bread around the streets openly - a delivery service to wealthier customers and to inns was common practice.

Several rules dealt with the day to day problems of baking - using only the authorised assize and weights, restrictions on the sale of bread, forbidding the bakers to receive horses from innkeepers in exchange for the supply of bread, forbidding the sale of bread to hucksters and victuallers who would sell it on again at a profit (in other words trying to cut out middlemen), allowing only one shop per baker, and banning payments to brewers' servants.

Weights are expressed in terms of currency weights (shillings and pence as in the original legislation which then equated with the troy system of weights) rather than in avoirdupois terms. Incidentally, there is in the Leet Book 1474 an example of early confusion as to how to express this term - it is reinterpreted and referred to as " haberdepeyse".[6]

There is an anomaly between the two sets of rules - old rule 17 (Sale of bread) refers to 13 pennyworth for 12 pence (what we call the bakers' dozen), whereas new rule 13 on the same subject says "fourteen to the dozen". Both sets are quite clear so

perhaps for a time there was a change in the practice here in Coventry. Restrictions were set out for persons from outside Coventry selling bread within the city, and both places and times were stipulated.

In 1722 an agreement[7] was made between the members of the Company because of concern at the failure to get sufficient attendance at Company meetings. Clearly it is intended to reinforce Old Rule 3. All members were required to attend at one hour's notice, unless they were out of the city on business or were given special permission not to attend. A fine of 6/8d was levied for each failure to comply. In a bond[8] in 1729, the 34 signatories named in it agreed not to sell any bread to hucksters, nor to give private families discounts on or extra quantities of bread, nor to bake pasties, spice puddings, tarts or indeed anything without payment, and they agreed to continue only their usual allowances to public houses for white bread. All new freemen were to be compelled by their previous masters to sign these agreements on joining the Company, with fines of 40 shillings for failure to do so, but this seems to have lapsed around 1781. Some of the later members signed only one of the documents and not the other, an example of increasing laxity in the running of the Company in the latter half of the 18th century.

A book[9] covering the period from 3 May 1700 to 4 December 1805, and a collection of 134 freemen's certificates[10] from 1697 to 10 November 1830, contain records of apprenticeships and freemen, the book being the more complete and showing that not all of the original freemen's certificates have survived. This book is dated inside its front cover as "Bought May ye 1, 1700, Saml Kevitt and Thomas Audlin). As the Company's official record of the apprenticeships and approval of freedoms, the book ought to be a full list for the period 1700 to 1805, but comparison with the Dugdale Society publications on apprentices shows that it is not complete, nor indeed are the apprenticeships listed in those Dugdale publications.[11] Thus none of these records or publications is complete, each one adding further names.

The book of accounts of income and expenditure,[12] from 1661 to 1804, has paper leaves but a parchment cover with leather thongs to tie it shut. Both the old and the new Masters are named for each account. The accounts themselves are simple statements of income and expenditure which do not always balance, and there are no supplementary comments to explain how such apparent discrepancies were resolved. The city regulations from 1475 required Company Masters to present their books and accounts to the Mayor by, or within 2 days of, St Clement's Day (23rd November) for scrutiny by him and if they did not do so they were fined.[13] The account book itself contains markings over the period from 1706 to 1726 inclusive which show that various persons (Jo Edwards, J Cochran, R O Baynes, & Wm Longman) checked the accounts and found them to be in order - "omnia

bene". There are similar endorsements in the accounts records of the Smiths' Company.

W G Fretton left a set of notes made in the late 19th century, before the Bakers' Company records were handed over to the City, about his examinations of the records of various trade companies of Coventry.[14] His comments regarding the Bakers' Company records show that he had access to some which have not come into the possession of the City Record Office. He refers to a gift of £2 made by the Bakers Company in 1620 to aid the King of Bohemia (the surviving account book starts only in 1661), and to the 1705 accounts of the Company showing that they still had the £30 allocated to them from the estate of Thomas Wheatley who died in 1566. The 1705 accounts statement has nothing at all in it about this £30, an indication that some other records had survived until at least the late 19th century, perhaps a membership book and overall financial control, if the surviving book of the Smiths' Company of the same period is used as an example.

Throughout the book on odd pages are memoranda of resolutions passed at meetings. Of particular interest is a long extract from the official warning to or statement of duties of the Clerks to the Market, the elected city officials who were responsible for the checking of weights, measures and trading practices in the City of Coventry for "the trades of Millers, Bakers, Brewers, Inkeepers, Alehousekeepers, cooks, victuallers, fishmongers, butchers, chandlers, maltsters, grocers and all other persons whatever haveing or useing weights or measures". Not only were all weights and measures to be checked, but quality was to be tested, they were to look out for persons buying and selling in bulk so as to raise prices, and they had to buy samples of wheat in the market to enable the Mayor to settle the assize and weight of bread. This particular statement of duties dates from sometime after 1700 because, in referring to the measure to be used in public houses, it mentions laws "made in the 11th and 12th years of King William".

Although the Leet regulations for trade companies from 1657 onwards required each company to have 6 fire buckets, the Bakers took a long time to comply. They made a special collection in 1667 to buy 4 fire buckets costing £1, but then took several years to add the extra two. The earliest of the inventories, prepared by the outgoing Masters of the Company, is dated 27 November 1671 and refers to -

> "Ye pall of Velvett the Chest & 2 keyes 2 streamers 2 suits of Armour 4 bookes ye parchment orders ye iron Box & 4 Leather Bucketts; Alsoe in the hands of Richard Archer trayned Souldier : 1 Musquett; Sword, belt & bandaleers."

The parchment roll (most probably the membership rules copy) appears from 1680 onwards, and in 1702 the "black Booke", which may mean that it was then

that the binding of the rules into a book took place. From 1723 the inventories refer to "a black book, parchment roll and five books and a bond". Since the Record Office holds only the black rule book and 2 other books this means that 3 further books either did not survive or were not handed over to the City.

A typical inventory from a later year is -

1727 A waincot box with a velvet pall in it, a coat, wastcoat and breeches for the follier, two suits of armor, a musquet, sword and Bandayleirs, a little box with Ribbands, The Streamer, a Cap and frock for the Boy to ware that holds the streamer and a little sword and Belt for the follier and four fire Buckets, a black book and a parchment role, five Company books.

There are regular purchases of clothes, shoes, stockings and gloves for the 'follier' (a follower, who took part in the processions which were a large part of the ceremonials, both company and municipal, in Coventry), and a boy to assist him. The absence of such items from most annual lists of assets suggests that such goods were kept by the individuals concerned. Ribbons were a regular expense of the Company. By 1782 the suits of armour, the bandaliers and the coat, waistcoat and breeches for the follier have gone and there is reference only to the sword, belt and two feathers for him to wear. Otherwise the inventories are very similar from year to year.

The Company purchased new feathers in 1700, a new crest and a painted truncheon in 1745, and in 1789 replaced its civic regalia as follows -

Pd Mr Worthhouse for a Role for the Streamer	4s 0d
Pd for Dying the folliers feathers	1s 0d
Pd Mr Minster for 10 yards of Luitstring for the Streamer at 6/- per yard	3 0s 0d
Pd Mr Downes for painting the Streamer & c	8 18s 0d
Pd Mr Villers for 3 Stamps	12s 9d
Pd Mr Dunn for a new Box for the Streamer	14s 6d

Fretton remarks, in his book on the Guilds, that in the pageant on 2 August 1892 the Master Bakers' Association took part and were headed by the Company banner "made for the purpose of the first pageant and which despite its age of 200 years looked tolerably well".[15] However, as the accounts show, this banner had been replaced and was just over 100 years old. Fretton had not noticed the renewal in 1789, but nevertheless at over 100 years old Mr Downes' painting had survived remarkably well. The banner is now held by the Herbert Art Gallery but unfortunately time has not been kind to it and now it is in a very fragile state as is

a cap which used to be worn by one of the Masters of the Company in civic processions.

Finally there are 2 pieces of paper.[16] The first is a receipt from Edward Freemen for the supply of "6 Silk Tassalls for a Velvett pall @ 2s 6d = 15s, satisfied by the use of the pall once 2s 6d and by cash of Mr John Reading 12s 6d which is in full". The cash payment of 12/6d appears in the account for the year to 9 November 1739. There are occasional entries in the accounts thereafter of receipts for the use of the pall at the funerals of members, but since there are entries in the earlier inventories for a velvet pall, this one must have been a replacement. The second piece of paper is undated but bears rough notes made for later incorporation into the record book. The entries correspond with some in the 1761 accounts, so they would have been written by either Nathaniel Read or John Gibbards, the Masters of that year. The major item is 42 shillings for "Ribbins at Crownation", the monarch crowned in 1760-61 being George III.

CHAPTER 7 - LATER HISTORY 1660 TO 1900

The surviving financial records of the Bakers' Company cover the period from 1661 to 1805, and show only the totals of the quarterage fees collected from members but neither how many people paid quarterage nor who they were. Up to 1787 the Company charged its members 4d per quarter, the due dates for payment being The Purification of the Virgin Mary (2 February), Holy Roode Day (3 May), Lammas Day (1 August), and All Saints Day (1 November). Each member should have paid 1/4d per annum and so the approximate number of members in each year can be calculated. The sums collected (and hence these membership figures) vary from year to year and, whilst some masters distinguished the arrears they had collected, others made no mention of them. The rules provided that, if anyone's quarterage was unpaid for a full year, he was to be banned from trading as a baker in the city and a fine of 40 shillings levied, but no fines of this size appear in the accounts. Over the 17th century the average membership was 27-35 with the numbers falling gradually over the 18th century to around 20.

The Bakers' Company employed a sumner (a clerk who summoned members to meetings). From 1661 to 1774 the wage was 12 shillings a year. John Fox served from 1683 to 1698, Peter Phillips from 1700 to 1715, and John Phillips from around 1716 to 1739. Thomas Bowne was the longest serving clerk from 1741 to 1774. If he was still alive in 1775 no doubt he felt aggrieved to see his successor Charles Higginson getting £1 1s 0d a year. From 1780 onwards the rate was £1 10s 0d per year. The wages of the sumner may have been supplemented by other payments e.g. for acting as the Follier or the man who waited upon the follier, the accounts not always being clear as to whether these payments were made to different persons. For some of his years of office, the records say that those extra payments went to "John Phillips and his boy". The rates varied but usually they could have earned another 5 shillings a year in these ways.

The accounts of the Bakers' Company do not give the address of any permanent headquarters. Up to 1678, they show the payment of a Hall rent of 6/8d per year plus 8d a year for candles for illumination, which suggests some reasonably established meeting place. Over the 1680s there are costs at Leather Hall, and these may be rent for the same hall as previously. The accounts records of both the Smiths' Company and the Carpenters' Company over much the same period also show rents paid for the use of this hall for their meetings. Leather Hall was on land between West Orchard and Smithford Street and eventually was taken over and altered by Congregationalists for use as their meeting house until they built new premises nearby, St Nicholas Hall.

Thereafter the Bakers' accounts contain rents paid for accommodation at various

inns in the city. Inns were used by many organisations for meetings because they had large rooms available. Over the late 17th century several meetings were held at Samuel Denham's, which might have been either an inn or a private house. Since the Smiths, the Cappers and the Chandlers Companies also used Samuel Denham's this property must have had larger rooms. After 1774 no mention is made of rents or of any premises expenditure, so it is not clear what the Bakers did then for meetings. A newspaper cutting in the Lowe collection in the Coventry City Library, taken from the Coventry Standard of April 10, 1888, contains the following paragraph suggesting that at one time the Company did have its own building, though the source of this information is not recorded -

> "On the pulling down of the very old house in Little Park Street (for the erection of the new vaccination station) which was probably built about the time of Edward IV, the timber, which probably came from the Coventry park, was found to be so thoroughly decayed and rotten at the bottom that nothing but the bracing and the outer wall held it up. I have heard that this house was once the hall of the Bakers' guild."

Small payments to journeymen bakers, travelling in search of work, were made from time to time, this being a normal practice for trade companies. In times of need, charitable support was given to members, for example -

1694	Given by consent of the companie to Stephen Beale	2s
1694	Pd att the ffunerall of Stephen Beale	2s 6d
1710	Gave Ralph Winterton Feb 1st,	5s
1711	Pd Ralph Winterton to bury his wife	3s
1712	Pd Ralph Winterton	2s 6d

In 1698 Mr Jonathan Kimberley, Vicar of Holy Trinity Church, Broadgate, Coventry was paid 10 shillings for a sermon preached at the funeral of Nicholas Willcox, a member from 1680 onwards, and Swordbearer for the City Council from 1682 to 1697. The company had paid a seat rent for a pew in church, this continuing until 1683, and, whilst no name is shown for that church, the most likely is the Holy Trinity Church. There is nothing to indicate why they gave up the maintenance of that seat though this was a period of religious unrest. In particular Coventry had continued to be a centre of Dissent with a high proportion of nonconformists. 1682 had seen the Duke of Monmouth welcomed to the city as he toured around expressing his opposition to the Duke of York (the future King James II) and the spread of Roman Catholic influence.

Many of the legal costs incurred by the Company followed from difficulties encountered at the weighing, by local council officers, of bread from both the bakers of Coventry and the country bakers. These events were attended by

representatives of the Baker's Company. Entertaining of the local officials was a recognised practice on such occasions, even the wife of the Mayor (Mistress Maioress) receiving a regular gift in the 1660s of a cake and a quart of sack. The accounts do not show any regular annual pattern of set weighing dates. Some indicate only 4 times in a year whereas other years show twice monthly weighings in June, August, September, October and December.

From time to time the Company made test purchases of loaves and imposed fines for any shortcomings found. In 1677 for example, Edward Buckingham was fined 9s 8d and Moses Merrey 10 shillings, though the company later agreed to give back to Merrey three shillings of his fine. Edward Buckingham, was a constant offender and thorn in their flesh for as well as the fine above there were legal costs and another fine in 1667 of 14s 8d, and in 1669, Mr Hopkins was paid £1 "for Counsell" and a total of 3s paid to Ann Walker, Constance Turley and John Fox for being "wittnesses".

There followed a fine in 1671 of 5s plus 3s paid for Buckingham's arrest, 1678 10s, and 1683 2s 4d plus fees of 3s 4d.

On occasions, there were legal costs in getting summonses against country bakers, seeking legal advice, and at times trying to obtain evidence for the prosecution of offending bakers, whether their own members or the bakers of the country. The year to 26 November 1683 has a long sequence for legal costs and proceedings for a Coventry baker named King -

Pd & spent for a Writt for King	1s 6d
Pd at Sam Denhams at the meeting about King	1s 6d
Pd Daniell Kilsby for arresting of King	1s 0d
Pd for summoning of King to the Court	4d
Pd at Sam Denhams at the ataining of Mr Gibbons	2s 6d
Pd Mr Gibbons his ffees	3s 4d
Pd Mr Jephcott for a copy of the Writt	0 4d
Pd for advice of a Councell at London	£1 1s 6d

In 1744 is a rather different sequence, this time for Cashmore, a baker from the nearby village of Baginton, with the Company seeking to get together evidence against him -

Pd at Hewitts in Greyfryers Lane in seeking for Cashmore of Baginton	1s 6d
Spent at the weighing of Cashmore's bread	1s 6d
Spent at Griffins at several times on Cashmore's account	2s 0d
Pd John Bunnys man for sitting up all night to watch Cashmore	1s 0d

In all probability, Cashmore, a baker from outside the city, was trying to get his

bread into Coventry either without having it weighed properly or brought in on days other than Friday, the only day then allowed for the country bakers to bring their bread into Coventry for sale.

Not all bakers were model citizens by any means, and the narrow streets of the city were easily blocked either by thoughtlessness or selfishness. In October 1657 Richard Kevitt was fined for leaving a cart in the street outside his door for 3 weeks.[1] Sixty years later in 1717 Thomas Butler left carts and a wagon in Little Park Street "to the annoyance of his Majestys subjects", though this was perhaps not as noxious as the deeds of William Shires in October 1718 who "in Gosford Street being the kings highway severall parcells of muck or rubbish did place and lay so that the kings subjects could not pass and repass safely without perell of life".[2] Of course bakers were not alone in this, other citizens of Coventry being fined for similar behaviour.

Many inhabitants, bakers included, were prosecuted for not repairing the broken pavements in front of their houses and there were summonses for offensive wood piles, dangerous dogs and for keeping "hoggs near the streete being a nusance" - a baker named Thomas Ricketts in June 1679. If it was a hot summer that year it is not surprising that there were complaints.[3] There are instances of bakers being fined for not attending church. In 1683 Moses Merry, the Widow Townsend and John Murdoch all were summonsed for not attending church on 3 consecutive Sundays.[4]

The Company bond dated 29 September 1729 has within its text the names of 34 bakers, probably the entire membership of the Company at that point. The population of Coventry in 1729 was around 13,000 i.e. approximately twice that in 1520 when the census showed 6601 citizens served by 43 bakers. To serve a larger population with fewer bakers means that there must have been a considerable increase in productivity by bakers. A doubling in the length and breadth of oven floors compared with early medieval ovens would have given a four fold increase in the number of loaves which could be baked at a time. Such a development is feasible, because the physical limitations in the efficient size of the beehive type of oven would not have been reached - in fact this would still be less than the size of a typical early 19th century commercial oven. Some additional employees might have been required to cope with the increased amounts of dough, though time would have been saved by not having to sieve the flour.

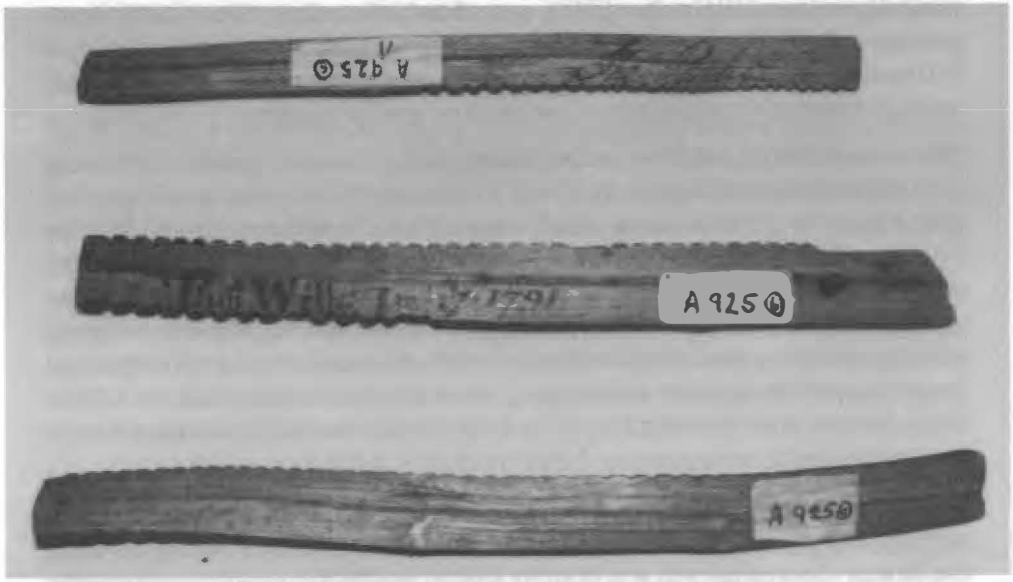
England in earlier centuries had its crimewaves, and a press anxious to record the events as an extract from Jopson's Coventry Mercury on 23 October 1749 shows - this is by no means an isolated example. Isaac Wale, a baker in Spon Street (he came from Astley in Warwickshire, was apprenticed in Coventry in 1741 and

made a freeman on 19 October 1748), was robbed at Stoneleigh Field "of his watch and upwards of £10 in money at 11am on the preceding Saturday". A reward of £40 was offered for information leading to the capture of the robber. This was not really the best of ways for him to end his first year in business!

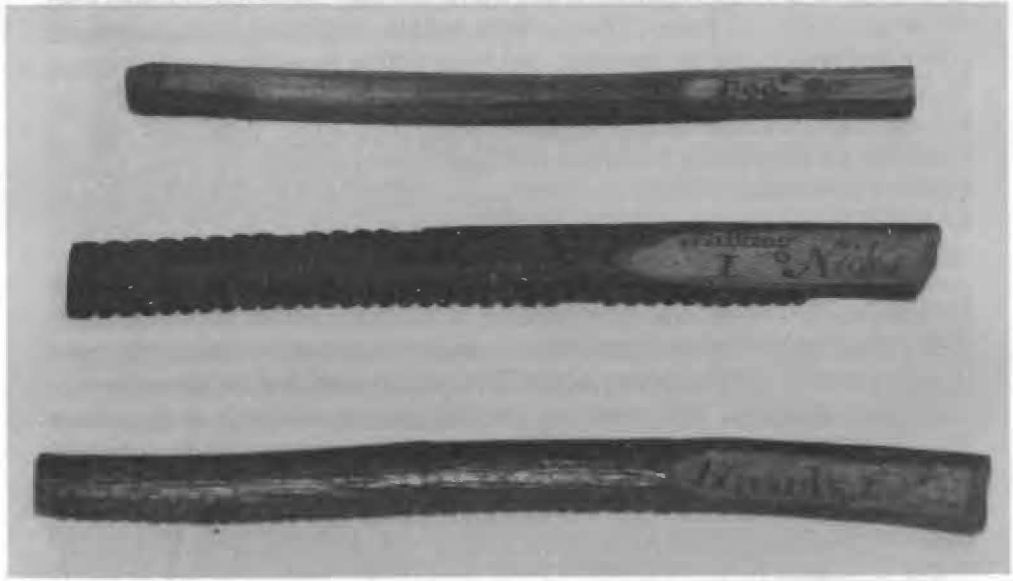
There are numerous instances in church records and other documents of charitable gifts and endowments from the estates of local residents for the benefit of the poor. These took many forms - cash distributions, educational prizes etc. In total the estates of Thomas Jesson, William Jelliff and Humphrey Burton provided for thirtynine penny loaves of bread to be distributed to the poor of Holy Trinity parish. In December 1765, John Boddington, baker, formally agreed to supply these loaves every week for this charity, but the requirements must have changed for eventually he supplied 19 twopenny loaves and one penny loaf for "a dole every Sunday after Morning Prayer" at Holy Trinity church.[5] Jesson and Burton also made similar arrangements for the poor of St Michael's parish.

The records kept by bakers of their customers and suppliers would have varied with the literacy of the individual baker and his customer. In 1790 and 1791 when the Bakers' Company itself was keeping written records for accounting purposes, Thomas Parker supplied loaves of bread to Bablake Hospital and made up a notched stick about 9 inches long as a tally for his bill of £1 7s 0d - the stick has 27 notches in it. The Herbert Art Gallery now has three such sticks marked with the names of Thomas Parker, Thomas Wills and Hands (Junior), all bakers.[6] Such tallies had been in use for centuries - see Plate VIII in From Memory to Written Record England for examples from 1293 - 94, some 500 years earlier! Yet Parker himself was a Master of the Bakers' Company in 1784, 1788 and 1800, a Constable for the Gosford St ward in 1783 and a warden of the city in 1786, so may have had some literacy. However, paper was not cheap, and not all traders or their customers could read. Tally sticks continued to be a recognised form of trade receipt until 1826. No other individual baker's records are held for Coventry.

During the 19th century, the more frequent publication of trade directories, with increasing detail and addresses, enables us to chart the growth in the baking trade in Coventry over a period when the old Bakers' Company was not active but the city was growing fast. The population growth figures available up to the start of the 20th century are shown in the table below together with average numbers of customers per baker. All the trade directory figures before 1841 are doubtful and the most likely explanation is that in the earlier period of trade directories not all bakers were persuaded that it was worthwhile to pay to have their names entered.



Tally Sticks (front)



Tally Sticks (back)

Year	Population	No. of Bakers	Average number of customers per baker
1377	4,817	15?	321
1449	?	19	
1520	6,601	43	153
1523	c.5,700?	28?	203
1586/7	6,502	?	
1694	6,710	30	224
1737	13,920	34	409
1748/9	12,117	?	
1801	16,034	?	
1821	21,242	40?	531
1831	27,070	49?	552
1841	40,803	52	785
1851	47,651	67	711
1861	53,264	82	650
1871	49,747	77	646
1881	55,963	79	708
1891	65,229	79	826
1901	77,832	78	998

In earlier centuries the Leet had prevented bakers from diversifying their trade (see Chapter 3). In the 19th century, their advertisement and entries in the trade directories show that, in the face of intense competition, they were spreading out into other lines, selling tea, wines, general groceries etc.

The Coventry Cooperative Society bakery, the earliest of the large scale bakeries in Coventry, appears in the 1894 and 1900 directories, though the society had had a bakery from 1868, when it moved to premises at 45 Bishop Street. A bakehouse was constructed in the back buildings "costing upwards of £30". The society's report says "The storekeeper engaged was a man in middle life, and the combined duties made his position anything but a sinecure. He had to be baker as well as counterman, and he was also required to deliver bread in all parts of the city. He probably did his best for a time . . ." but the shop finances got into a mess and eventually he was taken ill. His replacements (note the plural!) fared little better and the bakery side was something of a headache to the society until they engaged a competent baker to do only the baking, and had other staff to look after sales.

In 1877 new premises were built at West Orchard with a bakery and flour store in the yard, and even separate sleeping quarters for a baker. Within a few years,

demand had led to radical changes in their methods. A new continuous twodecker Mason's hot air oven was installed in 1885 at a cost of £200, with a dough kneader and flour sifter and an engine to work them, a boiler to heat the water for mixing the yeast and special thermometers to gauge the heat of each oven. It was their boast that the dough was only touched by hand when it was being cut up and weighed and moulded. Everything else was automatic! They were at pains to stress how hygienic this was in comparison with the old style of ovens and baking practices. After only 2 years, demand for their "Cooperative Bread" had outstripped production and they added a 3 decker bread oven costing £255 and an extra storeroom for flour at a cost of £71. In 1898 the Society bought a large plot of land in Cox Street by the City Flour Mills and built a new bread making establishment, the biggest in the area. The ground floor was 65 feet long, 29 feet wide and 14 feet high. In it they had 9 Cox's patent heat trap ovens, with automatic cutting and weighing of the dough and a separate cooling room for the bread. The bakers were supplied with a mess room and an office. Upstairs there were a doughmaking machine, a patent flour sifter, hoppers to feed a kneading machine and a flour storage room. The firing of the ovens was done from outside in the yard so that the interior of the bakery stayed clean. Thus over a span of 30 years the Society had moved from a single traditional style oven to multiple ovens with automatic machinery to mix, knead and cut the dough so that in no part of the process was manual handling necessary.[7]

Over the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries for which better evidence is available one can see baking businesses passing on for the one generation, but less frequently for 2 generations, and only very occasionally for 3 generations. Rarely were more than 3 generations of a family involved in baking. The Coventry Corporation Apprenticeship Registers show many bakers' sons being apprenticed to weavers, dyers and watchmakers, trades which had developed in importance and which seemed to offer better prospects to young men than baking.[8] In the 19th century, up to 1870, this trend is particularly noticeable with the majority of bakers putting their sons as apprentices into trades other than baking.

In contrast, the following families have shown some continuity in the baking trade. In the 16th century, the Owers, the 17th century Phillips and Townsend, the Willcox family in the 17th and 18th centuries as were the Winterton, Musson (Muston), Butterice, Hands, Clifton and Scotton families, the Freeman family in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, the Allen and Clarke families in the 18th century, Dunckley, Hunt, Eld and Merry families bridging the 18th and 19th centuries, and the Adkins and Olorenshaw families in the 19th century. The oldest of the traditional bakery firms to survive from the 19th century well into the 20th century was Farr and Reddy Ltd, whose Lockhurst Lane Bakery and shop closed in December 1967.

CHAPTER 8 - SUMMARY

The Bakers' Company was never a rich organisation, even at its greatest being only around 40 strong. Nevertheless it made its mark early as the attribution in the 1266 Assize of Bread and Ale demonstrates. It defended its members interests, negotiated with the civic authority and set rules for the training of apprentices and the maintenance of standards in baking. As an effective trade group it ran from the early 13th century up to the end of the 17th century but then gradually went into decline.

The accounts and records of the Bakers' Company show that to approximately 1696, it maintained the broad structure of the civic and social activities it had had from medieval times. It attended the statutory weighings of bread to ensure that standards were being maintained, paid for the attendance of the Town Crier on those occasions, provided refreshments for the Mayor's officers and made traditional presents of cake and sack to the Mayoress, attended the traditional fairs and markets, paid for 2 or 3 days wages for a trained soldier for the defence of the city and provided him with armour, sword and musket and powder, held quarterly meetings and suppers for its members, paid rent for a seat in church for the use of its Masters, and kept a clerk/sumner (summoner) to assist in the running of the company. Payments also were made to travelling journeymen bakers, to local poor bakers and for funeral expenses. All these things were the normal business of an active trade organisation.

The last seat rent paid was for 1683, when it gave up its reserved seat in church. After 1696, the armour etc was retained only for ceremonial purposes for parades and fairs. The repeal in 1710 of the Assize of Bread and Ale Statute of 1266 had meant a decline in the civic duties and importance of the Bakers' Company, though it participated in some formal bread weighing up to 1755, by which time the Company's activities were much reduced. Without the incentive to individual bakers of belonging to an organisation which had an influence in the control of their trade, membership began to fall progressively up to the end of the 18th century. The scale of expenditure continued to decline and by the later years of the 18th century the Company's activities were on such a limited scale that it could not have been very effective as a trade organisation, though the accounts up to 1801 still record annual attendance at the city fairs. The records of apprentices and freemen ceased and no records were kept to show whether or not any hard core of member bakers continued to meet, nor is there any indication of any continued association of bakers in Coventry from around 1805.

The replacement assize of bread legislation was abolished in 1822, and the bakers' companies throughout the country lost their last remaining influence and became

moribund. The exclusive rights of trading exercised by the Guilds and by the City Companies were abolished by the Municipal Corporations Act 1835. The trade became overcrowded and the quality of bread generally deteriorated. After 1853 the Smoke Abatement Act was passed, and bakers generally found it impossible to avoid smoke from their bakery chimneys and they felt it necessary to have some groupings to protect themselves. In 1868 in London the Master Bakers' Protection Society was formed to oppose the Act, and eventually that society and others throughout the country formed the National Association of Master Bakers. With the potential membership shown by the Coventry trade directories this was a thriving trade association in the 19th century, but it has not had a branch in Coventry for many years now.

Fortunately, someone did keep the old records and equipment of the Bakers' Company and passed them on from hand to hand until they came into the possession of the local branch of the newly formed Master Bakers Association in the 19th century, and from there into the possession of the city. It is both intriguing and exasperating to ponder as to the contents of the other records which survived until late in the 19th century but which are not now held by the Record Office.

As the 20th century progressed, modern large scale production and distribution methods (a local forerunner in this being the Coventry Cooperative Society bakery) drove most small independent bakers out of business, though recent years have seen something of a revival with greater interest shown in differing forms of bread and with smaller electrical and gas baking ovens in shops able to provide freshly baked bread from almost any kind of premises. However, many critics still say that this is 'factory-type' bread without the taste of bread produced by the traditional methods and type of oven. A final irony is that the old style ovens, even the 19th century types, are unable, for the most part, to meet modern legislative requirements for hygiene - for example, the reconstructed oven at the Black Country Museum is still capable of producing bread, and continues to do so for demonstration and display purposes, but the bread cannot be sold for human consumption!

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