

# Clothmaking in the Eden Valley

EXHIBITION 2022

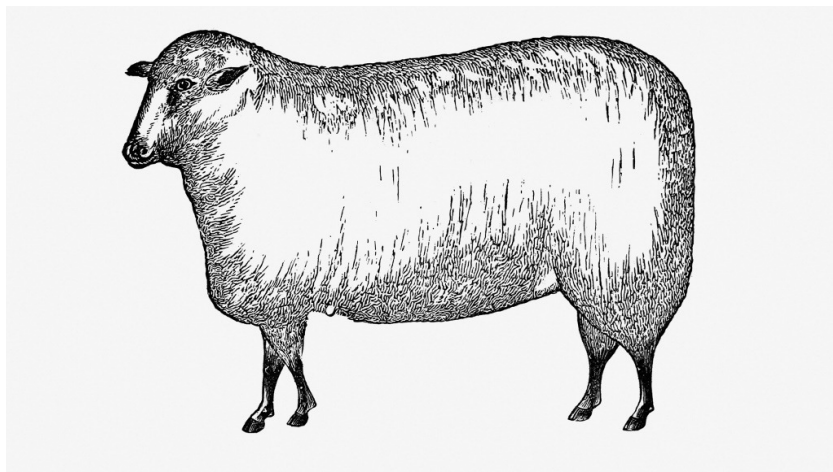


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**Front cover image**

Soaking red cloth in barrel

Image © Master of Edward IV, Wikimedia Commons

# Introduction

Clothmaking was a major industry in the Middle Ages. It was organised around a 'putting out' system whereby men called clothiers put out the raw materials to spinners, dyers and weavers, who carried out the work from home. Cloth was sold by mercers in towns, fairs and shops and unfinished cloth was exported to Europe. Some mercers and clothiers made vast amounts of money and became very powerful. Poor people depended on the cloth industry for income and especially in the Weald, where farms were smaller than other regions because of the woodland. Some cloth workers were farmers and clothmaking provided them with extra income.

Parish records suggest that activities relating to the cloth trade took place in the Eden Valley between the 14th and 18th centuries. Local place names attest to the processes of clothmaking, such Dyehurst Gill, Coomb Field (wool combing) or Tainters Hill where cloth was stretched on frames known as 'tenterhooks'.



Tenterframe

Image: Barabbas1312, Wikipedia Commons

When Edward III came to the throne in the early 1300s, he sought to promote the wool trade. In 1331, he invited Flemish artisans to Kent so that native

weavers could develop their skills. The English weavers wanted to charge the Flemish to join their guild but Edward said no and instead, encouraged the Flemish to set up their own guild. The arrangement caused tension between the two guilds but a century later, the guilds joined together to form the Weavers Guild and the problems subsided. Eventually, the guilds diminished because they couldn't compete with the power of the clothiers.



King Edward III

Image: Bl yt 48 f 41, Public Domain

Elizabeth I was wary of the clothier's independence and so in 1566, put a stop to the export of unfinished cloth. After that, the cloth industry began to decline,

despite various attempt to revive it, such as in 1571 when working men were encouraged to wear woollen caps and in the reign of Charles II, families were fined for not burying their dead in wool. The decline of the broadcloth industry in the Weald is thought to be partly attributed to the competition with the iron industry for timber. During the 1720s, there were only ten clothiers in Kent and one of them was George Fletcher of Penshurst who is buried in a vault in the parish church.



Image: Daniel Villafruela, Creative Commons

## The Weald

The coppices of the Weald provided fuel for heating the vats for dyeing the cloth. There was also an abundance of fuller's earth, a type of clay used to remove grease from wool. Sheep came from Romney Marsh but in medieval times they were smaller and more like a modern Soay sheep with a long neck and tail and polled (without horns.) The fleece was of a lesser quality in comparison with the Southdown and Romney sheep today, from which they are descended from. Farms in the Weald were mainly pastoral which was less labour intensive than agriculture. So some merchants had time for farming as well.

The clothmaking industry involved workers with a variety of skills including spinners, dyers, weavers, fullers, fibre workers, cloth finishers, flaxmen, hatters, milliners, tailors, dressmakers and leather workers, especially in Edenbridge where was a tannery.

## Burial in wool

During the reign of King Charles II, an act was passed to promote trade in wool requiring that corpses be buried in woollen shrouds. The rule is often mentioned in the parish registers with an affidavit to show that the law had been observed. Families that buried their loved ones in linen were obliged to pay a fine. The Sidney Family were fined several times, including in 1683 for Colonel Algernon Sidney whose remains are buried at Penshurst Church. He was beheaded for his alleged involvement in the Rye Plot to murder King Charles II. A record for Cowden in 1610 shows that canvas was also used to wrap two vagrants for burial but presumably, not in a coffin because until 1653, only wealthy people in Cowden could afford them. Bodies were



generally brought to the grave in a container, lifted out and buried in a linen shroud wrapped round with strips of canvas.



Sir Algernon Sydney

Image: Image © [www.historicalportraits.com](http://www.historicalportraits.com), Wikipedia Commons

## Fibre workers

Flax dressers used a swingle to beat the flax from the husk in preparation for spinning. A swingle (or scutching knife) was a wooden tool shaped like a large knife and used in conjunction with a small iron scraper. A mechanised scutcher with rotating paddles was invented for the same purpose in 1797. Records of 18<sup>th</sup> century flaxmen from Edenbridge include George Elwood who owned the White Horse next to Batts and his son James Elwood, a farmer who died in poverty.

## Spinning



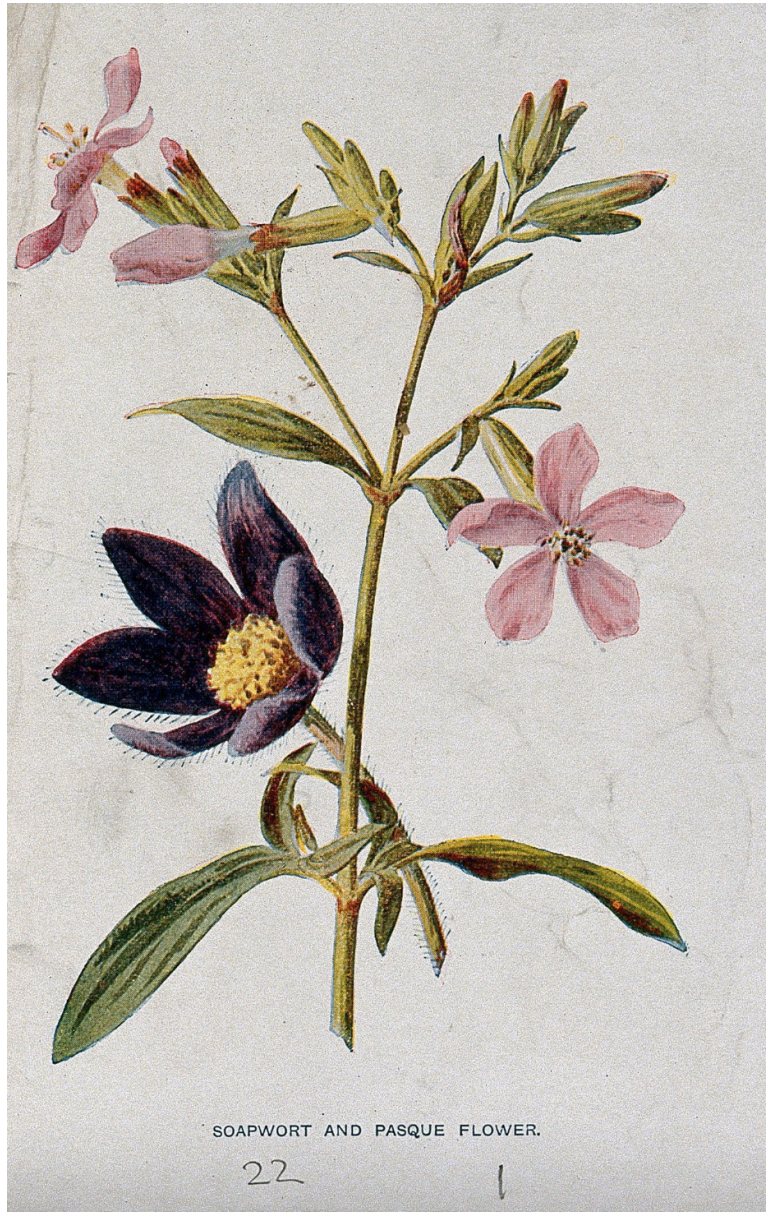
Spinning was carried out in the home by women and children, especially widows. Although it was a skilled occupation, it did not require an apprenticeship. Spinning was often offered as a solution for poor relief and provided around 30% of the income for poor families in the 17th century. By the mid-eighteenth century one million women and children were employed in spinning. Towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, spinners in Edenbridge were paid about 2d and 3d per pound of wool. The wages for spinning varied and in other parts of Britain, some women earned a good income from it.

### Types of yarn

Hemp, tow, blanket yarn and superfine yarn for worsteds were all used for spinning. In Cowden, women spun wool for broadcloth produced in the neighbouring village of Hartfield. They also spun flax which was grown by the local gentry who required linen for their clothes.

Women in the workhouse spun tow which was made into cloth by local weavers and bleached in the sun using a decoction of soapwort. The washing of cloth was known as 'bucking' and the work was poorly paid. Parish accounts for Cowden record that in 1792 George Waller was paid 1s. 6d. 'for washing 28lbs of Linen Yarn and drying it for the weaver.' The bridge wardens in Edenbridge used surplus cash from the rents they received to buy hemp for the poor to spin. Flax was grown in the meadow opposite Newhouses below the Edenbridge (top) Station and dried in the flax barn behind the watermill in the High Street. It was spun by older women who sold it for 4d a ball. The yarn was used for stitching shoes made with leather from Edenbridge tannery.

Women at the workhouse at Somerden Green were paid to spin wool, leather and flax to make cloth for the vestry.



Common Soapwort

Image: [www.lookandlearn.com](http://www.lookandlearn.com)

## Tools

Wool was carded before spinning to get rid of the tangles. Hand-spinning was undertaken using tools called a distaff and spindle which looked like two sticks.

Carded fibres were wound onto the spindle, twisted together to form a strand and then wound onto the distaff, which was attached to a belt at the woman's waist. The spinning wheel was introduced to Britain in the late Middle Ages. Although, spinners provided their own equipment, parish accounts for Cowden in 1793, record payments for spinning wheel repairs.



A woman spinning flax

Image: MET DT4702, Wikimedia Commons





Spinning in middle ages

Image: Smithfield Decretals, British Library, Wikimedia Commons

## Dyeing

In Kent, wool was dyed before weaving. The method was known as 'dyed in the wool'. Dyes used in Cranbrook included scarlet, russet, damson, ginger, blue medley, grey, orange tawney and green medley. Orangey red came from the leaves of the madder plant, woad produced a blue dye and weld, a yellow dye which had been used since Roman times. The Sumptuary Laws, which were introduced in Tudor times were intended to support the textile trade but they also restricted the colours that people wore. Lower class women, for example could only wear brown, yellow, beige, green and grey. Royalty could wear purple and bright red which was expensive because it was imported from Brazil.

# Weaving

There were usually a couple of weavers in every parish. Weaving was always undertaken by men and required an apprenticeship which, from 1557 was officially a minimum of seven years, although the rule was not always observed in market towns. Apprentices tended to be sons of gentry, yeomen and farmers. However, support was available in Cowden for poor families who could not afford the outlay. The Weaver's Act of 1555 only allowed one or two looms and apprentices to each master practising in a rural area. The intention was to restrict their activities to enable industry to flourish in corporate and market towns, such as Edenbridge. By 1603, they could only engage apprentices within a three-mile radius.

A number of weavers practised in Edenbridge between the 15th and 18th centuries. Richard Spatcherst was one of them. He granted another weaver, John Skelton in 1499 to use Batts, a house with outbuildings and a meadow which Richard had acquired from John Bates of Cowden. The site is now occupied by Coral Bookmakers at 66 High Street. Richard lived in a property called Falconers on a site which is now the corner of Croft Lane. On his death, Richard bequeathed his broad loom with rods, shaftes, shuttles and *sleas* to his son, John and a new loom to his son Richard. A slea was a frame strung with parallel wires used on a loom to separate the warp threads. Today, they are called reeds. Another weaver called Thomas Spatcherst gifted to Edenbridge parish church in 1524, a 'coverleth' for the high altar. This was probably a dust cover made of 'say' (a woollen cloth) on to which the linen cloths or 'towels' were placed.

A weaver called William Buss left half his rough cloth and all his yarn and tussow to his wife Denys on his death in 1520. Tussow was probably a variation

on 'tussham', a word used in West Kent for hemp or flax. Weaver, Christopher Allinson left a 'wevyng Lowme' to each of his sons, James and William in 1543.

Weaver Thomas Heirste, who died in 1582, left all his goods to his wife, Anna Hoggatt. She died in child birth shortly afterwards and left his loom to her sister Margaret and six "slyes" (sleas) to her brother Thomas.

There were several weavers in the Barnes family. Weaver, Thomas Barnes appears to have supplemented his income in 1685 by carrying stone from Starborough Castle to repair the Great Stone Bridge in town. (The castle was dismantled during the Civil War to prevent it becoming a Royalist stronghold.)

According to Somers-Cock's book 'Edenbridge', weaving also took place in a farmhouse near Skeynes called Brook House where windows were installed to allow women to continue their craft.

## Fulling

In medieval times, cloth had to be 'fulled' to strengthen the weave. The natural oils and lanolin in the wool were removed using fuller's earth, chamber-lye or soap. Marl was also used in the fulling of cloth and perhaps in Edenbridge, where there were marl pits. Before mechanisation, men called walkers trod down the cloth in water-troughs for about eight hours until the cloth compacted like felt. The cloth was then stretched on tenter-frames and left to dry in the fields. The saying, 'on tenterhooks' derives from the hooks used for this purpose.

The Flemish introduced the fulling mills to Kent in the 14th century. The great oak hammers of the fulling mills were operated by water power which pounded the cloth in running water. Fulling mills were once as common as

corn mills. There used to be a fulling mill at Seal near Sevenoaks and possibly at Buxton, which is described as Buxton-on -the-Water in the 16th century will of Edenbridge clothier, Richard Seyliarde.

## Shearing

When the woollen cloth was dry, it was sent to the shearer who trimmed off the loose ends of wool to create a smooth finish. Some cloth was roughed up with teasels which were dragged across its surface to create a nap. There are no records of shearers for the Eden Valley although there is one recorded for Sevenoaks.

## Kentish broadcloth and the new draperies

Mercers in the Weald dealt in broadcloth, a heavy standardised woollen cloth produced for the export market. Full length broadcloth made in London measured just over a yard in width, a minimum of twenty-eight yards long (when wet) and weighed at least eighty-six pounds. During the 14th century, broadcloth made outside London was often not full length and was either a half-cloth called duodenum or dozens or short narrow cloths called straits. Men called ulnagers were employed to check the measurements of each finished piece, known as a medley cloth.

During the 15th century the range of fabric was more diverse. Kersleys were made in all parts of the Weald and their quality improved in the 15th century. Kersleys were similar to broadcloth but lighter and shorter and made from short carded wool. They were the main export for Italy and Spain.



Lindsey walsey was a coarse twill fabric with a linen warp and a woollen weft and is mentioned in the Cowden parish account books. It was warm, cheap and durable fabric and used for making for gowns worn by working class women between the late 17th century and early 18th century.

Worstedes were introduced by the Dutch and Walloon weavers who arrived in England in the 14th century. Worstedes were one of the new draperies which were made from combed wool and had a special finish. The Dutch were able to make stronger, finer yarn without fulling.

Parish records for Cowden show that the overseers bought tow to make 80 ells of yard broad canvas which was sold for 12d an ell (45 inches). Canvas was an unbleached cloth made from hemp or flax and used for making shirts and aprons. It was coarser in texture than cotton made today, available in different qualities and sometimes trimmed.

Other fabrics included grogynes, a coarse woollen cloth, a mock velvet called mockadoes and sackcloth. Canterbury weavers made tiffanie which was a bit like muslin and a mixed fibre cloth called Phil and Cheyney.

## Clothiers

Cloth production was organised by clothiers, men who put out raw materials to independent spinners, dyers, weavers, fullers and shearmen. Clothiers were responsible for sorting their wool into lengths and the length of the wool was called the staple. Short, curly wool was 2 inches long and fine wool was 5-6 inches. Many clothiers practised their activities in rural locations and sold their wares in towns such as the Woodgates of Chiddingstone. They also arranged the export of cloth which they gave their own distinctive mark or initials. The livery companies in London had their own marks. The Edenbridge trade token

issued by Robert Alchorne shows the Mercers Arms, the bust of a woman with flowing tresses.

## The Seyliarde Family

Four brothers within the Seyliarde Family of Edenbridge were involved in clothmaking during the 16th century. Thomas and John were mercers, William a tailor and Richarde, a clothier. Richarde Seyliarde's will reveals that he had a farm in 'Buxton on the water'. Buxton was involved in cotton and silk manufacture. Richarde was a wealthy mercer and left a number of valuable items to his wife including a bedstead (a frame with slats or ropes across it) bed hangings, coverlets, pillows, blankets and his featherbed. Only the rich could afford a featherbed which was essentially a cloth bag or 'tick' filled with feathers, a bit like a duvet. (Poor people slept on a straw-filled bag on the floor.) Richarde Seyliarde's bed was most likely the most luxurious piece of furniture in his house and would have a comfortable place to entertain his guests and show off his textiles. Richarde appears to have had close associations with the Throgmorton family as he bequeathed his best geldings to his cousin Thomas Throgmorton and to his friend Humphrey Dike, 'my graye nagge called Eaton'. (Nicholas Throgmorton was the chief Banker of England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I and Throgmorton Street in London was the site of the Drapers Hall.)

## The Woodgate Family

The Woodgate family owned land in Chiddingstone, Cowden, Hever and Edenbridge and several family members dealt in textiles. John and William

Woodgate (and Chiddingstone mercer, William Hunt) took part in the Jack Cade's rebellion in 1450, although the two men were subsequently pardoned. The rebels, many of whom were clothworkers were rebelling against the economic depression which affected Europe at the time. Thomas and Peter Woodgate of Truggers were 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century clothiers.

Clothier, Thomas Woodgate, who married Elizabeth Knapp purchased a property called Truggers at Rensley Heath in Chiddingstone in 1544. The property is now known as Woodgates. He left Truggers to his son Peter, who was also a clothier and built the great house at Summerhill in Tonbridge. Thomas and Peter sold their cloth in Cranbrook and Hawkhurst which were the chief centres for the cloth trade in Kent. Peter Woodgate built Stonewall Park in Chiddingstone Hoath.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Woodgates had connections with the silk trade. through Anne Woodgate (1774-1848) who was the daughter of William Woodgate of Summerhill and Francis Hooker. In 1802, Anne married Peter Nouaille who owned the silk mills at Greatness in Sevenoaks and they had five children. Peter Nouaille's fortune amounted to £10000 a year. He bought cottages for his workforce and supplied silk to Royalty and nobility. Took over the business from his father, also a Peter senior's wife, Elizabeth whom he married in 1761 - her ancestors were refugees from France in 1686. Peter Nouaille senior greatly increased production of the greatness silk mills. With skills in engineering and mathematics, he was able to invent new mechanical parts which were more advanced than other mills in Britain at the time. Introduced crêpe, (a silk fabric with a crimped appearance) to Britain before they were imported from Bologna. Abacus furniture is located on the site of the old silk mills. The mill pond is still there. The Nouailles used the mills to produce silk until 1828.



Woodgates (formally Truggers) Chiddingstone

## Mercers

Mercers were merchants who were involved in the export of woollen cloth and the import of luxury fabrics such as silks, velvets and fine linens which came from Flanders and the Ottoman Empire. Some mercers were clearly wealthy but many were provincial shop keepers in an income bracket similar to yeomen and they sold other goods as well. Not all mercers were affiliated to the London livery companies. During the 17th century, some mercers issued trade tokens when small change was lacking, such as Henry Constable who issued a trade token for Penshurst.

Shops emerged around the 1500s. They were useful because they sold items that people could not make themselves, although only wealthier people could afford to use them. Poor people shopped in markets because the items were cheaper, although markets began to decline after the 1600s (Edenbridge became a chartered market in 1272.) The nobility shopped in fairs where they

could find agricultural goods, cloth, yarn, household items and a few specialities.

## Robert Alchorne of Edenbridge

During the 17th century, woollendrapers, Robert Alchorne and Wil Ablet issued a trade token for Edenbridge. The symbol on the face of the token denotes their membership of the Company of Mercers in London. In 1669, Robert sold a building and shops to mercer, Richard Tucker of Buxted in East Sussex where the other branch of the Alchorne family resided and clothier of Edenbridge, Richard Seyliarde owned a farm there. Buxted is known to have been a centre for silk weaving which had been taught by the Flemish refugee silk weavers.



Alchorne Rebus: by kind permission of the Sussex Archaeological Society

## Mercers and shops

Late 1500s – shops found in smaller towns in many areas of the country. People bought wares they couldn't produce themselves. However, markets had advantages as they were cheaper, even though they were held

intermittently. Shops were for wealthier people. Markets sold food stuffs, craft goods and household wares. Markets declined after 1600s. Trade went on in inns. Fairs were frequented by the nobility who bought goods in large quantities at different fairs. Most fairs sold agricultural goods and the by-products of cloth and yarn. Household goods and a few luxuries. Charters granted to fairs in Edenbridge 1272, Tonbridge 1241 and Westerham 1227.

## Ellis Jenner and John Stanford

Ellis Jenner was a mercer and tallow chandler who owned a shop in Edenbridge during the 17th century. His goods included oil and Holland which he sold to the church. Holland was a name attributed to any plain, woven linen imported from Europe.

When Ellis died in 1705, John Stanford took over the shop. John was also a parish overseer and supplied the church with a new pulpit and pew cloth, 6 ells of a bag of Holland for communion, linen whiting (whitewash), lamp black (ink), glue, shovel and nails. He also signed a document pledging to defend Edenbridge against the intrusion of the Vicar of Westerham in 1710. The incumbent at the time was George Lewis (senior) who recorded in meticulous detail the Beating of the Bounds, a regular event which took place to establish the extent of parish boundaries. John Stanford's son James, born in 1716 was a notorious smuggler in Hawkhurst! (The 'owlers' met regularly at the Mermaid Inn, Rye.) When James died, his brother Henry refused to be his executor. Henry was also a mercer and took over the business when his father died.

## The Gainsford family

The Gainsford family owned the shop in Cowden in the 18th century. Edward Gainsford, a mercer and parish overseer stocked cloth, buttons, thread, oil, candles, a basin, stair broom, nails, a saw and lanterns, which in 1767, he supplied to the church. At various times he sold cloth, hose, waistcoats, frocks, leather stays, tobacco and pipe, sieve thread, crockery, pins and even a wedding ring. When his father died, he inherited the White Horse and also a building and garden near the Crown.

## The Mercers of Chiddingstone Shop

The Manor House in Chiddingstone High Street was purchased by Thomas Boleyn, Anne Boleyn's father in 1517. The Beecher family acquired the property in 1592 and the farm, which had twenty acres, known as Shoplands. The shop which adjoins it dates from 1621. George Beecher, who was a wealthy mercer purchased the property in 1636 after trading there for over ten years. George's second wife was called Jane and they had two children. The couple's initials are carved into the Italian panelling above the fireplace in the front room. When George died he was buried in Chiddingstone between his first wife and his father. He bequeathed several items of value to Jane including two featherbeds with bolsters, pillows, sheets and blankets and his "tapestry coverlet with the valence of Irish stitch". The latter is thought to be white-work on linen. He also left three chairs of Tustaffaty, a type of taffeta with a tufted pile.



In 1667, one of George Beecher's daughters married Thomas Harrison who was also a mercer. The Beechers sold the property to Henry Streatfeild in 1669 for £306 who leased it to mercer and shop keeper, Nicholas Piggott.



Chiddingstone village showing the Manor House and shop

EDEVT: P2001.1.113

## Cowden Shop

During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a mercer, church warden and parish overseer called John Osborne ran the shop in the square. In 1663, he also issued a trade token to the value of one farthing because, at the time, there was a lack of small change. The family appear to have been fairly prosperous because when John died in 1680, they paid a fine of £5 to ensure that he was not buried in woollens.



17<sup>th</sup> century trade token issued by John Osborne of Cowden.

Image. Dix Noonan Webb

## The Streatfeild Family

During the 16th century, the Streatfeild family of Chiddingstone made a fortune from cloth and iron and provided much employment for local clothworkers in the village. Henry Streatfeild bought all the houses beside his own and also purchased Bore Place. In the 17th century, he replaced his old brick house, which had been in the family since the 1500s, with a Carolean manor house with formal gardens.

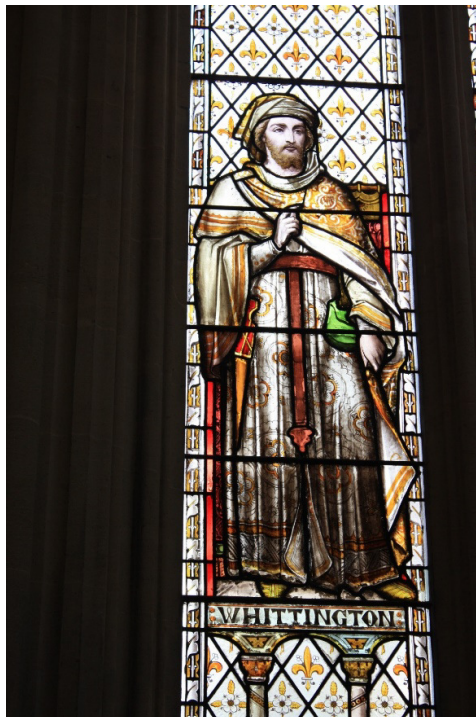
## The Hyde Family

William Hyde was apprenticed to Ralph Lee, a master draper with connections in the Levant. The length of his bond was 7 years and began on the 13<sup>th</sup> June 1666. William's father, Bernard was a London merchant and member of the Salter Company and one of the Commissioners of Excise of King Charles I. The Hyde's owned a number of properties in Kent including Bore Place in

Chiddingstone. They were Parliamentarians during the Civil War and raised a great deal of money for the cause.

## Dick Whittington

Lord Mayor of London, Richard Whittington was an immensely wealthy mercer who loaned money to kings and, one of six men responsible for Broxham Manor in Edenbridge. He sold damasks and velvets from his shop in London and provided cloths of gold and other finery for the bridal outfits for the daughters of King Henry IV. He opened a market for broadcloth at Blackwall Hall in the city of London and appointed the Mercer's Company as trustees for the charities he supported.



Dick Whittington as portrayed in the stained glass of the Guildhall in London.

Image: Stephendickson, Creative Commons

# Geoffrey Boleyn

Geoffrey Boleyn was the son of a tenant farmer from Norfolk who married Anne Hoo, the daughter of Thomas Hoo of Hastings. Geoffrey was also Anne Boleyn's great grandfather and bought Hever Castle and Hever Brocas in 1462.

He started his career as an apprentice hatter in London and obtained his freedom in 1428 but afterwards, decided to become a mercer instead.

Geoffrey was knighted by King Henry VI and was appointed Lord Mayor of London 1458 but died five years after. Geoffrey was buried in the Church of St Jewry in the City of London but like many buildings, it was destroyed in the Great Fire of London.

Apprentice hatters learnt how to craft felt for hats in beaver or rabbit fur. Once the pelts were wetted and dried, the hatter sloughed off the fur using a bow strung with catgut. The vibration of the strings against the fur caused the loose fibres to fly off into a heap. The fibres were then covered with a wet linen cloth and worked until they formed a piece of felt. The material was boiled for seven hours and worked on a shelf over steam to make it pliable. It was then ready to mould over a wooden block. Once formed, the hat was smoothed and finished with a pumice stone; a process known as pouncing.





Geoffrey Boleyn and his mother Alice at Ss Peter and Paul. Salle.

Image: Julian P. Guffogg, Creative Commons





15th century gargoyle depicting a hatter

Image: Alex-David Baldi , [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)

## The Company of Mercers

The Mercer's Company is one of the Livery Companies of London which was established in 1347. The merchants it admitted traded in a wide range of commodities including linens, woollens, furs, silks, wine, salt, oils, lead and wood. The brotherhood was governed by four masters who were appointed each year. Sir John Gresham who owned Edenbridge was master four times. During the dissolution of the monasteries, the king demanded that they return all their chantries, chapels, colleges, jewels and silver but the Company

managed to buy it all back. The Mercer's Hall and its property were destroyed in the Great Fire of London. However, the Company still managed to pay £65,979 to rebuild the Royal Exchange. They moved into Gresham College and rebuilt the hall and the school.



The Mercers Maiden Corbet Court, City of London.

Image: Julian Walker, Flickr.com

## Sir John Gresham

Sir John Gresham was a mercer, Merchant Adventurer\* and Lord Mayor of London who became chief minister to King Henry VIII. He owned Edenbridge and lived at Titsey Place in Surrey. Gresham was apprenticed for seven years to London mercer, John Middleton and became a freeman of the Company of Mercers in 1517.\*\* Gresham amassed his fortune through his international trading activities in fine textiles, mainly in the Low Countries and the Levant. He also imported other commodities such as grain, timber, skins and spices. After the wars with Scotland and France, he loaned a vast amount of money to the king to cover his debts which he raised (with interest) through the money markets in Antwerp, the centre of the cloth trade. He was also trading agent to



Thomas Cromwell and Cardinal Wolsey to whom he supplied hangings in cloths of gold for his closet at Hampton Court.

\* The Company of Merchant Adventurers was a branch of the Company of Mercers, who established themselves at Antwerp in the early 13th century. \*\*some terms were over twelve years in the 14th century.



Sir John Gresham

Image: Ann Longmore-Etheridge, Flickr.com

## Sir John Pultenay

Sir John Pultenay was a rich wool merchant and member of the Company of Drapers. He bought Penshurst Place in 1340 and he built the Great Hall.

Pultenay was appointed Lord Mayor of London four times and often advanced money to King Edward III. On the 18th October 1337, was given permission to send 160 sacks of wool custom free to Bruges to pay for the ransom of William Montague, first Earl of Salisbury. He fell out of favour with the king over his

business dealings and was subsequently put under arrest when he returned to England and imprisoned at Somerton Castle. Pultenay died in 1349, the year of the Black Death, although it is not known whether the plague was the cause.



The Barons Hall, Penshurst Place

Image: Michael Garlick, CreativeCommons

## Hosiers

After the 16th century, men wore knitted stockings in wool or silk, depending on what they could afford. Before then, they wore hose which comprised stockings and breeches (or pants) stitched together, a bit like a pair of tights. Cloth for stockings was bias cut to make the stockings stretchy. During the 18th century, hose was sold by the mercer, Edward Gainsford at his shop in Cowden.

## Tailors

Each parish had a tailor and records for Edenbridge during the 16th century include merchant tailor, William Seyliarde in the 16th century (a relative of John Seyliarde who owned Church House) and Robert Sharpe, a tenant of William Seyliarde. He also owned a property called Whistlers, formerly owned

by the Alchorne family. During the 17th century, tailor John Coster from East Grinstead was apprenticed to John Burton of Edenbridge. He lived at Ashcombes owned by William Shoebridge, a flaxman and licenced victualler of the White Horse. John Tayler appears to have been a wealthy tailor (i.e., he paid tax on five hearths.)

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