

The 1522 Military Survey of Gloucestershire

In 1522 King Henry VIII ordered Cardinal Wolsey to organise a nationwide fiscal and military survey in the anticipation of war between England and France. Throughout much of his reign Henry VIII's foreign ambitions clashed with those of the French king and on several occasions Henry imposed taxes or forced loans in order to build up and maintain the nation's military strength. The intention of the 1522 survey was to record information on each parish to include the names of the lord of the manor, the lord's steward, the land owners and their tenants, the value of their land and goods, and the value of the local church. The valuations would then be used to calculate a loan to the king, although this was not revealed to those surveyed at the time. In addition, all male inhabitants over the age of 15 were to provide details of the weapons and armour they possessed and their fitness for military service. As grand as this sounds, very few returns actually recorded the required information in such detail. On the one hand it is fortunate that the return for Fairford has survived (the majority have not) but on the other hand it is unfortunate that the return only provides names and valuations. Despite this limitation, the 1522 survey is useful in that it provides the names of 27 inhabitants of Fairford, 22 of whom also appear in the more detailed and more extensive 1523 Lay Subsidy. The values given in the 1522 survey are those that the king could expect to be 'loaned'.

The lord of the manor of Fairford in 1522 was the king himself and the survey states that although "the vill" was worth £30 this was not included in the total value as the king would just have been taxing himself, not something that Henry VIII was ever likely to do! The Tame family had leased the manor since 1479 and Sir Edmund Tame (called Edward in the survey) had been appointed steward of the manor of Fairford by Henry VIII in 1520. Sir Edmund was valued in the 1522 survey at £10, surprisingly low and certainly not the highest individual value. The highest valuations belonged to Nicholas Fitzherbert, Richard Sympson and Richard Stichall, each valued at £26. Sir Alexander Baynham (1459-1524) of Westbury-on-Severn held some land or property in Fairford but was only valued at £3 10 shillings so presumably was not extensive. Sir Alexander was lord of the manor of Mitcheldean and held property in Chesterton, English Bicknor, Ruardean, Staunton, Tarlton, and Westbury. He was also steward of Blaisdon, Fretherne, Little Dean and Flaxley Abbey. Bradenstoke Priory of Augustinian canons near Lyneham in Wiltshire had been granted one hide of land in Milton End as long ago as 1216 and this land was valued at £2 13 shillings in the survey. The Prioress of the small Benedictine nunnery at Studley in Oxfordshire must have held a very small amount of property in Fairford as she was assessed at only four shillings, the lowest figure in the valuation. The Prioress is not named in the survey but she was Catherine Cobcot who was elected in 1515 and died in 1529.

The list of the people and their valuation in the 1522 Military Survey is as follows:

Sir Edmund Tame	£10
Sir Alexander Baynham	£3 10s
John Bedall	£3
The Prior of Bradenstoke	£1 13s
The Prioress of Studley	4s
Richard Clerk	no valuation

John Coke	£12
Robert Corke	£2
Thomas Emote	£10
Robert Fant junior	£10
John Foule	no valuation
Nicholas Fitzherbert	£26
John Hewes	£16
John Hicheman	£8
John Hogges	£13
John Jonson	£6
William Manne	£12
Richard More	£10
Thomas Pole	£3
Walter Pole	£4
Thomas Prior	£3
Thomas Sendall	£4
Richard Stevyns	£3
Richard Stichall	£25
William Stokes	£16
Richard Sympson	£26
Thomas Tippar	£10

From their wills we can see that Richard Stichall was a mercer, Robert Fant was a tanner, Thomas Emote was a yeoman, and John Hicheman, Thomas Prior and Thomas Tippar were all husbandmen.

Cardinal Wolsey underestimated the amount of revenue that the forced loan would bring in, especially as many of the valuations were themselves underestimated, probably on purpose, and many of the poorer folk were simply not included. The lack of completeness of the survey in the eastern part of Gloucestershire is almost certainly due to the looser interpretation of the requirements by the commissioners. The commissioner for the Hundred of Brightwells Barrow is not known but could well have been Sir Edmund Tame. The king's continuing need for money resulted in the Subsidy Act of 1523 which imposed further taxes between 1523 and 1527. Information on how these taxes were levied on Fairford residents can be found in the Topic 1523 Lay Subsidy.

This article is based on information in the excellent publication 'The Military Survey of Gloucestershire, 1522' edited by R W Hoyle and published by the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, 1993.