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that is, there were some 160 adult males in the Frome valley, which means a total population of about seven to eight hundred.

Bisley was then the mother church of Stroud and district; not until 1304 is there a mention of a chapel at Stroud and not until 1360 was the latter place cut off as a separate ecclesiastical parish.

WOOL MEANT WEALTH

The fourteenth century saw the turning point in the fortunes of the Valley. In that century, Edward III allowed seventy families of Flemings to settle in England; some came to the Stroud district. These folk were skilled weavers. During this period, too, there came the introduction of the true Cotswold, or Lion, breed of sheep; these were large animals yielding good fleeces which had to be shorn.

The Flemings, and the locals, too, soon found that there were other natural advantages; not only was there plenty of wool close at hand, but there was Fullers Earth to de-grease the wool, and the water was especially suitable for dyeing and cleansing; there were several native plants, for example, woad to use as dyes. As a consequence, the weaving industry rapidly developed in the Frome Valley, and by 1440 we hear of Painswick as a centre for weaving on a commercial scale. Not for another hundred years, 1555, to be exact, is there any record of Stroud as a cloth centre, but by that time, all the villages from Cotswold to Severn were busily engaged in weaving cloth from the wool of Cotswold sheep.

In 1608, a military census was made and the lists of able-bodied men in each parish between the ages of twenty and sixty were compiled; these lists also give the occupations, so that we can get some idea of the importance of the cloth trade. Here are some figures: males

Parish	Total	Men engaged in cloth trade
Bisley	137	47
Leonard Stanley	67	30
King's Stanley	146	80
Stonehouse	92	29
Eastington	60	50
Frampton	114	18
Fretherne	20	5

from which it will be seen that some 44% of the men in the Valley were working, in some way or another, in the cloth trade.

The trade continued to expand during the century, and by 1695 Stroud was producing cloth worth £500,000 a year—no mean sum in those days. There

Flamode. This enterprise soon proved successful and in 1792 the canal was extended through the Sapperton Tunnel to link up with the Thames. This canal flourished until the coming of the railways in the mid-nineteenth century. The first line from London reached Stroud in 1845.

The weavers of the district still worked mainly in their homes; wool was brought to them and they wove it on their hand looms in their cottages, at their own inclination and in their own time. The workers thus were independent and conservative; they were their own masters, up to a point. This proved, in part, their undoing for when the larger, mechanised mills began to be set up in the early nineteenth century, the weavers resented the loss of personal freedom that becoming wage-earners with set hours entailed. There were disputes about wages, for example, at Chalford in 1825, when a strike of local hand-loom weavers threw some five thousand workers out of employment for a considerable time. The unemployed became mischievous and troops had to be called in before order was restored. The introduction of machinery was resented, too, for many feared that they would be thrown out of work as a consequence.

The mill-owners, too, were unduly conservative; they prided themselves—and with justification—on the fine quality of their cloth and they were slow to adapt themselves to the production of the fancy cloths and cheaper worsteds that were increasingly in demand. There was increased competition from abroad. The wool of the local Cotswold breed of sheep—which had been the main source of supply for so many centuries—became coarser as larger types of animals were bred. Finer and softer wools were being imported from abroad where improved breeds of Merino type of sheep were being reared. This foreign wool was, after the removal of the duty on imported wool in 1828, cheaper than the local wool. The clothiers of Yorkshire were swift to take advantage of the situation and they began to increase their output of the cloth that was in demand. The result for the Stroud valley was disastrous.

DECLINING CLOTH TRADE

Figures tell the story only too clearly. These are the census returns for the valley in selected years:

Parish	1831	1901
Stroud	8,607	10,785
Bisley	5,896	4,811
King's Stanley	2,438	1,845
Leonard Stanley	942	685
Frampton	1,055	797

The decline in the number of workers in Gloucestershire engaged in the cloth trade is shown by these figures:

1851	4,459 workers in the trade
1861	7,050 workers in the trade
1881	4,958 workers in the trade
1901	3,321 workers in the trade

There was much unemployment; many emigrated; the villages declined in population. Stroud, alone of the cloth centres, grew in population during the nineteenth century; this was as a result of the concentration of such cloth-making as there was in that town and its immediate surroundings. Mill after mill closed down, by 1906 there were only eleven mills at work in the whole of the Stroud valley.

And, on the hills, the sheep slowly disappeared too; the old Lion breed almost vanished. To-day there is but one flock of the old Cotswold breed still left on Cotswold, that is the one at Aldsworth. Fortunately, however, as the twentieth century passed, new and different industries have come into the valley to restore prosperity and give employment to the inhabitants. The ruins of the old mills, the derelict Stroudwater Canal, the names of some of the local inns (the Woolpack, the Clothiers' Arms, etc), and the various charities and other benefits bequeathed by the one-time wealthy clothiers, remain as mute witnesses of a time when the Frome valley was pre-eminent in the production of the finest cloth, of a trade which with its concomitant sheep-breeding, raised England to industrial greatness.

STROUD VALLEY THROUGH THE AGES

HOW WEAVING GAVE WAY TO OTHER TRADES

(By DR. T. A. RYDER)

THE human story of the Stroud, or Frome Valley, begins two hundred thousand years ago. Then, in a very different Gloucestershire, men of the River Drift Period made their homes on the gravel terraces of present day Frampton. Those early men were primitive, chinless, stooping, but capable of making tools, crude hand axes of stone, with which they hunted and killed the reindeer, musk-ox and other animals now extinct in Britain. The climate was colder then and the land levels were different, too.

There followed a very long period of which we know little so far as human occupation goes; not until some seven thousand years B.C. do we find the remains of men in the Frome Valley. These were the early Neolithic, or New Stone Age, folk who lived in settlements on Cotsall and who ceremoniously buried their dead in the many tumuli, or barrows, that are found on those hills from which the waters of the Frome rise.

By that time, certain advances had been made, a settled community life had been evolved, and as the prehistoric centuries passed, more arts were learned. The later Neolithic people grew and ground corn, and they wove into crude cloth the wool of the native wild Cotswold sheep that shed their wool in summer. During this later prehistoric period there appeared to have been but few settlements in the valley, and those like the earlier ones were on the Frampton gravels; that valley was then densely wooded and very marshy. Mainly on the scrub-covered limestone uplands did those early men dwell.

THE ROMANS

Then, early in the Christian Era, the Romans came to Britain, and by A.D. 47 they had conquered Gloucestershire east of the Severn. Within a century, the countryside had accepted the invaders and at Woodchester they built a magnificent country house, or villa; the tessellated pavement of its courtyard is still extant and world famous. Some weaving was probably carried out at this villa as at Chedworth further north. But still, the valley, as a whole was unsettled and wooded.

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were at that time, two dozen small mills at work in the parish of Painswick alone, and within a short time, there were eight fulling mills at Chalford.

The troubles of the Civil War do not seem to have seriously affected the industry of the Valley; in fact, Stroud and district has suffered little from the various wars and other disturbances that have affected other parts of the country. But developing trade brought other problems there was the demand for better means of transport; the eighteenth century saw the solution to that problem in two ways, roads and a canal.

IMPROVED TRANSPORT

Various turnpike trusts came into being; new roads were made during the latter half of the century and the early part of the nineteenth, roads through the Chalford and Slad valleys, from Nailsworth to Stroud and over the hills, and finally, in the 1830's the coach road from Stroud through Painswick to Cheltenham, then a flourishing and fashionable spa.

As more and more machinery was introduced and steam power became used, there was the need for a cheaper means of transport for the coal that was used, principally from the Forest of Dean, so a company was formed to construct a canal, and work was begun in 1775. Four years later, the Stroud-water Canal was opened and Stroud was linked by water with the Severn at Framilode. This enterprise soon proved successful and in 1792 the canal was extended through the Sapperton Tunnel to link up with the Thames. This canal flourished until the coming of the railways in the mid-nineteenth century. The first line from London reached Stroud in 1845.

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