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TO NESTA
WHO COUNTED MANY SHEEP
AND MUCH WOOL

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Preface

The importance of the wool trade in English history was clearly recognised by the first generation of native economic historians in the late nineteenth century. The index of the medieval volume of W. Cunningham's *The Growth of English Industry and Commerce*, for example, lists no fewer than 41 entries under the heading 'wool' and 19 under 'staple'. Despite certain changes in interpretation, Cunningham's work, like that of his great contemporary, J. E. Thorold Rogers, may still be read with far less consciousness of its being 'dated' than is experienced in reading most of the political histories written in that period. With economic history established as a discipline the wool trade did not wait long for researchers who singled it out for special treatment. R. J. Whitwell's 'English Monasteries and the Wool Trade in the Thirteenth Century' (1904) remains a classic, although, like other notable pieces of English scholarship of the early twentieth century, it appeared in a German publication. Some other specialist works of the same period are best passed over in silence, but mention must be made of the study by Adolf Schaube (1908). Although not without its limitations, Schaube's article has been used, or at least acknowledged, by every succeeding generation of historians.

The period of the First World War saw a stream of valuable studies by A. E. Bland, J. C. Davies, D. Hughes, S. B. Terry, T. F. Tout and G. Unwin and his pupils, all of whom, however, were concerned primarily with the role of the wool trade as a mainstay of royal finance. The inter-war years were dominated, of course, by the figure of Eileen Power, who broadened the field of study by dealing with the trade as a commercial activity. Although most of her published work was restricted to the fifteenth century, her Ford Lectures, issued posthumously as *The Wool Trade in English Medieval History*, has remained the only monograph devoted to the wool trade in general.

Immediately after the Second World War E. B. Fryde devoted a doctoral thesis to a re-examination of the wool trade in the early war finance of Edward III, much of which has subsequently been published in various articles. After this, new research into the wool trade tended to flag, although mention must be made of R. L. Baker's work

on the early customs and the publication by E. M. Carus-Wilson and O. Coleman of the wool export figures in *England's Export Trade, 1275-1547* (1963). Although most of the figures had already been published in various places they have been utilised far more by historians in their new form.

The present book was originally planned as a comprehensive study of the wool trade, incorporating new research as well as synthesising earlier knowledge. Unfortunately the harsh economic realities of present-day publishing have necessarily restricted its scope and certain topics, including sheep farming and the relationship between the wool trade and the shipping industry, have had to be excluded entirely, while others have been discussed in less detail than might seem desirable. The work of selection was influenced by knowledge of the fact that another scholar had impending a detailed study of the wool trade in the age of the Celys. There appeared to be little need, therefore, for the present writer to attempt to expand the commercial picture of the fifteenth century drawn by Eileen Power, since this enabled more space to be devoted to the marketing of wool in the early middle ages. Two important books, by G. L. Harris and G. Holmes, appeared only after the present work was completed and had been sent to the publisher. The former is particularly important since it proposes a major revision of Bertie Wilkinson's ideas, which have stood unchallenged for forty years, about parliamentary control of the wool subsidy. Although the present writer does not regard the new thesis as beyond dispute no revision of his own text could do justice to the ideas of any parties involved in the dispute and the matter has had to be passed over in silence.

In conclusion I would like to thank Professor R. H. Hilton, who read this book in manuscript, and Mrs J. Davies and Mrs J. Evans, who typed it.

Abbreviations used in Notes and Bibliography

<i>CCR</i>	<i>Close Rolls (1227–72) and Calendars of Close Rolls.</i>
<i>CChR</i>	<i>Calendar of Charter Rolls.</i>
<i>CFR</i>	<i>Calendars of Fine Rolls.</i>
<i>CPMR</i>	<i>Calendars of Plea and Memoranda Rolls (London).</i>
<i>CPR</i>	<i>Patent Rolls (1216–32) and Calendars of Patent Rolls.</i>
<i>EcHR</i>	<i>Economic History Review.</i>
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review.</i>
<i>Foedera</i>	<i>Foedera, Conventiones, Litterae (T. Rymer).</i>
<i>Letter Books</i>	<i>Letter Books of the City of London.</i>
<i>POPC</i>	<i>Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council.</i>
<i>PR</i>	<i>Pipe Rolls (Editions of the Pipe Roll Society).</i>
<i>Rev. Belge.</i>	<i>Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire.</i>
<i>Rot. Parl.</i>	<i>Rotuli Parliamentorum.</i>
<i>Rot. Litt. Claus.</i>	<i>Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum.</i>
<i>Rot. Litt. Pat.</i>	<i>Rotuli Litterarum Patentium.</i>
<i>Statutes</i>	<i>Statutes of the Realm.</i>
<i>TRHS</i>	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society.</i>
<i>VJSSWG</i>	<i>Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial-und-Wirtschafts-geschichte.</i>