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Daniel Defoe, A tour thro' the whole island of Great Britain, divided into circuits or journies

This low part of the country, between [Bridgewater](#) and [Bristol](#), suffered exceedingly in that terrible inundation of the sea, which was occasioned by the violence of the wind in the great storm, anno 1703, and the country people have set up marks upon their houses and trees, with this note upon them, " Thus high the waters came in the great storm": "Thus far the great tide flowed up in the last violent tempest"; and the like. And in one place they shewed us, where a ship was, by the force of the water, and the rage of the tempest, driven up upon the shore, several hundred yards from the ordinary high water mark, and was left in that surprizing condition upon dry land.

As this country is all a grazing, rich, feeding soil, so a great number of large oxen are fed here, which are sent up to London; so that now we come into the reach of my former observation, viz. That every county furnishes something for the supply of London, and no county in England furnishes more effectual provisions, nor, in proportion, a greater value than this. These supplies are in three articles.

1. Fat oxen (as above) as large, and good, as any in England.

2. Large Cheddar cheese, the greatest, and best of the kind in England.
3. Colts bred in great numbers in the moors, and sold into the northern counties, where the horse copers, as they are called, in Staffordshire, and Leicestershire, buy them again, and sell them to London for cart horses, and coach horses, the breed being very large.

As the low part of this county is thus employed in grazing and feeding cattle, so all the rest of this large extended country is employed in the woollen manufactures, and in the best, and most profitable part of it, viz.

In Taunton :	}	The Serges, druggets, &c. and several other kinds of stuffs.
In Wells , Shepton , Glastenbury , &c.	}	Knitting of stockings, principally for the Spanish trade.
In Bristol , and many towns on the Somersetshire side:	}	Druggets, cantaloons, and other stuffs.
In Froom , Philips-Norton , and all the country bordering upon Wiltshire:	}	Fine Spanish medley cloths, especially on that part of the county from Wincanton , and Meer , to Warminster , Bruton , Castle-cary , Temple Comb, down to Gillingham , and Shaftsbury , in Dorsetshire.

I mention this at large, because this trade of fine Spanish medley cloth, being the mix'd colours and cloths, with which all the gentlemen and persons of any fashion in England, are cloth'd, and vast quantities of which are exported to all parts of Europe, is so very considerable, so vast an advantage to England, maintains and supports so many poor families, and makes so many rich ones, that no man can be just in the description of things, and in a survey of this part of England, and not

enter into a particular description of it; the above you may take as an introduction to it, only I shall add but a little more, concerning this county of Somerset, and shall, upon my entering into the north-west and west parts of Wiltshire, where the center of this prodigy of a trade is, sum it all up together, and shew you the extent of land which it spreads itself upon, and give you room, at least, to make some guess at the numbers of poor people, who are sustain'd and enrich'd by it.

Four miles from [Glastonbury](#), lies the little city of [Wells](#), where is one of the neatest, and, in some respects, the most beautiful, cathedrals in England, particularly the west front of it, is one complete draught of imagery, very fine, and yet very antient.

This is a neat, clean city, and the clergy, in particular, live very handsomly; the Closs, or part of the city, where the Bishop's Palace is, is very properly called so; for it is walled in, and lock'd up like a little fortification, and has a ditch round it.

The dignified clergy live in the inside of it, and the prebendaries, and canons, which are very numerous, have very agreeable dwellings, and live very pleasantly. Here are no less than seven-and-twenty prebends, and nineteen canons, belonging to this church, besides a dean, a chancellor, a precentor, and three archdeacons; a number which very few cathedrals in England have, besides this.

Dugdale, in his *Monasticon*, tells us, that the church of [Wells](#) has given to the kingdom, one Cardinal, six High Chancellors, five High Treasurers, one Lord Privy Seal, one Lord President of Wales, one Secretary of State, all of them bishops of this diocess; the county is the diocess, and contains three hundred eighty-eight parishes, and the archdeaconries are of [Wells](#), [Bath](#), and [Taunton](#).

The city lies just at the foot of the mountains called Mendip Hills, and is itself built on a stony foundation. Its manufacture is chiefly of stockings, as is mentioned already; 'tis well built, and populous, and has several good families in it; so that there is no want of good company there.

Near this city, and just under the hills, is the famous, and so much talk'd of [Wokey Hole](#), which, to me, that had been in Pool's Hole, in the Peak of Derby, has nothing of wonder or curiosity in it; the chief thing I observed in this, is, what is generally found in all such subterraneous caverns; namely, That the water dropping from the roof of the vault, petrifies, and hangs in long pieces like isicles, as if it would, in time, turn into a column to support the arch. As to the stories of a witch dwelling here, as of a

gyant dwelling in the other (I mean in Pool's Hole) I take them to be equally fabulous, and worth no notice.

In the low country, on the other side Mendip Hills, lies [Chedder](#), a village pleasantly situated under the very ridge of the mountains; before the village is a large green, or common, a piece of ground, in which the whole herd of the cows, belonging to the town, do feed; the ground is exceeding rich, and as the whole village are cowkeepers, they take care to keep up the goodness of the soil, by agreeing to lay on large quantities of dung for manuring, and enriching the land.

The milk of all the town cows, is brought together every day into a common room, where the persons appointed, or trusted for the management, measure every man's quantity, and set it down in a book; when the quantities are adjusted, the milk is all put together, and every meal's milk makes one cheese, and no more; so that the cheese is bigger, or less, as the cows yield more, or less, milk. By this method, the goodness of the cheese is preserved, and, without all dispute, it is the best cheese that England affords, if not, that the whole world affords.

As the cheeses are, by this means, very large, for they often weigh a hundred weight, sometimes much more, so the poorer inhabitants, who have but few cows, are obliged to stay the longer for the return of their milk; for no man has any such return, 'till his share comes to a whole cheese, and then he has it; and if the quantity of his milk deliver'd in, comes to above a cheese, the overplus rests in account to his credit, 'till another cheese comes to his share; and thus every man has equal justice, and though he should have but one cow, he shall, in time, have one whole cheese. This cheese is often sold for six pence to eight pence per pound, when the Cheshire cheese is sold but for two pence to two pence halfpenny.

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