

holding from the Smyth estate 'One messuage or tenement called by the name of the howse in the lane with all out howses, barnes, stables, stalles, backsides, orchards and gardens' together with meadow, pasture and arable scattered throughout the parish including at Tucking Mill, Maesbury ford, Wallsdowne, Clayley, Wick path and Knowle gate. The annual rent was 6s 8d. Like the others who defied the Crown's attempts to confiscate the Church Estate land, William Lyons was not among the poorest parishioners, but he was far from rich. It is not possible to put precise figures on the wealth of these tenant farmers. Most of their wealth was in their livestock which provided their cash income from cheese and butter. Unlike most other counties Somerset has few probate inventories which would give detailed information about their possessions. In 1939 most of the inventories were taken to Exeter for safekeeping and stored in a chapel close to the cathedral. Later in the war this chapel was totally destroyed by a German bomb and all the documents were lost. Some information can be obtained from accounts which survive of the administration of the wills of two of the tenants. One is for William Horsington who died early in 1592/3.<sup>5</sup> His estate was administered by Thomas Horsington and William Holbrook and proved before the diocesan court in Wells on 23 March 1592, since all matters of wills and probate were dealt with by the Church courts. His goods and chattels were valued at the modest sum of £53 4s 8d.<sup>6</sup> His debts included £7 10s 0d owed to John Browne who had also resisted the Crown in its attack on the Church Estate, £7 5s 0d owed to William Butcher and £2 13s 0d owed to John Harris. William Holbrook who was an administrator of William Horsington's estate was one of the wealthiest of the Smyth tenants at Compton Dando. He lived in what was later known as Manor Farm, described as 'the mansion house of the manor of Compton Dando and one cottage adjoining'. He held a much larger acreage of land than most tenants, including the Park at Knowle, a close called Fyrry Hill and Dovehouse Close which is now known as Culverhays. The annual rent was the large sum of £3 17s 4d. Another defender of the Church Estate was William Lyons 'gent' who lived until 1635. He was presumably the son of William Lyons mentioned above. The administration account made at his death shows his total wealth as £84 19s 7d.<sup>7</sup> The administrators presented their account to the court at Wells on 4 August 1635 and this gives more detail of the expenses paid by the administrators:

Funeral expenses including meat & drink	£3	8s	0d
Tombstone	£1	2s	0d
Fixing the stone		1s	0d
Carriage from the quarry		6s	6d
For the mannes dyet that brought the stone		4s	0d
For rent	£1	0s	0d
To the proctors of the Court		3s	4d
For fodder for the cattle and kyne		4s	10d
Paid to William Brady of Pensford for a debt	£1	12s	0d
For copying the account		6s	8d
Expenses at Wells		17s	8d

It was tenant farmers such as these who were neither wealthy nor influential who stood up to the agents of the Crown when the right of the Church Estate to hold the former monastic land was challenged. In particular it was John Horsington and John Browne who were accused in the Royal Court in 1572 of illegally occupying Crown land in Compton Dando. The legal process was complex and protracted and it would require a great deal of additional