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Chapter Seven

FIGHTING SPIRIT

(I)

The Sieges of Bristol and Gloucester, 1643

Ugliest of all forms of human conflict is civil war, when the fighting takes place over your own land, and you are forced to watch damage and destruction inflicted on woods and fields, roads and rivers you know like the back of your hand, seeing crops trampled, livestock slaughtered, and houses set ablaze not by hated invaders but by your very own neighbours and fellow countrymen.

A nightmare scenario, and one that engulfed England between 1642 and 1646; a bitter, cruel, lawless time when ideology was often used as cover for the settling of private quarrels. A passing army might carry off your pigs and requisition your working horses, for instance, but that didn't quite explain why your best milking cow had ended up in your neighbour's byre.

Spies and informers frequented every inn, every meeting place, and there was no one you could trust not to betray a confidence. Nor could you be sure that the Royalist general you were fighting for would not suddenly defect to Parliament, or

Chapter Eight

GREAT MEN
OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE

William Tyndale 1494–1536

The most dangerous possession a man could own in England during the early years of the sixteenth century was a copy of the Bible in his native tongue. It wasn't just a question of a fine or prison: anyone caught with an English translation of the New Testament in his house risked being arrested, tortured on the rack, whipped, immured in a dark, cold, damp prison for months, then condemned to be burnt to death at the stake.

William Tyndale, who was born at Slimbridge and brought up in south Gloucestershire, was one of the most brilliant in a generation of exceptionally learned scholars. He spoke and wrote German, French, Italian, Latin, Hebrew, Greek and Spanish as well as English. At the age of 18 he took his BA at Oxford and his MA three years later.

While studying Greek and theology at Cambridge, he became a friend of Erasmus, who had lived long enough among monks to be openly critical of their corruption, pedantry and money-

Gloucester Old Spot Pigs

Easily recognised by the bold black splodges on a their thickly-bristled white skin and long floppy ears reaching down to their quizzical, upturned snouts, these charming pigs were traditionally kept to graze orchards and clear up windfalls on the Berkeley Vale's many dairy farms, and were fattened on the whey produced from butter-making.

Big, sturdy, full-bodied pigs with placid, laid-back natures, they are generally easy to handle, though a full-grown sow with her trotters on the door of her pen, squealing and slaving for her breakfast, is guaranteed to make the strongest man hurry up with the bucket of feed-nuts.

Spotted pigs are often seen in old paintings of rural scenes,



Gloucester Old Spot sow: a big, sturdy, full-bodied pig with a laid-back nature and a keen appetite for windfall apples.