

Writing the Manor: Manorial Officers and Rural Writing Culture, c. 1425–1518

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores late medieval rural writing culture as it was expressed in the documents produced by professional manorial officers on lay gentry estates. Studies of rural writing culture and of officers' writing have tended to focus on moments of complaint, or exceptional survivals; yet they have also drawn attention to the connection between officers' work and their writing, and to the complexity and multiplicity of a broader rural writing culture. To expand this work, this thesis turns instead to manorial documents, which represent a significant and normative body and practice of rural writing; examining them is to explore a neglected mass experience of rural writing.

Each chapter asks how officers and their labour were represented in manorial documents, examining in turn: manorial accounts from Mote, East Sussex; survey-type documents from four Kentish manors; and the remembrance book of an officer in Norfolk. This thesis takes what is – for these document classes – an unusually imaginative approach to their analysis, responding to calls to turn a more literary lens on administrative documents, and inspired by approaches developed in the study of legal documents and by literary and art history scholars.

This thesis draws together two well-established points – that manorial documents were important to the manor's integrity and prosperity, and that they might contain "fictional" elements – and takes the latter as more than a methodological challenge. It suggests that writing manorial documents provided officers with space to create a textual manor which had significance when it came to conceptualising and managing their reality. Officers were important participants in a rural writing culture; responsive to their audiences, comfortable in a multilingual textual space, and finding creative potential in the forms, processes, language, and conventions of manorial administration. Their work attests to the cultural vitality of the late medieval manor and its writing.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for a degree or other qualification at this University or elsewhere. All sources are acknowledged as references.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Account. Hist. J.	<i>The Accounting Historians Journal</i>
Account. Hist. Rev.	<i>Accounting History Review</i>
Agric. Hist. Rev.	<i>The Agricultural History Review</i>
AHR	<i>The American Historical Review</i>
Am. J. Legal Hist.	<i>The American Journal of Legal History</i>
AND	<i>Anglo-Norman Dictionary (AND² Online Edition)</i> , gen. ed. W. Rothwell, second edition (London: 2000–2012). < https://anglo-norman.net >
BBCS	<i>Bwletin Y Bwrdd Gwybodau Celtaidd / The Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies</i>
Bull. Hist. Med.	<i>Bulletin of the History of Medicine</i>
C&C	<i>Continuity and Change</i>
Cappelli	Adriano Cappelli, <i>Dizionario di Abbreviature latine ed italiane. Usate nelle carte e codici specialmente del medio-evo riprodotte con oltre 14000 segni incisi</i> (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1929).
Chaucer Rev.	<i>The Chaucer Review</i>
DMLBS	<i>Dictionary of Medieval Latin from Medieval Sources</i> . Ed. R. E. Latham, D. R. Howlett, and Richard Ashdowne. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2015. < https://clt.brepolis.net/dmlbs/ >
ESBHRO	East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office
Econ. Hist. Rev.	<i>The Economic History Review</i>
EHR	<i>The English Historical Review</i>
Hist. J.	<i>The Historical Journal</i>
Hist. Workshop J.	<i>History Workshop Journal</i>
JBS	<i>The Journal of British Studies</i>
J. Legal Hist.	<i>The Journal of Legal History</i>

J. Medieval Early Mod. Stud.	<i>The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies</i>
J. Mediev. Hist.	<i>Journal of Medieval History</i>
KA	Kent Archives
LHR	<i>Law and History Review</i>
L&S	<i>A Latin Dictionary, Lewis and Short Online.</i> < https://logeion.uchicago.edu/ >
MED	<i>Middle English Dictionary</i> . Ed. Robert E. Lewis, et al. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952–2001. Online edition in <i>Middle English Compendium</i> . Ed. Frances McSparran, et al. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 2000–2018. < http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/ >
NA	<i>Norfolk Archaeology: A Journal of Archaeology and Local History</i>
NRO	Norfolk Record Office
NMS	<i>Nottingham Medieval Studies</i>
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary Online</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023. < https://www.oed.com/ >
P&P	<i>Past & Present</i>
RES	<i>The Review of English Studies</i>
Soc. Hist. Med.	<i>Social History of Medicine: The Journal of the Society for the Social History of Medicine</i>
Stud. Biblio.	<i>Studies in Bibliography</i>
SAC	<i>Studies in the Age of Chaucer</i>
Trans. LAHS	<i>Transactions of The Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society</i>
TRHS	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>

EDITORIAL CONVENTIONS

Unless stated otherwise, translations are my own. I have not modernised the spelling or punctuation of vernacular sources. However, I have usually substituted 'J' for 'I' in words such as 'John' or 'Johannes'.

[[*]]	Denotes text which has been obscured or damaged in the original manuscript. The star indicates the number of letters (or numbers) which are estimated to have been lost.
[[]]	Denotes text that has been obscured or damaged, when it is not possible to accurately estimate the number of letters or numbers which have been lost.
Deletion	Denotes text which has been crossed through or deleted in some other way, but remains legible.
***	Denotes an estimation of the number of letters or numbers which have been crossed through or deleted and are not legible.
[blank]	Indicates where a gap has been left in the manuscript's text.
<u>Underlined</u>	Indicates when text has been underlined in the manuscript.
\text/	Denotes text which has been inserted above the line.
<i>Italics</i>	Denotes where I have expanded an abbreviation or contraction in the original text. However, where I have used italics in a translation, this indicates that I am using a word unchanged from the original text (e.g. 'net called <i>a Tramelnett</i> ')
tex'	An apostrophe indicates where I have not expanded an abbreviation mark in the original text.
— - /	Used to indicate lines that were included in the original text.
[text]	Single square brackets denote text which I have inserted either into a translation or into a transcription of the original text in order to improve the sense of the passage, or to provide a definition or explanation.
bold	Used for emphasis.

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INTRODUCTION

In the later fifteenth century – between approximately 1470 and 1500 – Robert Reynes of Acle created the manuscript which is now known as Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Tanner 407.¹ While it now forms a single commonplace book, MS Tanner 407 was originally eight unbound quires collated into booklets – probably four of them – which Reynes used concurrently.² Reynes covered these booklets with his ‘conservative’ document hand in red and black ink, even labouring over a small drawing of Christ’s scratched and battered heart.³ Cameron Louis, the editor of the manuscript, argues that Reynes began each booklet with different intentions and then, over the years, their purposes changed: for instance, a miscellany was later used as a guild book, while a formulary of contracts and other legal documents became a miscellaneous collection.⁴ Its variety is part of the delight of Reynes’ manuscript. It contains entries related to his activities as a ‘fairly prosperous’ member of Acle’s peasantry and others which are relevant to various facets of his rather “portfolio” career.⁵ Beyond that it is filled with an assortment of material including poetry, a Latin

¹ Cameron Louis, the editor of Robert Reynes’ commonplace book, discusses the attribution of the manuscript, arguing that the evidence is strong that Reynes was its sole creator. He also explains his deduction that c. 1470–c. 1500 is a likely period for composition. Cameron Louis, ed., *The Commonplace Book of Robert Reynes of Acle: An Edition of Tanner MS 407*, Garland Medieval Texts 1 (London: Garland Publishing, 1980), 6–8, 25–27.

² Louis, 11–13. I have followed Louis in referring to Reynes’ manuscript as a ‘commonplace book’ both for simplicity’s sake and because it communicates that MS Tanner 407 grew over time and was created by and for the same individual, responding to their requirements, interests, and context. Reynes, however, may never have considered these various booklets to be a single book or work. However, as Louis himself has discussed, the term ‘commonplace book’ has been regarded as a ‘largely unsatisfactory’ (Louis, 99) descriptor which has often been applied rather indiscriminately. For discussions and criticisms of how ‘commonplace book’ has been used as a descriptor and a concept in relation to medieval manuscripts, and for delineations of its definition, see Louis, 99–103; Margaret Connolly, ‘Compiling the Book’, in *The Production of Books in England 1350–1500*, ed. Alexandra Gillespie and Daniel Wakelin, Cambridge Studies in Palaeography and Codicology 14 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 129–149 (143–146); Deborah Youngs, *Humphrey Newton (1466–1536): An Early Tudor Gentleman* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008), 179–181. Derek Pearsall not only discusses the definition of the term ‘commonplace book’ and its use, but points to Reynes as the ‘best test case’ for defining what he terms a “Type 4” miscellany’. Derek Pearsall, ‘The Whole Book: Late Medieval English Manuscript Miscellanies and Their Modern Interpreters’, in *Imagining the Book*, ed. Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson, Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe 7 (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2005), 17–29 (23–24).

³ Louis, *Commonplace Book of Reynes*, 10–11, 14, 34. Reynes substituted the word ‘heart’ (or ‘herte’) for a drawing of that organ in a Middle English poem about the Passion of Christ. Louis, 14, 300 (#98), 489; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Tanner 407, f. 52v. ‘#98’ is the number which Louis ascribes to this entry in his edition of MS Tanner 407. To aid identification, I will use Louis’ numbering system to identify entries in Reynes’ commonplace book.

⁴ Louis, *Commonplace Book of Reynes*, 23.

⁵ Louis, 33. I will discuss entries related to Reynes’ role on the manor in more detail below. I will also introduce the other aspects of Reynes’ “portfolio” career. For examples of entries related to other aspects of his career, see Louis, 121–139 (#1, #2), 154–157 (#20), 161–162 (#22a, #22b), 174–175 (#32, #33), 191–228 (#46–#49), 272–273 (#86), 315–318 (#108–#110), 323–338 (#117a–#117p).

code, directions for blood-letting, prognostications, obituaries, family notices and documents, details of sights seen and travel, catechistic material, history, astronomy and astrology, charms, and recipes.⁶

Reynes was probably born after 1430, the second son of Alice and John Reynes, a carpenter.⁷ Like his parents, Reynes made his home in Acle – a village by the River Bure, eleven miles from the city of Norwich, on the road east to Great Yarmouth.⁸ He lived there as a ‘sengyl man’, then as a husband to Emma and finally, after five children and only eight years, as a widower, dying after 1505.⁹ Reynes served as an alderman in the Guild of St Edmund in Acle and as a church reeve, and he also seems to have found employment drawing up legal documents for fellow villagers.¹⁰ Moreover, he seems to have acted as an officer in various contexts and capacities.¹¹ He likely took some kind of role in the policing of the community, the regulation of the market and, perhaps, in the taxation of the village.¹² For our purposes, it is particularly significant that he seems to have served on the

⁶ For instance, Louis, *Commonplace Book of Reynes*, 140–141 (#4), 152 (#14), 152–153 (#15, #17), 142–143 (#7a, #7b), 152–153 (#16), 157–161 (#21), 167–174 (#27, #30, #31), 175–177 (#34), 180–181 (#38), 190 (#45a, #45b), 237–238 (#54), 240–246 (#58–#64), 255–256 (#75, #76), 261–262 (#82), 286–288 (#88, #89, #91), 289–299 (#92a–#92d, #94, #95), 312–315 (#105, #106), 322–323 (#116a–#116c). For Louis’ discussion of the contents of MS Tanner 407, see Louis, 103–108.

⁷ Louis, *Commonplace Book of Reynes*, 28–29. It seems likely that, by adulthood, Reynes was Alice and John’s eldest surviving child; Louis suggests that Reynes seems to have had an important role in family matters. Louis, 28.

⁸ Francis Blomefield, *An Essay towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, vol. 11 (London: W Miller, 1810; British History Online), 90–95, accessed June 15, 2023; Louis, *Commonplace Book of Reynes*, 35.

⁹ Robert Reynes is described as a ‘sengyl man’ in a contract from 1469 which he copied into his commonplace book. Louis, *Commonplace Book of Reynes*, 29, 289 (#92a). Reynes and Emma married in 1471 and she died in 1479. Reynes includes her death notice in his commonplace book and notes the names of their children alongside it: John, John, William, Thomas and Lewis. Below this, Reynes records the death of his younger brother, James, who died in the same year. Louis, 28, 143 (#7b), 176 (#34). Louis notes that 1479 was ‘one of the worst plague years’ of the fifteenth century, so it is possible that plague had been the cause of both Emma’s and James’ deaths. Louis, 391. A graffitied Latin inscription, painted in carbon black and arguably dating from the late fifteenth century, survives on the north wall of the chancel in St Edmund’s Church, Acle. This inscription may be a response to a wave of plague striking the village of Acle. It addresses Death itself and records the depredation and despair visited upon the population by disease. Matthew Champion, ‘Late Medieval Painted Decoration at St Edmunds Church, Acle’, *NA* 46, no. 4 (2013): 462–466 (462–463; 466 n. 8). This inscription may, perhaps, have been part of the textual world surrounding Reynes.

¹⁰ For Reynes as an alderman, see Louis, *Commonplace Book of Reynes*, 29, 32, 33, 517, 520. Reynes is referred to as an alderman in a charter from 1497, held at Norfolk Record Office. Norwich, NRO, NRS 17967, 41C5 (Charter: Grant. Margareta Strode of Acle in Accordance with the Custom 'Per Sirote Cam' to Robert Reynes, Alderman of the Guild of St Edmund King and Martyr of Acle, Simon Ditchlaw and Others (Created 19 June 1497)). For Reynes as a church reeve, see Louis, *Commonplace Book of Reynes*, 29, 30–31, 33, 174 (#32b). For Reynes being employed making legal documents for villagers, see Louis, 30, 323–338 (#117a–#117p), 503–506.

¹¹ Louis, 29, 33. For Reynes as an officer in various courts, see Louis, 143–150 (#8–#11), 166–167 (#26), 253 (#70), 360–363, 383, 454–455. For Reynes as an officer in the church, see Louis, 174–175 (#32a–#32b). Christopher Dyer uses Reynes to illustrate the ‘prominent part’ which office-holding took in the lives of fifteenth-century villagers. Christopher Dyer, ‘The Political Life of the Fifteenth-Century English Village’, in *Political Culture in Late Medieval Britain*, ed. Linda Clark and Christine Carpenter, The Fifteenth Century 4 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2004), 135–157 (143).

¹² For Reynes’ role in the policing of the community, see Louis, *Commonplace Book of Reynes*, 29, 154–157 (#20), 318–320 (#111), 376–377, 498. For Reynes’ role in the regulation of the market, see Louis, 29, 33, 121–138 (#1), 139–140 (#2), 315–318 (#109), 318 (#110), 349–352, 356, 496–497. For Reynes’ role in taxation, see Louis, 30, 161–162 (#22a–#22b), 177–179 (#35), 315 (#108), 338–341 (#118), 380–381, 391, 496, 506.

manor, both in its court and in its administration, and dealt directly with its lord (Tintern Abbey).¹³ Reynes used his commonplace book to record entries pertinent to his role in the administration of the manor, from a 'miniature formulary' suited to the manor court and information related to extents, to travel itineraries which would take him to his lord.¹⁴

The commonplace book of Robert Reynes of Acle is where my interest began in manorial officers as writers. I was captured by its variety, the profusion and melding of languages, its dissonances and repetitions, the way entries were shaped for Reynes' context and community: to me, it seemed vivid with curiosity and attention. It has urged me to think about the stories that manorial documents tell. What images do they compile? What narratives are constructed through their particular documentary forms? What arguments do they make? In this thesis I have taken up these questions to focus on the decisions that officers and scribes made as they composed such documents, choosing words, phrases and languages and determining where to use them, leaving gaps, compressing and expanding detail, and building narratives.

In the rest of this introduction I begin by using Reynes to open up this investigation of rural writing culture, as it is expressed in the documents produced by manorial officers. I then move to discuss how other scholars have led some of the way to this discussion, particularly in their recognition of the importance of locality to the creation of personal books and miscellanies like that of Reynes. But as I will suggest, these studies have not thus far been connected with the historiography of rural literacy and writing culture; I will turn next to examine this, and then, more specifically, to the few studies of manorial officers as writers. I then move to a discussion of the specific collections of manorial documents which are the focus of my thesis and introduce my interpretive approach to them. Finally, I will explain the structure of my thesis and provide a brief summary of each chapter's argument.

¹³ Louis, 29–30, 31–32, 33, 143–150 (#8–#11), 154 (#19), 165–166 (#25), 238 (#55), 239–240 (#57a–#57c), 258–260 (#80), 300–301 (#100), 360–363, 375–376, 382, 439–440, 441–442, 461, 489–490. For Tintern Abbey as the lord of a manor in Acle, see Blomefield, *Norfolk*, 1810, 11: 90–95. Louis suggests that Reynes may have been a reeve. Louis, *Commonplace Book of Reynes*, 31. However, I am not as confident in naming Reyes as a reeve. As I will discuss below, elected reeves became less common from the late fourteenth century, eventually ceasing to serve on most manors. Mark Bailey, ed., *The English Manor, c. 1200–c. 1500: Selected Sources Translated and Annotated by Mark Bailey*, Manchester Medieval Sources Series (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 99. See note 184. Moreover, Reynes could have served on the manor in a variety of positions – whether as a reeve, bailiff, or in another capacity in the manorial court. For elected officers serving in the manor court, see Alex Spike Gibbs, 'Manorial Officeholding in Late Medieval and Early Modern England, 1300–1600' (PhD diss., Trinity College, University of Cambridge, 2019), 68. Indeed, Reynes could have served in more than one role over the years, or been employed as a scribe or clerks at times. As Louis' work makes clear, I think that Reynes' commonplace book is very suggestive; however, I do not think it provides enough evidence for certainty as to the specifics of his office-holding career on the manor.

¹⁴ Reynes' commonplace book includes: a 'miniature formulary' (Louis, *Commonplace Book of Reynes*, 360) suited to the running of the manor court – particularly to the duties of the steward and the clerk of the court; a list of the lands of the manor, perhaps related to an extent, and a formula to be used in the composition of an extent; an entry which seems to record terms for food rents due to the manor; a list of tenants alongside the common land they held, and another list of Acle's tenements and tenants – including its lord – which records how much they owed for the Rome-skot (Peter's Pence); a Latin description of the Abbot of Tintern's first visit to his manor in Acle; and a note of the London address of Reynes' lord, along with a list of places in London, and itineraries for journeys from Acle to London and London to Tintern, as well as from Acle straight to Tintern. Louis, 143–150 (#8–#11), 154 (#19), 165–166 (#25), 177–179 (#35), 238–240 (#55, #56, #57a–#57c), 253–254 (#71), 258–260 (#80), 300–301 (#100), 360–363, 375–376, 382, 391, 439–442, 455, 461, 489–490.

Reynes' commonplace book offers us an insight into how late medieval manorial officers like Robert Reynes used and related to writing. Reynes appears to have returned to entries for reference and to add to them, for instance by updating the names of the tenants (and a tenement) in a list of manorial holdings, and adding more fires – old and new – into a 'fire section'.¹⁵ MS Tanner 407 has no index or contents page and, unsurprisingly for an unplanned project, there is limited grouping of entry types; although Reynes recorded a great deal either related to his community or with communal applications – such as his substantial legal formulary and an epilogue for a church play, as well as material suitable for performance by, or to, a guild – he does not seem to have envisaged his commonplace book being used by others far from his supervision.¹⁶

His manuscript demonstrates that Reynes had the linguistic skills required by manorial administration and documentation. The manuscript is macaronic, both as a whole and within individual entries. Latin, English, and entries combining both those languages account for approximately one third of the manuscript each, and Reynes also included one entry listing numbers in French.¹⁷ A series of recipes illustrates his comfort with a macaronic, as well as a materially textual, space. It is a collection of recipes for black, red and blue ink, stanchgrain for preparing parchment, mouth glue for assembling and repairing books, and tempering.¹⁸ Reynes likely made use of some of these recipes – red and black ink appear in his commonplace book – and it is probable that he prepared parchment using stanchgrain when working as a scribe.¹⁹ The recipe for stanchgrain is recorded in Latin and Reynes apparently felt no compulsion to translate it.

Reynes' Latin, however, has been criticised. Louis notes that Reynes' Latin grammar was 'sometimes deficient', with the occasional 'confusion of plain sense'.²⁰ He suggests that this, combined with the heavily-abbreviated character of Reynes' Latin, indicates that quick, tidy and efficient copying – rather than understanding – had been prioritised in Reynes' education, whether he got it from a 'business' or grammar school, or from a scrivener.²¹ However, this imperfection need not amount to a criticism of Reynes; his proficiency in Latin seems to have been equal to his requirements. Moreover, his commonplace book reveals a sensitivity to the shifting resonances of, and the boundaries between, languages. For instance, Reynes recorded two macaronic poems – 'The

¹⁵ Indeed, Reynes later went so far as to cross out this list of holdings (#35), perhaps because the Rome-skot (Peter's Pence) was no longer to be collected in Reynes' locality. Louis, 23, 140–141 (#4), 177–179 (#35), 358, 391.

¹⁶ Youngs, *Newton*, 185; Connolly, 'Compiling', 142; Louis, *Commonplace Book of Reynes*, 107, 196–236 (#49, #50, #51, #53), 268–273 (#85, #86), 323–338 (#117a–117p), 415, 430–431, 437, 468, 503–504.

¹⁷ Louis, *Commonplace Book of Reynes*, 151 (#12), 364.

¹⁸ Louis, 170–173 (#30), 387–388.

¹⁹ Louis, 14, 388.

²⁰ Louis, 34.

²¹ Louis does, however, suggest that a grammar school is a less likely option for Reynes' education. Louis, 33–35. H. G. Richardson examines the 'business training' which was available in medieval Oxford, including to those who wished to serve as officers, while Nicholas Orme discusses the development and character of 'business schools' (Nicholas Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen & Co, 1973), 71) and training in 'business skills' (Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Schools from Roman Britain to Renaissance England* (London: Yale University Press, 2006), 68). H. G. Richardson, 'Business Training in Medieval Oxford', *AHR* 46, no. 2 (1941): 259–280; Orme, *English Schools*, 70–71, 75–77; Orme, *Medieval Schools*, 68–73.

Signs of Death’ and ‘Fratres Carmeli’ – which rely upon juxtaposing language to create distinct voices, tones, and humour.²² Each line of ‘The Signs’ is divided into Latin and English, the English describing the state of the body and the Latin giving spiritual direction: ‘Whan þi lypps blakyth, Confessio’.²³

Superficially, English might seem an appropriate language for edifying instruction and Latin appears as the language of the sacraments delivered to the dying. Yet the poem is enhanced by the tension between the “naturalness” and corporeality of each language.²⁴ English is the language ‘we lerneden of our dames tonge’, while “universal” Latin is the language in which the soul cries out to God ‘Libera me, Domine’.²⁵ Although each half-line delivers an instruction, the distinction in language allows two voices to be heard in the poem: the voice of the instructor who describes the body in English and is distinct from the private reader/listener, and the internal voice of the soul which is animated by the reader/listener (‘me’). In the final line of the poem, the reader can even cross from a mortal to a divine voice as the Latin proclaims, ‘Venite ad Judicium’.²⁶

The ‘Fratres Carmeli’ is much less serious, whilst being the most intensely macaronic entry in the manuscript as it entangles languages within single words. As Reynes did not record the bawdiest lines of the poem, the humour in his manuscript rests upon its use of language:

Ffratres Carmeli navagant in a boot apud Ely.
Omnes dryncherunt quia sterysman non habuerunt.²⁷

This parallels a macaronic style of poetry from fifteenth-century Italy, in which languages are ‘confused’, with the deviation from proper use producing the comic effect.²⁸ In ‘Fratres Carmeli’ the jangle of languages, with English lashed to Latin endings (‘dryncherunt’), combines with the instability of the boat to emphasise the indecency of the brothers who (in the complete verse) ‘fvccerant’ the women of Ely and run amok with knives.²⁹ The incongruity of the situation expressed through the incongruity of the languages implies that the truly religious monastic would speak a purer Latin, rather than use it to partially cloak their foul vulgarity. Reynes’ decision to collect these

²² Louis, *Commonplace Book of Reynes*, 245–246 (#63), 299 (#97).

²³ Louis, 245 (#63).

²⁴ For a discussion of vernacular as natural or bodily, see Fiona Somerset and Nicholas Watson, ‘Preface: On “Vernacular”’, in *The Vulgar Tongue: Medieval and Postmedieval Vernacularity*, ed. Fiona Somerset and Nicholas Watson (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), ix.

²⁵ The quotation which asserts that English is what ‘we lerneden of our dames tonge’, comes from Thomas Usk’s fourteenth-century work, *The Testament of Love*. Gary W. Shawver, ed., *Thomas Usk’s Testament of Love: A Critical Edition*, based on the edition of John F. Leyerle, Toronto Medieval Texts and Translations 13 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 9, 45. For a discussion of Latin as a universal language, see Somerset and Watson, ‘Preface: On “Vernacular”’, ix–x. Translation: ‘Deliver me, Lord’. Louis, *Commonplace Book of Reynes*, 246 (#63).

²⁶ Translation: ‘Come to Judgement’. Louis, *Commonplace Book of Reynes*, 246 (#63).

²⁷ Translation: ‘Carmelite brothers sail in a boat to Ely. / All were drenched because they did not have a steersman.’ Louis, 299 (#97). Louis’ edition uses ‘Ff’ in ‘Ffratres’ in this poem.

²⁸ Jane Griffiths, “Divers of Language”: The Macaronic Glossing of Skelton’s *Speke Parrot*, in *Multilingualism in Medieval Britain (c. 1066–1520): Sources and Analysis*, ed. Ad Putter, Judith Jefferson, and with the assistance of Amanda Hopkins, Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe 15 (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2012), 211–224 (212).

²⁹ Louis, *Commonplace Book of Reynes*, 488.

poems, particularly the ‘Fratres Carmeli’ which without its macaronics is just a story of monks getting wet, suggests that he was receptive to the varied effects which each language, and code-switching itself, could produce in different contexts. Like these poems, manorial documents are frequently multilingual and macaronic.³⁰ Reynes’ sensitivity to the potentialities of different languages – and to moments of combination and code-switching – in a literary context suggests a similar creative and communicative capacity in administrative contexts; we cannot draw a sharp distinction between these two genres, nor between how officers like Reynes related to each of them.³¹

If his manuscript is singular, in many ways Reynes himself does not seem to have been so unusual. As Louis suggests, while most of his neighbours would not have had Reynes’ training, he was not an unusually well-educated man³². Most villages – and all manors – required people to fulfil the same roles that Reynes did, creating, using, presenting and interpreting records, documents and contracts, and taking an active part in administration.³³ Louis describes Reynes as ‘a man whose basic asset was literacy’, and it was from that literacy that his career, authority and successes grew.³⁴ Our view of Reynes, gained through the survival of his commonplace book, may be lopsided; perhaps he was appreciated for skills that are harder to see, like people-management or the way he explained things. Yet writing certainly flowed through and entwined with much of Reynes’ life, employing him, occupying him, motivating him. What kind of writing culture was he part of and contributing to?

³⁰ For discussions of multilingualism in medieval records, see Jeremy Catto, ‘Written English: The Making of the Language 1370–1400’, *P&P* 179, no. 1 (2003): 24–59 (36); A. E. B. Owen, ‘A Scrivener’s Notebook from Bury St. Edmunds’, *Archives* 14, no. 61 (1979): 16–22; Laura Wright, ‘On Non-Integrated Vocabulary in the Mixed-Language Accounts of St Paul’s Cathedral, 1315–1405’, in *Latin in Medieval Britain*, ed. Richard Ashdowne and Carolinne White, *Proceedings of The British Academy* 206 (Oxford: The British Academy, 2017), 272–298 (272); Andrew Butcher, ‘Textual Production and Vernacular Behaviour: Locating a Fifteenth-Century Administrative Book’, in *Vernacularity in England and Wales, c. 1300–1550*, ed. Elizabeth Salter and Helen Wicker, *Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy* 17 (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2011), 295–323 (305); Wendy R. Childs, ‘From Chronicles to Customs Accounts: The Uses of Latin in the Long 14th Century’, in *Latin in Medieval Britain*, ed. Richard Ashdowne and Carolinne White, *Proceedings of The British Academy* 206 (Oxford: The British Academy, 2017), 85–105 (95–96, 98–103).

³¹ For introductions to code-switching and to scholars’ interest in code-switching in a medieval context, see Penelope Gardner-Chloros, *Code-Switching* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 4; Ludmila Isurin, Donald Winford, and Kees de Bot, eds., *Multidisciplinary Approaches to Code Switching*, *Studies in Bilingualism* 41 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2009), ix; Herbert Schendl, ‘Code-Switching in Late Medieval Macaronic Sermons’, in *Multilingualism in Medieval Britain (c. 1066–1520): Sources and Analysis*, ed. Ad Putter, Judith Jefferson, and with the assistance of Amanda Hopkins, *Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe* 15 (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2012), 153–169 (153).

³² Louis, *Commonplace Book of Reynes*, 110.

³³ As I have noted above (see note 11), Dyer discusses how numerous the opportunities for office-holding could be in a village – particularly, he suggests, in East Anglia – and the demands which administration placed on members of the community. He presents Reynes as an instructive example of the significant role which office-holding could take in villagers’ lives. Dyer, ‘Political Life’, 142–143.

³⁴ Louis, *Commonplace Book of Reynes*, 33.

Personal writing and locality

As I will demonstrate in this section, scholars have recognised that the locality in which writing was produced had a significant role to play in forming its character and its content. Therefore, the writing produced in rural contexts is likely to have a distinctive character, shaped by the particular requirements, interests, and circumstances of its rural locality in contrast to those of - for instance - an urban context. Therefore, it is fruitful to examine writing produced in rural contexts in order to explore the contours of a distinctively rural writing culture. Reynes and his manuscript have often been considered in the context of studies on miscellaneity, compilation, commonplace books and personal book production.³⁵ Moreover, his commonplace book has been described as distinctively rural. Louis argues that the contents and tone of Reynes' manuscript indicates that 'the rural middle class may have been of a kind vastly different from that of the city'.³⁶ Malcolm Richardson follows suit: in his exploration of middle-class writing in late medieval London, he uses Reynes' commonplace book to throw metropolitan writing and writers into relief. He notes that, 'despite sharing common systems of written genres, the provincial middle classes left document collections that show significantly different interests than those in London'.³⁷ Eamon Duffy examines the devotional and spiritual material in Reynes' commonplace book and compares it with the contents of four other fifteenth- and early-sixteenth-century compilations, produced by and for a range of compilers and audiences.³⁸ While he draws attention to the 'concerns and convictions' which these manuscripts share, Duffy discerns a division, not along the lines of education or status, but between 'town (or ... [royal] court) and country'.³⁹ John B. Friedman uses Reynes' commonplace book to elucidate the contents and audience, or owner, of a folded almanac from 1389 whose outer faces are decorated with illustrations of Harry the Haywarde and Piers (or Peter) the Pyndare.⁴⁰ Friedman argues that this almanac was created for, or commissioned by, a manorial officer –

³⁵ For instance, see Pearsall, 'Whole Book', 23–24; Connolly, 'Compiling', 143–146; M. B. Parkes, *Their Hands Before Our Eyes: A Closer Look at Scribes. The Lyell Lectures Delivered in the University of Oxford, 1999* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 42; Julia Boffey and John J. Thompson, 'Anthologies and Miscellanies: Production and Choice of Texts', in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375–1475*, ed. Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall, Cambridge Studies in Publishing and Printing History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 279–316 (293–295).

³⁶ Louis, *Commonplace Book of Reynes*, 109.

³⁷ Malcolm Richardson, *Middle-Class Writing in Late Medieval London*, The History of the Book 7 (London: Routledge, 2016), 11–12.

³⁸ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400–1580*, second edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 69–77. The compilations which Eamon Duffy examines alongside Reynes' commonplace book are: a late-fifteenth-century collection produced for an 'urban bourgeois' (Duffy, 71) audience (Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Ff.2.38); a fifteenth-century compilation created by an 'Oxfordshire landowner and minor courtier' (Duffy, 71), known as 'Instructions to his son'; the Book of Brome, a miscellaneous manuscript written in an East Anglian gentry household in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries (Jessica Brantley, 'Forms of Reading in the Book of Brome', in *Form and Reform: Reading across the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Shannon Gayk and Kathleen Tonry, Interventions: New Studies in Medieval Culture (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011), 19–39 (21)); and the sixteenth-century commonplace book of a London grocer, Richard Hill (Oxford, Balliol College's Historic Collections and Archives, MS 354).

³⁹ Duffy, *Stripping*, 71, 74.

⁴⁰ John B. Friedman, 'Harry the Haywarde and Talbat His Dog: An Illustrated Girdlebook from Worcestershire', in *Art into Life: Collected Papers from the Kresge Art Museum Medieval Symposia*, ed. Carol Fisher and Kathleen Scott (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1995), 115–153 (115–116, 141–142).

although one less literate than Reynes – and, in this context, Reynes’ commonplace book is presented as part of a larger lineage of rural manuscripts emanating from officerial culture.⁴¹

Scholars working on book production, compilation and miscellaneity have emphasised the importance of the locality of production. Locality determined the practicalities of production, such as the availability of materials and exemplars, and shaped the tastes, interests and requirements of manuscript creators and their audiences. I will address each of these points in turn. Pushing back against scholars’ searches for complex thematic programmes and the ‘controlling or guiding intelligence’ which selected and ordered the contents of miscellaneous compilations, Derek Pearsall stresses that the scribes who created such collections ‘were not making unconstrained choices’.⁴² Rather, they were working within the restraints imposed by their ‘practical and day-to-day circumstances’, such as what exemplars they knew and how, when and where they could access them.⁴³ Implicit in Pearsall’s discussion is the role of locality as a factor in determining these ‘day-to-day’ circumstances, opportunities and constraints.⁴⁴ Other scholars, such as Carol M. Meale, John J. Thompson and Ralph Hanna III likewise examine how ‘pragmatic considerations’ – specifically the availability of texts – influenced the methods by which scribes compiled manuscripts, and determined the development and final form of such productions.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Friedman, ‘Illustrated Girdlebook’, 115–116, 118, 140–142. The hayward and the pinder were both manorial officers. The pinder’s foremost responsibility was impounding and managing stray livestock. The hayward’s role was more varied and, beyond managing various aspects of husbandry on the manor, it could include rent collection and various responsibilities at the manor court, and it might vary depending on whether the demesne was leased or directly managed. Friedman provides further discussion of the roles of these officers – with particular focus on the hayward – and characterisations of them. For discussion of these roles, see Friedman, 116, 137–140; George Caspar Homans, *English Villagers of the Thirteenth Century* (1941; repr., New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1975), 66–67, 290–297; Katherine J. Workman, ‘Manorial Estate Officials and Opportunity in Late Medieval English Society’, *Viator* 26 (1995): 223–240 (228–229).

⁴² Pearsall, ‘Whole Book’, 25, 29. Pearsall critiques works such as: Stephen G. Nichols, ‘“Art” and “Nature”: Looking for (Medieval) Principles of Order in Occitan *Chansonniere* N (Morgan 819)’, in *The Whole Book: Cultural Perspectives on the Medieval Miscellany*, ed. Stephen G. Nichols and Siegfried Wenzel, *Recentiores: Later Latin Texts and Contexts* 6 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 83–122; David L. Jeffrey, ‘Authors, Anthologists, and Franciscan Spirituality’, in *Studies in the Harley Manuscript: The Scribes, Contents, and Social Contexts of British Library MS Harley 2253*, ed. Susanna Fein (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000), 261–270; Barbara Nolan, ‘Anthologising Ribaldry: Five Anglo-Norman Fabliaux’, in *Studies in the Harley Manuscript: The Scribes, Contents, and Social Contexts of British Library MS Harley 2253*, ed. Susanna Fein (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000), 289–327; as well as certain elements of Seth Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers: Imagining the Author in Late-Medieval England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). Pearsall, ‘Whole Book’, 20–21, 28–29.

⁴³ Pearsall, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29.

⁴⁴ Pearsall, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29.

⁴⁵ Carol M. Meale, ‘The Compiler at Work: John Colyns and BL MS Harley 2252’, in *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England: The Literary Implications of Manuscript Study*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1983), 82–103 (98); John J. Thompson, ‘The Compiler in Action: Robert Thornton and the “Thornton Romances”’, in *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England: The Literary Implications of Manuscript Study*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1983), 113–124 (116–118); Ralph Hanna III, ‘Miscellaneity and Vernacularity: Conditions of Literary Productions in Late Medieval England’, in *The Whole Book: Cultural Perspectives on the Medieval Miscellany*, ed. Stephen G. Nichols and Siegfried Wenzel, *Recentiores: Later Latin Texts and Contexts* 6 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 37–52 (38, 46–48). The quotation, ‘pragmatic considerations’, is from Meale, ‘Colyns’, 98.

Jean-Pascal Pouzet explicitly draws connections between various elements of manuscript production – including access to materials and texts, and craftsmanship and style – and regional or local circumstances. In his examination of book production outside commercial contexts (including commonplace books), he argues that it ‘needed the decisive impetus of regional and local circumstances and motivations’.⁴⁶ Such manuscript production was embedded in local craft economies and trade networks, and Pouzet further draws our attention to the roads and meeting places, or ‘nodal points’, which encouraged texts to circulate between regions and thereby ‘energised segmented localities’.⁴⁷ George R. Keiser imagines Robert Thornton, a fifteenth-century Yorkshire gentleman with a penchant for compilation, travelling between his own regional ‘nodal points’ – monastic houses, other manors, rectors or clerics of various parishes, and the city of York and its citizens – to find and copy texts, and considers the effect this mode of collection may have had on Thornton’s work.⁴⁸ Locality thus had a significant influence on personal book production in practical terms: what texts, materials and crafts were available was locally specific, as were the networks of exchange through which they circulated.

In addition to locality’s practical effects on production, scholars have also been attentive to its effect on the tastes, interests and requirements of manuscript creators and their audiences. In his study of three miscellaneous manuscripts produced in the area around Ludlow, Jason O’Rourke reveals the influence of locality and region on these compilations. He argues that the regionally specific cultural, social, and political environment, circumstances and inclinations of their scribe and his community played an important role in determining the manuscripts’ contents and its multilingualism.⁴⁹ Similarly, while Meale notes that the commonplace book of John Colyns, a London mercer and bookseller, shows some ‘general correspondences in taste’ with similar manuscripts from other regions, she argues that the ‘most striking similarities’ occur between it and other miscellanies from the capital.⁵⁰ Furthermore, she suggests that numerous entries are reflective of attitudes, preoccupations and concerns common to Colyns and his fellow London citizens.⁵¹ Thus we can see how the specific social, cultural and political context of a locality shaped the manuscripts which were produced within it, inflecting them with a particular character.

⁴⁶ Jean-Pascal Pouzet, ‘Book Production Outside Commercial Contexts’, in *The Production of Books in England 1350–1500*, ed. Alexandra Gillespie and Daniel Wakelin, Cambridge Studies in Palaeography and Codicology 14 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 212–238 (216).

⁴⁷ Pouzet, 215–216.

⁴⁸ George R. Keiser, ‘Lincoln Cathedral Library MS. 91: Life and Milieu of the Scribe’, *Stud. Biblio.* 32 (1979): 158–179 (165–166, 167–177); George R. Keiser, ‘Robert Thornton: Gentleman, Reader and Scribe’, in *Robert Thornton and His Books: Essays on the Lincoln and London Thornton Manuscripts*, ed. Susanna Fein and Michael Johnston, new edition, Manuscript Culture in the British Isles 5 (York: York Medieval Press, 2014), 67–108 (71, 84–87); Michael Johnston, ‘Introduction: The Cheese and the Worms and Robert Thornton’, in *Robert Thornton and His Books: Essays on the Lincoln and London Thornton Manuscripts*, ed. Susanna Fein and Michael Johnston, Manuscript Culture in the British Isles 5 (York: York Medieval Press, 2014), 1–12 (1–2); quotation is from Pouzet, ‘Book Production’, 216.

⁴⁹ Jason O’Rourke, ‘Imagining Book Production in Fourteenth-Century Herefordshire: The Scribe of British Library, MS Harley 2253 and His “Organizing Principles”’, in *Imagining the Book*, ed. Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson, Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe 7 (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2005), 45–60 (46, 49, 50–52, 54–55, 58, 59–60). Jason O’Rourke suggests that the scribe of this manuscript was a ‘lawyer or legal clerk’ and, therefore, they were likely a man. O’Rourke, 57.

⁵⁰ Meale, ‘Colyns’, 82, 100.

⁵¹ Meale, 82, 100–103.

Studies of manuscripts created by members of the gentry have also drawn out the significant influence of locality on their production and their contents. When Llinos Beverley Smith and Deborah Youngs examine the writings of John Edwards of Chirk and Humphrey Newton respectively, they place these men and their manuscripts in their regional contexts. Newton (1466–1536) was a Cheshire gentleman who left behind a commonplace book, while Edwards was a fifteenth-century landowner, descended from a family of prosperous and influential freemen, who created a Latin grammar book and a commonplace book.⁵² Smith places Edwards – and others like him – into the wider literary and cultural history of the north-east March and of Wales, integrating them with the region’s poets.⁵³ Together, the poets and these ‘busy men of affairs ... ensured the preservation of ... literary and documentary materials, and ... continued the tradition of collecting and of study’.⁵⁴ Youngs notes the centrality of ‘location’ to gentry studies more generally, and also makes reference to Newton’s regional context in relation to his writing more specifically: she discusses, for instance, the literacy and literary culture of the gentry of Cheshire and the north-west more broadly and Newton’s searches for documents in their households, his experimentation with a poetic style which had ‘regional significance’, along with his ‘familiarity with a regional literary dialect’ and the ‘provincial’ settings of his courtly love lyrics.⁵⁵ However, Newton’s rural context most significantly shaped his writing, document-collection, and the contents of his commonplace book through his interests, skills and responsibilities as a landowning gentleman, who employed his legal and scribal skills in his neighbourhood, was intimately involved in the administration of his own modest estate, and acted as an officer on others.⁵⁶ Hanna understands Newton’s writing similarly. He sees a ‘rural acquisitiveness’ shaped by Newton’s gentry status at work in his commonplace book and his archive.⁵⁷ Locality thus had a fundamental effect on the production of these gentry manuscripts, through the regional cultures in which these men were embedded, and through the requirements of their gentry way of life in their rural contexts.

Historians have not only considered the gentry’s commonplace books in terms of locality; this type of analysis has also been applied to manuscripts created by lower-status individuals, such as that left by John Crophill of Wix, a fifteenth-century bailiff in rural Essex who also offered medical

⁵² Both of these men also served as officers, and I will discuss the relationship between their professional endeavours and their writing in more detail later in the Introduction. Llinos Beverley Smith, ‘The Grammar and Commonplace Books of John Edwards of Chirk’, *BBCS* 34 (1987): 174–184 (174, 176, 177–179); Youngs, *Newton*, 1–2, 4–6, 50–68. For Llinos Beverley Smith’s discussion of the attribution of Edwards’ manuscripts, see Smith, ‘Edwards’, 176, 179. For her discussion of the contents of the commonplace book, see Smith, 176, 179. For her description of the grammar book, see Smith, 179–181. For Deborah Youngs’ detailed discussion of Newton as a writer, see Youngs, *Newton*, 177–200.

⁵³ Smith, ‘Edwards’, 174–175, 176–177, 181–184.

⁵⁴ Smith, 184.

⁵⁵ Youngs, *Newton*, 6–7 at 6, 14–15, 177–179, 186–187, 193–195 at 193, at 195, 196–200.

⁵⁶ Youngs, 3–5, 10, 14–15, 37–38, 41–69, 71–73, 75–78, 81–84, 89–90, 96–97, 105, 177, 181–182, 189, 192, 197–199.

⁵⁷ Multifarious aspects of Newton’s life and interests were underpinned and advanced by the accumulation of texts, documents and information, by copying and cataloguing them, by checking and processing them through his writing. Ralph Hanna III, ‘Humphrey Newton and Bodleian Library, MS Lat. Misc. C. 66’, *Medium Ævum* 69, no. 2 (2000): 279–291 (283, 286–289 at 288).

services part-time.⁵⁸ James K. Mustain argues that the sources for Crophill's medical texts, while 'diluted', are essentially the equivalent of those used by his university-educated and professional counterparts.⁵⁹ However, Crophill's rural context still shaped the contents of his manuscript, with its combination of medical texts and entries related to his role as a manorial officer; Youngs also notes that Crophill's doodles 'reflect' the countryside in which he collected rents and ministered.⁶⁰ Moreover, Mustain argues that Crophill's work as a bailiff provided not only the income which supported his work as a medical-practitioner, but the clientele and the reputation which gave him the opportunity to practise.⁶¹ Although the medical exemplars for Crophill's manuscript were not restricted to his locality, the conditions which allowed and motivated him to create his manuscript, its combination of contents, and the environments in which he put it to use were specific to his rural context.

As well as examining how locality shaped the compilation of individual manuscripts, scholars have also taken a much broader view, exploring how particular localities produced distinctive writing cultures. The work of Arthur Bahr and Richardson explores – and argues for – geographically-specific writing, literary and reading cultures. Richardson argues that by the time the middle classes of late-medieval London began to write themselves, they were already well-acquainted with writing culture as they had long been participants in a 'culture of pervasive literate practices'.⁶² Their familiarity with and 'mastery' of practical modes of writing was fundamental to the creation of an 'English civic "documentary culture"'.⁶³ Richardson calls London a 'city of writing', and Bahr likewise draws attention to the way the city crammed together 'texts, scribes, and patrons', alongside the profusion and reach of its bureaucracy, its citizenry's 'literary consumption', and the way its fractious relationship with the Crown was bound up with documents.⁶⁴ Bahr argues that these economic, social and political conditions – which were particular to London – created powerful connections between civic 'social and textual identity' and a literary and reading culture which was particularly sensitive to the potential of compilation.⁶⁵ Moreover, Bahr contends that 'the ability to engage in such active, restless forms of reading [as rewarded by the London compilations which he studied] was one element of a broader textual acuity cultivated by key members of London's merchant elite'; this mode of reading had its place in the 'broader textual competence necessary to protect London's civic liberties'.⁶⁶ Both these scholars thus demonstrate the ways in which the conditions and culture of a specific locality could produce a distinctive reading and writing culture.

The scholarship of personal book production and miscellanies – such as Reynes' commonplace book – has, therefore, articulated the importance of locality in shaping both the

⁵⁸ James K. Mustain, 'A Rural Medical Practitioner in Fifteenth-Century England', *Bull. Hist. Med.* 46, no. 5 (1972): 469–476 (470–472).

⁵⁹ Mustain, 473–474 at 473.

⁶⁰ Mustain, 471–472; Youngs, *Newton*, 188.

⁶¹ Mustain, 'Medical Practitioner', 472–473, 475–476.

⁶² Richardson, *Writing in London*, 3–4 at 4.

⁶³ Richardson, 2, 4, 9.

⁶⁴ Richardson, 4; Arthur Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages: Forming Compilations of Medieval London* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 17–50 at 18, at 32–33.

⁶⁵ Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages*, 17–50 at 18.

⁶⁶ Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages*, 51, 257.

production of individual manuscripts and the formation of broader literary, writing and reading cultures. However, there has been limited exploration of this type of culture in a rural context, especially in the type of non-elite rural context which men such as John Crophill and Robert Reynes came from. Yet, as we have seen, scholars have often considered Reynes' commonplace book to be illustrative of rural writing. What, then, do we already know about rural writing culture?

Rural writing culture

While there has been limited study of rural writing culture – and much of the attention it has received has come from literary scholars – historians have devoted a great deal of study to rural literacy, particularly from a social and functional perspective. In the 1970s, M. T. Clanchy's ground-breaking work on the proliferation of written records between 1066 and 1307, *From Memory to Written Record*, demonstrated the expansion of 'literate modes' into the countryside and down the social hierarchy, even reaching some serfs by the start of the fourteenth century.⁶⁷ An increasing familiarity with documents bred both trust and discernment as documents and writing became entwined with the business of ordinary life – 'no rarer in villages than ribbons and needles'.⁶⁸ Even those who could not write themselves still 'participated in literacy' as they made use of writing.⁶⁹ F. H. Bäuml elaborated on this point. He argues that focusing on literacy in terms of an individuals' capacity to read and write (particularly in Latin) offered limited insight into the 'function of literacy in medieval society'.⁷⁰ Instead, he emphasises the 'elusive intermediate levels between complete literacy and complete illiteracy', and paid attention to the 'quasi-literate' – those who were able to depend on others' literacy to access writing.⁷¹ Thereby, the 'quasi-literate' were socially, functionally and culturally literate, able to participate in literate society and culture, and fulfil any of their 'social

⁶⁷ M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England, 1066–1307*, third edition (1979; repr., Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), especially 1–3 at 2, 318, 329–330, 334–335. For a full discussion of documents at a village level, see Clanchy, 48–53. For discussions of the literacy of the laity more broadly as well as in a rural context, see Clanchy, 78, 79–80, 83–84, 87–88, 90, 92, 94–98, 99–100, 169–170, 188, 202, 226–228, 233–236, 327. For a discussion of Latin literacy including amongst the peasantry, see Clanchy, 238–246. For the education of knights, see Clanchy, 248–254. For a discussion of clerks in the countryside, see Clanchy, 66–67. For further detail on literacy and record-keeping, particularly in a manorial context, see note 113 below. M. T. Clanchy pushes back against the assumptions of historians such as J. Lawson and H. Silver that rural communities, by and large, lacked education and literacy and, therefore, 'passed their lives in mental confinement' (Clanchy, *From Memory*, 8 quoting John Lawson and Harold Silver, *A Social History of Education in England* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1973), 39). Clanchy disputes that rural areas were fundamentally illiterate, arguing that many of the most literate areas of medieval, early modern and eighteenth-century Europe and America were rural. Moreover, he makes it clear that literacy is not a panacea for 'mental confinement', nor illiteracy its cause. Clanchy, *From Memory*, 8–11, 13–14.

⁶⁸ Clanchy, *From Memory*, 2, 48–53 at 50.

⁶⁹ This was also the case for people at the opposite end of the social scale, such as kings and sheriffs. Clanchy, 2, 273–274, 309.

⁷⁰ Franz H. Bäuml, 'Varieties and Consequences of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy', *Speculum* 55, no. 2 (1980): 237–265 (239, 246).

⁷¹ Bäuml, 239, 242, 243–244, 246–247 at 246.

functions' which required reading or writing.⁷² As I will discuss further below, scholars such as Steven Justice have used Bäuml's arguments to better understand literacy in rural communities in medieval England.⁷³

In the years following Clanchy's publication, historians also examined access to education in rural areas, including in the fifteenth century. Jo Moran's study of the diocese of York describes a growth in 'access ... to elementary learning in reading, song, and, to a certain extent, writing', including in rural areas.⁷⁴ She outlines a 'growing momentum in education', with increasing lay engagement with grammar schooling, through the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and, again, villagers took their part.⁷⁵ Nicholas Orme and Michael J. Bennett describe various routes by which those living in a rural context could obtain an education and training. Beyond apprenticeships, training in another household, or private arrangements with various professionals, they could: attend 'petty' schools run by parish clerks; receive some education from the parish clergy, some of whom were university educated; or move to a nearby town to access various forms of schooling.⁷⁶ While Moran emphasises the many barriers to education which the children of the rural poor faced, particularly in terms of expense, she shows that poorer members of the laity were literate.⁷⁷ Orme likewise draws attention to the way in which literacy permeated through various levels of society. He references an inquiry, held in 1466, that recorded which lay witnesses were literate: 'two merchants, a mariner, a husbandmen, an agricultural labourer, and a former schoolmaster' were literate, while the illiterate witnesses 'were of similar status'.⁷⁸

Historians have not only examined the acquisition of literacy generally, but have also drawn distinctions between different types of literacy. M. B. Parkes delineates three kinds of literacy: 'that of the professional reader, ... that of the cultivated reader, ... that of the pragmatic reader'.⁷⁹ He argues that it was the latter – pragmatic literacy – which grew among the lay middle classes from the

⁷² Bäuml, 239, 243–244 at 243, 246–247 at 246.

⁷³ Steven Justice, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381*, New Historicism: Studies in Cultural Poetics 27 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 33.

⁷⁴ Jo Ann Hoepfner Moran, *The Growth of English Schooling 1340–1548: Learning, Literacy, and Laicisation in Pre-Reformation York Diocese* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 221–222 at 222.

⁷⁵ Moran, *Growth of Schooling*, 221–222 at 221. The diocese of York was extensive. It included 'all of Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire, the northern half of Lancashire, and small parts of Westmorland and Cumberland' and was home to about 10% of the population. Moreover, it was topographically diverse and 'served as the link' between the south and the northern border. Moran argues, therefore, that 'the results of a study of this diocese ... cannot be explained away as idiosyncratic or isolated from the rest of England'. Moran, *Growth of Schooling*, xiii.

⁷⁶ Michael J. Bennett, 'Education and Advancement', in *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England*, ed. Rosemary Horrox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 79–96 (81–91 at 81); Orme, *Medieval Schools*, 72–73, 131–133, 193–194, 218, 220, 225–226, 243, 245, 250, 253.

⁷⁷ Moran, *Growth of Schooling*, 174–178. Orme also discusses the requirement for villeins to obtain a licence from their lord to send their children to school, as well as elite attitudes to villein education. In 1973 he suggested that this 'obligation' was likely progressively abandoned over the course of the fifteenth century, but in his later publication he – like Moran – stresses the long tail of this obligation. Orme, *English Schools*, 50–52 at 51; Orme, *Medieval Schools*, 220–222; Moran, *Growth of Schooling*, 175.

⁷⁸ Orme, *English Schools*, 50.

⁷⁹ M. B. Parkes, 'The Literacy of the Laity', in *Scribes, Scripts and Readers: Studies in the Communication, Presentation and Dissemination of Medieval Texts* (1973; repr., London: The Hambledon Press, 1991), 275–298 (275).

twelfth century onwards, driven by an ‘increasing reliance upon the written record’ in business, commerce, law and – significantly – manorial administration.⁸⁰ Those who worked in these areas not only used ‘written instruments’ in the course of their work, but developed literate habits.⁸¹ Moreover, Parkes argues, these practices incrementally expanded the literary horizons of the middle-class ‘pragmatic reader’ and, therefore, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries more people began to read for ‘recreation and profit’ and join the ranks of the ‘cultivated reader’.⁸² In the 1990s, Richard Britnell drew together a number of scholars to discuss pragmatic literacy in Latin Christendom and beyond, resulting in an edited volume.⁸³ Paul D. A. Harvey contributed a chapter, titled ‘English Estate Records, 1250–1330’.⁸⁴ In that chapter, he stresses the ‘rapid extension’ of written documents in manorial estate administration in this period, and their spread across estates of all sizes.⁸⁵ Again, he draws a clear connection between this development and the growth of pragmatic literacy, particularly professionalised pragmatic literacy.⁸⁶ Moreover, he argues that the expertise to create these intriguingly uniform records could readily be found in rural communities.⁸⁷

Michael Johnston’s work on the surviving corpus of *The Prick of Conscience* – a fourteenth-century vernacular poem describing the last days of the world – builds on such insights. He reiterates that scribes were at work throughout late medieval England, many in rural areas, producing documents for aristocratic households and their manors and, moreover, most of these scribes were working very close to their places of origin.⁸⁸ Johnston argues that such scribes were often also

⁸⁰ Parkes, 278–283 at 278.

⁸¹ Parkes, 283.

⁸² Parkes, 275, 283–289 at 288, 290, 291, 295–296. Clanchy agrees that the spread of literacy – even at a ‘minimal level’ (Clanchy, *From Memory*, 249) – between 1066 and 1307 was driven by the ‘demands of the “pragmatic” rather than the “cultivated” reader’ (Clanchy, 249) – fundamentally, the need to engage with more and more documents and written records, and a growing written bureaucracy. This was true for the peasantry as well as for landowners and the gentry. Clanchy, 156, 238, 249, 252–253, 329, 330, 332–333, 334–335. Clanchy argues that during this period the ‘types of writing which were done became increasingly practical’ (Clanchy, 330), prompting a plethora of changes: for instance, document forms and styles changed and new types developed; documents developed their own aesthetic and the materials used for writing changed to be more economical; and, similarly, cursive script developed to speed up the process of producing documents. Clanchy, 330–331. Another essential part of Clanchy’s arguments about pragmatic literacy relates to the development of practices for keeping and referring back to stored documents but I won’t be engaging with this here, beyond the idea that these practices also increased people’s familiarity with and use of documents. Clanchy, 152–156. For a discussion and critique of this element of Clanchy’s arguments, and the historiography of ‘pragmatic literacy’ more broadly, see Nicholas Karn, ‘Information and Its Retrieval’, in *A Social History of England, 900–1200*, ed. Julia Crick and Elisabeth Van Houts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 373–380; Jinming Yi, ‘A Study of York’s Civic Administrative Literacy: Writing, Records and Archives, 1272–1377’ (PhD diss., University of York, 2022), 14–20; Bronach C. Kane, *Popular Memory and Gender in Late Medieval England: Men, Women and Testimony in the Church Courts, c. 1200–1500*, Gender in the Middle Ages 13 (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2019), 177.

⁸³ Richard Britnell, ed., *Pragmatic Literacy, East and West, 1200–1330* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1997).

⁸⁴ Paul D. A. Harvey, ‘English Estate Records, 1250–1330’, in *Pragmatic Literacy, East and West 1200–1330*, ed. Richard Britnell (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1997), 107–118.

⁸⁵ Harvey, 107, 118.

⁸⁶ Harvey, 107.

⁸⁷ Harvey, 107.

⁸⁸ Michael Johnston, ‘Copying and Reading The Prick of Conscience in Late Medieval England’, *Speculum* 95, no. 3 (2020): 657–967 (764, 768–769, 770–771).

engaged in book production, producing manuscripts for local readers.⁸⁹ In many remote, unpopulated areas, far removed from urban centres, there existed the skill, expertise, and scribal teams required for producing books, from the 'very highest-end codices of Middle English literature' to 'simpler, more down-market products'.⁹⁰ Johnston suggests that this mode of production – local scribes working for local readers – was the most common arrangement from the mid-fourteenth century to the end of fifteenth, including in rural areas.⁹¹ Scribal skill, employed in creating both documents – including manorial documents – and literary manuscripts, was common in rural areas in late medieval England. In 2023, Johnston published a new work, *The Middle English Book: Scribes and Readers, 1350–1500*.⁹² Unfortunately, this work appeared too late to be given detailed consideration in this thesis.

However, the major work on rural writing culture has arisen from literary scholars' focus on the rising of 1381.⁹³ The most sustained exploration is Justice's compelling work, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381*, which takes rural writing culture as an object of study. Justice seeks to understand what writing, along with the vernacular, meant to the rebels and their rural communities – 'those who were not thought to read'.⁹⁴ Following the work of scholars such as Clanchy, Parkes, Orme and Bäuml, Justice asserts that rural culture was not an illiterate culture: rather, literacy was 'available, by one means or another, to almost all' in rural society.⁹⁵ He argues that the type of literacy which 'mattered' to these rural communities was 'the literacy that gave them their sense of familiarity with documentary culture', and his analysis of the rising illuminates the rebels' documentary and archival understanding and ability, and their 'respect for the forms of official writing'.⁹⁶ There is a strong 'adaptive' flavour to Justice's depiction of rural writing culture: peasants made use of manorial documents and the processes which produced them; furthermore, they 'shaped' the governance of their communities around these documents and 'created practices that depended' on them.⁹⁷ Crucially, Justice understands the rebels' writing as 'acts of assertive literacy', publicised in the face of a political and ecclesiastical elite which aligned literacy with authority and governance.⁹⁸ Yet Justice suggests that the rebels not only sought to appropriate official documentary culture and its command, but to create it anew.⁹⁹

⁸⁹ Johnston, 'Copying and Reading', 745, 755, 756, 768, 773, 777, 778.

⁹⁰ Johnston, 745, 755, 767, 768.

⁹¹ Johnston, 778.

⁹² Michael Johnston, *The Middle English Book: Scribes and Readers, 1350–1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023).

⁹³ Examples of other works that consider John Ball's texts, and writing and the rising are: Susan Crane, 'The Writing Lesson of 1381', in *Chaucer's England: Literature in Historical Context*, ed. Barbara A. Hanawalt, new edition, Medieval Studies at Minnesota 4 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 201–222; Richard Firth Green, 'John Ball's Letters: Literary History and Historical Literature', in *Chaucer's England: Literature in Historical Context*, ed. Barbara A. Hanawalt, Medieval Studies at Minnesota 4 (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 176–200 (180–193).

⁹⁴ Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, 4.

⁹⁵ Justice, 31–36 at 36, 52.

⁹⁶ Justice, 34–35 at 35, 41–43, 48.

⁹⁷ Justice, 189–191 at 190, at 191.

⁹⁸ Justice, 16–19, 24, 25, 34, 36–37, 192, 195. A similar point is also made by Susan Crane. Crane, 'Writing Lesson', 201–202, 204–210.

⁹⁹ Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, 38, 48, 71–73, 173, 188.

Writing thirteen years later, Wendy Scase takes a more expansive view of the writing of 1381, although she likewise approaches them from a literary perspective. She contends that to focus only on the 'six odd little vernacular texts' which form the centrepiece of Justice's study is to 'neglect a good deal of evidence for the quantity and nature of the rebels' textual output'.¹⁰⁰ Scase argues that the rebels formulated and promulgated their 'grievances and demands for redress' in writing, perhaps emulating the methods of the crown by publicising them as letters intended for 'proclamation'.¹⁰¹ There are echoes of Justice's analysis in Scase's work, particularly in regard to the way the rebels strategically made use of certain aspects of "official" documentary or judicial forms and processes while repudiating others.¹⁰² However, critical to Scase's argument is her insight that the rebels drew on the skills of the lawyers in their midst to '[articulate] their oppression in the judicial form of the petition or plaint' and 'positioned themselves in relation to this tradition'.¹⁰³

Scase's analysis extends beyond 1381, into the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. She sees the 'model' provided by the complaints of 1381 being taken up and developed by Cade's Kentish rebels in the 1450s; they may have done this consciously, deriving force and legitimacy from their forebears.¹⁰⁴ Later, their own petitions informed the texts produced in the sixteenth century by the Pilgrimage of Grace and Kett's rebellion.¹⁰⁵ Cade's rebels included professionals such as scribes and notaries and Scase suggests that, similarly to the situation in 1381, their skills were utilised in the creation of a substantial 'bill campaign'.¹⁰⁶ Strikingly, her analysis shows that the rebels were keenly engaged with how their writing circulated, tailoring different versions of their bills to different audiences for whom they had different aims.¹⁰⁷ Again, the centre of Scase's analysis is the rebels' active use of the traditions, language, forms, processes, and grievances appropriate to petition and plaint in the composition and publication of their bills.¹⁰⁸ For Scase, Cade's bills are particularly significant as they are indicative of what she describes as the 'maturing of clamour writing'; here is where she finds the beginnings of clamour being understood as 'a literature'.¹⁰⁹

Despite their influence, Justice and Scase's works have not been followed by historical investigations into rural writing culture, and there is still a great deal of scope for further exploration. Both studies focus on writing produced at moments of complaint, disruption or

¹⁰⁰ Wendy Scase, *Literature and Complaint in England, 1272–1553* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 84.

¹⁰¹ Scase, 84–85 at 84, at 85, 86, 87.

¹⁰² Scase, 84–86, 87.

¹⁰³ Scase, 84, 85, 86–87 at 86. Wendy Scase also discusses how, in the fourteenth century, 'knowledge of and access to the petitioning process' spread beyond 'political elites'. Scase, 90–91 at 90, at 91.

¹⁰⁴ Scase, 87, 112, 135–136.

¹⁰⁵ Scase, 157–158. Scase also sees the 'idiom of the Cade bills' in a petition from a rising in fifteenth-century Lincolnshire. Scase, 139. Moreover, when discussing the rebels of the sixteenth century, she suggests that the 'models' of complaint from Cade's rebellion may have been transmitted to them through chronicles and archives. Scase, 158.

¹⁰⁶ Scase, 110, 115–118 at 118, 134.

¹⁰⁷ Scase, 113–115, 118. Interested parties also strove to gain copies of the rebels' bills. Scase, 114, 118, 144–145. Bills could be posted or scattered in public places; rebels were even accused of intending to attach bills to the bodies of murdered royal officials. Scase, 135, for instance, 139, 140, 141–142, 143–144, 150. For a wonderful discussion of bill casting, see Wendy Scase, "'Strange and Wonderful Bills': Bill-Casting and Political Discourse in Late Medieval England", *New Medieval Literatures* 2 (1998): 225–247.

¹⁰⁸ Scase, *Literature and Complaint*, 110–113, 118–131.

¹⁰⁹ Scase, 135–136 at 135, at 136.

eruption, perhaps at the expense of routine – even normative – rural writing culture. Moreover, their work – and other scholars’ responses to it – draws attention to the complexity and multiplicity of a broader rural writing culture – if, indeed, we can speak of one. Justice’s work, as it focuses on the writing and documentary culture claimed by the peasantry – the ‘*rustici*’ – in contrast to the ‘official’ writing of the manor, indicates that rural writing culture could have numerous loci.¹¹⁰ This point is underscored by the afore-mentioned studies stressing the importance of locality, which argue that the production of rural commonplace books was inflected by the social status of their creators.¹¹¹ Scase’s analysis, situated as it is within a work on the broader literature of complaint, reminds us that rural writing culture did not exist in a vacuum; Justice, moreover, draws out the ways in which rebel writing drew on the ‘language of the psalter’ and the liturgy, repurposed a Wycliffite ‘vocabulary’, and transposed and reconfigured a literary work – *Piers Plowman*.¹¹² Even when considered in artificial isolation, rural writing culture was not one thing; when rebels made metaphors with documents they drew on – and spoke to – other elements of their lives and communities such as religious ritual, their labour and relationship with land, and peasant political culture and ‘ethic’.¹¹³ There are, therefore, many aspects and dimensions of rural writing culture still to be studied and explored.

In response to Justice’s work, Andrew Prescott argues that both Justice’s methodology – specifically his source materials – and his depiction of rural writing are too restrictive.¹¹⁴ Whereas Justice focuses his richest analysis on literary and chronicle sources, Prescott sifts through judicial records to find instances of rebel writing and use of documents which contrast with the image built from Justice’s sources.¹¹⁵ There is, perhaps, some ambiguity in Prescott’s writing as to whether he regards Justice’s interpretation as simply partial or, more harshly, wrong. However, his encouragement to scholars to make use of a broader range of texts and to appreciate their ‘multi-faceted nature’ – as it is only through that process that ‘the plurality of the revolt itself becomes comprehensible’ – suggests that there is space for both and again implies that rural writing culture was, itself, plural and varied.¹¹⁶ Prescott has since developed his position, arguing not only that documents provide evidence for uses of writing, but that administrative documents – and, indeed, the archives that preserve them – are themselves crafted narratives, ready to be ‘subjected ... to the same close reading as canonical literature’.¹¹⁷ This argument, combined with the recognition that documents were at the heart of rural communities’ relationship with writing, suggests a way forward in which we may consider administrative documents as creative and constructed expressions of rural

¹¹⁰ Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, 36, 45, 48, 64, 70–71, 73, 125, 190–191 at 190.

¹¹¹ See pages 19–21.

¹¹² Justice, especially 74, 75, 89–93 at 89, 118–119, 125–131, 134, 143; Chapter 2 (67–101) addresses ‘Wyclif in the Rising’, while Chapter 3 (102–139) addresses ‘*Piers Plowman* and the Rising’.

¹¹³ Justice, 150–172, 176–188 at 176, at 178.

¹¹⁴ Andrew Prescott, ‘Writing about Rebellion: Using the Records of the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381’, *Hist. Workshop J.*, no. 45 (1998): 1–27 (9–10, 13, 14–15, 16, 17–19).

¹¹⁵ Prescott, 13–16.

¹¹⁶ Prescott, 19–20 at 20.

¹¹⁷ Andrew Prescott, ‘Tall Tales from the Archive’, in *Medieval Historical Writing: Britain and Ireland, 500–1500*, ed. Jennifer Jahner, Emily Steiner, and Elizabeth M. Tyler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 356–369 (356–360 at 359). I will discuss Prescott’s 2019 work further on page 44.

writing culture.¹¹⁸ Thereby we can gain greater insight into a more everyday and normative dimension of rural writing culture.

One of the most abundant categories of documents produced in rural contexts are manorial documents. Manorial documents are some of the most well-known and well-studied sources for economic, social and legal history, but they have rarely if ever been considered in the context of cultural history.¹¹⁹ Moreover, this writing – pervasive as it was – was produced by a particular group of people: manorial officers like Robert Reynes wrote – or were responsible for the creation of – manorial documents. In this thesis I will analyse manorial documents as officers' creative productions and explore the images, arguments and narratives that they construct and communicate. Through this analysis, I will consider what writing may have meant to manorial officers – focusing on professional officers on lay gentry estates – and, finally, what it may suggest about a rural writing culture. But first, I will examine the existing historiography of officers as writers.

Manorial officers as writers

For well over a century, historians have considered manorial officers' literacy, and thought about their writing. In the late nineteenth century, James E. Thorold Rogers' examination of manorial accounts – and draft accounts – led him to argue that bailiffs could not have been 'wholly illiterate'; nor did he think it reasonable to assume that bailiffs did not have a grasp of Latin which was at least adequate to the task of manorial administration and accounting.¹²⁰ In his 1922 study of the Paston letters, H. S. Bennett drew attention to the writing of the Pastons' servants and officers and, notably, to the 'labour' of writing – both in its composition and its execution.¹²¹ Writing was not only a skill but a labour, one which was frequently significant, sometimes arduous and 'oftentimes unwillingly expended'.¹²² N. Denholm-Young's 1937 work on thirteenth-century seigneurial administration, meanwhile, only briefly addressed the connection between increasing lay literacy

¹¹⁸ In his contribution to the edited volume on pragmatic literacy discussed above, Richard Britnell drew a sharp distinction between pragmatic literacy and its products and literary manuscripts. However, as the discussion here, and later in the Introduction, demonstrate, this is no longer understood as so clear a binary. Richard Britnell, 'Pragmatic Literacy in Latin Christendom', in *Pragmatic Literacy, East and West 1200–1330*, ed. Richard Britnell (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1997), 3–24 (3–4).

¹¹⁹ Andrew Butcher's work on views of accounts is unusual in this respect. Butcher, 'Textual Production', 295–323.

¹²⁰ James E. Thorold Rogers, *Six Centuries of Work and Wages: The History of English Labour*, tenth edition (1884; repr., Bloomsbury: Swan Sonnenschein and Co., 1909), 165–166 at 165.

¹²¹ H. S. Bennett, *The Pastons and Their England: Studies in an Age of Transition*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 114–118 at 115.

¹²² Bennett, *The Pastons*, 114–118 at 115. Ralph Hanna III notes Thomas Hoccleve's 'appeal for seeing writing as just as back-breaking a labour as agriculture'. Ralph Hanna III, *The Penn Commentary on Piers Plowman: C Passus 5–9; B Passus 5–7; A Passus 5–8*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 22. Clanchy discusses a twelfth-century tradition of viewing writing as 'an act of endurance in which "the whole body labours"'. Clanchy, *From Memory*, 118–119 at 118 quoting W. Wattenbach, *Das Schriftwesen im Mittelalter*, third edition (Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 1896), 495 (translation by Clanchy).

and the rising professionalisation of – and lay involvement in – local administration.¹²³ However, his study assumed at least some level of literacy generally existed – or was at least not unexpected – throughout the hierarchy of seigniorial administrators; he discussed, for instance, treatises aimed at reeves and composed by a bailiff.¹²⁴ These early works thus considered literacy to be a useful – and not uncommon – skill for manorial officers to possess; writing could also be considered as part of their labour.

But in the 1970s, renewed work on manorial administration, documents, estate management treatises, and on the growth of literacy and written records, helped to develop a conversation about the literacy of manorial officers. This conversation focused on officers of the thirteenth century and the first half of the fourteenth, and was furthered by the work of Dorothea Oschinsky, Parkes, Harvey, and Clanchy in particular.¹²⁵ Oschinsky argued that the training of bailiffs and stewards both depended on and encouraged literate skills – including proficiency in French and Latin.¹²⁶ Clanchy also suggested that literacy and formalised teaching had an increasing role in training people in estate management and basic legal practice; interestingly, he animated treatises' creative potential in his description of a manual which employed a 'large element of imaginative licence' in order to provide engaging instruction suited to a steward.¹²⁷

Oschinsky demonstrated that manuals and treatises prepared and assisted officers to use and produce types of writing which were relevant, and even specific, to estate management.¹²⁸ Moreover, she presented writing and working with documents – especially survey-type documents – as the foundation of estate administration, and drew attention to treatises' instructions that officers should both produce and refer to these documents.¹²⁹ Harvey pointed out that, although the system of demesne farming which 'flourished' in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries could have developed without using written documents, written systems of accounting *did* grow up around it,

¹²³ N. Denholm-Young, *Seigniorial Administration in England*, Oxford Historical Series (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 5.

¹²⁴ Denholm-Young, 120–122.

¹²⁵ Dorothea Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley and Other Treatises on Estate Management and Accounting* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); Parkes, 'Literacy', 275–298; Paul D. A. Harvey, ed., *Manorial Records of Cuxham, Oxfordshire, circa 1200–1359*, Historical Manuscripts Commission 23 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1976); Clanchy, *From Memory*.

¹²⁶ Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley*, 3–4, 9, 61–63, 65, 73–74. In his work on business training in Oxford, Richardson also notes the ways in which one schoolmaster endeavoured to make his 'instruction more vivid and actual to his pupils', adding personal details, famous figures and engaging vignettes from numerous walks of life into his model documents and 'fictions'. Richardson, 'Business Training', 262–269 at 262. Emily Steiner discusses how the education provided by business schools had a literary edge and rhetorical flair, while the materials which teachers produced were often entertaining and used fictional elements. Emily Steiner, *Documentary Culture and the Making of Medieval English Literature*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 50 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 57–59. Writing much more recently, Martha Carlin finds 'wry recollection or humour' – rather than anxious advice or puzzling instructions for fraud – in the thirteenth-century formulary produced by a former bailiff. Martha Carlin, 'Cheating the Boss: Robert Carpenter's Embezzlement Instructions (1261x1268) and Employee Fraud in Medieval England', in *Commercial Activity, Markets and Entrepreneurs in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of Richard Britnell*, ed. Ben Dodds and Christian D. Liddy (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), 183–198 (183–184, 189–190 at 190).

¹²⁷ Clanchy, *From Memory*, 278–280 at 279.

¹²⁸ Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley*, 4.

¹²⁹ Oschinsky, 67–70.

becoming an integral – and vital – part of its administration.¹³⁰ Parkes asserted that literate, lay senior officers were the bedrock of this system of ‘accountable management’, and Harvey also provided examples of literate officers.¹³¹ Similarly, Clanchy created a picture of officers’ work which was run through with writing, reading, record-keeping, and creating and interacting with documents.¹³²

However, there was some disagreement over how far literacy – and of what type – extended down the hierarchy of officers. Oschinsky argued that reeves would not have been able to read or write Latin; instead, their literacy was likely restricted to the ability to ‘write symbolic signs and figures’, such as those required by the use of tallies.¹³³ Harvey agreed, arguing that – unless an estate took the unusual step of appointing clerks as reeves – it was very doubtful that a reeve would have been able to read or write a manorial account.¹³⁴ He disagreed with Parkes’ suggestion that reeves, as well as bailiffs, were able to write their own accounts, competently utilising Latin formulae.¹³⁵ Parkes, on the other hand, argued that some degree of literacy seems to have been expected of reeves: he followed Denholm-Young in asserting that treatises were directed to them, and he noted that written directions were sent to both reeves and bailiffs in French and – later – English.¹³⁶ Clanchy, likewise, was more optimistic about the extent of bailiffs’ and reeves’ literacy – particularly their reading. He argued that by 1300 we can presume some knowledge of Latin on the part of stewards, bailiffs, and reeves. He pointed once more to the expectations of certain treatises and, moreover, suggested that if a bailiff or reeve lacked a certain documentary competence he ‘would soon have been out of pocket’.¹³⁷

Since then, historians have often noted that officers were responsible for the production of manorial documents and indicated that literacy and some documentary skills were desirable – even necessary – qualifications for an officer, especially as we move into the fifteenth century. In a discussion of manor court rolls from the estate of Ramsey Abbey, Sherri Olson states that the steward was not only the ‘presiding officer’ at the court, but ‘the person responsible for seeing to

¹³⁰ Harvey, *Cuxham*, 12–16 at 13.

¹³¹ Parkes, ‘Literacy’, 280; Harvey, *Cuxham*, 39–40, 42.

¹³² Clanchy, *From Memory*, 48–50, 67, 92, 94–98, 99–100, 202, 278–280, 329. Clanchy also presents evidence for ‘long-standing habits of seignorial record-making’ from the eleventh century and, furthermore, suggests that this “habit” may have been older than that. Clanchy, 67. Orme also notes that the work of stewards, receivers and bailiffs ‘involved them with documents to a greater or lesser extent’, while he agrees that ‘reeves and bailiffs probably received clerical assistance in order to understand written instructions and to prepare accounts’. Moreover, he writes that due to ‘the literary demands which it made, royal and private administration both stimulated the spread of literacy and provided employment for the literate’. Orme, *English Schools*, 36.

¹³³ Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley*, 223.

¹³⁴ Harvey, *Cuxham*, 42, 51.

¹³⁵ Harvey, 41–42; Parkes, ‘Literacy’, 280–281. M. B. Parkes suggests that drawing up an account ‘would not necessarily require a knowledge of the Latin language, as such’, rather ‘only a knowledge of formulae’ which he terms the ‘jargon of the trade’. Parkes, 281.

¹³⁶ Parkes, ‘Literacy’, 280–281; Denholm-Young, *Seignorial Administration in England*, 121. Parkes notes that receivers and stewards, on the other hand, tended to receive instructions in Latin. Parkes, ‘Literacy’, 281 n. †.

¹³⁷ Clanchy, *From Memory*, 49.

the making of the record'.¹³⁸ Richard Ingham includes bailiffs (as well as clerks, such as 'accounts clerks', who worked in manorial contexts) amongst those professionals for whom literacy was a requirement of their 'social roles'.¹³⁹ Likewise, he expects stewards, receivers and auditors to be literate.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, Ingham's work on language-mixing in manorial accounts emphasises officers' and clerks' multilingual education and skills.¹⁴¹ In his outline of the life of Robert Parman, a bailiff and later farmer in fifteenth-century Suffolk, Christopher Dyer implies that the literacy which Parman seems to have made use of when managing his own farm was likely also an asset when it came to his employment as a bailiff.¹⁴²

To take up a more detailed example: Andrew Hope's examination of the life of William Sweeting (executed as a lollard in 1511) reveals a rather varied career.¹⁴³ Sweeting served as a bailiff, a holy water clerk, and a servant to a house of Augustinian Canons; it is also possible that he was a farmer for a period.¹⁴⁴ Hope draws an explicit parallel between Sweeting's work as a bailiff and as a holy water clerk, both being responsible administrative roles.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, they were connected by a requirement for literacy.¹⁴⁶ Hope writes that Sweeting appears to have had 'an education which provided him with the considerable literacy and numeracy necessary conscientiously to perform the duties of bailiff on important estates over a period of several decades'.¹⁴⁷ As a holy water clerk it is likely that – beyond his administrative duties – Sweeting also taught children to read, sing and, potentially, to write, and that he also read the Latin epistles during the mass.¹⁴⁸ Sweeting's career,

¹³⁸ Sherri Olson, *A Chronicle of All That Happens: Voices from the Village Court in Medieval England* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute for Medieval Studies, 1996), 6.

¹³⁹ Richard Ingham, 'Mixing Languages on the Manor', *Medium Ævum* 78, no. 1 (2009): 80–97 (80, 95 n. 5). Richard Ingham groups bailiffs and such clerks alongside others 'involved in administration and commerce' such as 'tax collectors, ... scribes, ... as well as teachers, lawyers, and the clergy'. Ingham, 80.

¹⁴⁰ Ingham, 85.

¹⁴¹ Ingham also argues that, in the fourteenth century, officers and clerks may have had some proficiency in French as well as Latin. Richard Ingham, 'Mixing Languages', 80–81, 82–83, 84–85, 93–94. Orme states that 'students of business techniques at Oxford were still mastering French and Latin' at the end of the fourteenth century, and suggests that French 'retained some currency' in realms including household administration and accounting into the 1430s. Orme, *English Schools*, 42. Jo Moran states that we 'can assume ... that professionals and university students, as well as higher clergy and lay administrators would once have been grammar students' and, therefore, had been trained in Latin. Moran, *Growth of Schooling*, 69.

¹⁴² Christopher Dyer, 'A Suffolk Farmer in the Fifteenth Century', *Agric. Hist. Rev.* 55, no. 1 (2007): 1–22 (3, 7, 8–10). Returning to John Crophill of Wix – the fifteenth-century bailiff and part-time 'medical practitioner' discussed earlier – Mustain states that his 'duties' as a bailiff 'attested that Crophill was literate'. Mustain, 'Medical Practitioner', 470–471 at 470, 472–473 at 473. See pages 20–21 for an earlier discussion of Crophill.

¹⁴³ Andrew Hope, 'The Lady and the Bailiff: Lollardy among the Gentry in Yorkist and Early Tudor England', in *Lollardy and the Gentry in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Aston and Colin Richmond (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1997), 250–277 (250).

¹⁴⁴ Hope, 250, 252, 255, 256–257, 260–261, 264. Over his lifetime Sweeting lived, worked and socialised in both rural and urban contexts. Hope, 252, 255, 256, 260, 264, 267.

¹⁴⁵ Hope, 257, 266.

¹⁴⁶ Sweeting's literacy also seems to have played a part in his lollardy as he read 'many good things out of a certain book' during conventicles. Hope, 264 quoting Josiah Pratt, ed., *The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe*, fourth edition (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1877), 216.

¹⁴⁷ Hope, 252.

¹⁴⁸ Hope, 255, 256. Hope notes that, by this period, the responsibilities of the holy water clerk had 'broadened to those of parish clerk in general'. Hope, 255. For information on the role and duties of the parish or holy water clerk, particularly in relation to those which required or imply literate skills, see Bennett, 'Education', 81;

with its through-line of literacy, echoes Reynes' and Crophill's professional lives: these men put their literacy to work in various roles. This parallels Kathryn Kerby-Fulton's description of the careers of the 'clerical proletariat'.¹⁴⁹ Their education fitted them for varied employment and mixed careers, often in a range of roles within the church, but also outside it, for instance in government, writing offices, or book production, or as schoolmasters, or as secretaries or chaplains in lay households.¹⁵⁰

Studies of late-fourteenth- and fifteenth-century education have tended to provide a clearer view of the education which catered to those men who went on to serve in the upper tiers of estate management – those aspiring 'gentleman bureaucrats' who were likely to serve noblemen.¹⁵¹ For instance, the works of Bennett and Patricia H. Cullum note that grammar schools and business schools – and even the education provided by the canons of secular cathedrals – provided the kind of education which 'would-be estate managers' required, turning out men 'trained as heirs or stewards to other estates'.¹⁵² Orme's and H. G. Richardson's discussions of the letter formulary of one fourteenth-century teacher of business studies suggest that such schoolmasters at least presented themselves as offering a gateway to more elevated service – or, indeed, salvation for those who found themselves out of their depth.¹⁵³

However, such schooling was not entirely exclusive and, therefore, we cannot be dismissive either of the literacy of officers who served lower down the manorial hierarchy, or of their documentary understanding or linguistic abilities. As I have discussed above, Moran's study of

Patricia H. Cullum, 'Learning to Be a Man, Learning to Be a Priest in Late Medieval England', in *Learning and Literacy in Medieval England and Abroad*, ed. Sarah Rees Jones, Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy 3 (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2003), 135–153 (149); Peter Heath, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation*, Studies in Social History (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 19–20, 84–85; Joyce Youngs, *Sixteenth-Century England*, The Pelican Social History of Britain (London: Allen Lane, 1984), 39; Orme, *Medieval Schools*, 63, 253.

¹⁴⁹ Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *The Clerical Proletariat and the Resurgence of Medieval English Poetry*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021).

¹⁵⁰ Kerby-Fulton, 2–3.

¹⁵¹ Bennett, 'Education', 89–90. G. G. Astill suggests that legal training – another highly literate mode of training – may also have provided a good background for office-holding. G. G. Astill, 'Social Advancement through Seigniorial Service? The Case of Simon Pakeman', *Trans. LAHS* 54 (1978–1979): 14–25 (19). This echoes Dorothea Oschinsky's argument that bailiffs' and stewards' training not only paralleled that of lawyers – depending on practical experience and didactic texts and manuals – but intertwined with it. Oschinsky suggests that such officers needed an education in law – they 'belonged to the rising legal profession' – while, in turn, lawyers who were engaged by lords would have benefited from a grounding in estate management; some may even have practised in both professions. Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley*, 9, 61–63, 73–74. Looking to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Youngs suggests a similar pattern for Humphrey Newton. Youngs, *Newton*, 44–45.

¹⁵² Bennett, 'Education', 89–90 at 89; Cullum, 'Learning', 149. Orme also notes that stewards, bailiffs and auditors required education in 'business skills'. Orme, *Medieval Schools*, 68, 71. He suggests that many students of grammar 'were less interested in its linguistic and literary aspects than its practical uses', for instance in administration. Orme, *English Schools*, 70. See note 18 for reference to Richardson's and Orme's discussions of business schools. Richardson suggests that the 'business' in which the Oxford schoolmaster Thomas Sampson sought to train his students was 'primarily the management of an agricultural estate'. Richardson, 'Business Training', 259–260, 269. Moran's study of schooling in the diocese of York from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century provides a detailed investigation of grammar schooling. Moran, *Growth of Schooling*.

¹⁵³ Orme, *English Schools*, 76–77; Richardson, 'Business Training', 259–260.

education in the diocese of York reveals some of the avenues for education and training which were open to rural communities and to villeins.¹⁵⁴ Reynes himself may have received his education at a grammar school or, more likely, a business school.¹⁵⁵ Business schools may have been less prestigious than grammar schools, due to their concern with practical administrative skills.¹⁵⁶ Even the founders of some schools which included ‘things as belonged to the scrivener craft’ and accounting in their curriculums did not prize these skills; some thought them better suited to ‘boys who were dull or lazy’.¹⁵⁷ However, it seems that such business-orientated studies were pervasive: even some more traditional grammar teachers also included at least some business and administrative skills in their curricula.¹⁵⁸ Alternatively, Reynes may have received a more informal education – perhaps from a scrivener.¹⁵⁹ Apprenticeships, private arrangements with tutors, clerks, chaplains and other professionals, or training in the households of those who possessed the desired skills, were just some of the ways in which people living in a rural context could gain education and training.¹⁶⁰

Whether officers received their education through a grammar or business school, or through more informal avenues, they would have been introduced to ‘elementary Latin grammar pedagogy’ and model Latin texts.¹⁶¹ Significantly, as Scase argues in her recent study, *Visible English*, basic grammar pedagogy initiated its students into an “‘us and them” discourse’ and provided ‘experiences of identity and difference’, while model texts provided ‘both of how “we” write and who “we” are’.¹⁶² Thereby, basic Latin education ‘transmitted literate practice as a way of entering into and inhabiting a social identity’.¹⁶³ While the identities formed through literate practices could be ‘fleeting and myriad’, those officers who had learned and who wrote Latin had not only been

¹⁵⁴ See page 23.

¹⁵⁵ Louis, *Commonplace Book of Reynes*, 34.

¹⁵⁶ Orme, *English Schools*, 71, 78.

¹⁵⁷ Orme, *Medieval Schools*, 72, 72 quoting Arthur Francis Leach, *Early Yorkshire Schools*, vol. 2, The Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series 33 (Leeds: Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1903), 89 (modernised by Orme); also quoted and discussed in Orme, *English Schools*, 78.

¹⁵⁸ Orme, *English Schools*, 71, 77–78; Orme, *Medieval Schools*, 72–73.

¹⁵⁹ Louis, *Commonplace Book of Reynes*, 34.

¹⁶⁰ Bennett, ‘Education’, 81–91. See pages 23–24 above. Orme also discusses the more informal ways in which people could gain training in professional or business skills, such as from scribes or within households ‘from their seniors’ (Orme, *Medieval Schools*, 73). Orme, *English Schools*, 78–79; Orme, *Medieval Schools*, 73. Moran notes that by the sixteenth century ‘peripatetic scribes’ travelled between schools in the York diocese to teach writing, although she suggests that it would have been easier to receive such an education in the towns where scribes ‘kept private writing schools’ which taught ‘cursive ... business methods, forms of correspondence, and accounts’. Moran, *Growth of Schooling*, 51. Anthony Smith speculates about the education of Simon Dicon, who served as a bailiff in the fifteenth century. Anthony Smith implies that literacy was one of the ‘qualifications’ for this role, and wonders if Dicon had been taught at the local Abbey. Interestingly, Anthony Smith notes that Dicon’s brother must also have received a literate education – which included Latin – as he served as a chaplain. Anthony Smith, “‘A Man of Substance of Witte Age and Goode”: Simon Dicon, A Fifteenth-Century Norfolk Bailiff”, *NA* 46, no. 4 (2013): 481–491 (481–482 at 482).

¹⁶¹ Wendy Scase, *Visible English: Graphic Culture, Scribal Practice, and Identity, c. 700–c. 1550*, *Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy* 54 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2022), 6, 12.

¹⁶² Scase, 12, 102.

¹⁶³ Scase, 12.

inculcated with the notion, but had experienced the practice, that through their writing – not only its content but its form – they could construct, share, and communicate identity.¹⁶⁴

Scholars have been interested in the connection between individual men's careers as officers – often with an emphasis on their legal expertise – and their broader writing and intellectual or creative pursuits. This can be seen in Llinos Beverley Smith's, Youngs' and Anthony Smith's studies of, respectively, John Edwards, Humphrey Newton and Nicholas Bokkyng.¹⁶⁵ In the 1950s, K. B. McFarlane had, in fact, elucidated some of the reciprocal relationships between William Worcester's employment as one of Sir John Fastolf's officers and his antiquarian activities and eclectic interests.¹⁶⁶ Like McFarlane, Youngs, Llinos Beverley Smith and Anthony Smith recognise the crucial practical connections between their protagonists' work and their writing, such as access to materials.¹⁶⁷ In comparison, however, they place greater weight on the skills which were common both to these men's labour as officers and to their writing. Moreover, the relationship between the two seems fundamental.

Both Youngs and Llinos Beverley Smith draw connections between Newton and Edwards' work and professional interests and the contents of their commonplace books.¹⁶⁸ Llinos Beverley Smith also emphasises that it was likely Edwards' position as an officer at Chirk which enabled him to access many of his sources.¹⁶⁹ Llinos Beverley Smith, Youngs and Anthony Smith all indicate a connection between these men's legal or officerial employment and their broader interest, and facility, in the 'labours of compiling and document-collecting'.¹⁷⁰ These men were also adept at interpreting and using documents: Anthony Smith, for instance, homes in on Bokkyng's 'archival and historical assurance', describing him as 'a man skilled at collecting information about [the] past, adept at making sense of the facts, and eloquent in presenting his material in a persuasive

¹⁶⁴ Scase, 14.

¹⁶⁵ Llinos Beverley Smith, 'Edwards', 174–184; Youngs, *Newton*; Anthony Smith, 'The Presence of the Past: The Bokkyngs of Longham in the Later Middle Ages', in *Concerns and Preoccupations*, ed. L. Clark, The Fifteenth Century 11 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2012), 91–105. Edwards pursued a legal career and served as an officer – certainly as receiver – in the lordship of Chirk. Llinos Beverley Smith, 'Edwards', 177–179. Newton and Nicholas Bokkyng of Longham were gentlemen who exercised their legal, scribal, administrative and managerial skills in others' service. Newton acted as a steward or deputy steward, presiding over various manorial courts and representing lords at others, while Bokkyng held a range of highly responsible offices over his lifetime, including acting as Sir John Fastolf's receiver-general. Youngs, *Newton*, 2, 8–9, 42–68; Anthony Smith, 'Bokkyngs', 91, 93, 94–97. See pages 20–21 for previous discussion of Edwards and Newton.

¹⁶⁶ K. B. McFarlane does not paint an entirely positive picture of Worcester's service, as he describes how Fastolf worked Worcester hard and paid him little. He suggests that Fastolf should, therefore, take some of the blame for Worcester's unfinished efforts. K. B. McFarlane, 'William Worcester: A Preliminary Study', in *England in the Fifteenth Century: Collected Essays of K. B. McFarlane* (1957; repr., London: The Hambleton Press, 1981), 199–224 (201–202, 206–208, 212, 214, 221–224).

¹⁶⁷ Anthony Smith, rather humbly, describes his work on Bokkyng as 'merely an elaboration' of McFarlane's discussion of Worcester's professional milieu. Anthony Smith, 'Bokkyngs', 99 n. 34.

¹⁶⁸ Llinos Beverley Smith, 'Edwards', 175, 176, 179; Youngs, *Newton*, 4–5, 47–50, 55–56, 68, 183.

¹⁶⁹ Edwards' commonplace book contains numerous documents related to the Stanleys, suggesting either that Edwards had a connection to the family or that the relevant material was still held at Chirk while Edwards was an officer there. Llinos Beverley Smith, 'Edwards', 178.

¹⁷⁰ Llinos Beverley Smith, 'Edwards', 182–184 at 182; Youngs, *Newton*, 10–16, 35–37, 39, 45–46, 47, 49–50, 55–56, 68, 77–78, 177, 181–182, 184–185; Anthony Smith, 'Bokkyngs', 98–99, 102..

manner'.¹⁷¹ Furthermore, their legal and officerial skills, experience and knowledge shaped some of their other intellectual and creative endeavours, from Bokkyng's antiquarian interests to the manner in which Newton pieced together his poetry.¹⁷² The linguistic skills required by Newton's work – Latin and 'law French' – also opened up a more varied corpus of literature for his perusal.¹⁷³ Llinos Beverley Smith draws attention to the way that poets in the north-east March praised Edwards and officers like him, extolling their 'wisdom as a lawyer', fair 'facility in language', and 'academic labours and book learning'.¹⁷⁴ For officers like them, at least, there is a suggestion that their learning was a valued part of their identity.

It is striking how much these scholars' analyses draw connections between these men's writing and their training and careers as officers. But despite their recognition and close consideration of this connection, they primarily frame these men in terms of their region or nation and, even more strongly, their gentry status.¹⁷⁵ They are less concerned with what these men's writing says about them *as* officers, a question that has received some attention in relation to labour in urban contexts.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, the richest studies of these unexceptional men's writing tend to focus on exceptional survivals – such as their commonplace books – rather than on the great mass of rural writing which is composed of manorial documents.¹⁷⁷ These documents are much more plentiful than the types of writing which Newton and Reynes produced for themselves; they are neither unusual productions nor unusual survivals. While they may not seem to let us as intimately close to their creators as Reynes' curiosities or Newton's doodles appear to do, they are the productions of centres of prodigious quantities of writing – manors – and they were the responsibility of manorial officers.¹⁷⁸ Manorial documents represent an extensive, significant and normative body and practice of rural writing in this period; to examine them allows us to explore a mass experience of writing which has been neglected. Therefore, in this thesis I will turn to manorial documents to ask how manorial officers and their labour are represented in their writing.

Historians have imagined manorial documents as places where the officer can be found, and where a particular image of him could be shaped. When discussing manorial accounts, Harvey

¹⁷¹ Anthony Smith, 'Bokkyngs', 102–104 at 102, at 103.

¹⁷² Anthony Smith, 98–99; Youngs, *Newton*, 68, 192–193, 199–200.

¹⁷³ Youngs, 68.

¹⁷⁴ Llinos Beverley Smith, 'Edwards', 179, 183.

¹⁷⁵ See pages 20–21 for an earlier discussion of locality as a frame for Edwards' and Newtons' writing. Youngs, *Newton*, 2–9, for setting Newton's writing and commonplace book in a gentry context, see 177–179, 182–183, 188, 191, 193–200 in particular; Anthony Smith, 'Bokkyngs', 105; McFarlane, 'Worcester', 201.

¹⁷⁶ Kerby-Fulton, *Clerical Proletariat*, for instance, see 2, 300–304; Esther Liberman Cuenca, 'Town Clerks and the Authorship of Customals in Medieval England', *Urban History* 46, no. 2 (2019): 180–201 (199–200); Jennifer Bishop, 'The Clerk's Tale: Civic Writing in Sixteenth-Century London', in *The Social History of the Archive: Record-Keeping in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Liesbeth Corens, Kate Peters, and Alexandra Walsham, Past & Present Supplements 11 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 112–130 (114–120, 126–130).

¹⁷⁷ In general, Youngs, Llinos Beverley Smith and Anthony Smith conclude that – while these men may have had some uncommon qualities or interests, and perhaps took some aspects of their writing further than many of their fellows – as a broader type, and as possessors of a certain skillset, it is likely that they were 'not so very rare' (Anthony Smith, 'Bokkyngs', 105). Llinos Beverley Smith, 'Edwards', 183–184; Anthony Smith, 'Bokkyngs', 105; Youngs, *Newton*, 2, 4–6, 9, 177–179, 181–183, 186–187, 191, 196–200.

¹⁷⁸ For Newton's doodles, see Youngs, *Newton*, 1, 20, 185, 188.

describes them as a document which ‘present[s] [the reeve’s] activity in the best possible light’.¹⁷⁹ Harvey’s description of how much we know about the manorial reeve, beginning in the mid-thirteenth century, is simple but evocative: ‘He stands before us in surveys, in court rolls and, above all, in manorial accounts ... under the successive scrutiny of bailiff, steward and auditor’.¹⁸⁰ This image – of the officer conjured from, anchored in, scrutinised through, and composed by documents – is one that also motivates my analysis, although I head off in a rather different direction to Harvey. I will explore how manorial documents depict officers and their labour, delineate their place and role on the manor, and – perhaps – express and construct a professional identity for these men. Manorial officers were often from a rural context, certainly laboured in a rural context, and were responsible for – or actively produced – writing in and for a rural context.¹⁸¹ Therefore, this study aims to complement Justice’s and Scase’s work by exploring another element of a larger rural writing culture in late-medieval England.

Manorial documents as writing culture

Sources

In this thesis I will be examining records from three different genres of manorial documents. Two of these genres – manorial accounts and survey-type documents (such as rentals, surveys proper, and terriers) – are well-established and familiar. The third – a remembrance book, organised day-by-day, and kept by an officer – is more unusual. The specific documents I will be exploring are: a series of manorial accounts for the manor of Mote (East Sussex) which span the years 1464–1465 to 1480–1481; a series of survey-type documents from the manors of West Wickham, Baston, Keston and Southcourt (Kent), with a particular focus on those produced in the last quarter of the fifteenth century; a remembrance book kept from March 1516 into 1518 by John Skayman, an officer working on the Norfolk estate of Roger Townshend. The Covid-19 pandemic directed my decision to analyse Mote’s accounts and Skayman’s remembrance book as they are both available in edition: the former has been edited and translated by Mark Gardiner and Christopher Whittick, while Charles Moreton and Paul Rutledge have edited the latter.¹⁸² I have since been able to access photographs of the original documents. I have chosen this group of Kentish manors as the focus for my second chapter as – like Mote and the Townshend estate – it was held by lay lords of gentry

¹⁷⁹ Harvey, *Cuxham*, 41.

¹⁸⁰ Paul D. A. Harvey, ‘The Manorial Reeve in Twelfth-Century England’, in *Lordship and Learning: Studies in Memory of Trevor Aston*, ed. Ralph Evans (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2004), 125–138 (125).

¹⁸¹ Some manors did include – or were entirely focused on – urban contexts. For instance, Paul D. A. Harvey refers to manors that might simply be ‘a group of rent-paying town houses’. However, this was rarer, and such manors will not be the focus of my thesis. Paul D. A. Harvey, *Manorial Records, Archives and the User 5* (London: British Records Association, 1984), 31–32 at 32.

¹⁸² Mark Gardiner and Christopher Whittick, eds., *Accounts and Records of the Manor of Mote in Iden, 1442–1551, 1673*, Sussex Record Society 92 (Lewes: Sussex Record Society, 2011); Charles Moreton and Paul Rutledge, ‘Skayman’s Book, 1516–1518’, in *Farming and Gardening in Late Medieval Norfolk*, ed. Claire Noble, Charles Moreton, and Paul Rutledge, Norfolk Record Society 61 (Norwich: Norfolk Record Society, 1996), 95–169.

status. Moreover, a range of survey-type documents from the relevant period survive from these manors, which is not common.

This thesis is not an exhaustive study of all the document-types or genres produced during the course of manorial or seigneurial administration. I have not turned to manorial court records, despite them being a rich and much-appreciated source; and indeed, beyond the main genres of manorial documents – accounts, survey-type documents, court records – there is a broader range of manorial or administrative documents – such as letters and muniments – which also sit outside the scope of this thesis.¹⁸³ The decision to exclude such material has been, to some degree, a practical one, necessitated by the limitations of a thesis project, particularly one undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, my focus on administrative documents from the late medieval period, excluding court records, has also allowed me to focus on professional officers such as bailiffs, receivers and stewards, rather than those who were selected to serve for a time from amongst the tenantry, such as reeves, beadles and various other court officials.¹⁸⁴ This has given greater specificity to my analysis. Moreover, I have been able to consider documents from across the spectrum of manorial documents, ranging from those with tighter and enduring conventions – such as accounts – which have often been considered “drier”, to one – Skayman’s remembrance book – which is more flexible and singular in form, and which seems to offer a greater sense of immediacy and personality. However, a useful avenue for future analysis may be to consider whether the practices and discourses which I identify in the documents I study in this thesis are also shared by documents produced by the manor court. In what follows, I provide a general introduction to manorial accounts and survey-type documents, and briefly contextualise Skayman’s remembrance book; I will discuss each in more detail – and introduce my specific sources – in their respective chapters.

To begin with manorial accounts: these documents were normally produced once a year, written up on a roll, and usually run from Michaelmas to Michaelmas.¹⁸⁵ As I will discuss in more

¹⁸³ In their explanations of manorial documents, historians have tended to consider accounts, survey-type documents and court records as the key genres. For instance, see Bailey, *The Manor*. Harvey has produced useful introductions to these genres of documents, along with letters and charters. Harvey, ‘Estate Records’, 110–118; Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 15–53. However, in a discussion of manorial accounts, he also reminds us that documents which historians have ‘lumped together’ into a single genre may have been understood as different documents with different purposes by contemporary estate administrators. Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 37–38 at 37.

¹⁸⁴ Alex Spike Gibbs also delineates between the ‘salaried appointees’ who are the subject of my thesis and the officers selected from the tenantry, and often serving in the court, who are the subject of his own. Gibbs, ‘Manorial Officeholding’, 8. He provides a discussion of the different types of officeholders and roles which comprised the latter category. Gibbs, ‘Manorial Officeholding,’ 68. As Mark Bailey notes, ‘seigneurial estate management became increasingly professional and systematic’ from around the beginning of the thirteenth century (Bailey, *The Manor*, 16). Day-to-day, a manor might be managed by a resident reeve or bailiff. A reeve was a member of the unfree tenantry of the manor and was elected – or selected by the lord – each year, although some reeves would serve for multiple years. A bailiff was a professional officer who received a salary for his work. From the late fourteenth century elected reeves became increasingly uncommon and eventually their employment came to an end on most manors. Therefore, by the mid-fifteenth century manors were usually being managed by a professional officer. Bailey, 16, 98–99, 106.

¹⁸⁵ Michaelmas falls on 29 September. Draft accounts or views of account may also have been produced during the accounting year, but these documents were often more ephemeral. Bailey, *The Manor*, 97; Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 26, 38–39; Harvey, *Cuxham*, 19, 43, 58–61.

detail in Chapter One, the account had a starring role in the system by which lords maintained oversight of manorial officers and, moreover, it used a charge/discharge system to establish what the officer owed the lord (or vice versa).¹⁸⁶ The earliest surviving written manorial accounts come from the first decade of the thirteenth century.¹⁸⁷ From around the 1270s, written manorial accounting really took off and, by the early fourteenth century, estates of all sizes and types were producing accounts.¹⁸⁸ In contrast to earlier accounts, these documents were compiled on the individual manors to which they related; moreover, they are remarkably uniform across manors and are highly detailed.¹⁸⁹ On the front of the roll – the recto – is the cash account which deals with items such as rents, sales and running costs. On the back – the dorse – is the corn account and then the livestock account.¹⁹⁰ Amendments, additions and calculations made at audit are often visible on these accounts.¹⁹¹

Surveys have not received the same level of study as accounts or court rolls, although they are the oldest known type of manorial document – some survive from the twelfth century.¹⁹² The broader survey genre is composed of a network of documents which establish and record knowledge about a manor. They enumerate what lords owned and what they were owed, cataloguing both tenants' obligations and demesne lands. This genre of documents – which I will usually refer to as survey-type documents – includes: surveys proper, which are descriptions of the lands of the manor, and may also include lists of the customs and services of the different tenants; rentals, which record tenants' names, their annual rent, and possibly details of their holding and any services they owed; terriers, which describe the location of the manor's lands, usually in an order related to their topography; extents, which are similar to surveys but include valuations of the manor's various properties and resources; firmals, which record what leaseholders held at farm and for how much; and custumals, which record the various customs of the manor, such as what works and services tenants owed.¹⁹³ Like those of the account, the form and content of survey-type documents changed over time, while new types of documents were developed – or gained importance – in response to changes in estate and land management practices.¹⁹⁴

Manorial documents of the later thirteenth and first half of the fourteenth centuries are often thought of as the “classics” of the genre. Harvey notes that the accounts of this period are ‘what is sometimes called a “normal” manorial account’, and it is this kind of account which provided

¹⁸⁶ Harvey, *Cuxham*, 14–15, 65; Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 6, 34; Bailey, *The Manor*, 102; William T. Baxter, ‘The Account Charge and Discharge’, *Account. Hist. J.* 7, no. 1 (1980): 69–71 (69).

¹⁸⁷ Bailey, *The Manor*, 97; Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 25; Harvey, ‘Estate Records’, 114; Harvey, *Cuxham*, 15.

¹⁸⁸ Early accounts tend to come from great estates, particularly those with ecclesiastical lords. Harvey, *Cuxham*, 15–19; Harvey, ‘Estate Records’, 114–115; Bailey, *The Manor*, 97; Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 25–26, 31.

¹⁸⁹ Harvey, *Cuxham*, 16, 19–22, 29; Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 31–33; Harvey, ‘Estate Records’, 115; Bailey, *The Manor*, 97, 100–102.

¹⁹⁰ Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 28, 31–32; Harvey, *Cuxham*, 23.

¹⁹¹ Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 31–33; Harvey, *Cuxham*, 42, 50–57.

¹⁹² Bailey, *The Manor*, 21–22.

¹⁹³ Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 15–24; Bailey, *The Manor*, 21. For an example of a document which describes itself as a firmal, see Maidstone, KA, U312/M24 (Firmal of West Wickham, Southcourt, Keston and Baston, 1495–1497) (hereafter, U312/M24 (Firmal, 1495–1497)).

¹⁹⁴ Harvey, *Cuxham*, 73–76, 78; Bailey, *The Manor*, 22–25, 37–41.

the template for the model manorial account I have described above.¹⁹⁵ From the mid-fourteenth century direct demesne farming declined and it became increasingly common for lords to lease out parts – or all – of their manors. This change in estate management was reflected in developments in manorial accounts.¹⁹⁶ Bruce M. S. Campbell asserts that ‘by 1450 the era of the manorial account [was] effectively over’, while Mark Bailey notes that ‘survivals are often little more than glorified rent rolls’.¹⁹⁷ Harvey, on the other hand, is less severe, dubbing this later phase of manorial accounting ‘Phase 3’ and outlining its distinctive features.¹⁹⁸ In particular, he emphasises that there is much greater diversity amongst Phase 3 accounts than their predecessors, although they generally retain their charge/discharge format.¹⁹⁹ Phase 3 accounts can also be less detailed and much shorter, ‘scrappy and informal’ or – conversely – ‘over formalised’.²⁰⁰ Historians lament that ‘the value of fifteenth-century manorial accounts to the economic and social historian is, it is true, considerably less than that of the accounts dating from the hey-day of demesne farming’, and warn that their study requires the careful disentangling of fact and fiction.²⁰¹

Survey-type documents likewise altered in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The ‘classic survey, with its detailed and pedantic recitals’ of tenants’ rents and obligations was suited to the conditions of the earlier thirteenth century and – in response to the growth of the peasant land market followed by changes in tenure, increased leasing and a greater reliance on rents (and difficulties in collecting them) – survey-type documents changed.²⁰² Over the course of the fourteenth century ‘monumental’ detailed surveys and extents became ‘increasingly irrelevant’, and rentals – which were also quicker and cheaper to produce and maintain – became indispensable, particularly in the fifteenth century.²⁰³ Terriers were also increasingly useful, and late-medieval surveys have much more in common with these types of documents.²⁰⁴ Jean Birrell discusses the ‘bad press’ which the longer, more detailed survey-type documents have received from some

¹⁹⁵ Harvey, *Cuxham*, 19.

¹⁹⁶ Bailey, *The Manor*, 106, 108–111; Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 35; Bruce M. S. Campbell, *English Seigniorial Agriculture, 1250–1450*, Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography 31 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 28–29.

¹⁹⁷ Campbell, *Seigniorial Agriculture*, 30; Bailey, *The Manor*, 106.

¹⁹⁸ Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 26, 35–37; Harvey, *Cuxham*, 16. Harvey suggests that Phase 3 accounts began to be produced from around 1350. Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 35. However, he is careful to point out that the ‘change to Phase 3 took place slowly over half a century or more’. Moreover, he states that the three phases which he defines should ‘[not] be taken as more than a general pattern of development, for all sorts of exceptions and variations can be found’, as well as overlaps. Harvey, *Cuxham*, 16; also, see Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 26.

¹⁹⁹ Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 35–37.

²⁰⁰ Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 35, 36–37 at 36.

²⁰¹ I will return to the latter assertion in Chapter One. The quotation comes from R. H. Hilton, ed., *Ministers’ Accounts of the Warwickshire Estates of the Duke of Clarence, 1479–80*, Publications of The Dugdale Society 21 (Oxford: The Dugdale Society, 1952), ix. Dyer asserts that fifteenth-century accounts are a confection of ‘theory and reality’, a point which Harvey reiterates. Christopher Dyer, *Lords and Peasants in a Changing Society: The Estates of the Bishopric of Worcester, 680–1540*, Past & Present Publications (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 162; Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 36–37.

²⁰² Bailey, *The Manor*, 37–41 at 37.

²⁰³ Bailey, 37–41 at 38.

²⁰⁴ Bailey, 40.

historians, being ‘tedious ... static ... and worse ... quickly out of date, or deceptive’.²⁰⁵ Interestingly, in contrast to later-medieval accounts which – as we have seen – have often been discussed in terms of decline, the ‘evolution’ of survey-type documents in this period has been characterised as testimony to managerial ‘progress and innovation’.²⁰⁶

The manorial documents produced in the fifteenth century are, therefore, distinctive. Skayman’s remembrance book – and, indeed, Reynes’ commonplace book – can also be considered particular to the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries as writing increasingly became an ordinary part of such men’s lives and work: ‘writing saturated their lives on a new scale’.²⁰⁷ Early modern merchants also developed habits of routine, even daily, note-taking and writing as they recorded the transactions they made in day-books.²⁰⁸ Therefore, while Skayman’s remembrance book is an unusual survival, his writing was part of a broader increase in regular and personal writing which encompassed both merchants and rural administrators like himself and Reynes; it is unlikely therefore, that his writing was unparalleled amongst his contemporaries on other estates. His book also bears some relation to more established genres of manorial documents, particularly the manorial account.²⁰⁹ Skayman’s remembrance book is not an outlier; it is at home amongst the manorial documents of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

While manorial administration and documents of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries have been the focus of classic studies, the fifteenth century has received less attention.²¹⁰ My thesis, therefore, contributes to rectifying this imbalance. Moreover, economic, legal and social historians have moved away from reiterating the narrative of the decline of the manor and, instead, explored its continuing – if altered – life in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.²¹¹ My thesis accords with

²⁰⁵ Jean Birrell, ‘Confrontation and Negotiation in a Medieval Village: Alrewas before the Black Death’, in *Survival and Discord in Medieval Society: Essays in Honour of Christopher Dyer*, ed. R. Goddard, J. Langdon, and M. Müller, The Medieval Countryside 4 (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2010), 197–211 (210).

²⁰⁶ Bailey, *The Manor*, 41.

²⁰⁷ Tom Johnson, *Law in Common: Legal Cultures in Late-Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 245.

²⁰⁸ Ann M. Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 69.

²⁰⁹ I will discuss this in more detail in Chapter Three. See pages 132–133.

²¹⁰ Examples of classic studies which focus on the earlier period are: Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley*; Harvey, *Cuxham*; Denholm-Young, *Seignorial Administration in England*.

²¹¹ For examples of narratives of declines, see Christopher Dyer, *An Age of Transition? Economy and Society in England in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005), 6; John S. Beckerman, ‘Procedural Innovation and Institutional Change in Medieval English Manorial Courts’, *LHR* 10, no. 2 (1992): 197–252 (199–200); Christopher Dyer and Richard Hoyle, ‘Britain, 1000–1750’, in *Social Relations: Property and Power*, ed. Bas van Bavel, Richard Hoyle, and in association with Stefan Brakensiek, Piet van Cruyningen, Christopher Dyer, Mats Morell and Nadine Vivier, *Rural Economy and Society in North-Western Europe, 500–2000* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2010), 51–80 (especially 57–59, 67). However, historians have studied various aspects of the continuing life of the manor, even beyond the sixteenth century. For instance, see Jane Whittle, *The Development of Agrarian Capitalism: Land and Labour in Norfolk 1440–1580*, Oxford Historical Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 28–84; Brodie Waddell, ‘Governing England through the Manor Courts, 1550–1850’, *Hist. J.* 55, no. 2 (2012): 279–315 (especially 279–283, 308–309); Marjorie Keniston McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehaviour in England, 1370–1600*, Cambridge Studies in Population, Economy, and Society in Past Time 34 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 42–43; Spike Gibbs, ‘Lords, Tenants and Attitudes to Manorial Office-Holding, c. 1300–c. 1600’, *Agric. Hist. Rev.* 67, no. 2 (2019): 155–174 (especially 156–160,

this adjustment. Rather than continuing to emphasise the persistent characterisation of late medieval manorial documents as ‘less informative’, I am drawn to recognitions of their adaptability, innovation and creativity.²¹² I am approaching these manorial documents as vital elements of the continuing cultural richness of the manor.

Approach

Manorial documents are among the most well-known and well-studied sources for the economic, social and legal history of medieval England. Manorial accounts, court rolls and survey-type documents have been studied for evidence of their own development and the processes of their production.²¹³ They have also been mined for the source material which underlies a varied wealth of works, including studies of individual manors and whole estates, seigneurial agriculture and broader economic developments, peasant society and village politics, and the relations between lords, peasants and officers.²¹⁴ Some historians, such as P. L. Larson, combine traditional methods of analysing manorial documents with approaches gleaned from other fields and disciplines in an attempt to make the medieval manor ‘come alive’ and ‘evoke relevant aspects of peasant mentality’.²¹⁵ Matthew Tompkins makes great use of precise analyses of variations in the wording of

168–174); Elizabeth Norton, ‘The Continuing Importance of the Manor in Late Sixteenth-Century England: The Example of the Blount Family of the West Midlands’, *Midland History* 47, no. 2 (2022): 113–128.

²¹² Jane Whittle, for instance, notes that manorial documents of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries ‘are less informative than those of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries’, although more numerous. Whittle, *Agrarian Capitalism*, 3. Also see the quotation from Hilton, *Ministers’ Accounts*, ix which appears on page 39.

²¹³ For instance, Harvey, *Cuxham*; Reginald Lennard, ‘What Is a Manorial Extent?’, *EHR* 44, no. 174 (1929): 256–263.

²¹⁴ For instance, F. W. Maitland, ‘The History of a Cambridgeshire Manor’, in *Selected Historical Essays of F. W. Maitland*, ed. Helen M. Cam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 16–40; Marjorie Keniston McIntosh, *Autonomy and Community: The Royal Manor of Havering, 1200–1500*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought 4, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); J. Ambrose Raftis, *The Estates of Ramsey Abbey: A Study in Economic Growth and Organisation*, Studies and Texts 3 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1957); Dyer, *Lords and Peasants*; Campbell, *Seigniorial Agriculture*; David Stone, *Decision-Making in Medieval Agriculture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Whittle, *Agrarian Capitalism*, 28–84; Miriam Müller, ‘A Divided Class? Peasants and Peasant Communities in Later Medieval England’, *P&P* 195, no. 2 (2007): 115–131; Phillipp R. Schofield, *Peasant and Community in Medieval England, 1200–1500*, Medieval Culture and Society (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003); Dyer, ‘Political Life’, 135–157; Chris Briggs, ‘Monitoring Demesne Managers through the Manor Court before and after the Black Death’, in *Survival and Discord in Medieval Society: Essays in Honour of Christopher Dyer*, ed. R. Goddard, J. Langdon, and M. Müller, The Medieval Countryside 4 (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2010), 179–195; Gibbs, ‘Manorial Officeholding’, 155–174. See note 34 on pages 93–94 for examples of studies which make use of survey-type documents specifically.

²¹⁵ P. L. Larson, *Conflict and Compromise in the Late Medieval Countryside: Lords and Peasants in Durham, 1349–1400*, Studies in Medieval History and Culture (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), xviii–xix at xix, 37–47. Judith Bennett discusses the convergence of feminist scholarship and medieval studies. Judith M. Bennett, ‘Medievalism and Feminism’, *Speculum* 68, no. 2 (1993): 309–331.

court rolls to uncover court processes and fifteenth-century peasants' use of lawyers.²¹⁶ Social and cultural historians such as Birrell and Sherri Olson fruitfully pay close attention to the wording of manorial documents, along with their tone, and the dynamic and layered process of their composition.²¹⁷ Arguably, Olson sometimes treats court rolls and their scribes as too-passive witnesses and recorders of the voices and events heard at the manor court.²¹⁸ Yet her mode of reading does gesture towards a type of analysis which would allow us to understand them as cultural productions.

This is an approach which is more often used with legal records. In her work on sixteenth-century letters of remission from France, Natalie Zemon Davis turned her attention to the “‘fictional’ qualities’ of these letters: ‘their forming, shaping, and moulding elements: the crafting of a narrative’.²¹⁹ Since then, many historians of legal records have taken up and ‘subtly refined’ Davis’ pioneering approach; as Merridee L. Bailey asserts, ‘understanding legal documents as highly narrativised is now standard practice’.²²⁰ Endeavouring to uncover and understand ‘popular mentalities’, and social, cultural, legal, political and emotional norms and discourses, historians approach depositions, testimonies, petitions, and other legal records as texts.²²¹ They pay close

²¹⁶ Matthew Tompkins, “‘Let’s Kill All the Lawyers’: Did Fifteenth-Century Peasants Employ Lawyers When They Conveyed Customary Land?”, in *Identity and Insurgency in the Middle Ages*, ed. Linda Clark, The Fifteenth Century 6 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006), 73–87.

²¹⁷ Jean Birrell, ‘Manorial Customals Reconsidered’, *P&P* 224, no. 1 (2014): 3–37; Olson, *A Chronicle*. Sherri Olson describes the court roll as a ‘working document that could absorb and preserve cultural meaning of great density’. Olson, *A Chronicle*, 9. I will discuss Jean Birrell’s ground-breaking work on customals further in Chapter Two.

²¹⁸ Olson, especially 6–27 for her approach to the court rolls.

²¹⁹ Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 2–3 at 3.

²²⁰ The initial quotation is from Tom Johnson, ‘The Preconstruction of Witness Testimony: Law and Social Discourse in England before the Reformation’, *LHR* 32, no. 1 (2014): 127–147 (136). Merridee L. Bailey, “‘Most Hevyneesse and Sorowe’: The Presence of Emotions in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Court of Chancery”, *LHR* 37, no. 1 (2019): 1–28 (6). Both Tom Johnson and Merridee L. Bailey discuss the substantial influence of this approach. Johnson, in particular, suggests criticisms and further refinements. Johnson, ‘Preconstruction of Testimony’, 136–137, 139–147; Bailey, ‘Emotions’, 5–7, 7 n. 20. For further examples of this and similar approaches in studies published after Natalie Zemon Davis’ work, *Fiction in the Archives*, see Laura Gowing, ‘Gender and the Language of Insult in Early Modern London’, *Hist. Workshop J.* 35, no. 1 (1993): 1–21; Jeremy Goldberg, ‘Debate: Fiction in the Archives: The York Cause Papers as a Source for Later Medieval Social History’, *C&C* 12, no. 3 (1997): 425–445 (435–440); Malcolm Gaskill, ‘Reporting Murder: Fiction in the Archives in Early Modern England’, *Social History* 23, no. 1 (1998): 1–30 (see 1–5 for a discussion of his approach); Anne Dolan, ‘Death in the Archives: Witnessing War in Ireland, 1919–1921’, *P&P* 253, no. 1 (2021): 271–300 (see 277–280 for a discussion of her approach); Daniel Lord Smail, ‘Witness Programs in Medieval Marseille’, in *Voices from the Bench: The Narratives of Lesser Folk in Medieval Trials*, ed. Michael Goodich, The New Middle Ages (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 227–250; Cordelia Beattie, ‘Single Women, Work, and Family: The Chancery Dispute of Jane Wynde and Margaret Clerk’, in *Voices from the Bench: The Narratives of Lesser Folk in Medieval Trials*, ed. Michael Goodich, The New Middle Ages (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 177–202 (178–179, 182–193); Joel T. Rosenthal, *Telling Tales: Sources and Narration in Late Medieval England* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), see xi, xvi, xvii, xxii, 2–5, 9–15, 64–66, 96 for useful discussions of his approach, but it is woven through the work.

²²¹ The quotation is from Gaskill, ‘Reporting Murder’, 2. For further illustrations of the above point, see W. Mark Ormrod, ‘Introduction: Medieval Petitions in Context’, in *Medieval Petitions: Grace and Grievance*, ed. W. Mark Ormrod, Gwilym Dodd, and Anthony Musson (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2009), 1–11 (11); Bailey, ‘Emotions’, 6; Johnson, ‘Preconstruction of Testimony’, 136–137.

attention to language choice, style and tone, the use of 'phrases, motifs and images' and how they are combined, what is emphasised, detailed or repeated and what seems to have been diminished or excised.²²² They discuss the 'devices' these texts employ, and the 'aesthetics' of testimony and truth.²²³ They scrutinise how people characterised themselves and others, and consider the significance of setting and description in these texts.²²⁴

Historians also draw out the resonances and interactions between these records and other forms and modes of story-telling, social and cultural discourses – or stereotypes – and consider how witnesses and courts made use of them.²²⁵ They explore the cumulative effect which different statements (or other texts) produced, and the relationships between them both in their formulation and in their reception.²²⁶ They are on the alert for the construction of narrative and argument.²²⁷ Some historians, such as Malcolm Gaskill, are wary of more formulaic documents, arguing that these further distance us from the 'thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and emotions' of ordinary people; others, such as Tim Stretton and Daniel Lord Smail argue that formulae and homogeneity can be meaningful, communicative, and aesthetically and strategically important.²²⁸

Such studies have increasingly engaged with the requirements, conventions, cultures and processes of the legal contexts which produced these documents, and with the roles and agency of the various players who took part in their construction.²²⁹ This has been entwined with an awareness of audience and, therefore, a vivid sense that these texts were 'persuasive' and 'designed to get something done'.²³⁰ The relationship and context that these documents were created in, by and for has proved essential to their analysis. More recently, historians have begun to expand this search for

²²² The quotation is from Gaskill, 'Reporting Murder', 8. For further illustrations of the above point, see Bailey, 'Emotions', 11–22; Gowing, 'Gender and Insult', 1–21; Gaskill, 'Reporting Murder', 4, 8; Tim Stretton, 'Social Historians and the Records of Litigation', in *Fact, Fiction and Forensic Evidence: The Potential of Judicial Sources for Historical Research in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Sølvi Sogner (Oslo: Department of History, University of Oslo, 1997), 15–34 (29).

²²³ Both quotations are from Smail, 'Witness Programs', 229, 230.

²²⁴ Gowing, 'Gender and Insult', 1–21; Smail, 'Witness Programs', 229, 241–245; Bailey, 'Emotions', 12–13; Stretton, 'Records of Litigation', 31–32.

²²⁵ Gaskill, 'Reporting Murder', 4–12, 14–16, 22–23, 23–27, 28; Stretton, 'Records of Litigation', 24, 29, 32–33; Bailey, 'Emotions', 12–13; Smail, 'Witness Programs', 241–244; Johnson, 'Preconstruction of Testimony', 138–139, 143–144; Davis, *Fiction*, for instance, 17–20, 25–35.

²²⁶ Johnson, 'Preconstruction of Testimony', 143–144; Bailey, 'Emotions', 12–13; Smail, 'Witness Programs', 229, 237, 239–240, 242–244; Ronald C. Finucane, 'The Toddler in the Ditch: A Case of Parental Neglect?', in *Voices from the Bench: The Narratives of Lesser Folk in Medieval Trials*, ed. Michael Goodich, The New Middle Ages (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 127–148; Rosenthal, *Telling Tales*, 14–15.

²²⁷ Smail, 'Witness Programs', 229, 237; Rosenthal, *Telling Tales*, 65, 66–72, 96.

²²⁸ Gaskill, 'Reporting Murder', 2; Smail, 'Witness Programs', 230, 237–240, 247–248; Stretton, 'Records of Litigation', 19, 29.

²²⁹ Johnson, 'Preconstruction of Testimony', 139–147; Smail, 'Witness Programs', 230–231, 237–238, 244; Jeremy Goldberg, *Communal Discord, Child Abduction and Rape in the Later Middle Ages*, The New Middle Ages (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 35–39, 41–43; Michael Goodich, 'Introduction', in *Voices from the Bench: The Narratives of Lesser Folk in Medieval Trials*, ed. Michael Goodich, The New Middle Ages (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 1–14 (2–3); Stretton, 'Records of Litigation', 18–21, 24–25, 29–30, 31–33; Beattie, 'Single Women', 178–182, 192–193.

²³⁰ The first quotation is from Gaskill, 'Reporting Murder', 8; the second quotation is from Ormrod, 'Petitions', 11. For further illustrations of the above point, see Stretton, 'Records of Litigation', 29; Gaskill, 'Reporting Murder', 28.

narratives and fictions beyond the context of the courtroom and into other types of records and administrative documents; Prescott's article, 'Tall Tales from the Archive', lays out a tempting array of archival materials which 'tell stories which are shaped by their institutional and governmental context, and are as deceptive and full of invention as more self-consciously literary works'.²³¹

Administrative manorial documents such as the ones considered in this thesis, however, are yet to receive much of this type of attention. The works of literary scholars Emily Steiner and Scase, and art historian Jessica Berenbeim take documents seriously as cultural productions.²³² However, their primary focuses are elite, literary or otherwise unusual documents, and it is here that they find documentary culture's richest and most intriguing expressions. Nevertheless, their approaches point beyond literature and decorated documents and suggest a way of understanding more workaday documents. Steiner and Scase explore the vital and creative convergence of law and literature. Steiner argues that in the materiality, language, 'practical efficacy', authority, practices and rituals of documents – and document making, using, and keeping – literary writers of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries found a rich store of vocabulary, metaphor, rhetoric and concepts with which to experiment.²³³ Literary writers shaped documentary culture and, in turn, documentary culture helped to form an 'identity' for English literature.²³⁴ Similarly, Scase argues that the 'judicial institutions of written complaint ... came into dialogue with literary production, becoming part of, and centrally informing, a wider literature of complaint'.²³⁵ Berenbeim's work on the role of documents in medieval art focuses on beautiful monastic productions.²³⁶ She highlights the prominence and potential of legal documents in the medieval imagination and, importantly, her study demonstrates that 'art-historical methods' make a valuable offering to the study of documents.²³⁷ The work of Steiner, Scase and Berenbeim has, therefore, further encouraged me to approach manorial documents as creative documents produced by a particular rural writing culture.

As historians of legal documents have recognised, the context in which documents were produced is essential to how they look and what they say. Furthermore, as we begin to approach a wider range of documents in this way, Prescott reminds us that the varied contexts – 'institutional, administrative, and legal' – which shaped different types of archival materials were likewise varied and distinct, meaning that we cannot simply search them for the same 'archetypal literary forms', devices and narrative conventions.²³⁸ Rather, these 'many different bureaucratic forms ... constitute sophisticated rhetorical genres'.²³⁹ Therefore, as I analyse the manorial documents which are the focus of this thesis I pay attention to the specifics of their production and their use, their formulae,

²³¹ Prescott, 'Tall Tales', 356. Following archivists, historians have also considered the narratives created at the scale of the archive itself. Bishop, 'Civic Writing', 112–130; Prescott, 'Tall Tales', 356–369.

²³² Steiner, *Documentary Culture*; Scase, *Literature and Complaint*; Jessica Berenbeim, *Art of Documentation: Documents and Visual Culture in Medieval England*, Text Image Context: Studies in Medieval Manuscript Illumination 2 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2015).

²³³ Steiner, *Documentary Culture*, especially 3–4 at 3, 5, 10–12.

²³⁴ Steiner, 10. Steiner draws attention to the far-reaching tendrils and potential of the 'intersection between documentary culture and late medieval literature', which she dubs 'documentary poetics'. Steiner, 10.

²³⁵ Scase, *Literature and Complaint*, 1.

²³⁶ Berenbeim, *Art of Documentation*, 6–7, 8.

²³⁷ Berenbeim, 3, especially 5–7 at 5.

²³⁸ Prescott, 'Tall Tales', 367–368 at 368.

²³⁹ Prescott, 367–368 at 367.

form and conventions, the relationships they were created by and within, and the variety of things which they were meant ‘to get ... done’.²⁴⁰ Officers’ and scribes’ creative agency was exercised within boundaries determined by the forms which different manorial documents were expected to take and what they were expected to include, the vocabulary of formulae and conventions which they offered, the processes by which they were made, reviewed and maintained, and the administrative requirements they were intended to fulfil. Similarly to Stretton and Smail, I consider many of these constraints – such as formulae, conventions and signs of the processes of composition – not as barriers to analysis to be mitigated, but as fundamental and communicative elements of these documents which, furthermore, officers and scribes could wield expressively.²⁴¹ It is important for me to consider the audiences that these documents were targeted at or might have had to face – in the following chapters I will consider lords, tenants and other officers as audiences. I understand these documents as, firstly, being created within relationships between officers and other parties and, secondly, as being alive to that.

Finally, the focus of this thesis is manorial officers rather than the scribes or clerks who wrote many manorial documents. As I have discussed, the production of manorial documents was often a collaborative effort between officers and scribes. Through the thesis I will, therefore, often refer to the ‘officer and scribe’ when I, for instance, discuss decisions which were made during the composition of a document. However, scribes were usually working under the direction of the officer – they could be thought of, for instance, as the ‘reeve’s clerk’.²⁴² Crucially, officers bore the ultimate responsibility for these documents, financially and legally, and had to be able to withstand their scrutiny.²⁴³ I have, therefore, chosen the officer as the focal point of my analysis of the manorial documents for which they were responsible. In this thesis I will analyse manorial documents as officers’ creative productions and ask how they used this writing to talk about themselves and their work on the manor; this exploration offers insights into the rural writing culture of late-medieval English manors.

²⁴⁰ Ormrod, ‘Petitions’, 11.

²⁴¹ See discussion on page 43.

²⁴² Harvey, *Cuxham*, 51. Clanchy, Harvey and Oschinsky agree that reeves and bailiffs often employed clerks to write accounts or letters for them. Oschinsky also argues that treatises on the composition of manorial accounts were aimed at specialised accounting clerks. Clanchy, *From Memory*, 49; Harvey, *Cuxham*, 29, 35–37, 39–42; Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley*, 62, 65, 73. However, Harvey and Oschinsky imagine the officer working in collaboration with the clerk to produce the account. It was officers – reeves and bailiffs – who provided the raw material for the accounts, and Oschinsky suggests that clerks worked with them on the ‘compilation of the data’ in preparation for the composition of the account. Harvey, 41, 44–45, 51; Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley*, 73.

²⁴³ It was the officers who were responsible for these ‘returns’ (Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley*, 73), who were questioned on them by auditors – and so must be able to understand and defend them – and who would bear the repercussions of their scrutiny. Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley*, 72–73; Harvey, *Cuxham*, 29.

Structure of the thesis

Each chapter of my thesis centres on a different document or document-type in turn. The decision to approach each document-type separately has been informed by my methodological approach. As I am exploring the communicative and creative potential of these documents' forms, conventions, and of the specific processes by which they were made and reviewed, there is a specificity to the analysis of the documents based on their type or – in the case of Skayman's remembrance book – on their individual features. Therefore, considering each document or document-type in turn, rather than cutting across them, seems to be an effective way to organise the thesis. Moreover, the audience of each of these document-types was distinct: accounts were directed at the lord (and his auditors); tenants were involved in the creation of survey-type documents and also formed part of their audience, along with the lord and later officers; the full extent of the audience for Skayman's book – and what audience he intended it for – is more ambiguous, but it was certainly read by his lord and it may also have been read by later officers. It is important for me to consider how the composition of each of these documents – accounts and survey-type documents in particular – responded to their audiences and anticipated their imagined reception and, indeed, what kind of relation between officer and audience the documents communicate and construct. Therefore, the variation of audience and relation across these documents further informs my decision to examine each in turn, as each illuminates the officer from a slightly different angle.

As the thesis progresses, we slide across a spectrum of documentary forms, moving from one which is well-defined and conventional to one which is rather remarkable. The first chapter examines Mote's manorial accounts, the second turns to the survey-type documents from the four Kentish manors, and the final chapter is focused on Skayman's remembrance book. I begin with a document form – the manorial account – which has been deeply studied and analysed by administrative historians, who have emphasised the consistency and strictures of its form which, by the mid-fifteenth century, had begun to flex.²⁴⁴ The survey-type genre has received much less attention and, of course, is a more expansive genre whose constituent documents altered over time.²⁴⁵ I end with Skayman's remembrance book. While, as I will suggest, this book bears a relation to genres such as the manorial account, it is a singular document whose form and use was flexible and changeable.

In the first chapter I argue that manorial accounts compile images of officers' work. The accounts demonstrate the documentary labour which officers undertook when they created these documents. The processes involved in that documentary labour, and the form of the account which they created, also compile images of other aspects of officers' work. The account, therefore, displayed officers' labour to their lord, arguing for their value and, implicitly, their reward. Documentary labour, therefore, seems to have been an important element of officers' work, and a mode of expression and argumentation.

²⁴⁴ Bailey, *The Manor*, 100–101, 105–106, 109–111. See discussion on pages 37–40.

²⁴⁵ Bailey, 22–25, 37–41. See discussion on pages 38–40.

In the second chapter I explore how survey-type documents communicate officers' labour. I argue that these documents position the officer as an essential agent in the formulation of manorial knowledge, and contend that the character and mode of their labour denotes the legitimacy of that knowledge. However, these documents anticipate a much broader audience than that of manorial accounts, encompassing lords, officers and tenants. Interpretations of these documents' intimations and depictions of officers' knowledge-labour therefore proliferate and, crucially, are complicated. For instance, one way in which these documents communicate the character and quality of the officer's work can argue for the legitimacy of the knowledge these documents hold; yet, when the same feature is interpreted from another perspective, that legitimacy is undercut. Not only does knowledge labour seem to have been a vital and valuable element of officers' work, but officers and scribes seem to have been alive to the ambiguities, limitations, and potential power of communicating it.

In the final chapter I examine the remembrance book of John Skayman, an officer in early-sixteenth-century Norfolk. In this chapter I explore how Skayman depicts the labour of making and tending agreements, which appears as a central part of his work as an officer. In his remembrance book, Skayman shows off the discursive and documentary skills which he brought to bear on this labour and communicates the legitimacy of the agreements he made, the negotiating positions he took, and of the testimony he collected. His writing also asserts who was in the right and who had committed wrongs. Skayman's remembrance book not only communicates when his labour was needed but, importantly, that it *was* needed. The labour of agreement-making emerges as being fundamental to the management of the Townshend estate as a whole.

The remembrance book expands the depiction of Skayman's labour and skill beyond the creation of singular and independent agreements. Instead, the labour of agreement-making involved the management of an interconnected web of agreements which stretched across the estate; relations, equilibrium, peace and contentment – which appears particularly significant in Skayman's writing – had to be created and maintained across it. Contentment was the product, and the profit, of the labour of agreement-making and this formulation provides a more expansive way of thinking about Skayman's labour and its value. Finally, Skayman's remembrance book is not only a record of his labour but a continuation of it. As he constructs narratives around the making and tending of agreements, he continues that labour as he shapes and sustains them in his writing.

In the conclusion, I outline several significant features of manorial officers' writing which emerge over the course of my analysis: they were attuned and responsive to their audiences; they were at home in a multilingual textual space; and they found rich creative potential in the forms, processes, language and conventions of manorial administration. Writing these documents provided the space for manorial officers to create a textual manor which had significance when it came to conceptualising and managing the manors on which they worked. We should consider this to have been an important element of manorial officers' work and, moreover, we should consider them as important participants in a rural writing culture. Their work attests to the cultural vitality of the late medieval manor and its writing.

CHAPTER ONE

Accounts of the Manor of Mote

Introduction

In the account which he returned for the year 1477–1478, John Marener the rent-collector requests 33s 4d for his stipend. His account states that this stipend was due to him both for his office as rent-collector and for making and repairing nets, ‘in accordance with an agreement made with the lord’.¹ In his account for the previous year he had requested the same stipend of 33s 4d and, it seems, he had received it.² However, this year he was refused. At the end of Marener’s account, Sir John Scott, lord of the manor of Mote, wrote his justification for why he could not countenance this ‘Excessively great allowance’.³ Firstly, Marener had not, he writes, served the whole year. Furthermore, the stipend was not only given for Marener’s work collecting rents, but for service in the house. Sir John clearly considered that service to have been lacking. Therefore, Sir John commands that Marener should have an allowance ‘according to the Reckoning of his service’.⁴ Marener’s account and Sir John’s memorandum present very different understandings of their agreement, what labour had been expected of that officer, and how the labour he had done should be valued.

¹ The complete entry reads: ‘And for the stipend of the Accountant both for the office of collector of rents and for making and repairing nets in accordance with an agreement made with the lord each Year 33s 4d’. Original: ‘Et in stipendio Computantis tam pro officio collectoris redditum quam pro rethibus faciendis et emendandis ex conuencione facto cum domino per Annum xxxiiij s iij d’. Brighton, ESBHRO, NOR 15/115 (Mote: The Account of John Maryner, Collector of Rents, from 29 September 1477 to 29 September 1478), m. 2r (hereafter, NOR 15/115 (Account of Maryner, Rent-collector, 1477–1478)).

² However, that year it had been agreed that the payment was for his office and the upkeep of the lord’s garden: ‘for the fee of the said Accountant by reason of his said Office and also for Keeping the Garden of the lord in accordance with an agreement made with my lord 33s 4d’. Original: ‘in feodere dicti Computantis racione dicti Officij sui necnon pro Custodia Gardini domini ex conuencione domino mee facto xxxiiij s iij d’. Brighton, ESBHRO, NOR 15/113 (Mote Manor: The Account of John Marener, Rent-collector, from 29 September 1476 to 29 September 1477), m. 2r (hereafter, NOR 15/113 (Account of Marener, Rent-collector, 1476–1477)).

³ Original: ‘Nimis multum allocamentum’. NOR 15/115 (Account of Maryner, Rent-collector, 1477–1478), m. 2r. See note 4 below for the full transcription and translation of the relevant text.

⁴ Sir John Scott wrote a short list of memoranda at the bottom of Marener’s account, noting his response to the account and giving directions. His refusal of Marener’s request is the second of the four memoranda: ‘Also he seeks 3[3]s 4d for his Stipend / [This is an] Excessively great allowance for him because he did not serve for the whole year, because that stipend is not given only for collecting Rent but for service in the house therefore allow according to the Reckoning of his service’. Original: ‘Item petit — xxx[*]ij s iij d per Sty Stipendio suo / Nimis multum allocamentum eo quod non seruiuit toto anno quare ꝑ illud stipendium non datur pro colleccione Redditus tantum set pro seruicio in domo ideo alloca secundum Ratam seruicij sui’. NOR 15/115 (Account of Maryner, Rent-collector, 1477–1478), m. 2r.

Marener's account not only asserts that an agreement exists between Marener and Sir John, but the account itself is a record of the labour that Marener claims fulfilled their agreement: as to be expected, it tells of Marener's work as a rent-collector and, just before the entry which requests Marener's stipend, it lists the expenses he had incurred making and mending the lord's nets. He had sourced materials from multiple sellers, while the nets he names – the 'great net' and a 'net called a *Tramelnett*' – imply the scale of his work and his technical expertise.⁵ Marener's account presents a job well done, or at the very least an officer who had exerted himself. Sir John, however, was not convinced; this was not the labour he envisaged for the value of 33s 4d and he had the final say. Yet, his use of intensifiers and adjectives – 'Excessively great allowance' – and his layers of justification, begin to suggest that this is not simply a straightforward statement of clear expectations left unmet, but an argument between Marener and Sir John over this manorial officer's labour and its value, conducted through their writing.⁶ Sir John's final decision – that Marener should have an allowance 'according to the Reckoning of his service' – increases the sense that his memorandum is engaged in an argument.⁷ It suggests that subjectivity could play a role in valuing Marener's service; *reckoning* could be subject to negotiation.⁸

This interaction between lord and officer, played out in writing in John Marener's account, introduces the threads of my argument in this chapter. As I have noted in the Introduction, the lord was the primary audience for the manorial account; the relation between lord and officer, as it is expressed in Mote's accounts, will be the starting point of my analysis. The labour and skill of the manorial officer was at the heart of this relation. Accounting was not simply an exercise through which the officer was held accountable by his lord; the manorial account became an argument for the officer's value and implicitly, therefore, his reward. The image of the officer's labour, framed by a document-type shaped around obligation and owing, asks what the lord should be accountable for in return. Paying attention to these images of officers' labour and skill can help us to understand more precisely, and more richly, what late medieval manorial officers thought made them valuable to their lords.

Analysing the manorial account allows us to gain insights into the relation between lord and officer as the act of accounting and the documents it created were structured by, and themselves constructed, that relation. The account defined the relation between lord and officer in social terms; John Sabapathy argues that being held to account created a dynamic of 'servility' or 'subordination'.⁹

⁵ Original: 'magno rethi'. Original: 'rethi vocatur a Tramelnett'. NOR 15/115 (Account of Maryner, Rent-collector, 1477–1478), m. 2r. Wendy Childs and Andrew Butcher both discuss the significance of vernacular technical language, and the precision of these expressions, in late medieval accounts. Childs, 'Chronicles to Customs Accounts', 85–105; Butcher, 'Textual Production', 295–323.

⁶ Original: 'Nimis multum allocamentum'. NOR 15/115 (Account of Maryner, Rent-collector, 1477–1478), m. 2r.

⁷ Original: 'secundum Ratam seruisij sui'. NOR 15/115 (Account of Maryner, Rent-collector, 1477–1478), m. 2r.

⁸ John Sabapathy discusses how 'holding sheriffs to account could be as much a question of political arithmetic as pure maths' for the Exchequer. John Sabapathy, *Officers and Accountability in Medieval England 1170–1300* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 105–106 at 105. Here, *ratam* is somewhat slippery in its meaning, as it can suggest numerical calculation or reckoning. *DMLBS*, s.v., *rethi*, 6. However, I think this slipperiness of translation adds to the sense of argument and negotiation in this written interaction; Sir John Scott's memorandum is able to be both hard-line and flexible, allowing an immutable written instruction to be used sensitively and responsively when put into action.

⁹ Sabapathy, *Officers and Accountability*, 43, 252.

The relation between the lord and the officer also structured the manorial account itself.¹⁰ The account and its audit were essential to the systems by which lords maintained some oversight of their officers.¹¹ As we have seen, some lords like Sir John scrutinised their officers' accounts intently, along with their auditors. More than that, however, establishing what the officer owed to the lord, and vice versa, was the central principle of the manorial account.¹² This principle lies behind the charge/discharge system which manorial accounts use.¹³

Furthermore, the relation of owing-owed was personalised rather than being simply institutional; it existed between the lord and a specific individual, rather than between the lord and the office itself, whoever was in post.¹⁴ Lords benefited from this personalised system of accounting as it encouraged manorial officers to monitor and report on their fellows.¹⁵ Officers carefully maintained it in order to avoid taking on others' liabilities.¹⁶ For instance, in the first account which William Sharpe returned as rent-collector at Mote in 1480, he makes a distinction between arrears accrued in 'the time of John German', late bailiff and rent-collector, those of John Marener, 'the last collector and accountant in that place', and his own.¹⁷ Sharpe's account is meticulous in assigning responsibility for accrual of these arrears, despite the fact that Sharpe was still answerable for £6 9s 8¾d of his predecessors' arrears.¹⁸ It seems, therefore, that officers may not only have used this personalised system of accounting to avoid or reduce their financial liability. It also allowed them to distinguish the quality of their office-holding from that of their predecessors, taking responsibility only for their own successes, struggles, and labour (or lack of it), and communicating that to their lord and his auditors.

The historiography of manorial accounts and the relation between officers and lords has focused on two, often intertwined, strands of analysis: first, accountability, trust and fraud; and second, the competence and efficiency of manorial officers. In what follows it is worth examining these emphases in turn. Firstly, as I have mentioned above, the manorial account – and its audit – are agreed to have played a key role in allowing lords to maintain oversight of their manorial officials. The aim of that oversight is generally understood to have been to ensure that the manor was being managed in an 'honest, competent, and – ideally – profitable manner'; the danger of unchecked officers, who could be ineffective, fraudulent, or just self-serving, was the 'main problem'

¹⁰ For an authoritative history of the development of manorial accounting, and a discussion of the accounting process and the form of the account, see Harvey, *Cuxham*, 12–57.

¹¹ Hilton, *Ministers' Accounts*, xiii; Harvey, *Cuxham*, 14, 65; Dyer, *Lords and Peasants*, 67; Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 6, 34; Bailey, *The Manor*, 98, 100; Briggs, 'Monitoring Managers', 181; Gibbs, 'Attitudes to Office-Holding', 161.

¹² Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 28, 34; Bailey, *The Manor*, 102.

¹³ Bailey, *The Manor*, 102; Baxter, 'The Account', 69.

¹⁴ Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 35.

¹⁵ Gibbs, 'Attitudes to Office-Holding', 161–162.

¹⁶ Gibbs, 161–162.

¹⁷ Original: 'tempore Johannis German'. Original: 'vltimi Collettoris et Computantem ibidem'. Brighton, ESBHRO, NOR 15/118 (Mote: The Account of John \William/ Sharpe, Collector of Rents, from 29 September 1479 to 29 September 1480), m. 2r (hereafter, NOR 15/118 (Account of Sharpe, Rent-collector, 1479–1480)).

¹⁸ Sharpe was answerable for 18s 2d of his own arrears, while the arrears from the time of John German were respited to him. 'Account of Sharpe, Rent-collector, 1479–1480', m. 2r.

with which the lord's central administration had to contend.¹⁹ Paul D. A. Harvey hypothesises that one of the factors which drove the development and adoption of written manorial accounts was that it provided lords and their auditors with records against which they could check the officer's 'optimistic recollections', as Harvey euphemistically refers to them.²⁰ E. Stone also argues that early manorial accounts were primarily exercised by the question 'Are we being cheated?', while David Stone notes that the form of the manorial account – the charge/discharge system – was well-suited to 'guard against' and detect significant frauds perpetrated by manorial officers.²¹

Questions about profit and efficiency were harder to answer using the manorial account, but they were asked; by implication the officers' efficiency could have been assessed alongside the profitability of the overall management system.²² Chris Briggs has analysed presentments made to the manorial court about the conduct of demesne managers, and his assessment both of presentments which cleared officers of any wrongdoing and of those which were critical of them coalesces around the two themes of fraud and honesty, and competence.²³ These analyses and arguments concerning the system of manorial oversight and its development have primarily been conducted from the perspective of the lord, and fraud, honesty and competence have been gleaned as their dominant preoccupations and motivations. The relation between lord and officer has, therefore, been formulated as one of accountability with trust, fraud and competence at its heart. Officers' perspective on these systems of oversight have come to be considered the perfect mirror of these concerns: localised manorial accounting gave officers the means to protect themselves from their own lords' accusations, dishonesties, and 'malicious or "bad faith" attempts' to offload or deny expenses to the officers' detriment.²⁴

Secondly, the historiography of seigneurial and manorial management, economy and agriculture has encouraged a similar focus, particularly on competence. These studies have often relied heavily on the plentiful evidence of manorial accounts, and the historian has, to some degree, paralleled the lord in their assumption of the position of overseer and assessor.²⁵ In his analysis of the administration of a great lay estate, N. Denholm-Young compares two bailiffs in familiar terms: one was the 'type of faithful bailiff, who grew old in the service of his mistress' and later served as an auditor, while the other was 'of a different type ... unpopular and not too efficient ... who never rose to the trusted position of auditor'.²⁶ These archetypes echo through the great number of works

¹⁹ The first quotation is from Briggs, 'Monitoring Managers', 181; the second quotation is from Dyer, *Lords and Peasants*, 67. For further illustration of the above points, see David Stone, *Decision-Making*, 13–14.

²⁰ Harvey, *Cuxham*, 15.

²¹ E. Stone, 'Profit-and-Loss Accountancy at Norwich Cathedral Priory', *TRHS* 12 (1962): 25–48 (25); David Stone, *Decision-Making*, 78.

²² E. Stone, 'Profit-and-Loss', 26.

²³ Briggs, 'Monitoring Managers', 181, 183, 187–188.

²⁴ Sabapathy, *Officers and Accountability*, 33–36, 74–76 at 75. Harvey describes this motivation in gentler terms, suggesting that moving to localised accounting would have been attractive to the officer as it would have helped them to 'protect themselves from severe auditing'. Harvey, *Cuxham*, 36. Oschinsky also suggests that officers needed their accounts to 'back them up'. Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley*, 233.

²⁵ For a particularly in-depth analysis of using manorial accounts as sources for economic and agricultural history, see Campbell, *Seigniorial Agriculture*, 26–54.

²⁶ Denholm-Young, *Seigniorial Administration in England*, 36, 38, 39.

which have endeavoured to understand medieval, particularly demesne, agriculture, the management of estates and manors, and their economies.

Such studies have often weighed the influence of lords and their officers on the profitability and productivity of these estates, thereby evaluating their managerial competence and effectiveness in economic terms.²⁷ David Stone's work has a great respect for the economic judgement and decision-making capabilities of manorial officers, teasing out the contours of their sophisticated managerial skill.²⁸ However, David Stone's descriptions are still drawn towards the same archetypes: some officers 'probably were dishonest and some were clearly more competent than others'; one officer was not a 'duplicitous slouch' but a 'trusted, loyal, and competent official'.²⁹ Again, this historiography has emphasised fraud, trust and competence in its own assessment of manorial officers, as well as in its consideration of the relation between lords and officers. Furthermore, due to this historiography's particular questions and interests in economics, management, profitability and productivity, its conceptions of competence have been relatively narrow, focusing on officers' economic understanding and capabilities, and their ability (or lack of it) to cultivate productivity and profit on the estates and manors which they managed.

Finally, later medieval estate management literature itself places the issue of fraud at the heart of the relation between lord and officer. This literature has been an important source for the study of manorial accounts and the relation of lord and officer, ensuring that these discourses remain central to our understanding of this dynamic. Sabapathy notes that the estate management literature of the thirteenth century had developed a keen interest in officers' accountability.³⁰ His analysis of the ways in which 'practices of accountability interacted with norms of responsibility' and of the varieties of 'attempted solution' to the 'problem of manorial officers' accountability', engages with the central fear of this estate management literature: that not only could officers be incompetent or even negligent, but that they could be actively fraudulent and perfidiously bring their lord harm.³¹

For instance, the thirteenth-century treatise *Walter of Henley*, advises that when it comes to choosing a bailiff they should be 'loyalle and well advised and can skylle of husbandrye and of stoare [livestock]'.³² Nevertheless, it is full of tips to catch, deter and thwart potentially fraudulent officers,

²⁷ For instance, Campbell, *Seigniorial Agriculture*, 324; Mark Bailey, 'Rural Society', in *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England*, ed. Rosemary Horrox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 150–168 (153–154); M. M. Postan, *The Medieval Economy and Society: An Economic History of Britain and the Middle Ages* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972), 91–94, 95–96, 100–105, 107, 108, 229–230; Richard Britnell, *The Commercialisation of English Society 1000–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 116–118, 187–188, 196–198; Barbara Harvey, *Westminster Abbey and Its Estates in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1977), 163, 331–332.

²⁸ David Stone, *Decision-Making*, 45–77.

²⁹ David Stone, 78.

³⁰ Sabapathy, *Officers and Accountability*, 60.

³¹ Sabapathy, 82.

³² Walter of Henley's 'Husbandry', c. 33 in Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley*, 317. Sabapathy provides a helpful translation of the French version of this portion of the text: he should be 'loyal and perceptive, and know about fields and stock'. Sabapathy, *Officers and Accountability*, 76.

officers who would be attempting to hide their deceit in their ‘accompt’.³³ These concerns continued to circulate in the fifteenth century. The *Gloucester Husbandry*, copied out in a fifteenth-century hand, explains how the compiler dealt with the discovery of fraud in the corn account as an auditor.³⁴ The fifteenth-century *Tretyce off Housbandry* is also full of cautions; one particularly evocative warning concerns threshers and bailiffs who fill their literal and metaphorical pockets with corn and cream off the profits.³⁵ Again, it makes the point that the bailiff would attempt to conceal his thieving in his account.³⁶ This literature demands and relies on officers’ accounting, but it is full of anxiety about its artifice and, for their purposes, fallibility; this anxiety is played on in the, apparently darkly humorous, instructions for embezzlement and creative accounting which Robert Carpenter, bailiff and freeholder, composed.³⁷

Clearly, trust, fraud, accountability and economic competence were extremely important elements of the relation between lord and officer. Yet this way of characterising manorial officers and their relation with their lords has become all-pervasive, while taking the perspective of only one half of that relation. In what follows, I return to the manorial account anew and focus on the voice of the manorial officer. The manorial account was a site of conversation, negotiation, collaboration and argument; what did the account allow the officer to say, other than the price of a mare and that he certainly *hadn’t* cheated the lord out of a dozen lambs?³⁸ As I have discussed, the estate management literature worries that manorial officers could fabricate and manipulate the accounts to tell the stories they wanted them to. Historians have also agreed that manorial accounts have an element of fiction about them, which we must guard against or seek to untangle.³⁹ However, rather than trying to unearth some hidden “reality”, I want to lean into the idea that the accounts are fabrications; I will be paying attention to the arguments which the accounts make about the officer, the stories they tell and the images that they construct. Attending to the officers’ side of the argument, as expressed in the accounts, deepens our understanding of the relation between officer and lord.

In other contexts, historians have noted moments when administrators and officers have made use of the creative potential of their professional writing – its conventions, forms, and modes of production – in order to talk about their labour, their value, and their professional identity and

³³ Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley*, 188, 313, 323, 325, 341.

³⁴ Oschinsky, 249–251.

³⁵ ‘Tretyce off Housbandry’ in Elizabeth Lamond, ed., *Walter of Henley’s Husbandry, Together with an Anonymous Husbandry, Seneschaucie, and Robert Grosseteste’s Rules* (London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1890), 50.

³⁶ ‘Tretyce off Housbandry’ in Lamond, *Walter of Henley*, 50–51.

³⁷ Carlin, ‘Cheating’, 183–198.

³⁸ For discussion of the manorial account as a ‘dialogue’, ‘debate’ and ‘dynamic record’, see Harvey, *Cuxham*, 43, 54; Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 29–30, 33 (the first and third quotations come from Harvey, *Cuxham*, 43; the second quotation comes from Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 33. Sabapathy argues that the accounts ‘furnished the weapons for a *conflictus* between accountant and auditor’. Sabapathy, *Officers and Accountability*, 72. The 1476–1477 account from Mote which was returned by Henry Turnour states the cost of a mare, while Robert Carpenter’s instructions for creative accounting address how to conceal the appropriation of a dozen lambs. Brighton, ESBHRO, NOR 15/112 (Mote: Account of Henry Turnour, Accountant, from 29 September 1476 to 29 September 1477), m. 1r (hereafter, NOR 15/112 (Account of Turnour, Accountant, 1476–1477)); Carlin, ‘Cheating’, 186–187.

³⁹ Dyer, *Lords and Peasants*, 162; Harvey, ‘Estate Records’, 115.

history. For instance, Esther Liberman Cuenca draws our attention to the fourteenth-century White Domesday of Ipswich which records the dreadful tale of a notorious common clerk who had run off with the town's custumal in 1272.⁴⁰ A sixteenth-century clerk made an addition to the manuscript, writing the oath of the common clerk into the space preceding the tale.⁴¹ Cuenca doubts that this placement was an accident; instead she argues that this compiler's act of juxtaposition was 'a political statement about the history of his office in Ipswich and the crucial importance of his responsibilities'.⁴²

Similarly, Andrew Butcher discusses a junior officer who worked in one of the localities of the Canterbury Cathedral Priory estates in the mid-fifteenth century and composed a memorandum – less proud, more plaintive – as he went about his work.⁴³ As the officer's memorandum continues he begins to turn his attention from his lord's 'gret loss' to his own, and the 'small reward' he had received for 'moche labour'.⁴⁴ Butcher describes this text as a 'hybrid voice' which 'appropriates conventional forms – linguistic, calligraphic, administrative and even poetic', while making use of a 'voice reminiscent of English, mid-fifteenth-century petitions'.⁴⁵ But rather than seeing this writing as an appropriation of these administrative forms, I suggest that its control of them suggests ownership. This officer's ability to switch between different documentary voices is another manifestation of his labour – in addition to that which he explicitly describes – and of his skill. This kind of officer would have undertaken the kind of work which underlay the Priory estates' views of account, and his memorandum climaxes with an implied and unbalanced calculation:

moche labour I haue more than any
hauyng my Office euer had etc
and small reward' etc⁴⁶

He is able to petition with an officerial and accounting voice, perhaps hoping to be heard by the administrative centre. Cuenca and Butcher's insights demonstrate that there is potential to take these types of examination further. My analysis of the accounts of the manor of Mote suggests that labour was at the heart of the relation between officer and lord: the accounts express this labour in ways which emphasise trustworthiness and competence, not only in management but in documentary skill.

My approach to analysing Mote's manorial accounts is heavily informed by the manner of their production: manorial accounts are compilations and, importantly, the process of their

⁴⁰ Cuenca, 'Town Clerks', 199–200.

⁴¹ Cuenca, 200.

⁴² Cuenca, 200.

⁴³ Butcher, 'Textual Production', 306–307, 308–309.

⁴⁴ Butcher, 307, 308.

⁴⁵ Butcher, 310.

⁴⁶ Butcher, 308. I have followed Butcher in laying this text out in short lines as Butcher's transcription sought to 'represent' the layout and line breaks of the original document. Butcher, 307.

compilation is still tangible in their form and content.⁴⁷ Accounts are the product of a laborious process of compilation. When it was time to begin writing the annual manorial accounts, officers and scribes drew on a store of documents, accounts, tallies, memoranda, receipts and other ephemera which had been collected and created throughout the year, as well as memory and conversation.⁴⁸ The contents of these documents and other evidences were then compiled according to the form and conventions of the manorial account.⁴⁹

Given the importance of compilation in the production of accounts, I have turned to the work of literary and manuscript scholars who have shown great interest in compilation as a mode of literary production. M. B. Parkes' work on *compilatio* is particularly influential. His analysis of thirteenth-century scholarly works focused on the relationship between the mode of production – compilation – and the layout and form of the manuscript.⁵⁰ Developing Parkes' work, scholars have continued to investigate the relationship between the practice of compilation and the layout and decoration of such 'composite manuscripts', considering both what effect this relationship may have had on their interpretation and what it might reveal about compilers' readings of their source texts.⁵¹ Scholars have also explored compilation as a process with creative potential, both on the level of a whole manuscript and within a single literary work, and its relationship with authorship.⁵²

Growing from this scholarship on the practice, manuscript forms, and creative potential of compilation is the work of Arthur Bahr. Bahr proposes that compilation was not only a means of

⁴⁷ When explaining the history, purpose, and form of the manorial account, historians have commonly described the process of their creation as 'compilation'. For instance, see Bailey, *The Manor*, 100, 101, 103, 105, 106, 107; Harvey, *Cuxham*, 41, 43, 48, 51, 53, 55, 59, 60.

⁴⁸ Harvey, *Cuxham*, 44; Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 38–40; Bailey, *The Manor*, 101.

⁴⁹ As discussed on pages 37–40, the manorial account retained a strong and consistent form for well over 100 years. However, from the late fourteenth and into the fifteenth century, this consistency diminished as manors began to be managed in increasingly diverse ways. Bailey, *The Manor*, 105–106; Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 31–36.

⁵⁰ M. B. Parkes, 'The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* on the Development of the Book', in *Scribes, Scripts, and Readers: Studies in the Communication, Presentation, and Dissemination of Medieval Texts* (1976; repr., London: Hambledon Press, 1991), 35–70. In 1992, R. H. Rouse and M. A. Rouse published an article which gave an overview of the ways scholars had made use of, and built on, M. B. Parkes' concepts. They are generally critical of this work, arguing that the idea of *compilatio* is not only conceptually imprecise, but has become almost meaningless through the diversity of its use. They also criticise the way the term, and scholars' application of it, has 'blur[red] the distinction between what an author composed, and the physical form in which that composition is presented'. R. H. Rouse and M. A. Rouse, 'Ordinatio and Compilatio Revisited', in *Ad Litteram: Authoritative Texts and Their Medieval Readers*, ed. Mark D. Jordan and Kent Emery Jr, Notre Dame Conferences in Medieval Studies 3 (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 113–134 (124). Arthur Bahr responds to this criticism, arguing that analysing a text in the context of a particular manuscript is far from futile. Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages*, 1–3.

⁵¹ Murray J. Evans, *Rereading Middle English Romance: Manuscript Layout, Decoration, and the Rhetoric of Composite Structure* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 7, 106, 114.

⁵² Hanna, 'Miscellaneity and Vernacularity', 37–52; A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, second edition, The Middle Ages Series (1984; repr., London: Scolar Press, 1988), 94–95, 97–103; Rouse and Rouse, 'Ordinatio and Compilatio', 123–125, 127–128. Chaucer has received particular attention. Rouse and Rouse, 124, 127. For examples of scholars considering Chaucer and his works in terms of compilation, see Ralph Hanna III, 'Compilatio and the Wife of Bath: Latin Backgrounds, Ricardian Texts', in *Latin and Vernacular: Studies in Late-Medieval Texts and Manuscripts*, ed. A. J. Minnis, York Manuscripts Conferences: Proceedings Series 1 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1989), 1–11; Minnis, *Authorship*, 191–210.

textual production, but a mode of interpretation and reading.⁵³ He uses compilation ‘as a mode of perceiving such forms so as to disclose an interpretably meaningful arrangement, thereby bringing into being a text/work that is more than the sum of its parts’.⁵⁴ He terms this approach ‘read[ing] compilationally’.⁵⁵ Bahr’s work is part of wider movements in literary scholarship which take a ‘multivalent’ and multidisciplinary approach to the interpretation of texts, search for the ‘interpretive possibilities’ of texts, and ‘connect textual criticism and book history with the interpretative provocations offered by contemporary critical theory’.⁵⁶ His work has also influenced literary scholars’ approaches to the analysis of compilatory manuscripts and texts, and informed how scholars have understood the contemporary reception of texts and, therefore, how we should approach and apprehend their malleability.⁵⁷ While, initially, some felt trepidation at drawing on Bahr’s approach, it has increasingly been integrated into scholars’ approaches with enthusiasm.⁵⁸

Social and cultural historians have begun to engage with and develop Bahr’s interpretative approach more recently. His insights have been brought to bear on understanding individual texts and manuscripts as well as broader literary cultures.⁵⁹ However, historians have not yet begun to apply these ideas explicitly to administrative texts such as manorial accounts. Manorial accounts invite this kind of analysis as they are, likewise, compilations. This is amply demonstrated by Butcher’s work on the fifteenth-century views of account of the estate of Canterbury Cathedral Priory. He reveals the ‘complex intertextuality’ of these records, which had been created by drawing together an abundance of documents.⁶⁰ Butcher’s work, therefore, has inspired my decision to pay attention to the ways that compilation remains visible and tangible in the manorial account.⁶¹

The manner in which contemporaries engaged with the accounts also encouraged me to take inspiration from Bahr’s approach. Accounts and their associated documents could be read in varied ways with different questions: for instance, they could be read ‘one by one’ or ‘item by item’,

⁵³ Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages*, 2–3.

⁵⁴ Bahr, 3.

⁵⁵ Bahr, 3.

⁵⁶ The first quotation is from Tiffany Beechy, ‘The Manuscripts of *Solomon and Saturn*: CCCC 41, CCCC 422, BL Cotton Vitellius A.xv’, *Humanities* 11, no. 2 (2022): 52 (2 of 14); the second quotation is from Thomas C. Sawyer, ‘Bookish Brains and Visionary Learning in the Apocalypsis Goliae Episcopi’, *ELH* 89, no. 1 (2022): 1–31 (11); the third quotation is from Tom White, ‘National Philology, Imperial Hierarchies, and the “Defective” *Book of Sir John Mandeville*’, *RES* 71, no. 302 (2020): 828–849 (829). For a further illustration of the above point, see Matthew Johnson, ‘Bodiam Castle and *The Canterbury Tales*: Some Intersections’, *Medieval Archaeology* 64, no. 2 (2020): 302–329 (303).

⁵⁷ Matthew W. Irvin, ‘The Narrative Tactics of Chaucer’s Monk’, *Chaucer Rev.* 56, no. 1 (2021): 1–32 (5–7); Mary Raschko, ‘Taking Apart the Wycliffite Bible: Patterns of Selective and Integrative Reading’, *J. Medieval Early Mod. Stud.* 47, no. 3 (2017): 461–486 (462–463). Also see all the articles in *Arthuriana* 30, no. 3 (2020). This volume took Bahr’s approach as its inspiration. His work was also the basis of a session, entitled ‘Assembling Arthur’, at the 52nd International Congress on Medieval Studies 2017. D. Thomas Hanks Jr, ‘Assembling the Fragments in Sir Thomas Malory’s *Morte Darthur*’, *Arthuriana* 30, no. 3 (2020): 101–121 (111).

⁵⁸ Lisa H. Cooper, ‘Nothing Was Funny in the Late Middle Ages: The “Tale of Ryght Nought” and British Library, MS Egerton 1995’, *J. Medieval Early Mod. Stud.* 47, no. 2 (2017): 221–253 (250 n. 49, 221–240).

⁵⁹ Tom Johnson, ‘Byland Revisited, Or, Spectres of Inheritance’, *J. Mediev. Hist.* 48, no. 4 (2022): 439–456 (444); Erin Maglaque, ‘The Literary Culture of the Renaissance Venetian Empire’, *Italian Studies* 73, no. 1 (2018): 35–52 (37–38).

⁶⁰ Butcher, ‘Textual Production’, 298–299 at 298.

⁶¹ Butcher, 298–299.

checked for justifications and authorisations, or perused in large swathes for clues of fraud or negligence, or to tussle with the complicated question of profit and how well the manor was, should, or could be paying.⁶² Furthermore, the account was read and discussed and annotated by different parties: officers, auditors, clerks, and – certainly at Mote – the lord himself.⁶³ Each of these different questions, ways of reading, and acts of reading, drew the account's entries into different relationships with each other, and highlighted different facets of the account. These multiple and multivalent readings, produced by administrative necessity, echo the literary invitation which Bahr sees in texts such as the *Canterbury Tales*.⁶⁴ I will be taking this invitation, and reading the manorial account for the stories which it tells about officers and their labour.

Reading Mote's accounts 'compilationally' in the strictest sense of Bahr's approach allows us to bring different components or entries in the account into conversation with each other, drawing together some of the potential meaningful 'constellations' within the text in order to find different resonances and readings.⁶⁵ But we must also pay attention to the choices which officers and scribes made as they compiled the account and to the allusions to the process of compilation which appear in the text, and treat these as meaningful. In what follows, I will be focusing on two critical textual practices: referencing and selecting. By "referencing" I mean the moments when the manorial officer or scribe directly mention either the underlying sources which they had drawn from as they compiled the manorial account or the supplementary documents which they would submit to the auditor alongside it.⁶⁶ I also suggest that the multilingualism of the account is an oblique form of

⁶² *Original*: 'parcellatim'. Brighton, ESBHRO, NOR 15/108 (Mote Manor: The Account of John German, Rent-collector and Bailiff of John Scot, Knight, from 29 September 1471 to 29 September 1472), m. 2r (hereafter, NOR 15/108 (Account of German, Rent-collector and Bailiff, 1471–1472)); NOR 15/112 (Account of Turnour, Accountant, 1476–1477), m. 2r; Harvey, *Cuxham*, 51–57; Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley*, 188; E. Stone, 'Profit-and-Loss', 25–26, 40–41; Gardiner and Whittick, *Accounts and Records of Mote*, lxix.

⁶³ Harvey, *Cuxham*, 42–43, 45, 47, 49–52; Gardiner and Whittick, *Accounts and Records of Mote*, xi, lxvii, lxix; Christopher Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain 850–1520* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 342. In the case of lords, such examination may have been more common with gentry lords. Dyer, 342. See notes 4, 83, and 140 for examples of Sir John Scott's interventions in Mote's accounts.

⁶⁴ Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages*, 7–8.

⁶⁵ Bahr, 3, 13.

⁶⁶ Ann Blair and Anthony Grafton examine referencing practices including footnotes and citations, 'tacit' citations, and lists of authorities in scholarly and learned works. Blair, *Managing Information*, 19, 33, 37–38, 68, 129, 133–135, 153, 155, 176, 208, 241–245, 253, 259, 260, 262–263; Anthony Grafton, 'The Footnote from De Thou to Ranke', *History and Theory* 33, no. 4 (1994): 53–76. As I will discuss later in the chapter, literary and scholarly compilers did not claim that they themselves were authorities – or authors. Rather, they declared that authority belonged to and, crucially, derived from the authors of the original texts. Compilations drew their authority from their sources. Minnis, *Authorship*, 94–95; Parkes, '*Ordinatio and Compilatio*', 58–59. See page 74. This provides a productive comparison to the compilation of manorial accounts and the value derived from the practice of referencing. However, this is not a straightforward parallel as the manorial officer would often have created – and at least collected or requested the production of – many of the materials (or the draft account, built up through the year) which underlay the final annual account, while his memory or testimony were likewise often essential to its compilation. Harvey, *Cuxham*, 44–45; Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 39; Bailey, *The Manor*, 101–102. For instance, the draft account of 1470–1471 seems to have drawn heavily on the account of one of the lord's officer's – Henry Turnour (see page 63) – for its information and it makes frequent reference to that source: 'as in the account of Henry Turnour ... as in the account of the said Henry' ('vt in compoto Henrici Turnour ... vt in compoto dicti Henrici'). Brighton, ESBHRO, NOR 15/107 (Mote Manor: The Account of [blank], Receiver of John Scotte, Knight, of his Manor of Mote, from 29 September 1470 to 29 September 1471), m. 3r (hereafter, NOR 15/107 (Account of [blank], Receiver, 1470–1471)). Harvey notes that draft accounts can include more detail than final accounts, so this level of referencing may have been intended

referencing, as these switches to the vernacular often draw on the underlying material from which the account was compiled.⁶⁷ I will explore how referencing draws attention to the documentary labour of the manorial officer during the process of compiling the account. I will then discuss how the practice of referencing interacted with the lordly fear of the fraudulent officer. Referencing allowed the officer to build a trustworthy record through his labour and, thereby, the signs of his labour became a sign of his trustworthiness.

By “selecting”, I mean the choices which officers and scribes made as they compiled the account in regard to what they should take from their underlying sources, what they should cut, what details they should combine and summarise, and how they should do that. I will discuss how the choices which officers and scribes made foreground the work of the manorial officer and, crucially, argue for its worth. I will explore how the manorial account constructs a hierarchy of manorial officers, and portrays different officers in different ways. Finally, I will present a case study which draws together a constellation of entries which, read ‘compilationally’, create a powerful image of the work of an officer creating emotional and communal bonds in support of their lord.⁶⁸ The officer, however, sits outside these bonds. Instead he exists in a relation with the lord in which his labour, rather than his loyalty, is centred. Before I turn to the body of my analysis, however, I will introduce Mote and its accounts.

to be smoothed out in the fair version of the account. Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 39. However, the fact that manorial officers were often drawing on their own knowledge or materials means that their practices of referencing could not elide their role and place authority elsewhere in quite the same way as literary compilers claimed to do.

⁶⁷ The underlying vernacular material could have been speech, but it could also have been vernacular notes or documents. Butcher argues that the views of the account of Canterbury Cathedral Priory sometimes seem to use ‘words and phrases which seem to have been lifted straight from the original’, vernacular, document. He uses the examples of ‘myche et lytill’ and ‘in bill sic Of the olde hokis and newe lying’ and suggests that, in one instance, a substantial portion of a vernacular document noting the costs of various works has been copied into one of the views of account (Canterbury, Canterbury Cathedral Archives, MS Dcc/MA/6, ff. 74v–75r). Butcher, ‘Textual Production’, 301 quoting Canterbury, Canterbury Cathedral Archives, MS Dcc/MA 6, 323. Manorial officers did make notes for themselves in the vernacular. One such note, which I will discuss in Chapter Two, appears in a terrier from 1495 which concerns the lands of the four Kentish manors studied in this thesis. It reads: ‘*Memorandum* that my master hath purchased of Richard Botyler j grove of Wode callid Burghams in Kestan / Whiche grove is not yet enterid in the terror’. Maidstone, KA, U312/M30 (Terrier of West Wickham, Southcourt, Keston and Baston, 1485), f. 15v (hereafter, U312/M30 (Terrier, 1485)). Skayman’s remembrance book, which is the subject of Chapter Three, is primarily in the vernacular and his master, Roger Townshend II, also added his own notes to it in the vernacular. Norwich, NRO, BL/T 13/28 (John Skayman’s Journal of Business Undertaken for Roger Townshend), see f. 3v for an example of a vernacular note by Townshend (hereafter, BL/T 13/28). Moreover, while Eleanor Townshend was running the Townshend estate following the death of her husband (Roger Townshend I) in 1493, the documents produced on the estate were usually composed in the vernacular. Charles Moreton, ‘The “Diary” of a Late Fifteenth-Century Lawyer’, in *Estrangement, Enterprise and Education in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. Sharon D. Michalove and A. Compton Reeves, The Fifteenth Century Series 5 (Thrupp: Sutton Publishing, 1998), 27, 28. The vernacular could be an appropriate and useful language for writing both notes and more or less formal documents.

⁶⁸ Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages*, 3.

The manor of Mote and its manorial accounts

Mote's series of surviving annual manorial accounts covers the years 1464–1465 to 1480–1481, with only a few short gaps, providing a good run to work with.⁶⁹ This was a period of both continuity and change for the manor and, importantly for my purposes, for the accounts. The accounts were all compiled under the conscientious lordship of Sir John Scott and his wife, Lady Agnes Scott, and many of the same actors, projects and habits can be tracked through them. However, substantial building work was also undertaken, officers changed, and, crucially, the manor transitioned back to direct cultivation and demesne farming, with all the attendant changes to management structures and accounts.⁷⁰ Mote's accounts, therefore, are a rich territory in which to explore the arguments and images which are constructed by this documentary form. Furthermore, the changes in the manor's management enable my conclusions to be applied to a broader range of manors and their accounts from this period.

Mote was a dispersed manor, lying to the south of the River Rother in Sussex.⁷¹ Its moated centre lay between Iden and Peasmarsh, and its demesne lands and – even more so – its tenements were scattered through the parishes of Ewhurst, Northiam, Beckley, Peasmarsh, Iden and Playden, with some outlying tenements found as far afield as the parishes of Ninfield and Hollington.⁷² This type of dispersed arrangement was not unusual in north-east Sussex, but it did make administration more complex and the maintenance of records more crucial.⁷³ The manor ranged over various types of land; in 1460 the demesne was recorded as comprising arable, meadow, pasture, woodland, and heathland, while some areas were marshy enough to grow reeds.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ An account summarising billets received and their stallage over the period of 25 December 1481 to 16 May 1484 also survives, but it will not form part of my discussion. Brighton, ESBHRO, NOR 15/121 (The Account of Richard Sherfold of all Billets by him Received and Stallage of the Same from 25 December 1481 to 16 May 1484); Gardiner and Whittick, *Accounts and Records of Mote*, 150–152.

⁷⁰ Mark Gardiner and Christopher Whittick, who have edited Mote's surviving records, comment that Mote's accounts are a particularly illuminating source as they, unusually, 'forced' building and household accounts into the 'conventional structure' of the manorial account. Gardiner and Whittick, *Accounts and Records of Mote*, xi. Furthermore, the fact that they cover Mote's transition back to direct management and the development of new commercial initiatives there means that the accounts provide a wealth of information and have a 'much wider significance' to our understanding of the agrarian economy in this period. Gardiner and Whittick, xi–xiii at xii. With the unconventional breadth of their contents, amongst other features, Mote's accounts fit into what Harvey calls 'Phase 3' accounts, with their increasing levels of variety and idiosyncrasy. Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 35–37. See Gardiner and Whittick's edition for a vividly detailed discussion of Mote, its documents and their survival, the lord and lady of the manor, and their servants and officers. Gardiner and Whittick, *Accounts and Records of Mote*, xi–lxxxii.

⁷¹ Gardiner and Whittick, xxviii.

⁷² Gardiner and Whittick, xxviii, and see illustrations 3, 8, 9 and 10 on xxix, lxxix, lxxxi, lxxxii. These provide both a visual overview of the manor and more detailed maps of individual tenements' locations. Gardiner and Whittick pay tribute to the work of David and Barbara Martin, who have identified the locations of most of the tenements described in the 1673 survey and whose work forms the basis of illustrations 8, 9 and 10. Gardiner and Whittick, xxviii, lxxix, lxxxi, lxxxii.

⁷³ Gardiner and Whittick, xxviii–xxx.

⁷⁴ Gardiner and Whittick, xxx; L. F. Salzmann, ed., 'Sussex Fines: 36–39 Henry VI', in *An Abstract of Feet of Fines For the County of Sussex: 1308–1509*, vol. 3 (Lewes: Sussex Record Society, 1916; British History Online), 269–272, no. 3151, accessed August 24, 2023.

Mote had been in the hands of the Pashleys since the early fourteenth century, but by the mid-fifteenth century the family was under considerable financial strain.⁷⁵ It seems that this predicament led to Mote's acquisition by Sir John Scott in the latter part of 1460, via a transfer which seems to have begun as a mortgage.⁷⁶ Mote was a peripheral addition to Sir John's estate, which was concentrated in the eastern Weald of Kent; in that county he was 'already a force to be reckoned with in ... politics and society'.⁷⁷ However, Sir John's decision to support the Yorkist invasion of 1460 propelled him to a new level of success.⁷⁸ He was knighted, 'showered ... with the property of attainted Lancastrians', 'numerous custodies, keeperships and commissions' as well as a life pension, and had a long and varied career in royal service.⁷⁹ Some of his most significant appointments were controller of the royal household (where he would have dealt with accounts) in the 1460s and, from the 1470s, lieutenant of the Cinque Ports and then Marshal of Calais, where he set up a household.⁸⁰ Sir John, therefore, was not often at Mote although his wife, Lady Agnes, may have spent more time there.⁸¹

When Sir John first gained Mote, the manor was leased and this state of affairs continued for a number of years.⁸² In 1466, however, he began to invest in Mote much more heavily, and building work started on a new 'grand' manor house there.⁸³ There had only been a small number of servants permanently resident at Mote, but the building work brought an influx of labourers and craftsmen whose food and board also had to be paid for.⁸⁴ Investment continued when, in 1471, Sir John took Mote back into direct management and began work to improve its lands and assets.⁸⁵ His primary motivation seems to have been to establish another branch of his family at Mote and, in addition, to

⁷⁵ Gardiner and Whittick, *Accounts and Records of Mote*, xiii, xv–xvii.

⁷⁶ Gardiner and Whittick, xvii.

⁷⁷ Gardiner and Whittick, xiii, xvii–xviii at xvii. Sir John seems to have had some legal education, perhaps at an Inn of Chancery. He had been involved in the Kentish commissions from 1450, the same year in which he had resisted Cade's rebellion, and by 1458 he had become both a king's esquire and a member of the county bench. Gardiner and Whittick, xviii–xx, xxiii.

⁷⁸ Gardiner and Whittick, xvii, xviii, xx, xxviii.

⁷⁹ Gardiner and Whittick, xx, xxviii.

⁸⁰ Gardiner and Whittick, xiii, xx, xxi–xxii, xxiii. Sir John was also made the sheriff of Kent in 1460, replacing a man executed for defying the invasion. He was knighted two days before the coronation of Edward IV. Gardiner and Whittick, xx. In the 1460s he also served as lieutenant of Dover Castle and MP for Kent, and he often took part in 'diplomatic missions of both commercial and dynastic consequence' on the Continent. Gardiner and Whittick, xx, xxi. After Sir John had become the Marshal of Calais, he continued to act on diplomatic missions and on Kentish commissions. He also served the Prince of Wales as a councillor and tutor, and again sat in Parliament, though this time he held a northern seat. Gardiner and Whittick, xxii.

⁸¹ Gardiner and Whittick, xxi.

⁸² Gardiner and Whittick, xii, xvii.

⁸³ Gardiner and Whittick, xiii. For a discussion of the building works at Mote see Gardiner and Whittick, xliii–l. For a discussion of lords' (including gentry lords') investment in their estates, while leased or under direct management, see Dyer, *Age of Transition?*, 157–160. Christopher Dyer notes that the gentry 'were capable of high levels of investment relative to their income'. Dyer, 159.

⁸⁴ Initially these workmen boarded out or stayed with the bailiff, John German. However, as their numbers increased they began to be fed and lodged at Mote. These changes – and increases in household expenses – can be seen in the accounts. Gardiner and Whittick, *Accounts and Records of Mote*, xxxvi.

⁸⁵ Gardiner and Whittick, xii, xxxii–xxxiii. Richard Britnell notes that it was more common for 'minor landlords ... to take demesne lands back into their own hands from time to time' than for great lords to do so. Britnell, *Commercialisation*, 198.

use the manor as a 'home farm' for his household in Calais.⁸⁶ This change required more servants to be permanently resident at Mote and, again, household expenses increased accordingly.⁸⁷ Some arable crops were grown at Mote, but most of the demesne was put to pasturing livestock.⁸⁸ However, it was usually only cattle that were raised for sale.⁸⁹ They were fattened at Mote and then either transported to Calais or another of Sir John's manors, or slaughtered at Mote and then shipped to Calais in barrels.⁹⁰ From the mid-1470s, wood began to become a major output for the manor and Calais, again, provided a major market.⁹¹ Similarly, reed also became a major output for the manor, being sold for thatch.⁹²

In terms of the accounts themselves, they are audited accounts, and many of them also show the evidence of Sir John's own review as he made annotations in his own hand, in English and in Latin.⁹³ From 1464–1465 to 1467–1468 William Harlakynnden, Sir John's receiver, returned a cash

⁸⁶ Gardiner and Whittick, *Accounts and Records of Mote*, xxi, xxii, xxxii. Sir John may also have been influenced by 'military considerations' due to Mote's location and the continuing political instability. Gardiner and Whittick, xxi. Dyer discusses the common practice of gentry lords mainly using 'home farms' for 'domestic consumption'. Dyer, *Making a Living*, 343.

⁸⁷ Gardiner and Whittick, *Accounts and Records of Mote*, xxxvii–xxxviii. For an introduction to the household at Mote, including officers and other servants, see Gardiner and Whittick, xxxix–xliii.

⁸⁸ Gardiner and Whittick, xxxiii–xxxv. In fifteenth-century Sussex, arable land was often converted to pasture. Mavis Mate, 'The Occupation of the Land: Kent and Sussex', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales: 1348–1500*, ed. Edward Miller, vol. 3, *The Agrarian History of England and Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 119–135 (119, 121, 126–127).

⁸⁹ Gardiner and Whittick, xxxv. It was typical of fifteenth-century Sussex manors for the demesne to supply the 'seigneurial household' rather than the market. Mate, 'Land: Kent and Sussex', 136. In regards to cattle, some manors raised oxen for husbandry as well, while others – such as Mote – focused on raising them for food. Mavis Mate, 'Farming Practice and Techniques: Kent and Sussex', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales: 1348–1500*, ed. Edward Miller, vol. 3, *The Agrarian History of England and Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 268–284 (272, 282–283, 284); Gardiner and Whittick, *Accounts and Records of Mote*, xxxv.

⁹⁰ Gardiner and Whittick, *Accounts and Records of Mote*, xxxiii–xxxvi. Mate discusses the different reasons that lords – particularly in Sussex – raised cattle, including for dairy products, haulage and ploughing, or consumption. Sir John Scott's cattle-farming – primarily for consumption – provides one of her examples; she notes that Sir John's officers maintained only a 'small herd' of cattle, preferring to buy bullocks for fattening rather than raising them all from birth. Mate, 'Farming: Kent and Sussex', 282–283.

⁹¹ Gardiner and Whittick, *Accounts and Records of Mote*, xxxvi; Mate, 'Land: Kent and Sussex', 135. In the late 1470s Sir John built a yard and dock from which wood could be shipped. Before long, he was 'dealing in firewood, both his own and others, on a vast scale'. Gardiner and Whittick, xxxvi. Wood was a major commodity of this region. Mate, 'Land: Kent and Sussex', 134–135, 136. By 1600 'firewood and timber were the major exports from Sussex ports'. Mate, 135. It was shipped to English ports, including London, but the Continent was the greater market. Mate, 135. Dyer notes that in the later fifteenth century 'overseas trade picked up' in Kent, Sussex and Surrey, and stresses the 'market pull' for wood and meat. Christopher Dyer, 'England's Economy in the Fifteenth Century', in *Exploring the Evidence: Commemoration, Administration and the Economy*, ed. Linda Clark, *The Fifteenth Century 13* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2014), 201–226 (216). David L. Farmer discusses the market for wood as fuel, and Mote was primarily producing wood for firewood. David L. Farmer, 'Marketing the Produce of the Countryside, 1200–1500', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales: 1348–1500*, ed. Edward Miller, vol. 3, *The Agrarian History of England and Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 324–430 (411–413, 415);

⁹² Gardiner and Whittick, *Accounts and Records of Mote*, xxxvi. For a discussion of the gentry and commercial investment and enterprise, see Dyer, *Making a Living*, 344–346.

⁹³ For Mote's accounts being audited accounts, see Gardiner and Whittick, *Accounts and Records of Mote*, xvii. Gardiner and Whittick have identified Sir John's hand amongst the annotations made to a number of Mote's accounts, and two annotations they note as 'probably' being in Sir John's hand. Gardiner and Whittick, xxiii, 21

account.⁹⁴ John German, the bailiff and rent-collector, also took responsibility for a portion of these accounts. The next account to survive is from 1470–1471 and it appears to be a draft account; Sir

n. 25, 33 n. 37 n. 38, 34 n. 40, 44 n. 41, 50 n. 42, 53 n. 45 n. 46, 54 n. 48, 55 n. 49, 84 n. 70, 116, 145 n. 138. Sir John's hand can be seen in his 'personal accounts', which he seems to have written himself in English, and Gardiner and Whittick have also identified his 'characteristic hand' in a Chancery answer from 1483. Gardiner and Whittick, xxiii; J. R. Scott, 'Receipts and Expenditure of Sir John Scott, in the Reign of Edward IV', *Archaeologia Cantiana* 10 (1876): 250–258; London, The National Archives, C 1/67/331 (Gardiner and Whittick cite C 1/67/332, however The National Archives catalogue only includes C 1/67/331 so the reference in the edition may be a typographic error). Sir John's annotations can be seen in these manorial accounts: Brighton, ESBHRO, NOR 15/105 (Mote Manor: The Account of William Harlakynnden, Receiver of Sir John Scotte, Knight, from 29 September 1466 to 29 September 1467) (hereafter, NOR 15/105 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1466–1467)); Brighton, ESBHRO, NOR 15/106 (Mote Manor: The Account of William Harlakynnden, Receiver of Sir John Scotte, Knight, from 29 September 1467 to 29 September 1468) (hereafter, NOR 15/106 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1467–1468)); NOR 15/107 (Account of [blank], Receiver, 1470–1471); Brighton, ESBHRO, NOR 15/110 (The Mote: Account of John German, Bailiff and Rent-collector of John Scot, Knight, from 29 September 1474 to 29 September 1475) (hereafter, NOR 15/110 (Account of German, Bailiff and Rent-collector, 1474–1475)); NOR 15/115 (Account of Maryner, Rent-collector, 1477–1478); Brighton, ESBHRO, NOR 15/119 (Mote Manor: The Charge of Henry Turnour, Servant of John Scotte, Knight, from 29 September 1480 to 29 September 1481) (hereafter, NOR 15/119 (Account of Turnour, Servant, 1480–1481)). Many of the accounts seem to be fair copies written up after the audit, although additions, deletions and amendments were still made after that point in many of the accounts, and totals added. Harvey notes that it is more common for accounts from Phase 3 to survive as fair versions written up after audit. Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 37. The fair versions of Mote's accounts are very similar in layout and content to the surviving draft account from 1470–1471 (NOR 15/107 (Account of [blank], Receiver, 1470–1471)). For instance, the order of sections in the draft account generally follows the order found in the account of 1467–1468 (NOR 15/106 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1467–1468), which (other than the draft account itself) is the latest surviving account before Mote was taken into direct management. Even an un-headed section, for allowances of rent, falls in the same location in the 1470–1471 draft account as it does in the 1467–1468 account; only the sections related to repairs and building works show significant variation, which is common across the accounts as these activities varied year-to-year. While gaps are left in the draft account for further information to be added, it still neatly collects together individual charges and discharges and calculates totals, while its greater number of annotations show the process of charges being allowed ('cancelled' (Bailey, *The Manor*, 104) or respited ('postponed' (Bailey, 104)). These annotations and the similarities between the draft account and the fair copy accounts suggest that the changes made at audit would have been of the limited scope and type visible in Phase 2 accounts which Harvey discusses. Harvey, *Cuxham*, 51–55. Some of the accounts – such as the accounts of 1465–1466 and 1474–1475 – seem to have been written up in sections, then cut out and sewn together. Brighton, ESBHRO, NOR 15/104 (Mote Manor: The Account of William Harlakynnden, Receiver of Sir John Scotte, Knight, from 29 September 1465 to 29 September 1466) (hereafter, NOR 15/104 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1465–1466)); NOR 15/110 (Account of German, Bailiff and Rent-collector, 1474–1475). Others, meanwhile, are neatly written over the joins in the roll. For instance, see NOR 15/105 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1466–1467); NOR 15/106 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1467–1468). As these are fair copy accounts, it is unclear exactly when details were gleaned from the accounts of Sir John's other manors or from the papers of the lord and lady themselves (who were usually not based at Mote). Therefore, it is unclear whether the accounts were compiled across different locations – moving between Mote and another central location – or whether access to documents and information was organised in a different way. It may have varied from year-to-year and between officers and types or even sections of accounts. Harvey has discussed the information and documents which would have been required for compiling an account and how they may have been sourced. Harvey, *Cuxham*, 44–46. A few blank spaces were left in the account of 1464–1465 where the number of weeks someone had laboured for should have been listed, suggesting that there were occasional difficulties accessing some documents or information. Brighton, ESBHRO, NOR 15/103 (Mote Manor: The Account of William Harlakynnden, Receiver of Sir John Scott, Knight, from 29 September 1464 to 29 September 1465), m. 3r (hereafter, NOR 15/103 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1464–1465)); Harvey, *Cuxham*, 45–46. Harvey notes similar gaps in other accounts. Harvey, 45–46.

⁹⁴ NOR 15/103 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1464–1465); NOR 15/104 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1465–1466); NOR 15/105 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1466–1467); NOR 15/106 (Account of

John still inspected it, however, writing in its balance at the end of the document.⁹⁵ Harlakynnden left Sir John's service in 1471, and this also marked Mote's transition to direct management.⁹⁶ German seems to have taken over Harlakynnden's accounting responsibilities at Mote, and in 1471–1472 he returned cash, corn and stock accounts.⁹⁷ For the following accounting year, however, only a cash account returned by Henry Fynche, Sir John's new receiver and steward of the household, survives.⁹⁸ Here, there is another short gap in the run of accounts, but in 1474–1475 German once again returned cash, corn and stock accounts, although only his cash account survives for the year 1475–1476.⁹⁹ Sadly, German died in the following year, and Henry Turnour – who had already been acting as an 'accounting bailiff' at Mote – took over the responsibility for returning most of the accounts.¹⁰⁰ Unlike German, however, Turnour did not account for the rents of the manor; instead, a separate rent-collector's account began to be returned.¹⁰¹ In 1476–1477 and 1477–1478 John Marener returned this account, and in 1479–1480 and 1480–1481 it was returned by William Sharpe.¹⁰² Turnour continued to return the rest of the account.¹⁰³ Across the years the accounts follow the same form and layout, although there is some variety in their character; those returned by Harlakynnden, for instance, are particularly neat, with careful decoration.¹⁰⁴ Hands also vary across the accounts, and sometimes within the same document. It is often unclear who held each quill. While some officers certainly wrote at least part of what they submitted at audit, clerks or other

Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1467–1468). Although Mote's accounts refer to Harlakynnden as a receiver, his responsibilities were much broader, akin to those of a steward. Gardiner and Whittick, *Accounts and Records of Mote*, xxxix.

⁹⁵ NOR 15/107 (Account of [blank], Receiver, 1470–1471). A final or fair account may not have been made for this year. Not only does Sir John seem to have inspected this draft account and written in a balance, but it was referred to and annotated later on – perhaps during the compilation of the next year's account. Gardiner and Whittick, 55 n. 49, 56. Furthermore, John German and Henry Turnour both received a 'reward' ('remuneracione') for their expenses while collecting 'because of the disorder of the world' ('propter inquietudinem mundi'). NOR 15/107 (Account of [blank], Receiver, 1470–1471), m. 5r. It may have been too much for the officers to have managed to produce a fair account in those conditions.

⁹⁶ Gardiner and Whittick, *Accounts and Records of Mote*, xxvi, xxxii.

⁹⁷ NOR 15/108 (Account of German, Rent-collector and Bailiff, 1471–1472)

⁹⁸ Gardiner and Whittick, *Accounts and Records of Mote*, xl.

⁹⁹ NOR 15/110 (Account of German, Bailiff and Rent-collector, 1474–1475); Brighton, ESBHRO, NOR 15/111 (Mote: Account of John German, Bailiff, from 29 September 1475 to 29 September 1476).

¹⁰⁰ Brighton, ESBHRO, NOR 15/109 (Mote Manor: The Account of Henry Fynche, Receiver of Various Moneys of John Scot, Knight, from 29 September 1472 to 29 September 1473). Gardiner and Whittick, xl.

¹⁰¹ Separate collectors' accounts are typical of Phase 3 accounting. Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 35–36.

¹⁰² NOR 15/113 (Account of Marener, Rent-collector, 1476–1477); NOR 15/115 (Account of Maryner, Rent-collector, 1477–1478); NOR 15/118 (Account of Sharpe, Rent-collector, 1479–1480); Brighton, ESBHRO, NOR 15/120 (Mote: The Account of William Sharp, Collector of Rents There, from 29 September 1480 to 29 September 1481). No rent-collector's account survives for 1478–1479.

¹⁰³ NOR 15/112 (Account of Turnour, Accountant, 1476–1477); Brighton, ESBHRO, NOR 15/114 (Mote Manor: The Account of Henry Turnour, Accountant, from 29 September 1477 to 29 September 1478) (hereafter, NOR 15/114 (Account of Turnour, Accountant, 1477–1478)); Brighton, ESBHRO, NOR 15/116 (Mote: The Account of Henry Turnour, Servant of John Scot, Knight, Lord of the Said Manor, from 29 September 1478 to 29 September 1479); Brighton, ESBHRO, NOR 15/117 (Mote: The Account of Henry Turnour, Servant of Sir John Scott, Knight, from 29 September 1479 to 29 September 1480) (hereafter, NOR 15/117 (Account of Turnour, Servant, 1479–1480)); NOR 15/119 (Account of Turnour, Servant, 1480–1481).

¹⁰⁴ Gardiner and Whittick comment that the accounts returned by Harlakynnden are 'very detailed and complex in their organisation', while the later accounts 'are more conventional in arrangement' and less detailed. Gardiner and Whittick, *Accounts and Records of Mote*, lxvii.

professionals could also be hired to write out that year's parcels or engross the accounts.¹⁰⁵ Creating these accounts was a collaborative process between officers, scribes, and, later in the process, auditors.¹⁰⁶ Having introduced Mote's accounts, I will now begin my main analysis and turn to the practice of referencing.

Referencing

Mote's manorial accounts make notable reference to a variety of documents and evidences which either underlay the contents of the account or sat alongside it. A certain profit might be 'as is evident according to the rolls of the same [courts] examined upon this account', while another expense was 'as is evident in diverse particulars'.¹⁰⁷ A bill or tally might be cited as evidence of a payment, or of the command to make a payment, while officers' regular accounts are named as the source of a wealth of information.¹⁰⁸ The accounts thereby call our attention to a small drift of parchment, paper, and wooden slivers, besides the spoken evidences, which underlay and surrounded them, but no longer survive.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ In the account of 1466–1467 Harlakynnden allowed John Mayne, rent-collector, 4d 'for writing his particulars' ('*pro scriptando particularum suarum*'). NOR 15/105 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1466–1467), m. 4r. The account of 1474–1475 records a payment of 5d made to a 'clerk hired to write the parcels of the account for this year' ('*clerico conducto pro parcellas computationis hoc anno scribendo*'). NOR 15/110 (Account of German, Bailiff and Rent-collector, 1474–1475), m. 6r. The account of 1472–1473 records a payment of 8d for 'Beer and wine bought for John Bokelond' upon the making of the Rental and engrossing [making a fair copy of] the accounts' ('*Ceruisia et vino emptis pro Johanne Bokelond' super facturam Rentalis et computata ingrossandum*'). NOR 15/109 (Account of Fynche, Receiver, 1472–1473), m. 3r.

¹⁰⁶ Harvey discusses the writing of the account and the relationship between officer, scribe, and auditors in the fourteenth century. Harvey, *Cuxham*, 36–37, 39–42, 51–52. Bailey notes that local bailiffs and rent-collectors (or even the demesne lessee) drew up Phase 3 accounts. Bailey, *The Manor*, 106. See pages 39, 45, and note 242 in the Introduction.

¹⁰⁷ Original: 'vt patet per rollas earundem [curias] super hunc computatum examinatas'. NOR 15/103 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1464–1465), m. 1r. Original: 'vt patet in diuersis particularis'. NOR 15/105 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1466–1467), m. 5r.

¹⁰⁸ For example: 'And paid to John Lewkenore at Brabourne on Friday nearest after the feast of saint Michael by the command of the lord as appears by a bill delivered to William Wright' by the order of the said my Master — 100s'. Original: 'Et solutio Johanni Lewkenore apud Brabourne die veneris proximo post festum sancti Michaelis per mandatum domini vt patet per billam deliberatam Willelmo Wright' per praeceptum dicti Magistri mei — C s'. NOR 15/103 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1464–1465), m. 4r. For example: 'And for forging the marra of the Mill and the mill-spindle of the same and also for hooks and great nails and other ironwork bought from John Twyk \smith/ both for the works of the Mill and for the doors and the windows of the same by a tally — 11s 10d'. Original: 'Et in marra Molendini et fusa eiusdem fabricanda necnon pro hamis et clauis grossis ac aliis ferementis emptis de Johanne Twyk \fabro/ tam ad opera Molendini quam pro hostijs et fenestris eiusdem per tallia — xj s x d'. NOR 15/114 (Account of Turnour, Accountant, 1477–1478), m. 3r. For example: 'And paid Hugh bryght', mason, for making lez Corbellez in the chamber of the lady as appears in the account of the said Henry [Turnour] — 4d'. Original: 'Et solutio Hugh bryght' lathomus pro factura lez Corbellez in Camera domine vt in computo dicti Henrici [Turnour] — iiij d'. NOR 15/107 (Account of [blank], Receiver, 1470–1471), m. 4r.

¹⁰⁹ Tally sticks were made of wood. Clanchy, *From Memory*, 49.

Mote's accounts are not unusual in this respect.¹¹⁰ Many accounts make such references, and historians have undertaken careful work to disentangle and understand the ephemeral documents and evidences which officers and scribes drew on as they compiled their annual manorial account, as well as the documents which they created to sit alongside the account.¹¹¹ They have noted that officers had to undertake their own 'careful' work the year round to create and collect the records and evidences which enabled them to compile the account; the laborious and time-consuming process of compiling the accounts has also been recognised.¹¹² Butcher's work on a book of views of account reveals the astonishing labour involved in its compilation: not only were a 'multitude of officers and agents' involved, but the book's compilers 'consulted and processed' more than 2000 documents and records.¹¹³ Uncovering these underlying sources, and discussing how the account was compiled, is a common approach to this document type.¹¹⁴ However, it has rarely been an object of analysis – except technical analysis – in itself. Here, the process of compilation and the accounts' underlying sources – specifically how this is expressed through referencing – will be the focus of my analysis.

Referencing draws attention to the documentary labour and skill which compiling the accounts required. These references evoke the quantity and variety of the documents and evidences which officers and scribes worked with. Writing and working with documents seem to have been critical parts of officers' labour and, potentially, their professional identity. Moreover, paying attention to referencing suggests that the manorial account built a sense of the officers' trustworthiness or honesty through labour and displayed it to his lord. Creating the account was not simply an act of testimony or confession, dependent on the moral or social character of the officer; truth and trustworthiness were produced through the officer's consistent labour and the work of compilation. The officer gathered, marshalled, and displayed truth; he did not draw it from within himself. The manorial account places value on the officer who was capable of building such a solid and heavily documentary edifice.

Referencing the documents, records and evidences which underlay and surrounded Mote's accounts draws attention to the documentary labour and skill which compiling the accounts demanded of officers and scribes. Firstly, referencing suggests the quantity and variety of documentation, evidences and information which had to be managed and processed. Of course, the numerous references which Mote's accounts make to the documents and evidences officers and scribes had drawn upon suggest that quantity very explicitly. Likewise, the range of documents which the accounts reference – rentals, acknowledgements, court rolls, other accounts and accounts books, charters, contracts, agreements, parcels, tallies, particulars and books of particulars, bills,

¹¹⁰ Harvey, *Cuxham*, 44–45.

¹¹¹ Particulars of account, schedules, petitions or memoranda could be attached to the manorial account and, like the documents which underlay the account, these very rarely survive. Harvey, *Cuxham*, 44–46, 67–68; Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 38–40; Harvey, 'Estate Records', 108; Bailey, *The Manor*, 101, 104.

¹¹² The quotation is from Bailey, *The Manor*, 101. For further illustration of the above points, see Harvey, *Cuxham*, 44.

¹¹³ Butcher, 'Textual Production', 299.

¹¹⁴ For instance, Campbell, *Seigniorial Agriculture*, 26–54.

papers, schedules, warrants and letters – speaks of their variety.¹¹⁵ However, I will focus on references to one type of subsidiary document – particulars – in order to explore how referencing communicates the officer's labour. These references remind the reader of the swathes of information which Mote's officers had to access, evaluate, manage and process, and the skill and attention which was required to create an accurate, coherent, and concise account.

Particulars are detailed lists of expenses which were provided separately to the auditor, so as not to 'overweight' the relevant part of the account.¹¹⁶ Mote's accounts make frequent references to particulars and books of particulars, and to documents which fulfilled a similar function such as parcels, certain bills and papers, and schedules.¹¹⁷ As is common with these sorts of documents,

¹¹⁵ For instance: 'as appears by the Rental' ('vt patet per Rentale') (NOR 15/103 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1464–1465), m. 1r); 'by the acknowledgement of my lady' ('per recognicionem dicte domine mee') (NOR 15/105 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1466–1467), m. 5d); 'as appears by the rolls of the same [court]' ('vt patet per rollas earundem') (NOR 15/103 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1464–1465), m. 1r); 'having been received from Christopher Gay Receiver of the lord as appears in his account' ('receptatis de Christofero Gay Receptore domini vt patet in computo suo') (NOR 15/112 (Account of Turnour, Accountant, 1476–1477), m. 2r); 'because it is allowed to the same Richard by his charter' ('quod allocatur eidem Ricardo per cartam suam') (NOR 15/103 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1464–1465), m. 2r); 'for the clearing of the lands ... by an agreement [or contract]' ('pro eradicatione terrarum ... ex conuencione') (NOR 15/105 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1466–1467), m. 4r); 'by a tally' ('per tallia') (NOR 15/114 (Account of Turnour, Accountant, 1477–1478), m. 3r); 'by the warrant of the lady' ('per Warantum Domine') (NOR 15/117 (Account of Turnour, Servant, 1479–1480), m. 2r); 'from the same [the lady] by the hand of Richard Seford with a letter' ('de eadem per manum Ricardi Seford cum littera') (NOR 15/117 (Account of Turnour, Servant, 1479–1480), m. 3r). Also see note 117.

¹¹⁶ The quotation is from Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 39; also, see Harvey, *Cuxham*, 67–68.

¹¹⁷ Below is a short selection of references to particulars, a book of particulars, parcels, bills and papers used for this purpose, and schedules. **Particulars:** 'And paid to John Lillesden' for the Cleaning of the aforesaid Pond \next to the Barn/ and for the carriage of 6950 huelles by a 100 of 120, as appears in diverse particulars — 59s 6d'. Original: 'Et solutio Johanni Lillesden' pro Mundacione Stagni praedicti \iuxta Orrium/ et pro cariagio vj Mⁱ. ix^{cl}. huelles per C^{ua} de vj^{xx}. vt patet in diuersis particularis — lix . s . vj . d'. NOR 15/105 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1466–1467), m. 5r. **Book of particulars:** 'And paid to the same Thomas [Bachiler] for the carriage of the aforesaid lime into the Manor by multiple trips as appears by the book of particulars — 4s'. Original: 'Et solutio eidem Thome [Bachiler] pro cariagio praedicti Calcini in Manerium per vices vt patet per librum de particularis — iiij s'. NOR 15/106 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1467–1468), m. 5r. **Parcels:** 'And for the expenses of John Hale, Servant of the aforesaid accountant, going all the way to le Mote on various occasions for the purpose of performing diverse business and to supervise the labourers in that very place as appears in diverse parcels — 2s 5½d'. Original: 'Et in expensis Johannis Hale Seruientis praedicti computantis euntis vsque le Mote per diuersas vites. .super diuersa negocia facienda et operarios ibidem superindendere vt patet in diuersis parcellis — ij s . vd . ob'. NOR 15/103 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1464–1465), m. 4r. **Bills and papers used for this purpose:** 'And for meat and fish bought at the Market for the consumption of this household ... as appears weekly by the paper of the Accountant ... — £4 11s 8d'. Original: 'Et in carnibus et pissibus emptis in Marcato pro expensione huius hospicii ... prout patet septimati per papirum Computantis ... — iiij li xj s viij d'. NOR 15/112 (Account of Turnour, Accountant, 1476–1477), m. 4r. 'And for meat and fish and other victuals ... as appears by a bill of the expenses of the accountant ... £4 3s 11½d'. Original: 'Et in carnibus et piscibus et alijs victualibus ... vt patet per billam expensionum dicti computantis ... iiij . li iij s xj d ob'. NOR 15/111 (Account of German, Bailiff, 1475–1476), m. 1r. **Schedules:** 'And for diverse men and women hired in harvest time for reaping, gathering and binding 16½ acres of oats and 2½ acres of beans by the day as appears by a schedule shown by the accountant 14s 3d'. Original: 'Et in diuercis hominibus et mulieribus conductis in Automno pro xvj . acris . dimidiis Auenae et ij Acris . dimidiis fabarum metendum colligendum et ligandum per dietam vt patet per cedullam computantore ostencam xiiij . s iij d'. NOR 15/110 (Account of German, Bailiff and Rent-collector, 1474–1475), m. 4r.

none from Mote survive.¹¹⁸ However, they were the focus of close attention at the audit, and the ways in which Mote's accounts describe auditors engaging with particulars, and similar documents, evokes their richness and their detail. Auditors examined the 'bill of the expenses of the said accountant ... fully', the 'paper of the Accountant ... item by item'.¹¹⁹ These descriptions of full and painstaking attention being paid to these documents, item by item, speak, of course, of the auditors' work. However, these descriptions also reflect the nature of the particulars themselves and, therefore, also speak of the officer's labour in producing them. The officers and scribes had compiled exhaustive documents which both demanded, and provided the material for, the auditors' careful engagement.

Compiling a set of particulars was a laborious process which required a varying, but potentially very substantial, number of separate documents, tallies, records and scraps of paper and parchment to be processed. The fact that some particulars drew on significant quantities of documentation is suggested by the summaries of their expenses which appear in the accounts. For instance, the 1476–1477 account references the 'paper of the Accountant' which records 12 weeks-worth of expenses for foodstuffs purchased for the household, totalling £4 11s 8d.¹²⁰ Smaller expenses which are summarised in the accounts, but noted as being detailed in full in the particulars, can also imply the existence of a good number of entries or underlying documentation.¹²¹ We know that some officers undertook all the labour of compiling particulars themselves. The account of 1466–1467 records that John Mayne, rent collector, was allowed 4d for writing his own particulars; this suggests it was not a trifling amount of work, as 4d was also how much it cost to hire a thatcher for a day.¹²²

However, even when a clerk was hired to write up the fair versions of the particulars, the officers still engaged closely with that document.¹²³ Firstly, these documents also drew on the 'careful running record' which officers kept throughout the year, and the collections of documents, 'working memoranda' and tallies that they had built up.¹²⁴ They may even have put together rough drafts of the account themselves. Secondly, it was usually the officers themselves who showed or

¹¹⁸ Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 39.

¹¹⁹ Original: 'billam expensarum dicti computantis ... plenarie'. NOR 15/111 (Account of German, Bailiff, 1475–1476), m. 1r. Original: 'papierum Computantis ... parcellatim'. NOR 15/112 (Account of Turnour, Accountant, 1476–1477), m. 4r.

¹²⁰ Original: 'papierum Computantis'. NOR 15/112 (Account of Turnour, Accountant, 1476–1477), m. 4r.

¹²¹ In the account of 1467–1468 Thomas Bachiler was paid 4s for the carriage of lime into the manor 'by multiple trips as appears by the book of the particulars' ('per vices vt patet per librum de particularis') (NOR 15/106 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1467–1468), m. 5r). In the same year, several men were paid 1s 6d to transport one cartload of stone nearly 30 miles, suggesting that Thomas Bachiler, simply carrying lime 'into' the manor, had probably undertaken quite a number of trips, likely with a corresponding number of entries in the particulars. NOR 15/106 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1467–1468), mm. 4r, 5r.

¹²² NOR 15/105 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1466–1467), m. 4r.

¹²³ As stated in note 105, the account of 1474–1475 records a payment made to a 'clerk hired to write the parcels of the account for this year' ('clerico conducto pro parcellas computationis hoc anno scribendo'). NOR 15/110 (Account of German, Bailiff and Rent-collector, 1474–1475), m. 6r.

¹²⁴ Bailey, *The Manor*, 101.

exhibited these documents to the auditors; Mote's accounts often note that they had done so.¹²⁵ The audit process required the officers to have a strong and detailed understanding of the contents of the particulars – what was in them, what were the bases of their claims, why a certain expense had been listed in the particulars rather than the account – as they had to be able to respond to the auditor's questions.¹²⁶ References to the particulars, and the descriptions of their audit, act as microcosms of the manorial account itself, reminding the reader that the same processes – and the same skill and labour – also underlies the compilation of the accounts. The account is likewise a rich and detailed document, deserving, and needful, of careful engagement by the auditors and indicative of the officer's documentary labour.

However, the references to particulars in Mote's accounts don't simply evoke the quantity of evidences; they also evoke the officer's ability to effectively and shrewdly manage that quantity. Mote's accounts record expenses which appear in *diverse particulars*. For instance, one entry in the 1466–1467 account notes John Lillesden was paid 59s 6d for cleaning a pond and for the carriage of 6950 'hulles' in various batches 'as appears in diverse particulars'.¹²⁷ These references to expenses which had been calculated by gathering information from a range of particulars make it clear that the labour and skill which compiling the accounts required went far beyond neat and exhaustive collection. It was essential that the officer and scribe could create coherence out of a morass of material, find patterns, make connections, and bring together relevant information. The aim was to 'secure complete internal consistency'.¹²⁸

Similarly, a reference in Sharpe the rent-collector's 1479–1480 account demonstrates how officers created complex evidentiary connections between various manorial documents. Sharpe was allowed – meaning the amount would be 'cancelled' and not added to his charge – 2s 6d for the rent of Thomas Fowle's heirs for their land called Bordens.¹²⁹ The rent 'as in the rental' was 4s 1d but, the account explains, through demise and the lord's pleasure (which had been given at the court held at Mote on 26 January 1478) they now held the land for 1s 7d a year.¹³⁰ The account builds the story of Bordens through detailed references to a range of manorial documents – the rental and the court rolls – and then fixes it into documentary memory for the benefit of future officers and their lord.

The writings of other medieval administrators and compilers provide us with a sense of the difficulty of such tasks. Although John Carpenter, Common Clerk of the City of London, was working on a rather larger scale than the officers at Mote, his description of compiling a custumal provides some flavour. Confronting this 'monumental task', he wrote: 'viewing the immense mass of matter to be written out, an inextricable labyrinth, ... he felt apprehensive lest he might be pronounced rash

¹²⁵ For instance: NOR 15/106 (Account of Harlakynden, Receiver, 1467–1468), m. 5r; NOR 15/111 (Account of German, Bailiff, 1475–1476), m. 1r; NOR 15/108 (Account of German, Rent-collector and Bailiff, 1471–1472), m. 2r.

¹²⁶ Harvey, *Cuxham*, 29, 51–52. As I will discuss in the next section, officers needed to make judgements about whether certain details should be recorded in the body of the account or in the particulars.

¹²⁷ Original: 'vt patet in diuersis particularis'. NOR 15/105 (Account of Harlakynden, Receiver, 1466–1467), m. 5r. It is not entirely clear what 'hulles' means in this context, but it is likely referring to a 'small measure of weight'. *MED*, s.v., *hol(e)* n.1, 1d.

¹²⁸ Harvey, *Cuxham*, 44.

¹²⁹ Bailey, *The Manor*, 104.

¹³⁰ Original: 'vt in rentale'. NOR 15/118 (Account of Sharpe, Rent-collector, 1479–1480), m. 2r.

or presumptuous, for entering upon so vast a chaos'.¹³¹ On their own scale, Mote's officers and scribes had to face the 'mass of matter' and make sense – in the very particular form of the account – out of it.¹³² These references to *diverse particulars*, therefore, draw attention to the labour and skill which had brought disparate information and documents together and made useful and concise sense out of them.

Turning away from particulars, we can find references which evoke officers' documentary labour by including additional description. Mote's officers and scribes sometimes note the material features or nature of their sources. These more detailed and descriptive references are few and far between, and they are neither flowery nor lengthy; a document may simply have been 'of paper'.¹³³ Nevertheless, the materiality of these descriptions is evocative of the sensory experience of officers' and scribes' documentary labour, as it calls to mind the moment when the document was handled, seen and understood. We can imagine them touching the paper of the 'new rental of paper'; indeed, as Mote's officers and scribes became more familiar with this document, it shifted from being referred to as the 'new rental' to being the 'new rental of paper'.¹³⁴ The way the descriptions in Mote's accounts capture and identify their sources is material and, therefore, these descriptions do not describe the document alone but, implicitly, the document in relation to someone who is interacting with and experiencing it. This type of reference thereby communicates the officers' and scribes' familiarity with these documents and the close attention which they paid them.

The simplicity and scarcity of the accounts' descriptive references align this writing with the 'plain' speaking and cataloguing of truth.¹³⁵ Penitential literature aimed at parish priests also associates truthfulness in confession with speaking 'baldely', without manipulation or adornment.¹³⁶ However, simple and plain expression, and its corresponding moral associations, is likely to have played only a limited role in presenting an account or an officer as trustworthy to a degree which would satisfy their lord. It was certainly not enough on its own; after all, the comic embezzler of

¹³¹ Cuenca, 'Town Clerks', 185, 185–187 quoting the translation from Henry Thomas Riley, ed., *Liber Albus: The White Book of the City of London, Compiled A.D. 1419 by John Carpenter, Common Clerk. Richard Whittington, Mayor* (London: R. Griffin, 1861), 452. John Carpenter was Common Clerk, or Town Clerk, of the City of London from 1417 to c. 1438. Henry Thomas Riley, ed., *Munimenta Gildhallae Londoniensis: Liber Albus, Compiled A.D. 1419, Liber Albus, Liber Custumarum, et Liber Horn*, Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores, or Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages 1 (London: Longman, 1859), xviii–xix. As Esther Liberman Cuenca notes, Carpenter is writing about himself in the third person. Cuenca also draws attention to the fact that Carpenter describes himself as a compiler or 'compiler'. Cuenca, 'Town Clerks', 185.

¹³² Cuenca, 185 quoting the translation from Riley, *Liber Albus*, 452.

¹³³ Original: 'de papiro'. NOR 15/111 (Account of German, Bailiff, 1475–1476), m. 1r.

¹³⁴ Original: 'nouo rentale de papiro'. For an example of this reference, see NOR 15/111 (Account of German, Bailiff, 1475–1476), m. 1r. Original: 'nouo rentale'. NOR 15/110 (Account of German, Bailiff and Rent-collector, 1474–1475), m. 1r. The new rental was produced in 1472–1473 (NOR 15/109 (Account of Fynche, Receiver, 1472–1473), m. 3r). After this date the accounts differentiate this one from its predecessor by calling it the 'new rental' ('nouo rentale') to begin with, and then the 'new rental of paper' ('nouo rentale de papiro').

¹³⁵ Anke Bernau, 'Enlisting Truth', *Style* 50, no. 3 (2016): 261–279 (265, 269).

¹³⁶ John Mirk, *John Mirk's Instructions for Parish Priests: Edited from MS Cotton Claudius A.II and Six Other Manuscripts*, ed. Gillis Kristensson (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1974), 127.

Robert Carpenter's composition hides his more intricate frauds behind seemingly uncomplicated accounting.¹³⁷ Instead, the practice of referencing seems to be a vital component of building a reliable account and arguing that the officer was trustworthy. It sidesteps the anxiety about dishonest and untrustworthy officers revealed in contemporary estate management literature. If an officer could provide evidence to back up his claim – a reference – the lord did not need to rely on his trustworthiness.¹³⁸

Referencing has an authenticating effect. Referencing particular documents or evidences provides a trail which auditors and lords could follow to check the accuracy and reliability of the officer's account. For instance, the account of 1472–1473 records that 53s 4d had been received from John at Hale, rent collector of the manor of Icklesham, 'as appears by an indented bill of the said [John at Hale] of 12 day of December in 12 year of Edward IV'.¹³⁹ Provided with a description and a date, it would have been quite a simple matter for the auditors to identify and check this source. If Sir John was reviewing a fair copy written up after audit, he presumably had the assurance of knowing that such a source had been checked and approved.

Furthermore, the reference demonstrates that the officer and scribe had consulted that document during the compilation of the account. Descriptive references provide "authentic touches" which have the "ring of truth".¹⁴⁰ Other references communicate that the officer had, for instance, collected, stored, managed (or accessed), and then consulted the bills and tallies which had accompanied various transactions. Accounts record the purchase of various pieces of ironwork memorialised by tallies; a payment made according to Sir John's order 'as appears by a bill' delivered, again, by the lord's order; and what John Mayne charged for 6 days 'as appears by his bill' which had been delivered to the lady.¹⁴¹ Moreover, the reference that money had been received 'without a bill' implies that to be so lacking in external evidence was unusual.¹⁴² The references which the annual manorial accounts make to the accounts which officers kept throughout the year also demonstrate both the work of compilation and the careful year-round labour that provided their material.¹⁴³ References, therefore, allowed the auditor and the lord to reassure themselves by following the officer's claim to its authenticating source. Importantly, they also made the officer's

¹³⁷ Carlin, 'Cheating', 186–189.

¹³⁸ Following the definition of trust which Ian Forrest uses: 'a conscious decision to rely upon another person or entity without the possibility of knowing for certain whether that reliance is well-founded'. Pure trust, therefore, is given without evidence. Ian Forrest, *Trustworthy Men: How Inequality and Faith Made the Medieval Church* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 11.

¹³⁹ Original: 'vt patet per billam indentatam cuius dicti xij die decembris Anno xij Edwardi iiii'. NOR 15/109 (Account of Fynche, Receiver, 1472–1473), m. 1r.

¹⁴⁰ Derek Pearsall, 'Interpretative Models for the Peasants' Revolt', in *Hermeneutics and Medieval Culture*, ed. Patrick J. Gallacher and Helen Damico (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 63–70 (67 citing Morton W. Bloomfield, 'Authenticating Realism and the Realism of Chaucer', *Thought* 39 (1964): 335–358).

¹⁴¹ For the reference to the tallies which recorded the purchase of ironwork, see NOR 15/114 (Account of Turnour, Accountant, 1477–1478), m. 3r. Original: 'vt patet per billam'. NOR 15/103 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1464–1465), m. 4r. Original: 'vt patet per billam suam'. NOR 15/107 (Account of [blank], Receiver, 1470–1471), m. 6r.

¹⁴² Original: 'sine billa'. For instance, see NOR 15/109 (Account of Fynche, Receiver, 1472–1473), m. 1r.

¹⁴³ For instance, Henry Turnour's account is frequently referenced in the 1470–1471 account. NOR 15/107 (Account of [blank], Receiver, 1470–1471).

labour visible, and it was this work that demonstrated that the account was reliable and the officer was trustworthy.

Many of the entries in Mote's accounts do not include such explicit or specific references to subsidiary documents or underlying sources. However, the multilingualism of the accounts works to produce a similar authenticating effect. Scholars have drawn a connection between the multilingualism and macaronicism of medieval accounts and the fact that they are compilations. They have pointed out that their vernacular words and phrases often seem to have been drawn from an account's underlying source material, whether that was a written record or the spoken word.¹⁴⁴ As I have discussed, Butcher comments that views of account are works of 'complex intertextuality' and, importantly, his findings demonstrate that the work of compilation is visible in the account itself.¹⁴⁵ However, despite having drawn this connection, scholars have not explored what it might mean that these documents' macaronicism constantly reminded their readers of the fact that they were compilations, carefully and laboriously constructed from a multiplicity of underlying sources. I would also suggest that, by acting as a reminder of the process of compilation, the macaronicism of Mote's accounts asserts the documentary labour and skill of its officers and scribes.¹⁴⁶ Like the explicit references to underlying documents which the accounts make, their macaronicism speaks of the work which officers undertook year-round to create, collect, and manage documents and records. It also speaks of the labour of actually compiling the account, the multitude of writing – and speech – that had to be sifted through, processed, collated, and compiled.

However, Mote's accounts are not entirely devoid of the language of faith. The officers and scribes of Mote's accounts sometimes reference a transaction – usually of money – as having been 'by the hand' of a particular person.¹⁴⁷ This seems to have been a formulaic phrase which helped to communicate useful information about who had been involved in a certain transaction and in what capacity. I would also suggest that this phrase allows the language of oath-making into the account, undergirding its claims. Not every transaction of this kind is described as having been done *by the hand*; for instance, William Ham had simply been paid 'by German' while five gallons of fat were sold 'by the accountant'.¹⁴⁸ Nor does *by the hand* appear in every account. However, it is used across the period of Mote's surviving accounts, sometimes frequently and sometimes sparingly. It is applied to

¹⁴⁴ Ingham, 'Mixing Languages', 89, 91; Richard Ingham, 'Language-Mixing in Medieval Latin Documents: Vernacular Articles and Nouns', in *Multilingualism in Medieval Britain (c. 1066–1520)*, ed. J. Jefferson and A. Putter, Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe 15 (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2012), 105–121 (119); Butcher, 'Textual Production', 299, 301. In his study of Cuxham's thirteenth-century manorial accounts, Harvey argues that switches from the third person to the first person in the account are likely to be the result of the scribe quoting the words (or potentially the writing) of the reeve. Harvey, *Cuxham*, 41–42.

¹⁴⁵ Butcher, 'Textual Production', 298, 299, 301.

¹⁴⁶ This argument also builds on the work of Laura Wright. She argues that the creators of medieval accounts wanted their accounts to be multilingual. She proposes that non-integrated language-mixing in accounts is a key part of a unique accounting 'text-type' which was 'deemed appropriate for stewardship' and connoted a 'register of trade and commerce, of land and money management, of asset movement and inventory'. Wright, 'On Non-Integrated Vocabulary', 272–273 at 273, 283–284 at 283, at 284. Here, I give further consideration to what this 'text-type' communicates about officers' 'stewardship'. Wright, 273, 283.

¹⁴⁷ Original: 'per manum'. For an example, see NOR 15/103 (Account of Harlakynden, Receiver, 1464–1465), m. 3r.

¹⁴⁸ Original: 'per German'. NOR 15/109 (Account of Fynche, Receiver, 1472–1473), m. 2r. Original: 'per computantorem'. NOR 15/110 (Account of German, Bailiff and Rent-collector, 1474–1475), m. 2r.

transactions carried out by a range of people, from craftsmen and officers, to the lord and lady, as well as people from outside Mote or from Sir John's wider estate.¹⁴⁹ The 1466–1467 account, for instance, notes that William Bailly, a farmer and labourer, was paid 'by the hand of John German' for the carriage of straw to the brickmakers, while the account of 1470–1471 records numerous transactions done by the hand of Lady Agnes.¹⁵⁰ For instance, Thomas Neve, a labourer, was paid 'by the hand of the lady as in the paper of the lady herself'.¹⁵¹

It is possible that these transactions are distinguished as having been done *by the hand* because they had involved a particular gesture of faith. At the very least, the accounts' reference to the hand evokes faith or promise-making, to which hand gestures were often central.¹⁵² Ian Forrest argues that we should not take the hand gestures of medieval promises, oaths and declarations of faith 'lightly'.¹⁵³ They were not 'denuded remnants' of the ritual past, but 'meaningful in their own time'.¹⁵⁴ Hands were closely linked to faith and promise-making in the symbolic and imaginative world of exempla. This can be seen in a tale, haunted by anxieties about the weaknesses of law, which features a woman who, after death, is stricken with a damaged and 'blackened' hand as a sign that she had often sworn false oaths.¹⁵⁵ In the manorial court, meanwhile, people would come with a certain number of 'hands' – meaning people who would support them or their claim.¹⁵⁶ Indeed, these "hands" had to be 'trustworthy' or 'true' men themselves.¹⁵⁷

Likewise, I suggest that the references in accounts to transactions being done *by the hand* should not be taken lightly. Even if these descriptions are conventional, it does not make them empty. Instead, *by the hand* seems to create an oath in the account itself, not only suggesting that

¹⁴⁹ For instance: 'And as regards – 2s having been received from my said Master by the hand of the maker of cement at London'. Original: 'Et de – ij . s . receptatis de dicto Magistro meo per manum ffactoris cementi apud londonium'. NOR 15/106 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1467–1468), m. 1r. For instance: 'And for money to my lady by the hand of my Master'. Original: 'Et in denariis domine mee per manus Magistri mei'. NOR 15/106 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1467–1468), m. 1d. For instance: 'And as regards – 10s having been received from my Master lord John Scotte knight by the hand of John Cole Supervisor of the works for his labour coming from Assher [Esher] all the way to the Manor of Mote'. Original: 'Et de – x . s . receptatis de Magistro meo domino Johanne Scotte Milite per manus . Johannis Cole Superuisoris operis pro labore suo veniente de Assher vsque Manerium de Mote'. NOR 15/105 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1466–1467), m. 2r.

¹⁵⁰ Original: 'per manus Johannis German'. NOR 15/105 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1466–1467), m. 5d.

¹⁵¹ Original: 'per manum domine vt in papiro ipsius domine'. NOR 15/107 (Account of [blank], Receiver, 1470–1471), m. 4r.

¹⁵² Forrest, *Trustworthy Men*, 47–51.

¹⁵³ Forrest, 48.

¹⁵⁴ Forrest, 48.

¹⁵⁵ Johnson, 'Byland Revisited', 448, 451. This tale was likely recorded in the early fifteenth century by a monk of Byland Abbey, North Yorkshire. M. R. James, 'Twelve Medieval Ghost-Stories', *EHR* 37, no. 147 (1922): 413–422 (414); Johnson, 'Byland Revisited', 446.

¹⁵⁶ Jordan Claridge and Spike Gibbs, 'Waifs and Strays: Property Rights in Late Medieval England', *JBS* 61, no. 1 (2022): 50–82 (51 quoting Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, C11/1/3 (Court Rolls of the Manor of Little Downham, 5 December 1392, Ely Diocesan Records), m. 31 (translation by Jordan Claridge and Spike Gibbs), 66).

¹⁵⁷ Claridge and Gibbs, 'Property Rights', *JBS* 61, no. 1 (2022): 66 quoting Forrest *Trustworthy Men* and R. Oram, ed. *Court Rolls of the Manors of Bruces, Dabeneys, Pembrokes (Tottenham), 1 Richard II to 1 Henry IV (1377–1399)* (Tottenham: Libraries and Museum Department, 1961), 54.

this transaction was conducted with faith, but that what is being accounted for is being sworn to.¹⁵⁸ The account therefore, is threaded through with strands of faith and creates textual oath-makers (or “hands”) – some, like the lord and lady, completely irreproachable – to support the accountant’s claims. Mote’s accounts, therefore, were not divorced from the lordly preoccupation with trust which so concerned contemporary estate management literature. Rather, these documents’ conventions laboured to create the sense that the account, and therefore the officer, was trustworthy.

The trustworthiness of the manorial account was built through labour and demonstrated by the references and intertextuality which revealed that labour. The officer did not draw the truth out from within themselves, as demanded by contexts like confession or legal testimony.¹⁵⁹ Instead, the manorial officer gathered, marshalled and displayed truth as he compiled the manorial account. Labour and value were the currency of the manorial account, and it was in this vein that it responded to the lordly fear of fraudulent officers. It seems to have been more profitable for the manorial officer to rest his reliability and trustworthiness on a display of his labour than on faith or character.

Although lords feared the harm that a dishonest officer could do to them, the relation was weighted in their favour. And a lord’s faith was, it seems, worth more than an officer’s. In the account which John Marener, rent-collector, returned in 1477–1478, he requests an allowance of 2s paid to the bailiff of the Rape of Hastings for the ‘suit of Court \of the lord for this manor/ by the hand of William Tomsette’.¹⁶⁰ However, Sir John disagreed. At the bottom of the account he notes ‘that I believe ... it is paid by William Tomsette in addition to rents’.¹⁶¹ Perhaps Sir John’s objection was simply intended to trigger further investigation; ironically, ‘I believe’ was an acknowledgement of the limitations of his knowledge.¹⁶² However, when the testimony-like phrasing which was available to the lord was pitted against the faith-related phrasing available to the officer, the lord had the advantage. The account, with its focus on the documentary labour and skill of the officer, places value on someone who can build a solid edifice of evidence, rather than on the inherent trustworthiness of their character. Documentary labour was a vital and valuable facet of manorial officers’ work – both for them and their lord – and, growing from that, their professional identity.

¹⁵⁸ Forrest describes the different ways hands and gestures were used to form different kinds of bonds. He points out that hand gestures with only brief, or no, touching of hands suggested a ‘promise on a single issue’. Forrest, *Trustworthy Men*, 50–51 at 50. This is the kind of gesture and promise which the accounts seem to describe.

¹⁵⁹ Mirk, *Mirk’s Instructions*, 114; Forrest, *Trustworthy Men*, 244.

¹⁶⁰ Original: ‘setta Curiae \domini pro hoc Manerio/ per manum Willelmi Tomsette’. NOR 15/115 (Account of Maryner, Rent-collector, 1477–1478), m. 2r.

¹⁶¹ Original: ‘quod Credo ... soluitur per Willelmum Tomsette vltra Redeitis’. NOR 15/115 (Account of Maryner, Rent-collector, 1477–1478), m. 2r.

¹⁶² Original: ‘Credo’. NOR 15/115 (Account of Maryner, Rent-collector, 1477–1478), m. 2r. For a discussion of the way in which people could use ‘assertions of belief’ to put a ‘limit’ on their declarations, see Forrest, *Trustworthy Men*, 261–262 at 261.

Selecting

When our officers and scribes came to compile Mote's accounts, they did not simply collect together all the documents, records and evidences they had amassed, and then exactly copy out all that they contained, exactly as it appeared. Not everything could, or should, go into the account, either at all or in full; selecting, cutting and summarising were essential tasks for the officers and scribes who compiled manorial accounts. They had to think critically about what they should include and then make judgements and active decisions.¹⁶³ These decisions could also be made at the level of individual entries: how could disparate information be compiled into a single entry? what details should be included in order to succinctly justify an expense? where should they be more expansive and, importantly, what should and should not be included in that expansion?

Scholars have discussed the role of the medieval compiler, often with reference to the definition provided by St Bonaventura: the compiler 'adds together or arranges the statements of other men, adding no opinion of his own'.¹⁶⁴ Parkes notes that compilers were inclined to proclaim that they had added nothing of their own to their texts, deflecting both authority and blame elsewhere.¹⁶⁵ And yet, implicitly, compilers were making adept and decisive judgements about what to cut, keep and combine from their source texts in order to suit their own purposes. Cuenca discusses the creative power afforded late-medieval town clerks by the process of compiling customals. She argues that 'selectively drawing content from previous customals to forge new ones' was one of the ways in which such clerks 'fundamentally shap[ed] the creation and maintenance of customary law'.¹⁶⁶ Similarly, the decisions which manorial officers and scribes made as they considered their source material and compiled their accounts – what they cut, what they included, how they combined it, and how they phrased any summary – reveal something of their priorities and what they thought was appropriate, essential, or argumentatively powerful to convey to their lord and their auditors.

The choices which the compilers of Mote's accounts made often bring the labour of manorial officers to the fore. Here, I will focus on just two entries which record expenses for which William Harlakynnden was responsible; both come from accounts which he returned. The first entry I will discuss is only brief, but the choices made in its compilation paint an outsize picture of the officer's labour. The second entry is much more generous, but the expansive detail it provides is also

¹⁶³ As I have discussed, detailed lists of certain expenses would often be provided to the auditors in the form of particulars or schedules, while the expense would be summarised in the account. Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 39. Mote's accounts state that the details of certain summarised expenses are laid out much more fully in other particulars or papers which had also been examined in audit. For example, see NOR 15/104 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1465–1466), m. 6r; NOR 15/112 (Account of Turnour, Accountant, 1476–1477), m. 4r. Sometimes there were disagreements about where certain expenses should have been recorded. For instance, in the account of 1467–1468 Sir John Scott added two notes in the margin which declare that these expenses could not be allowed here; instead they should have been allowed in the particulars. NOR 15/106 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1467–1468), m. 1d; Gardiner and Whittick, *Accounts and Records of Mote*, 53 n. 46, n. 47).

¹⁶⁴ The quotation is from Minnis, *Authorship*, 94; also, see Parkes, 'Ordinatio and Compilatio', 59.

¹⁶⁵ M. B. Parkes notes that both Chaucer and Vincent of Beauvais 'claim[ed] to be adding nothing of [their] own' in their compilations of tales and texts. Parkes, 'Ordinatio and Compilatio', 62.

¹⁶⁶ Cuenca, 'Town Clerks', 184.

focused on the labour and skill of one particular officer. This entry also helps us to understand what skills were understood to be central to this officer's role, value and, potentially, professional identity. Interestingly, the entry constructs a manorial hierarchy, and privileges the value of the officer most closely affiliated with the accountant over that of his subordinates. These entries demonstrate that scribes and officers gravitated towards language and detail which emphasises the labour and skill of the officer. What was salient, what was essential, what had justificatory power or, simply, what held interest, was officers' labour. The form and conventions of the manorial account demanded that compilers made these choices and, in turn, the account both compiles, and becomes a compilation of, images of manorial officers' labour and skill. Such images argue for officers' value and ask, implicitly, what the lord owed them in return.

The first entry comes from the account 1465–1466. It can be found in the portion of 'Repairs of the Manor' for which Harlakynnden was held responsible.¹⁶⁷ It reads: 'And paid for Syves bought at Hawkhurst with 1 d for the expenses of going to get [*petendi*] and seeking [*querendi*] for the same'.¹⁶⁸ As it justifies the additional 1d needed to acquire these sieves, the entry does not detail the specifics of what that penny was spent on, whether food, travel or tips. Instead, the focus of this summary entry is the work done to acquire the sieves: the going and seeking which Harlakynnden either undertook himself or had undertaken under his auspices. The verbs chosen for this summary magnify the labour involved, both through their numeracy and their meanings. Neither verb alone is enough to encompass the work of acquiring these sieves. Simply stating that they had needed to be got is not enough; they had needed to be *sought*. Furthermore, while *petere* and *quaerere* do have distinct definitions, the two verbs intensify each other. They both have meanings which constellate around *trying* – reaching, seeking, searching, pursuing, demanding and investigating – evoking an almost quest-like search for sieves.¹⁶⁹ It is not the careful enumeration of what the 1d was spent on which justifies this expense but the labour involved. Here, the decisions regarding selecting and summarising, which compiling a concise account required, provided the compilers of Mote's accounts with the opportunity to use a minor expense to paint an image of the manorial officer's labour of almost romantic proportions. They were drawn to modes of selecting and summarising, and to choices of language, which magnify that work, creating the image of an officer who really went the extra mile. Furthermore, this suggests that these compilers expected such images to have value to their lord and to provide satisfactory justification to their auditors.

The second entry comes from the account of the following year, 1466–1467. This time it is included under the heading 'Expenses of the Accountant'.¹⁷⁰ Once again, Harlakynnden was the accountant for this year, although John Hale, who was Harlakynnden's servant, is the protagonist of

¹⁶⁷ Original: 'Reparaciones Manerij'. NOR 15/104 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1465–1466), mm. 4r, 5r–6r.

¹⁶⁸ Original: 'Et solutio pro Syves emptis apud Hawkhurst cum 1 d pro expensis pro eisdem petendi et querendi — ix . d'. NOR 15/104 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1465–1466), m. 5r; DMLBS, s.v., *petere*, 3; DMLBS, s.v., *quaerere*, 1, 4. This scribe is not alone in having an idiosyncratic way with gerunds and prepositions. In their edition, Whittick and Gardiner translate the final portion as: 'the expenses of seeking and fetching them'. Gardiner and Whittick, *Accounts and Records of Mote*, 12.

¹⁶⁹ DMLBS, s.v., *petere*, 1, 5, 7, 8, 11; DMLBS, s.v., *quaerere*, 1, 4, 6, 7, 8..

¹⁷⁰ Original: 'Expensae Computantis'. NOR 15/105 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1466–1467), m. 5d.

the entry.¹⁷¹ Harlakynden, however, still has a shadowy – but vital – presence in the entry. Situated within the section dedicated to the expenses of the accountant, this entry aligns with the interests of Harlakynden and his servant as it compiles a favourable image of their labour. In contrast to the short entry I just discussed, in this instance the officer and scribe chose to carry substantial detail over from the source material into the account. This was an active choice made in the process of the account's compilation; if they had decided to summarise it further, and be more narrowly selective, it would have matched similar entries in this section.¹⁷² The entry records how, on a visit to Mote, Hale discovered a delay in the building works and took action to remedy it, issuing instructions to two of the other officers at Mote. It reads:

And for the expenses of the same John Hale [for going] to *le Mote* the 11th day of the Month of January to tell [*ad loquendum*] John Mayne to fell and carry wood to *le Brikeost* and to order [*ad praecipendum*] John German to prepare wood for *le brikeost* in the manner just specified because the said *Brikemen*' were delayed in their work for a lack of wood — 6½d¹⁷³

Once again, the entry justifies the expenses which an officer had incurred by making reference to their labour: the expenses of Hale's travel to Mote were worth it because he was able to make a valuable contribution to the situation on the manor; a contribution which, the entry suggests, no other officer already there was capable of making. This entry promotes Harlakynden and Hale, centring and celebrating their role in the manorial hierarchy and the value of their labour. It is the climax of the 'Expenses of the Accountant' section, which is otherwise comprised of shorter and less colourful entries. Hopefully, it left its audience – particularly Sir John Scott – with a persuasive image.

The labour and skills which this entry dwells on are managerial and problem-solving.¹⁷⁴ This entry does not hide the fact that there were problems at Mote, with the brickmakers' work having

¹⁷¹ Gardiner and Whittick, *Accounts and Records of Mote*, xl. The 1467–1468 account refers to John Hale as the 'servant of the Receiver of the lord' ('*seruientis Receptoris domini*'). NOR 15/106 (Account of Harlakynden, Receiver, 1467–1468), m. 3d.

¹⁷² For instance: 'And for the expenses of the said William [Harlakynden] towards the Manor of Mote on the 8th day of July for the purpose of supervising the labourers of the lord in that very place — 4d'. Original: 'Et in expensis dicti Willelmi [Harlakynden] versus Manerium de Moote viij^o die Julij pro Operarijs . domini ibidem superindendere — iiij d'. For instance: 'And for the expenses of John Hale for diverse occasions going all the way to *le Mote* for conducting diverse business and supervising the labourers — 6d'. Original: 'Et in expensis Johannis Hale per diuersas vices euntis vsque le Mote in diuersa Negocia agenda et operarios superindendere — vj d'. NOR 15/105 (Account of Harlakynden, Receiver, 1466–1467), m. 5d.

¹⁷³ Original: 'Et in expensis eiusdem Johannis Hale vsque le Mote xj^o die Mensis Januarii ad loquendum Johanni Mayne ad prosternendum et carandum boscum vsque le Brikeost et ad praecipendum Johanni German' ad praeparandum boscum pro le brikeost . sic quod dicti Brikemen' in defouta bosci in opera suis tardarentur — vj . d ob'. NOR 15/105 (Account of Harlakynden, Receiver, 1466–1467), m. 5d. '[L]e brikeost' is a brick kiln in which bricks were baked during their manufacture. *MED*, s.v., *ost(e n., 1*. I have interpreted 'defouta' as a variant spelling of *defauta* or *defalta*, in its meaning of *lack*. *DMLBS*, s.v., *defaula*, *defauta*; *DMLBS*, s.v., *defalta*, 3a.

¹⁷⁴ Despite Hale's travel being the immediate cause of this expense, the account provides no sense at all of what his journey entailed, not even a terse 'going, staying, and returning homewards' ('*eundo morando et domorsum redeundo*') as in some earlier entries in this section. NOR 15/105 (Account of Harlakynden, Receiver, 1466–1467), m. 5d.

been stalled by a lack of wood. In fact, the inclusion of both of Hale's interventions as two distinct clauses – first telling John Mayne and then ordering John German – creates a sense of severity and urgency through its reiterative force. The focus of the entry, however, is how Hale solved this problem: he swept in, identified the trouble and its cause, and then set its resolution into motion by providing specific instructions to the officers based on the manor. Furthermore, through its display of managerial skill, this entry constructs a hierarchy of Mote's officers.

This sense of hierarchy is created by the phrases '*ad loquendum*' and '*ad praecipiendum*' – *to tell* and *to instruct* or *order*.¹⁷⁵ Hale is the one commanding while Mayne and German are the ones who obey. In the entry, *to tell* and *to order* are each paired with one of the instances of the vernacular phrase '*le brikeost*'.¹⁷⁶ Firstly, these pairings reinforce a particular construction of the manorial hierarchy: not only are Mayne and German subordinate to Hale and Harlakynden, but there are certain characteristics, skills and types of labour which this entry reserves to their superiors. It is Hale who speaks – he orders and tells – and, therefore, both elements of the vernacular phrase '*le brikeost*' are claimed for his command.¹⁷⁷

The repeated use of '*le*' and, importantly, its association with Hale also reinforce the construction of hierarchy and the character of Hale's labour. Richard Ingham argues that, in the manorial context, the French article *le* (and *lez* etc.) was associated with members of the 'professional milieu' of land management, with their voice, with the documents they made, and with the documents from which they received their instructions and training.¹⁷⁸ By the late fifteenth century, *le* was a scribal convention of such documents rather than a reflection of speech.¹⁷⁹ However, it seems reasonable to suggest that *le* continued to carry its association with higher status estate and land management into the documents of the fifteenth-century manor, thereby acting as an assertion of an officerial and managerial "voice".¹⁸⁰ In the manorial context, this combination of French with the vernacular may even have been a mode of documentary expression which marked estate managers as a distinct group, with a particular professional history, specialised skills, and a certain status in the manorial hierarchy. The appearance of '*le*' in this entry, therefore, claims the labour, skill and, arguably, the prestige of being an estate manager for Hale, the "speaker", in contrast to Mayne and German.

Secondly, this entry did not only create a favourable image of Hale, but of Harlakynden. First of all, Hale was acting as Harlakynden's agent in the management of Mote. This is why Hale's expenses and, importantly, his labour is detailed amongst the 'Expenses of the Accountant'. As the

¹⁷⁵ In this context, '*ad loquendum*' has the sense of *to tell* rather than *to speak* or *to confer*. Likewise, '*ad praecipiendum*' has the sense of *to command*, *order* or *instruct*. *DMLBS*, s.v., *loqui*, especially 1, 2, 3; *L&S*, s.v., *loquor*, 1b; *DMLBS*, s.v., *praecipere*, 2, 3.

¹⁷⁶ See note 173 for definition of '*le brikeost*'.

¹⁷⁷ As I have discussed earlier in this chapter, the vernacular – in this case specifically the Middle English in this phrase – has associations with speech. The use of '*brikeost*', therefore, reinforces the sense that these were spoken commands and enlivens Hale's voice. On the other hand, '*le*' sits more comfortably in the written world of this period. However, its grouping with *to tell* or *to order* and '*brikeost*' allow '*le*' and its connotations to be claimed for Hale. Both the spoken and the written expressions come under his command.

¹⁷⁸ Ingham, 'Language-Mixing', 105–106 at 106.

¹⁷⁹ Ingham, 'Mixing Languages', 91, 92–93; Ingham, 'Language-Mixing', 108.

¹⁸⁰ Ingham, 'Language-Mixing', 119.

accountant and Hale's master or superior, Harlakynnden was responsible for both. Therefore, this entry's favourable depiction of Hale's labour reflects well on Harlakynnden. It argues that Harlakynnden – who, as a receiver and steward, was not based at Mote – was providing an effective level of oversight and management at a distance. When Harlakynnden could not go to Mote himself he provided a very capable proxy at a very opportune time.

Hale could also be considered an extension of Harlakynnden in a more profound way. This understanding of the relationship between master and servant is implied by Sabapathy's discussion of lords' anxieties about their bailiffs or servants acting on their behalf, or even *as* them, because they imagined that they understood their lord's true, if unspoken, wishes.¹⁸¹ However, while an overzealous servant could be a liability, it was still desirable for an officer to identify strongly with his lord; this was both a mark and a cause of good service. Contemporary estate management literature frets that if a servant did not feel that he was an extension of his lord it would lead to loss as, according to the fifteenth-century *Tretyce off Housbandry*, 'it is often seyne þat all þe offecers bene off one asente to avayle þem selfe [of corn] and hurt þe lorde'.¹⁸² Its thirteenth-century model is more specific and even more helpful as it delineates the boundaries of such identification between master and servant, aiming for the most profit with the least risk to the lord: 'in making of profite they ought to thynke that the thing is theire owne but in making expence they should thynke it an other mans'.¹⁸³ This is 'faithful dealing' or 'loialtie'.¹⁸⁴

In the above entry John Hale appears as a good servant engaged in 'faithful dealing': he acts to prevent unnecessary expense and stave off 'hurt'.¹⁸⁵ The account's depiction of Hale – acting as a good servant to his master's master – in conjunction with its grouping of his labour within Harlakynnden's expenses, invite a favourable conflation of Hale and Harlakynnden. Hale acts for, and as, Harlakynnden. Recounting Hale's managerial skill, therefore, goes further than complimenting Hale and suggesting Harlakynnden's skill in choosing and directing his agents. It also directly reflects Hale's skills, and this specific labour, onto Harlakynnden. It perhaps even adds retrospective character to the entries preceding it which record Harlakynnden's, seemingly more straightforward, supervisory trips to Mote.

This entry, and its position within the account, thus argues that Hale and Harlakynnden were essential agents within the manorial hierarchy. Harlakynnden may even claim a greater share of that value, since Hale was under his direction. Without their direct management and intervention both on the ground and at a distance, Mote and the various projects underway on it would not run nearly so well. Hale and, by extension, Harlakynnden are cast as conscientious and active problem-solvers, set above Mayne and German. In their turn, Mayne and German are portrayed as mere helpers, doing Hale and Harlakynnden's bidding but not taking any initiative. This construction is particularly powerful in relation to German. Mayne was a rent-collector at Mote, but German was the bailiff –

¹⁸¹ Sabapathy, *Officers and Accountability*, 65–66.

¹⁸² 'Tretyce off Housbandry' in Lamond, *Walter of Henley*, 50.

¹⁸³ Walter of Henley's 'Husbandry', c. 111 in Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley*, 341.

¹⁸⁴ Walter of Henley's 'Husbandry', c. 109 in Oschinsky, 341.

¹⁸⁵ Walter of Henley's 'Husbandry', c. 109 in Oschinsky, 341; 'Tretyce off Housbandry' in Lamond, *Walter of Henley*, 50.

the most senior officer permanently based at Mote.¹⁸⁶ And yet, it is to Hale's interaction with him that the most forcefully instructive verb – *praecipere* – is applied.¹⁸⁷ This entry, therefore, insinuates the limitations of German's managerial capabilities. It hints that, without Hale's intervention, this problem with the building works could have gone on either unnoticed or unsolved for some time. This entry, therefore, constructs Mote's hierarchy to Hale and Harlakynnden's advantage and makes them indispensable to it. It argues for the value of their labour, even as it diminishes the skills of another.

As they selected, cut and summarised details from their source documents, records and evidences, officers and scribes had to consider what was essential to include, what the lord and his auditors expected to see, and what they themselves wanted the lord and his auditors to see. These compilatory practices gave them the opportunity to create narratives, build images, and place emphases. Even in moments where officers and scribes kept their entries short and sweet and where they unfurled them over several lines, they used the form and process of compilation to turn the reader's attention to the labour and skill of manorial officers and impress their value on to their lord. To explore this point further, I will now turn to a longer case study in which we can look more broadly at how a number of decisions made during different processes of compilation play out over a series of entries. I will be paying attention to where entries are placed in the account and how they are grouped, their phrasing, what information is included and how it is either combined or split between entries; I argue that, cumulatively, these decisions compile an image of one particular officer's labour and present it as valuable and meaningful.

John German the bailiff and the distraint of Thomas Oxebrigge

In the last section, I argued that the 1466–1467 entry focusing on John Hale's labour paints John German as initiative-less. However, turning to the account of 1464–1465 and a run of expenses which were German's responsibility provides the opportunity for a rather different picture of German to emerge. Once again, an image of an officer's labour and skill is constructed by the account, but here German appears within a particular sphere of action on the manor, distinct from that of William Harlakynnden. This case study is of particular interest because it shows German at work in the management of a dispute between Sir John and a tenant, Thomas Oxebrigge. The account presents German working actively and effectively for his lord in this dispute, particularly in building and enhancing a network and communal memory which supported Sir John's interests. While my reading of this series of entries focuses on the creation and maintenance of emotional and communal bonds, German appears as an orchestrator of such bonds, rather than a participant in them himself. The account, therefore, does not define German's relationship to Sir John by loyalty, faith, trust or emotion. Once again, the account defines the officer's relation to his lord by the labour and the skill that he exerts on his behalf. In Mote's accounts, the 'loialtie' which estate management

¹⁸⁶ Gardiner and Whittick, *Accounts and Records of Mote*, 229, 230.

¹⁸⁷ See page 77 and note 175.

literature looks for when choosing an officer was not a characteristic, but labour which the officer offered up and described in the context of an economic relation.¹⁸⁸

In the manorial account of 1464–1465, John German took responsibility for a substantial portion of the ‘Repairs of the Manor’, and his name is bracketed alongside it.¹⁸⁹ However, within this section is a run of three entries which have nothing to do with repairs or building works.¹⁹⁰ They record the purchase of foodstuffs: bread, barrels of beer, butter and herrings. The officer and scribe’s decision to include these entries among German’s expenses means that German retains personal responsibility for this expenditure.¹⁹¹ More importantly, he retains responsibility for its social, and potentially legal, intention and effect. This run of entries, therefore, shows off German’s labour and skill.

The first entry records the expenses of a meal shared by Sir John Scott and other gentlemen. The second records the expense of one ‘Barell’ de Beere’, and bread, bought for various men who had come from Rye when the distraint was taken on Thomas Oxebrigge.¹⁹² The third entry relates to the same meal: butter was bought for the same.¹⁹³ The distraint mentioned in the second entry is quite prominent in Mote’s account for that year, suggesting that it caused a great deal of activity at Mote and that this tenant was not a trifling man to deal with.¹⁹⁴ This entry, therefore, provides plenty of fodder for a depiction of German’s labour as meaningful and valuable. It reads:

¹⁸⁸ Walter of Henley’s ‘Husbandry’, c. 109 in Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley*, 341.

¹⁸⁹ Original: ‘Reparaciones Manerij’. NOR 15/103 (Account of Harlakynden, Receiver, 1464–1465), mm. 2r–3r at 2r.

¹⁹⁰ There is a fourth entry, later in the section, which also does not relate to repair or building work. This entry also relates to the distraint of Thomas Oxebrigge; it records the expense of the board of a man who had come to attend upon the distraint. NOR 15/103 (Account of Harlakynden, Receiver, 1464–1465), m. 3r.

¹⁹¹ The compiler chose not to separate this expenditure on foodstuffs into a more appropriate section of the account – perhaps by creating a section for household expenses, necessary expenses, or small expenses. Before Mote was taken back into direct management in 1471 and its household grew (Gardiner and Whittick, *Accounts and Records of Mote*, xii, xxxvii–xxxviii), payments for foodstuffs consumed at Mote appeared under headings such as: ‘Expenses of the household of the lord’ (‘*Expensae hospicii domini*’) (NOR 15/104 (Account of Harlakynden, Receiver, 1465–1466), m. 6r); ‘Expenses of the household of the lord and lady’ (‘*Expensae hospicii domini et Domine*’) (NOR 15/105 (Account of Harlakynden, Receiver, 1466–1467), m. 5r); ‘Expenses of the household of the lord with other payments’ (‘*Expensae hospicii domini cum aliis solutionibus*’) (NOR 15/105 (Account of Harlakynden, Receiver, 1466–1467), m. 3r); and ‘Expenses of the household’ (‘*Expensae hospicii*’) (NOR 15/106 (Account of Harlakynden, Receiver, 1467–1468), m. 5d). Expenses for small quantities of foodstuffs would also have fitted well under such headings as ‘Small [expenses]’ (‘*Minuta*’) (NOR 15/105 (Account of Harlakynden, Receiver, 1466–1467), m. 5d), and ‘Small expenses and hedges with others’ (‘*Expensae Minutae et clausurae cum aliis*’) (NOR 15/107 (Account of [blank], Receiver, 1470–1471), m. 5r).

¹⁹² NOR 15/103 (Account of Harlakynden, Receiver, 1464–1465), m. 2r.

¹⁹³ NOR 15/103 (Account of Harlakynden, Receiver, 1464–1465), m. 2r.

¹⁹⁴ Five entries in the account of 1464–1465 refer explicitly to the distraint of Thomas Oxebrigge. Three appear in the section for ‘Repairs of the Manor’ (‘*Reparaciones Manerij*’) which were the responsibility of John German. NOR 15/103 (Account of Harlakynden, Receiver, 1464–1465), m. 2r–3r at 2r. The final two appear in the section for ‘Expenses of the Accountant’ (‘*Expensae Computantis*’). NOR 15/103 (Account of Harlakynden, Receiver, 1464–1465), m. 4r. The accountant for this year was William Harlakynden. NOR 15/103 (Account of Harlakynden, Receiver, 1464–1465), m. 1r. The entries in the section recording the accountant’s expenses reveal that Harlakynden travelled about the area in order to discuss taking a distraint against Oxebrigge – and stopping him from removing hay from a certain piece of land called Holmede – with various people, including highly influential local men. NOR 15/103 (Account of Harlakynden, Receiver, 1464–1465), m. 4r; Gardiner and Whittick, *Accounts and Records of Mote*, 229. He also consulted with a lawyer – another influential local man –

And paid for one *Barell' de Beere* bought for diverse men of Rye for the time in which the distraint was taken on Thomas Oxebrigge in his lands called Holbrokes with 2d for bread bought for the same — 14d¹⁹⁵

German was doing something more than simply feeding hungry guests. Firstly, this entry contributes to the creation of a documentary record of this distraint.¹⁹⁶ The event itself also had a memorialising function. Distributing food was often a central feature of events that were commemorative or to be commemorated: funerals, guild-meals, obits and the anniversaries of deaths, the audits of municipal accounts, or the changeovers of civic officials, for instance.¹⁹⁷ By laying on a meal for the men who had come for the distraint, German was fostering the creation of a communal memory of this dispute, at a moment in which the lord and his officers could be seen taking decisive action.

Sharing a meal could also provide an opportunity to build and strengthen social relationships. Historians have frequently noted that sharing food and drink 'created community' and gave 'tangible expression to ... companionship'.¹⁹⁸ Tom Johnson discusses how feasting at the time of manor courts 'greased the wheels' of the proceedings, and C. M. Woolgar also notes that giving food and hospitality was often used to win favour and create co-operative and beneficial 'bonds'.¹⁹⁹ The account shows German generating an event which bolstered connections amongst a network of people who were acting in support of Mote's officers and lord. The strength of that network was then reflected back to those attendees and, potentially, demonstrated to a wider audience across the manor.

who had been employed by the previous lord of Mote, in order to enquire about evidences concerning another piece of land – Holebroke – involved in the dispute. NOR 15/103 (Account of Harlakynden, Receiver, 1464–1465), m. 4r; Gardiner and Whittick, *Accounts and Records of Mote*, 232. Harlakynden's search for evidences concerning Oxebrigge's holding of Holebroke and the move to stop him removing hay from Holmede suggests that the distraint was taken as part of a dispute between Oxebrigge and Scott. The dispute may have been over an unpaid rent, an unmet obligation, what Oxebrigge's rights were in his holding, or even whether he should have been farming some of that land at all. Britnell discusses how the Pastons used distraints and seizures of crops to force the payment of rents and dues. Their letters reveal them planning such campaigns. Richard Britnell, 'The Pastons and Their Norfolk', *Agric. Hist. Rev.* 36, no. 2 (1988): 132–144 (140–141). Paul Brand discusses the 'legal skills and legal knowledge' which undertaking 'forcible actions' – including distraints – required of officers. They needed to be able to defend the action and 'to know just how far to go'. Paul Brand, 'Stewards, Bailiffs and the Emerging Legal Profession in Later Thirteenth-Century England', in *Lordship and Learning: Studies in Memory of Trevor Aston*, ed. Ralph Evans (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2004), 139–153 (149–150 at 149).

¹⁹⁵ *Original*: 'Et solutio pro vna Barell' de Beere emptā pro diuersis hominibus de Rye tempore quo districtione capta fuit super Thomam Oxebrigge in terris suis vocatur Holbrokes cum ij d pro pane empto pro eisdem — xiiij d'. NOR 15/103 (Account of Harlakynden, Receiver, 1464–1465), m. 2r.

¹⁹⁶ Harvey argues that one of the reasons why manorial documents – including manorial accounts – were preserved was because they 'provided evidence of practice and precedent in the lord's relations with his own tenants, to be turned to for guidance if any query or dispute should arise'. The quotation is from Harvey, 'Estate Records', 108; also, see Harvey, *Cuxham*, 15.

¹⁹⁷ C. M. Woolgar, *The Culture of Food in England, 1200–1500* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 124, 230.

¹⁹⁸ The first quotation is from Woolgar, 124; the second quotation is from Gervase Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast: Commensality and Social Relations in Late Medieval England', *JBS* 33, no. 4 (1994): 430–446 (431).

¹⁹⁹ Johnson, *Law in Common*, 28; Woolgar, *Culture of Food*, 126, 230, 237–238.

The communal and connective aspect of this interpretation is elevated by this entry's relationship to the two either side of it. Read in this 'constellation' – to use Bahr's formulation – German's labour becomes not just effective but profound.²⁰⁰ The first entry, which records a meal enjoyed by Sir John and his guests, reads:

And paid for one *Barell' de Beere* bought for the consumption of the lord John Scott and of other Gentlemen being at *le Mote* in Lent namely the week closest before the Feast of Palm Sunday with 4d paid for bread and 7d paid for herrings bought — 23d²⁰¹

This entry begins as a mirror image to the entry recording the meal held at the distraint, both in content and phrasing – 'And paid for one *Barell' de Beere* bought for ...'.²⁰² Then the date and attendees of each are recorded, followed by the expenditure for bread. However, this first meal of Sir John's includes herrings alongside bread and beer; it is a classic Lenten meal.²⁰³

These two meals are not grouped chronologically but thematically; they parallel each other.²⁰⁴ The entries mirror each other's textual structure and the actions they record – the sharing of beer and bread, which were culturally and socially meaningful actions and foodstuffs.²⁰⁵ But it is the compiler's decision to separate the purchase of butter out into a separate entry – 'And paid for butter bought for the same — 1d' – which intensifies their connection in a particular and meaningful way.²⁰⁶ As would have been obvious to contemporaries, butter was not a Lenten food.²⁰⁷ Removing butter from the image of the meal shared at the distraint allows this meal to become a quasi-Lenten feast.

²⁰⁰ Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages*, 13–14.

²⁰¹ *Original*: 'Et solutio pro vna Barell' de Beere empta pro expensione domini Johannis Scott et aliorum Generosorum existencium apud le Mote in xl^a videlicet septimana proxima ante Festum dominice in Ramis Palmarum cum iiiiij d solutione pro pane et vij d solutione pro alleciis emptis — xxiiij d'. NOR 15/103 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1464–1465), m. 2r.

²⁰² *Original*: 'Et solutio pro vna Barell' de Beere empta pro ...'. NOR 15/103 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1464–1465), m. 2r.

²⁰³ Fish was a 'penitential food' (D. Serjeantson and C. M. Woolgar, 'Fish Consumption in Medieval England', in *Food in Medieval England: Diet and Nutrition*, ed. C. M. Woolgar, D. Serjeantson, and T. Waldron (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 102–130 (102)), and Sir John and his guests were enjoying a Lenten classic: herring, one of the period's most commonly consumed fish across the social spectrum. Serjeantson and Woolgar, 'Fish', 102, 107, 116–117, 122, 126, 129; C. C. Dyer, 'Seasonal Patterns in Food Consumption in the Later Middle Ages', in *Food in Medieval England: Diet and Nutrition*, ed. C. M. Woolgar, D. Serjeantson, and T. Waldron (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 201–214 (202); C. M. Woolgar, 'Group Diets in Late Medieval England', in *Food in Medieval England: Diet and Nutrition*, ed. C. M. Woolgar, D. Serjeantson, and T. Waldron (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 192–200 (192).

²⁰⁴ The meal shared at Thomas Oxebrigge's distraint did not take place during Lent. The account dates other events in the dispute with Thomas Oxebrigge to the summer hay harvest and to November. NOR 15/103 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1464–1465), m. 4r. For the summer date of the hay harvest, commonly June or July, see Dyer, 'Food Consumption', 211.

²⁰⁵ Woolgar, *Culture of Food*, 42, 61, 65, 144, 219.

²⁰⁶ *Original*: 'Et solutio pro butiro empto pro eisdem — j d'. NOR 15/103 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1464–1465), m. 2r.

²⁰⁷ Dyer, 'Food Consumption', 202; C. M. Woolgar, 'Meat and Dairy Products in Late Medieval England', in *Food in Medieval England: Diet and Nutrition*, ed. C. M. Woolgar, D. Serjeantson, and T. Waldron (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 88–101 (99, 100); Woolgar, 'Group Diets', 192.

Lent was a period of confession and, importantly, a time intended for reconciliation and community renewal.²⁰⁸ John Bossy argues that, for the laity in particular, the focus of confession was the role it played in the ‘regulation and resolution’ of disputes which would otherwise have proved disruptive and divisive in the community.²⁰⁹ Manuals for parish priests charge them to encourage their parishioners towards reconciliation and forgiveness during confession, and priests could also make practical efforts to assist their parishioners’ reconciliations.²¹⁰ The anger or resentment which penitents bore had to be disavowed before they could receive their own absolution or, indeed, take Easter Communion.²¹¹ As receiving communion was itself a sign of community membership, the Lenten period became a path to communal peace and consolidation.²¹²

The week before Palm Sunday – when Sir John’s meal took place – was an important period for confession and reconciliation as the unconfessed, and therefore unreconciled, could be forbidden from carrying a branch in the procession and so be seen, judged, and excluded.²¹³ At this time of year, feasts could also be moments when fractures in the community could be uncomfortably visible; the unconfessed and unreconciled marked out by their inability to join in with their neighbours’ enjoyment and the reiteration of their communal bonds.²¹⁴ However, the Lenten meal recorded in Mote’s accounts presents a very united picture. All the participants share the same food and Sir John is described as sitting down to a meal with people who are just like him, his fellows – ‘other Gentlemen’.²¹⁵ They are one body, reconciled in Lent and renewing their bonds through sharing a meal. This entry provides a symbolic template of social and communal repair and reaffirmation, and it makes a powerful and intriguing parallel to the entry below it, which records an event in the lifespan of an ongoing dispute.

This parallel draws out the community- and relationship-building aspect of the meal which John German laid on. The distrainted tenant is left out in the cold, cut off from this meal; in fact, those joined by the meal are bound together in opposing and thwarting him. He is made shameful and lonely by this parallel, the unrepentant and unreconciled member of the community. The strength of this image supports the position of the manorial administration and their lord. Their ability to build and utilise bonds like these in disputes conveys strength, but also legitimacy; they act in ways which build and protect community rather than damage it. While the entries which relate to Harlakynnden and this distraint focus on the legal elements of the dispute, this series of entries

²⁰⁸ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400–1580* (London: Yale University Press, 1992), 60.

²⁰⁹ John Bossy, ‘The Social History of Confession in the Age of the Reformation’, *TRHS* 25 (1975): 21–38 (21).

²¹⁰ Mirk, *Mirk’s Instructions*, 144; Edward H. Weatherly, ed., *Speculum Sacerdotale: Edited from British Museum MS. Additional 36791*, Early English Text Society 200 (Oxford: Early English Text Society, 1971), 71.

²¹¹ Johnson, ‘Preconstruction of Testimony’, 130; Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400–1580*, 94.

²¹² Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400–1580*, 94.

²¹³ Weatherly, *Speculum Sacerdotale*, 98. Lenten ceremonies were popular with the laity and ‘charged with intense religious emotion’. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400–1580*, 27.

²¹⁴ Mary C. Mansfield, *The Humiliation of Sinners: Public Penance in Thirteenth-Century France* (London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 70–71.

²¹⁵ Original: ‘aliorum Generosorum’. NOR 15/103 (Account of Harlakynnden, Receiver, 1464–1465), m. 2r.

provides German with his own sphere of action and influence in disputes; he is bringing social pressure to bear on this tenant, conjuring up the spectre of ostracisation.²¹⁶

This series of entries builds an image of John German's labour and, crucially, argues that it is valuable. German is constructed as someone who not only extends Mote's hospitality well, but acts strategically for the benefit of his lord and understands how to conduct the social and communal sides of legal disputes. German facilitates the commemoration of the distraint as legitimate both textually and through communal memory. The festive spirit of the meal promotes the authority of Mote's lord; it proclaims his and his officers' success and vigour in pursuing his interests, perhaps even to those who do not attend. The entry's parallel with Sir John and his fellows' Lenten meal enriches and deepens the sense of what German is doing and what he is creating and, furthermore, how powerful that can be. John German knew how to do business. His labour was more valuable than simply the 15d spent on bread, beer and butter. What might his lord owe him in return?

Conclusion

In this chapter I have set out to explore the relation between lord and officer, as it is expressed in the manorial account. My approach to analysing Mote's manorial accounts has drawn on Bahr's proposal that compilation can also be a 'mode of perceiving' which can 'disclose an interpretably meaningful arrangement'.²¹⁷ I have found that Mote's manorial accounts compile an image of its officers' labour and skill. As the manorial account is based upon the principle of determining what was owed between the lord and the officer, this compilation of the officer's labour and skill becomes an argument for his value and for his reward: as we have seen, references demonstrate the documentary labour and skill of the manorial officer, both year-round and during the compilation of the annual account. Officers were continually creating, commissioning, collecting, managing, abiding by, responding to, and processing documents. They drew connections between manorial documents in order to create and preserve knowledge about the manor, its lands and its tenants. Through careful selection, they created coherence out of quantities of information, and foregrounded the manorial officers' labour, assigning them differing labour, skills, and spheres of action or responsibility. The account not only presents an image of substantial documentary labour, but of officers exerting control through documents and having control *of* documents. Trustworthiness and truth did not rest on a demonstration of the officer's character, but on his labour. Documentary labour, therefore, seems to have been a valuable and central part of the work and role of these manorial officers. It may have been part of a professional identity.

Mote's manorial accounts, therefore, express the labour of the manorial officer, compiling an image of various facets of his labour. I have only discussed a few elements here, but they cover documentary work, the skill of managing the social and communal sides of disputes (while another

²¹⁶ For a brief explanation of the entries relating to William Harlakynden and Thomas Oxebrigge's distraint, see note 194.

²¹⁷ Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages*, 3.

officer managed the legal dimension), and the labour of managing, problem-solving and overseeing. The drama of the entry about seeking and getting sieves suggests that simply an officer *labouring* was part of what the account presented to the lord. Furthermore, the way in which narratives and arguments about the manorial officer emerge from the manorial account suggests that manorial documents were a medium in which officers expressed a professional identity. I will develop these ideas in the following chapters, where I will explore how survey-type documents and Skayman's remembrance book bring other elements of officers' work to the fore. Survey-type documents engage with the complexities of the officers' role in formulating manorial knowledge, while Skayman's remembrance book depicts him hard at work making and maintaining agreement across the Townshend estate.

The account's focus on the relation between officer and lord is, however, particularly distinctive. This relation – and its expression through the compilation of the manorial account – is emphasised by a final, and evocative, example. The few moments when Mote's accounts switch from the impersonal third person and the self-effacingly authoritative voice of the compiler, to the first person emphasise the claims for value and recognition that the account makes on the officer's behalf.²¹⁸ The only times that the account switches to the first person are in moments when a relation is described; once that is 'my wife', but otherwise these moments relate to 'my Lord' or 'my lady'.²¹⁹ For instance, the account of 1464–1465 records Harlakynden going to Rye 'to speak with Thomas Watell on diverse business of my Master'.²²⁰ This slip into the first person has powerful potential. It reiterates the centrality of the relationship between Sir John and Harlakynden to the very purpose and act of compiling the accounts, and to the labour which Harlakynden has undertaken; this is what he owes to his lord. The *my* which appears in Mote's accounts is not combative, but reiterative and reinforcing; it claims the relationship between officer and lord or lady. In one of the entries which I refer to at the beginning of this chapter – John Marener's successful claim for his stipend in the account which he returned as rent-collector in 1476–1467 – is the phrase: 'in accordance with an agreement made with my lord'.²²¹ Through the account the officer provided a record of his labour, and its explicit and implicit value – he was valuable. And it asked his lord to fulfil his side of the relationship and bestow proper reward.

In the Introduction I drew attention to economic and social historians' critiques of manorial accounts from the later fifteenth-century: compared to the proper manorial accounts of the thirteenth century they are often uninformative, distorted, fossilised, vestigial.²²² However, my analysis in this chapter has demonstrated the creativity and vitality of Mote's late fifteenth century

²¹⁸ Hanna, '*Compilatio*', 5–6.

²¹⁹ Original: '*vxoris mee*'. NOR 15/105 (Account of Harlakynden, Receiver, 1466–1467), m. 4r. Original: '*Magistri mei*'. NOR 15/103 (Account of Harlakynden, Receiver, 1464–1465), m. 4r. Original: '*domina mea*'. NOR 15/105 (Account of Harlakynden, Receiver, 1466–1467), m. 5d. Harvey notes this in other accounts. He suggests that this was often simply the result of the scribe directly quoting or copying the words of the officer. Harvey, *Cuxham*, 41–42. I do not think that this explanation removes the meaningful potential of this switch; interestingly, it seems to have been a widely tolerated "slip", or even convention of the account.

²²⁰ Original: '*ad loquendum cum Thoma Watell super diuersa negocia Magistri mei*'. NOR 15/103 (Account of Harlakynden, Receiver, 1464–1465), m. 4r.

²²¹ Original: '*ex convencione domino mee facto*'. NOR 15/113 (Account of Marener, Rent-collector, 1476–1477), m. 2r.

²²² See pages 38–39.

manorial accounts, which have their own idiosyncracies and cover periods when the manor was leased and when it was directly managed. These accounts are indicative of manorial officers' participation in a rural writing culture. The contents of the accounts demonstrate that manorial officers worked intensively with writing and documents, while the form and conventions of the account showed off their documentary labour and skill to an audience. Moreover, the accounts are creative and argumentative productions; their conventions and form, along with the processes and signs of compilation, provided officers and scribes with a structure and language with which they could do a great deal as they wrote the officer's side of negotiations and relations into the account.

CHAPTER TWO

Surveys, Rentals and Terriers of the Manors of West Wickham, Baston, Keston and Southcourt

Introduction

The officers who managed and oversaw the manors of West Wickham, Baston, Keston and Southcourt in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries produced many survey-type documents – such as surveys, rentals, terriers, and firmals – fourteen of which survive. In this chapter I will explore how these documents communicate officers' labour and position them as essential agents in the formulation of legitimate "manorial" knowledge. By this I mean knowledge or information which was bounded by the geography and the jurisdiction of the manor. It was co-produced by tenants and the seigneurial administration, particularly officers, although the seigneurial administration and its documents supplied many of its categories and questions. The seigneurial administration also aimed to record and preserve it in its documents. Manorial knowledge was to be made, used and relied on by tenants and officers; it was meant to provide a mutual framework for relations, action and understanding. Survey-type documents, therefore, attempt to communicate that the knowledge and information which they contain is legitimate. As I will explore in this chapter, two significant means by which these documents can communicate that legitimacy is through written expression and visual cues.

The processes of making these documents brought officers and tenants together, negotiating and producing knowledge. A draft rental of 1428/9 from West Wickham shows officers in negotiations with tenants: the total rents owed by each tenant are written in, amended, and sometimes amended again, the numbers stacking up in the margin.¹ Some rents are raised, while others decrease, with no sign that the holdings themselves have changed.² What knowledge did the officer and each tenant now share that allowed these rents to be renegotiated in different directions? In one negotiation, however, it seems to have been impossible for the tenant and officer to have come to a shared understanding. Each margin in the document harbours a stubbornly held position: the right-hand margin stolidly declares William Mountford of Baston's rent to be 4s, with no alterations; the left-hand margin counters, '*confessus . ij s*'.³ The choice of the word '*confessus*'

¹ Maidstone, KA, U312/M22/5 (Rental of West Wickham, 1428/1429) (hereafter, U312/M22/5 (Rental, 1428/1429)).

² For instance, Robert Lygh now owed 15s 7d rather than 18s 8d for *Ffraunceys* ('*pro ffraunceys*') (U312/M22/5 (Rental, 1428/1429), m. 1v), while the wife of William Walbroun had to pay an additional 2s for the *Walbron*' lands ('*pro terris Walbron*') (U312/M22/5 (Rental, 1428/1429), m. 1r).

³ Presumably, '*confessus*' was written in the left-hand margin as each tenant agreed their rent. U312/M22/5 (Rental, 1428/1429), m. 1r. *Confiteri* (from which *confessus* comes) can be translated as *to admit* or *to*

encourages us to see this document as active in a process of transformation. To *confess* suggests the exposure of some solid and pre-existing truth, and yet we have seen the alteration and calculation of the rents; ‘*confessus*’, then, arrests that malleability and declares the existence of a truth which was manifest to the officer, tenant and the manor.⁴ ‘*Confessus*’ also emphasises the importance of both the officer and the tenant to this process, and casts them in interdependent roles: the officer is the director, the prober, and the orchestrator, while the tenant is tasked with admitting, and therefore defining, what both should regard as true. While the tenants’ position has ambiguous benefits, William Mountford was able to use it to his advantage.⁵ In the final version of the document the rent for his lands is given as 2s; there is even the remnants of an expunction before the first minim of the ‘ij’, suggesting that it may originally have read ‘iiij’.⁶ The officer and their documents had had to accept what William knew.

The more detailed rentals of these manors seem to be drawn to capturing localised and individualised pieces of knowledge. The rental of 1484 describes the location of many pieces of land, including two which lay at *lez Barcell*’ or *lez Barcelles*, and another two which are described as lying at *lez Buttes*.⁷ These pieces of land lay close together, while both names – *lez Barcelles* and *lez Buttes* – suggest that this area was associated with archery practice.⁸ One of these pieces of land was bordered on its eastern side by *Bowlandes*, held by the lord, which further suggests an area associated with archery practice.⁹ While the names *lez Barcelles* and *lez Buttes* may refer to two distinct areas, I think it is very possible that, given what I can tell of their proximity, they were the

acknowledge, but it has strong undertones of *to confess*, both legally and sacramentally. *DMLBS*, s.v., *confiteri*, 1, 2.

⁴ Isobel Staton, ‘Secrecy: Complicating the Experience of Confession in Fifteenth-Century England’ (MA diss., University of York, 2018), 24–25, 27–28. For the importance of manifest-ness in relation to knowledge and truth, see Johnson, *Law in Common*, 185–187, 192–198.

⁵ Working on the context of the late-medieval German peasantry, Gadi Algazi discusses how the ‘consequences’ of remembering and speaking law and tradition were ‘deeply ambiguous’ for the peasantry as ‘they were taking part in the legitimization of their own subjection by publicly recognising their manifold obligations’. Gadi Algazi, ‘Lords Ask, Peasants Answer: Making Traditions in Late-Medieval Village Assemblies’, in *Between History and Histories: The Making of Silences and Commemorations*, ed. Gerald Sider and Gavin Smith (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 199–229 (202–203 at 202).

⁶ Maidstone, KA, U312/M22/1 (Rental of West Wickham, 1428/1429), m. 1r (hereafter, U312/M22/1 (Rental, 1428/1429)).

⁷ Maidstone, KA, U312/M29 (Rental of West Wickham, Baston, Keston and Southcourt, 1484), ff. 19r, 19v, 20r (hereafter, U312/M29 (Rental, 1484)).

⁸ U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), f. 20r. Both *but* and *bersel* can refer to a butt or target used for archery practice. *MED*, s.v., *but* n.1, 2a; *MED*, s.v., *bersel* n., 1.

⁹ U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), ff. 19v, 20r. In the 1485 terrier, the land of the lord is called *Bolandes* and is recorded as being thirty two acres. U312/M30 (Terrier, 1485), f. 13r. Andrew Halpin’s work on Waterford’s medieval archery butts offers a sense of the scale of archery practice areas. Waterford had both the ‘Shortcourse’ and the ‘Longcourse’. Andrew Halpin, ‘The Long and the Short of It: The Untold Story of Waterford’s Medieval Archery Butts’, *Archaeology Ireland* 35, no. 2 (2021): 30–35. At thirty two acres, *Bowlandes* would certainly have been much too large to have entirely been given over to archery, but a small area of it may have been, or its name may simply be a further indication that archery was being practised in this area. However, it may be significant that the area(s) called *lez Barcelles* or *lez Buttes* all lay to the west of *Bowlandes*, perhaps suggesting the direction in which shooting would have been done. For useful insights into late medieval archery, particularly civilian practice, see Richard Wadge, ‘Medieval Arrowheads from Oxfordshire’, *Oxoniensia* 73 (2008): 1–16; John B. Friedman, ‘Robin Hood and the Social Context of Late Medieval Archery’, in *Robin Hood in Greenwood Stood: Alterity and Context in the English Outlaw Tradition*, ed. Stephen Knight, *Medieval Identities: Socio-Cultural Spaces* 1 (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2012), 67–85.

same area known by different names, which was not uncommon.¹⁰ This variety in naming and, indeed, the partial nature of this document's locative descriptions suggests that officers were drawn to capture and create localised and individualised pieces of knowledge, parcelled up like the lands they described and focused on the close and immediately pressing relationships between lands and neighbours.¹¹ This begins to suggest how tenants' and/or officers' knowledge of the landscape and its names interacted with the form, conventions and demands of these document-types to create knowledge with a particular character which was recognisable to the manor's inhabitants and responded to their variances.

However, the manner in which officers and scribes wrote these documents can further inflect and shape the knowledge they contain, emphasising the importance of the officer's influence and labour. For instance, in the same 1484 rental, it is recorded that William Momford holds one piece of land 'called *Crofta* of the said Messuage [Groves]' which is 'also called Webland'.¹² *Webland* is underlined, and written in larger and thicker letters and in a showier script than '*Crofta* of the said Messuage'.¹³ Through this visual finding or indexing technique, the officer and scribe who made this document weights certain knowledge, privileging the name *Webland* and, perhaps, subordinating the connection between this land and Momford's messuage.¹⁴ The manner in which officers and scribes composed these documents, therefore, contributes to the character and meaning of the knowledge they record; both tenants and officers are implicated in the formulation of manorial knowledge.

¹⁰ Three of the pieces of land (two described as lying at *lez Barcelles*, one as lying at *lez Buttes*) lay to the west of the common road between Hayes and Keston, while the fourth (described as lying at *lez Buttes* and next to *Bowlandes*) lay to the east of the road. Three of the pieces of land (two on one side of the road and the third on the other) all abutted the heath of Baston to the south. The fourth piece seems to have sat a little further to the north, although it isn't stated what bordered it to the south. U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), ff. 19r, 19v, 20r. Tom Johnson discusses the naming of land and landscape features, noting that '[even] people who lived in the same locale might know the same features by different names'. Johnson, *Law in Common*, 161–162 at 161.

¹¹ It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to create a large-scale patchwork of these manors using the locative information in these documents; rather than reconstructing the manor on a large scale, the manner of their descriptions is focused on smaller and more immediate constellations of lands and tenants.

¹² Original: 'vocatur Crofta dicti Mesuagij [Groves]'. Original: 'eciam vocatur . Webland'. U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), f. 5r.

¹³ Original: 'Crofta dicti Mesuagij'. U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), f. 5r.

¹⁴ Both Susan Kilby and Johnson explore the way that land and place names could be a 'signal of proprietary interests and obligations' or work to argue that a person or a family had long been connected to a place. The quotation is from Johnson, *Law in Common*, 162; also see Susan Kilby, *Peasant Perspectives on the Medieval Landscape: A Study of Three Communities*, Studies in Regional and Local History 17 (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2020), 114. A similar visual finding or indexing technique is used for the names of other pieces of land or properties both in this same entry and, intermittently, on other pages throughout the 1484 rental. U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), ff. 4v, 5r, 6r, 7r, 7v. At times, the name of the tenant given at the start of the entry is written with a little more flair and slightly larger than the following text; this can be seen nicely on U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), ff. 21v–22v. Throughout the 1484 rental, the writer constructs the capital 'E' of 'Et' – which is used at the start of each new clause within larger entries – in a way which stands out from the rest of text. This *E* is much larger than the surrounding text and it is made with three long curving strokes – almost like a capital *O* which has been bisected vertically. This is another useful visual finding technique, as this letterform – and its scale – makes it much easier to navigate within larger entries and identify the individual lands and properties which make up larger tenants' holdings. U312/M29 (Rental, 1484). Some of the early pages of the terrier of 1485 also draw attention to landnames within the text, again through underlining, writing at a larger scale, and using a more gothic script. U312/M30 (Terrier, 1485), ff. 2r–v, 4v.

These instances elucidate the argument I will make in this chapter. I will explore how survey-type documents from these four Kentish manors communicate manorial officers' knowledge-labour. These documents position the officer as an essential agent in the negotiation and formulation of manorial knowledge. They work to convey the character and mode of the officer's labour in ways which convey the legitimacy of the knowledge they contain, both to tenants and to lords and officers. However, the broad audience which these documents anticipate means that interpretations of their intimations and depictions of officers' knowledge-labour proliferate and, crucially, become more complicated. For instance, one mode of communicating the character and quality of the officer's work can argue for the legitimacy of the knowledge which these documents hold and then, from another angle, undercut it. Not only does knowledge labour seem to have been a vital and valuable element of officers' work, but officers and scribes seem to have been alive to the ambiguities, limitations, and potential power of communicating it.

In the next section, I will first discuss how survey-type documents were co-produced by officers and tenants, both of whom – along with lords and the wider seigneurial administration – had a continuing interest in these documents. I will then discuss the historiography of officers' and tenants' roles in the production of these documents and the knowledge they contain; finally I introduce the manors of West Wickham, Baston, Keston and Southcourt, along with their surviving survey-type documents. The main analysis of the chapter then takes up two focal points: first, a prominent visual feature of these documents – gaps – and second, a formulaic phrase – *per estimacionem*. Gaps have rich interpretive potential. They can communicate the failure of officers, of the processes of knowledge-production and document-creation, and even of seigneurial power. However, the ambiguity of gaps, the scope of their interpreters and, indeed, officers' interventions, mean that gaps can also act as spurs to further work, speak of officers' diligence and, crucially, communicate the legitimacy of the knowledge which these documents *did* contain. Scribes and officers carefully placed the formula *per estimacionem* in these documents, appending it to particular parcels of knowledge. This phrase communicates an image of the officer at work, presiding over the formulation of manorial knowledge. However, although *per estimacionem* engages with conceptions of legitimate knowledge which would have been accepted and recognised by the tenantry, its focus on the role of the officer fundamentally limits its use as a marker of legitimacy. Tellingly, officers were aware of this vulnerability.

Making survey-type documents

The processes by which the documents which comprise the survey genre – rentals, terriers, extents, firmals (documents which record what leaseholders hold at farm and for how much), custumals and surveys proper – were produced are likely to have varied subtly or substantially across document-type; indeed, they also varied across time and manor.¹⁵ However, historians have

¹⁵ For instance, Birrell discusses some of the variety in the processes by which custumals were composed. Birrell, 'Custumals Reconsidered', 10–13; Jean Birrell, 'Rereading Manorial Custumals: Lords, Tenants and

widely recognised that the participation of the tenantry, as well as manorial and estate officials, was essential to the production of these documents. Senior officers, such as stewards, usually oversaw the creation of manorial surveys, extents and customals.¹⁶ They depended on the information provided by existing documents, their own and other officers' investigations and knowledge of the manor's lands and customs, and the knowledge of local tenants.¹⁷ Tenants usually participated in this process as a jury, or as some other select group. The fifteenth-century *Tretyce off Housbandry* advises 'let *your* landis be extendide by wyse men sworne', while the mid-fourteenth-century surveys of three of Merton College's Surrey manors declare that they depend on the 'oath of worthy men'.¹⁸ The testimony of sworn jurors could also be augmented with the knowledge of 'others of the manor', while individual tenants, or groups of particular types of tenant, might be consulted.¹⁹ Simply updating these documents through annotation would have required officers to draw on these same sources and networks, and engage in the work of producing manorial knowledge, albeit potentially in a more piecemeal fashion. Lordship and the manorial and estate administration structured the process of composition, and gave it voice, but the tenantry played an essential role in the production of these documents.²⁰

As these documents were created, both officers and tenants would have held in mind that they would both be an important audience for these texts. As we can see from the layers of annotations in the documents of these four Kentish manors, officers returned to these texts. Mote's manorial accounts similarly assert that officers regularly referred to their rentals, both old and new.²¹ Officers could also draw on survey-type documents to support their work in the manor court.²² However, these survey-type documents were also an important source for the tenantry; they could be put to use to support individual interests, in village governance, or in interactions with

Custom on Three Staffordshire Estates (1297–1341)', *Staffordshire Studies* 19 (2008): 1–14 (especially 2, 3, 4–5, 7, 8, 10, 13).

¹⁶ The creation of rentals and terriers could follow similar processes. Ralph Evans, 'Whose Was the Manorial Court?', in *Lordship and Learning: Studies in Memory of Trevor Aston*, ed. Ralph Evans (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2004), 155–168 (165).

¹⁷ Bailey, *The Manor*, 34; Kilby, *Peasant Perspectives*, 34–38; Evans, 'Manorial Court', 165–166; Harvey, 'Reeve', 128; Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 15; Harvey, *Cuxham*, 74–75, 76; Birrell, 'Customals Reconsidered', 9–13.

¹⁸ 'Tretyce off Housbandry' in Lamond, *Walter of Henley*, 43; Evans, 'Manorial Court', 165 quoting Oxford, Merton College, MCR 4783 (Surveys of Thorncroft, Malden, Farleigh, June 1357) (translation by Evans).

¹⁹ Birrell, 'Customals Reconsidered', 10–11 quoting Stafford, Staffordshire Record Office, D (W) 1734/J/2268 (Extents of manors of Bishop of Chester, 1297–1298), f. 25v (translation by Birrell), 12.

²⁰ For instance, Mark Bailey discusses how the form and contents of these documents were closely linked to the requirements of the seigneurial administration. Bailey, *The Manor*, 21–25, 41. In regards to other ways in which officers could structure the process, Birrell discusses how officers likely asked jurors to respond to specific questions or may have asked tenants to 'confirm' or comment on a 'pre-prepared' or draft version of the document. Birrell, 'Customals Reconsidered', 11–13 at 12. Marjorie Chibnall, née Morgan, discusses how the questions which officers asked may have shaped the contents of the customals of the Abbey of Bec; she notes that the framing or repetition of questions had the potential to produce an 'illusory similarity' between manors or fail to capture certain services. Marjorie Chibnall (née Morgan), *The English Lands of the Abbey of Bec*, Oxford Historical Series (1946; repr., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 82, 90.

²¹ As I have discussed in Chapter One, Mote's accounts made numerous references to the manor's rentals. See pages 65–66, 68–69, and note 134 in Chapter One.

²² Johnson, *Law in Common*, 162; Beckerman, 'Procedural Innovation and Institutional Change in Medieval English Manorial Courts', 224.

the seigneurial administration.²³ Indeed, manorial administrations could require tenants to refer to these documents, particularly in court.²⁴ Tenants may have had access to their own versions of these documents, likely either as drafts or copies.²⁵ They could also ask that the documents kept by the manorial or estate administration be consulted.²⁶ When John Aleyn came to the manor court of West Wickham in order to try and identify the locations of certain parcels of land – although he now held them he did not know where they lay – he presumably hoped that access to the manor’s documents would help him in his search for them.²⁷ Tenants and peasants could also forcefully demand that the manorial or estate archive be opened to them and the documents which they regarded as legitimate be displayed.²⁸ Tom Johnson examines a complaint which the tenants of the

²³ Steven Justice argues convincingly that the villagers of Thaxted in Essex made a copy of their lord’s custumal at some time before 1381. They kept this copy – withholding it from their lord’s officers – even after they had destroyed the original in the rising. Justice argues that the peasants saw ‘that they could use [this document] in conducting their lives and work, and perhaps in evading the lord’s demands’: ‘local communities adapted the lords’ documentation to their own local needs’. Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, 190–191 at 190, at 191.

²⁴ Ada Elizabeth Levett notes that, from the early fourteenth century, the Abbey of St Albans not only commanded its tenants to appear at the halimote with their ‘copy’ of the court roll to prove their holding, but could order them to ‘produce the Custumal’. The halimote court could also make use of the court rolls or Custumals held by the Abbey, and may also have commanded tenants to consult documents held by the Abbey. Ada Elizabeth Levett, *Studies in Manorial History*, ed. H. M. Cam, M. Coate, and L. S. Sutherland (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1938), 139, 149–150. For a concise discussion of the development of the practice of holding ‘by copy’, see Bailey, *The Manor*, 36.

²⁵ Levett suggests that tenants may have kept draft versions of the St Albans custumal, such as the rolls produced by the jury. Levett notes that these could have provided a ‘common series of *copies* in the technical sense’ which would have fulfilled the requirement that tenants ‘produce the Custumal’ at the halimote (see note 24 above). Levett, *Manorial History*, 139. See note 23 above, where I discuss Justice’s argument that the fourteenth-century villagers of Thaxted in Essex held a copy of their lord’s custumal. Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, 190–191. Returning to Reynes’ commonplace book, his list of the fields of the manor of the Acle (Louis, *Commonplace Book of Reynes*, 165–166 (#25)), written as though in preparation for making an extent (Louis, 382), and his list of tenancies and rents (Louis, 258–260 (#80), 461) suggest that the form of survey-type documents need not have been mysterious to the tenantry of Acle. Reynes’ commonplace book did, after all, have a communal outlook and Reynes, employed by both his lord and his fellow villagers (Louis, 29–30, 31, 33), may have been a point of access to manorial documents in some capacity.

²⁶ Levett also discusses how tenants could make use of documents held by the Abbey of St Albans; they seem to have been able to request that the ‘rolls kept in the great stables at St. Albans may be searched on their behalf’ and they could also ‘[a]ppeal’ to the Abbey’s custumals. Levett, *Manorial History*, 150. Historians have suggested that tenants would have had some familiarity with – and therefore access to – the forms of survey-type documents. For instance, when Justice discusses the literacy of fourteenth-century peasants he references the ability of even the ‘minimally literate’ to pick out their names and holdings in manorial documents, including extents. Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, 34.

²⁷ This event probably took place in 1434. The entry from the manor court roll describing this event was copied on to a separate slip which is now sewn to the relevant folio in the 1484 rental. The slip is more dishevelled than the rental and seems to be older. This suggests that the slip may originally have been attached to an earlier rental or survey, perhaps the one to which John Aleyn had turned and which was now being consulted during the compilation of this new document. The heavy creasing of the slip is also why it is difficult to date this event. Slip sewn to U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), f. 7v.

²⁸ Rosamund Faith describes how, during the rising of 1381, peasants and townspeople urged the abbot of St Albans to bring out a richly decorated ‘charter of liberties’ produced by King Offa. Rosamund Faith, ‘The “Great Rumour” of 1377 and Peasant Ideology’, in *The English Rising of 1381*, ed. R. H. Hilton and T. H. Aston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 43–73 (64). Her influential article, ‘The “Great Rumour”’, explores the events of 1377, when numerous peasant communities procured exemplifications of Domesday, believing that these documents would provide evidence of their freedom – perhaps by recording their rents and services, or the status of their holdings and their history. Faith uncovers what these events might suggest about peasant society, political culture and attitudes towards Domesday. However, her work may also be

manor of Withyham, Sussex, made to the manor court in 1435.²⁹ The tenants wanted to see 'the ancient rental' as – in their view – the new rental was intolerably deficient as it had overlooked various holdings and rents.³⁰ The new, lacking, rental left the tenants unprotected.³¹

Similarly, historians have noted that a well-stocked manorial or estate archive did not simply disadvantage the tenantry; they could also use documents such as customals to limit or direct the actions of their lords.³² The production and use of these survey-type documents did not straightforwardly benefit the seigneurial administration to the detriment of the tenantry or vice versa. Instead, the relations between these documents and their audiences were complex and fluctuating; these documents could bolster the extraction of rents and services, protect tenants, function as useful tools in peasants' 'self-rule', be contested or demanded, while their lack could confound everyone.³³ Both officers and tenants were essential to the creation of these documents, and their contents were of vital concern to both parties. Furthermore, the legitimacy of their contents was both clearly contestable and valuably decisive; it was important that it could be demonstrated and sustained.

While survey-type documents have provided material for much manorial research, they have been little studied in their own right, particularly in contrast to the court roll or the account.³⁴

revealing of how peasants used and related to some of the survey-type documents – albeit less charismatic than Domesday – held on their own manors. Faith, "'Great Rumour'", especially 44–45, 48, 51–52, 58–60.

²⁹ Johnson, *Law in Common*, 206–207.

³⁰ Johnson, *Law in Common*, 207 quoting Cambridge, King's College, WIT/17 (Court rolls of Withyham), m. 3r (translation by Johnson).

³¹ Johnson, 207.

³² Dyer notes that lords' detailed and plentiful records could ensure that tenants never escaped their burdensome services and obligations. Dyer, 'Suffolk Farmer', 7. On the other hand, he also recognises that surveys and customals could offer tenants some certainty – which they desired – by fixing their obligations and providing them with protection from rises and arbitrary demands. Christopher Dyer, 'Attitudes Towards Serfdom in England, 1200–1350', in *Serfdom and Slavery: Studies in Legal Bondage*, ed. M. L. Bush (1996; repr., London: Routledge, 2013), 277–295 (284–285). Jean Birrell's work on customals reveals the ways tenants could actively participate in – or prompt – the creation of these documents. She argues that tenants saw the value that these documents could have as they 'provided some safeguards for customary tenants, while at the same time enshrining certain specific protections' (Birrell, 'Customals Reconsidered', 33). Birrell, 'Rereading Customals', especially 7, 11, 13–14; Birrell, 'Customals Reconsidered', especially 33–37 Spike Gibbs draws on Birrell's argument that tenants could use customals to 'constrain' their lords, using it to illuminate both customals and the activities of manorial juries. Gibbs, 'Attitudes to Office-Holding', 166–167 at 166.

³³ The quotation is from Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, 189. For illustrations of the above points, see Larson, *Conflict and Compromise*, 103; McIntosh, *Autonomy and Community*, 37–40; Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, 189–191; Matthew Tompkins, 'Individualism, Community, and Lordship: The Peasant Demesne Lessees of Great Horwood, 1320–1610', in *Survival and Discord in Medieval Society: Essays in Honour of Christopher Dyer*, ed. R. Goddard, J. Langdon, and M. Müller, vol. 4, *The Medieval Countryside* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2010), 161–177 (171–172).

³⁴ For examples of manorial research which have made particular use of the material provided by survey-type documents, see Frederic Seebohm, *The English Village Community*, fourth edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), 55–81 and 82–104 which also draws on the Domesday Survey; Chibnall (née Morgan), *Abbey of Bec*, 74–118; Edward Miller, *The Abbey and Bishopric of Ely: The Social History of an Ecclesiastical Estate from the Tenth Century to the Early Fourteenth Century*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, Second Series 1 (1951; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), especially 113–153 in his discussion of the peasantry; Andrew Jones, 'Harvest Customs and Labourers' Perquisites in Southern England, 1150–1350: The Hay Harvest', *Agric. Hist. Rev.* 25, no. 2 (1977): 98–107; Harold S. A. Fox, 'Exploitation of the

Nonetheless, some consideration has been given to the role of the officer and of the tenantry in the production of survey-type documents. Administrative and economic studies, in particular, have often modelled the production of these survey-type documents as an extractive process, designating the tenantry as the place where knowledge resided and the officer as a conduit for that knowledge. While social and cultural studies have significantly enriched our understanding of the tenantry's role in this process, the same attention has not yet been afforded to officers.

Economic and administrative historians' analyses of the survey genre's development have emphasised that these documents came into being, took shape and operated according to the purposes, requirements and interests of the manorial or estate administration.³⁵ Their central purpose was to support the seigneurial administration's effective extraction of the manor's economic resources. Eleanor Searle sees the increasingly detailed and specific customs of the thirteenth century as reflective of a 'new contractuality and a new spirit of efficiency' in estate management.³⁶ Bailey argues that the surveys of the late twelfth century allowed the 'tighter and more sophisticated management of seigneurial estates', while the documents of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries assisted a generation of officers who managed 'their rent rolls and tenants

Landless by Lords and Tenants in Early Medieval England', in *Medieval Society and the Manor Court*, ed. Zvi Razi and Richard M. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 518–568; N. E. Stacy, 'The State of the Demesne Manors of Glastonbury Abbey in the Twelfth Century', in *Lordship and Learning: Studies in Memory of Trevor Aston*, ed. Ralph Evans (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2004), 109–124; Mark Bailey, 'Tallage-at-Will in Later Medieval England', *EHR* 134, no. 566 (2019): 25–58; Phillipp R. Schofield, *Peasants and Historians: Debating the Medieval English Peasantry*, Manchester Medieval Studies (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 10, 16, 255. Historians have also engaged in debates over how survey-type documents should be interpreted and used. For instance, Reginald Lennard, later supported by B. F. Harvey and E. Stone, criticised Postan's reading of the surveys and customs of Glastonbury Abbey, resulting in the publication of a series of criticisms, replies and rejoinders: M. M. Postan, 'Glastonbury Estates in the Twelfth Century', *Econ. Hist. Rev.* 5, no. 3 (1953): 358–367; Reginald Lennard, 'The Demesnes of Glastonbury Abbey in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries', *Econ. Hist. Rev.* 8, no. 3 (1956): 355–363; M. M. Postan, 'Glastonbury Estates in the Twelfth Century: A Reply', *Econ. Hist. Rev.* 9, no. 1 (1956): 106–118; Lennard, Reginald, with an introduction by B. F. Harvey and E. Stone, 'The Glastonbury Estates: A Rejoinder', *Econ. Hist. Rev.* 28, no. 3 (1975): 517–523. More recently, the debate between L. R. Poos and Richard M. Smith on the one hand and Zvi Razi on the other over demographic analysis and its methodology, has included discussions of using rentals in conjunction with court rolls: L. R. Poos, Zvi Razi, and Richard M. Smith, 'The Population History of Medieval English Villages: A Debate on the Use of Manor Court Records', in *Medieval Society and the Manor Court*, ed. Zvi Razi and Richard M. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 298–368 (305–307, 325–326, 335–340, 356–358). John Hatcher notes that there is still much work to be done for the survey-type documents of the late-fourteenth and fifteenth-centuries to be 'systematically collected and analysed', particularly in regard to the distribution of land. John Hatcher, 'Unreal Wages: Long-Run Living Standards and the "Golden Age" of the Fifteenth Century', in *Commercial Activity, Market and Entrepreneurs in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of Richard Britnell*, ed. Ben Dodds and Christian D. Liddy (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), 1–24 (23). Several historians have reiterated that survey-type documents have been little studied in their own right, although each of them has made their own vital contributions to that study. Harvey, *Cuxham*, 72; Bailey, *The Manor*, 21–22; Birrell, 'Rereading Customs', 1; Birrell, 'Customs Reconsidered', 6; Birrell, 'Confrontation and Negotiation', 210. Birrell also discusses the 'bad press' these types of documents can have amongst historians. Birrell, 'Confrontation and Negotiation', 210.

³⁵ Both Paul D. A. Harvey and Bailey link the chronology of each documents' appearance and their decline or transformation to the emergence of particular types of estate management. Harvey, *Cuxham*, 73–78; Bailey, *The Manor*, 23–24, 37–41.

³⁶ Eleanor Searle, *Lordship and Community: Battle Abbey and Its Banlieu*, Studies and Texts 26 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974), 169–170 at 169.

more actively, sensitively and closely'.³⁷ Similarly, Susan Kilby, a social and cultural historian, sees the influence of lords and their officers most clearly in those features of surveys which allowed them to '[keep] a watchful eye on the seigneurial coffers', focusing on the economic value of the manors' resources and calculating what they should expect from their tenants.³⁸ This economic extraction has been presented as reliant upon officers *extracting* knowledge from the tenantry. The tenantry has been designated as the 'repository' of knowledge on the manor, while the officer was the conduit through which that knowledge made its way into the manorial administration's documents.³⁹

Historians have suggested that officers took advantage of events where tenants had engaged in establishing, reaffirming or declaring knowledge or custom, such as Rogationtide processions or manor courts, producing their survey-type documents shortly afterwards.⁴⁰ At such moments the tenantry would have been "ripe" with knowledge and officers would have been guaranteed a good "harvest". Ralph Evans stresses that when it came to making survey-type documents, and in the manor court, the tenantry served as a 'repository' of knowledge.⁴¹ They were the collective body which held '[k]nowledge of the custom of the manor, as of other matters of fact', and officers 'drew upon' them and the manorial archive when it was time to produce a new survey-type document.⁴²

Meanwhile, this characterisation of the tenantry as the 'repository' in this process of knowledge extraction dovetails with that of the officer as the conduit.⁴³ This characterisation of the officer's role is intensified by historians' descriptions both of their work and of the character of the documents which they produced. Historians have focused on the quantity and accuracy of the information which officers channelled into these documents, their diligence, thoroughness, precision, and pursuit of detail. While historians have acknowledged that survey-type documents could take simpler forms, their focus on, even delight in, the fastidious excess of manorial officers' work is apparent in their descriptions of these documents. Kilby discusses these documents' 'meticulousness', and how they 'scrupulously' record information about the manor.⁴⁴ Similarly, Bailey's descriptions of these types of documents are peppered with variations on 'minute detail' and 'precision'; the 'most mature and extended form' of the survey was 'detailed' and 'recited' its information 'in great, almost pedantic detail'.⁴⁵ Such descriptions imply that the officers' success depended upon their ability to simply funnel a great quantity of information, extracted from tenants and written records, into survey-type documents.

Many of these studies have provided a much richer and more dynamic picture of these documents' production and of the tenantry's agency. Scholars have paid attention to instances

³⁷ Bailey, *The Manor*, 23, 41.

³⁸ Kilby, *Peasant Perspectives*, 35–38 at 38.

³⁹ Evans, 'Manorial Court', 165.

⁴⁰ Kilby, *Peasant Perspectives*, 39; Evans, 'Manorial Court', 166.

⁴¹ Evans, 'Manorial Court', 165.

⁴² The first quotation is from Evans, 165–166 at 166; the second quotation is from Bailey, *The Manor*, 24.

⁴³ Evans, 'Manorial Court', 165.

⁴⁴ Kilby, *Peasant Perspectives*, 35.

⁴⁵ Bailey, *The Manor*, 21, 22, 23, 26.

where the contents of these documents went beyond, or perhaps against, the requirements, aims or activities of the seigneurial administration. There they have found the tenantry's own agendas, interests and practices at work in the processes of document-production initiated by lords and their officers. For instance, having examined a series of thirteenth-century manorial surveys produced across a single estate, Kilby notes that there are fluctuations in the level and type of detail which each document records.⁴⁶ As most, if not all, of these documents were compiled under the direction of a single steward, Kilby determines that these variations reveal the involvement of the tenants of each manor in the creation of these documents.⁴⁷ Kilby implies not only that it was the tenants who had determined the scope of each survey, but that the tenants of each manor had their own agendas for these surveys; she argues that these documents were 'in effect their [the jury of free and servile peasants] version of the local environment, named and familiar' and, crucially, the tenants 'noted what they believed was important'.⁴⁸ Ian Blanchard draws our attention to the *quondam* and *nuper* clauses which are frequently found in survey-type documents, such as: 'Alicia Wodman holds freely one piece of land ... recently [*nuper*] of William Wodman and formerly [*quondam*] of Andrew Sparow'.⁴⁹ He argues that these clauses had little utility for stewards; instead, it was the jurors drawn from the tenantry who valued these clauses.⁵⁰ They were an essential 'collective memory' or – in Justice's refinement of Blanchard's argument – 'collective aide-mémoire' which underpinned the exercise of 'reversionary rights' in the villagers' landmarket.⁵¹ It was, therefore, the jurors who made sure that these details – central to their lives – were recorded.

Similarly, Jean Birrell's illuminating work on the creation of custumals, which is perhaps the most sustained consideration of survey-type documents, finds the hallmarks of tenants' active influence.⁵² She explores the social relations revealed by and played out in these documents, and draws attention to the ways in which both officers and tenants used these documents to further their interests in ongoing disputes.⁵³ Officers, for instance, created more detailed custumals in order to cajole unwilling or resistant tenants.⁵⁴ On the other hand, jurors and other tenants '[took] the initiative' and '[tried] to use ... manorial document[s] for their own ends'.⁵⁵ They took advantage of the opportunities for interruption, protest, complaint, resistance, refusal and silence which the process of producing these documents offered.⁵⁶ Birrell argues, therefore, that negotiation, dispute

⁴⁶ Kilby, *Peasant Perspectives*, 34–35.

⁴⁷ Kilby, 35–36.

⁴⁸ Kilby, 35.

⁴⁹ Original: 'Alicia Wodman' *tenet libere vnam peciam terre ... nuper Willelmi Wodman' et quondam Andree Sparowe*. U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), f. 18v.

⁵⁰ Ian Blanchard, 'Industrial Employment and the Rural Land Market 1380–1520', in *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle*, ed. Richard M. Smith, Cambridge Studies in Population, Economy and Society in Past Time 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 227–275 (242–244).

⁵¹ Blanchard, 'Industrial Employment', 244; Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, 177–178 at 178, 189–190 at 189.

⁵² Birrell, 'Rereading Custumals', 1–14; Birrell, 'Confrontation and Negotiation', 197–211; Birrell, 'Custumals Reconsidered', 3–37.

⁵³ Birrell's work focuses primarily on the relation between lords and tenants. However, she acknowledges that that relation was often 'mediated' through officers (Birrell, 'Custumals Reconsidered', 28). She also discusses how custumals explicitly describe day-to-day relations between officers and tenants. Birrell, 'Confrontation and Negotiation', 203; Birrell, 'Custumals Reconsidered', 27–28.

⁵⁴ Birrell, 'Custumals Reconsidered', 15–16, 17.

⁵⁵ Birrell, 'Confrontation and Negotiation', 204. Also, see Birrell, 'Rereading Custumals', 14.

⁵⁶ Birrell, 'Rereading Custumals', 5, 7, 14; Birrell, 'Custumals Reconsidered', 17, 19–23.

and compromise were central to the creation of the custumal, and her work emphasises the perspective and actions of the tenantry who impelled such negotiations.⁵⁷

However, although historians have now greatly enhanced our understanding of the role of the tenantry in the creation of survey-type documents, they have not yet given the same consideration to officers' agency. Kilby's and Blanchard's work, discussed above, substantially retains the sense of officers as conduits for the tenantry's perspective, simply slotting the knowledge offered up to them into the frameworks of survey-type documents. Birrell, on the other hand, considers officers' agency, asking *why* they recorded tenants' interventions in their otherwise 'very orderly and professional' documents; why did they undertake the 'remarkable' and 'surprising' act of recording the wrecking of their own processes and aims, and the undermining of their efforts to both exercise and project control?⁵⁸ However, this question is not the focus of Birrell's studies; within the scope available to her, she finds the potential answers on offer unsatisfying.⁵⁹ The thirteenth- and early-fourteenth-century officers whom Birrell considers were working in a rather different economic and social context to the officers from these Kentish manors in the fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries.⁶⁰ However, in this chapter I will pick up the spirit of Birrell's question and pay attention to officers' and scribes' agency as the creators of these documents.

In what follows, therefore, I turn to the survey-type documents of West Wickham, Baston, Keston and Southcourt and explore how and what they communicate about officers' labour and their role in the formulation of manorial knowledge. These documents do not present officers as conduits of knowledge, nor their knowledge-labour simply as extraction. Instead, their labour and skills extend beyond the diligent collection of a mass of knowledge: officers appear to engage with concepts of legitimate knowledge which were shared with the tenantry, to preside over the formulation of manorial knowledge, and be capable of discerning and evaluating it. Formulating manorial knowledge was a valuable element of the officer's work and, potentially, part of their professional identity.

The manors of West Wickham, Baston, Keston and Southcourt, and their survey-type documents

From across the manors of West Wickham, Baston, Keston and Southcourt in Kent, fourteen survey-type documents survive from the fifteenth century and the very early years of the sixteenth.

⁵⁷ Birrell, 'Confrontation and Negotiation', 202, 203, 209; Birrell, 'Rereading Custumals', 6, 8–9, 11–13; Birrell, 'Custumals Reconsidered', 4, 15, 17, 26, 28, 31, 36–37.

⁵⁸ The first and second quotations come from Birrell, 'Rereading Custumals', 7; the third quotation comes from Birrell, 'Custumals Reconsidered', 22. For illustrations of the above point, also see Birrell, 'Custumals Reconsidered', 22–23.

⁵⁹ Birrell, 'Custumals Reconsidered', 14–15, 22–23; Birrell, 'Rereading Custumals', 7.

⁶⁰ For instance – and importantly, due to the framing of Birrell's work – fifteenth-century lords were in a much weaker position than their predecessors had been when it came to negotiating with their tenants or enforcing their demands. Bailey, 'Rural Society', 154–159.

Figure 1 provides a simple schematic diagram of these documents, highlighting key identifying details, and the relationships between six of them. I will introduce the documents in more detail in the text below. During this period the lordships of these manors passed through various hands, although they were often held by the same lord. They therefore make a coherent group to investigate.⁶¹ The four manors lay close together, with some of their boundaries abutting and their lands intertwining.⁶² The manors were spread across several parishes: Baston seems to have been focused in the parish of Hayes, with further lands in Farnborough, Keston and Cudham; West Wickham was concentrated in the parish which shared its name; Keston and Southcourt, meanwhile, were both focused in the parish of Keston.⁶³ They lay within approximately ten to fifteen miles of London Bridge, and the proximity of the capital no doubt affected the economic activities and the lives of its tenants; the officers' care to record woodland and brush wood in their documents may suggest it provided a market for firewood.⁶⁴ West Wickham was the largest of the manors, followed by Baston, Keston and, finally, Southcourt. According to a terrier from 1485, the four manors were comprised of 'land' – presumably including arable land – as well as pasture, woodland, small groves, underwood or brushwood, and – especially in Keston and Baston – expanses of heathland.⁶⁵

Like the manor of Mote, these four Kentish manors tended to be held by members of the gentry. In the fourteenth century, West Wickham and Keston – and probably Southcourt – were held by the Huntingfield family.⁶⁶ Towards the end of Edward III's reign (1327–1377), Joane and Alice de Huntingfield inherited and, upon the division of their estates, West Wickham went to Joane and then

⁶¹ A firmal of 1495–1496 groups the manors under the umbrella 'Westwykham with members [or parts]' ('Westwykham cum Membris'). U312/M24 (Firmal, 1495–1497), f. 1r.

⁶² For instance, see U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), ff. 10r, 17r, 19v–20r; U312/M30 (Terrier, 1485), ff. 4v, 5r, 13r, 13v–14r, 14v.

⁶³ Edward Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent*, vol. 2 (Canterbury: W Bristow, 1797; British History Online), 22–46, accessed May 11, 2022; U312/M30 (Terrier, 1485), f. 14v. The terrier and rentals of 1477, 1484 and 1485 describe Southcourt as a manor in the same terms as Baston, West Wickham and Keston. Maidstone, KA, U312/M28/1 (Rental of Baston, Southcourt and West Wickham, 1477), ff. 1v, 2v, 3r; U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), ff. 3r, 16v, 21v, 23r; U312/M30 (Terrier, 1485), ff. 2r, 10v, 11v, 13r. The firmals of 1495–1496 and 1496–1497 refer to the manors of Keston and Southcourt as, respectively, a single manor and as two manors. U312/M24 (Firmal, 1495–1497), ff. 1v, 4r. By the time that Edward Hasted came to write his survey of Kent, however, it seems that the manors of Keston and Southcourt had become 'Keston, alias Southcourt'. Hasted, *Kent*, 2:37–46.

⁶⁴ See note 65 below for references to examples of descriptions of types of land, including different types of woodland. The manors of West Wickham, Baston, Keston and Southcourt were likely close enough to supply the London market: Richard Britnell notes that in the early fourteenth century, London received its supplies 'by road over distances up to twenty miles'. Britnell, *Commercialisation*, 87. While discussing the south-east, including Kent, Christopher Dyer notes the 'close integration of the economic activities of town and country ... in the exploitation of wood for fuel and timber, and the production of meat'. Dyer, 'England's Economy', 216. For discussions of the influence of London, as well as the activities of its merchants in leasing and land purchasing, see Dyer, 215–216; Britnell, *Commercialisation*, 87–88, 161, 199; Mate, 'Land: Kent and Sussex', 132, 135.

⁶⁵ Original: 'pecia terrae'. U312/M30 (Terrier, 1485), f. 2r. For instance, see U312/M30 (Terrier, 1485), ff. 2r, 2v, 4v, 12r, 13v–14r.

⁶⁶ 'Parishes: West Wickham', in Hasted, *Kent*, 2:29–37; 'Parishes: Keston', in Hasted, *Kent*, 2:37–46; 'The parish of West Wickham', in Daniel Lysons, *The Environs of London: Counties of Herts, Essex and Kent*, vol. 4 (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1796; British History Online), 550–557, accessed May 12, 2022.

to her husband John Copledike.⁶⁷ Keston (and probably Southcourt), on the other hand, passed from the Huntingfields to the Belknaps: first Sir Robert Belknap, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas before his attainder and banishment; then to his wife, Juliana; and then, after a short period when it was escheated to the Crown, to their son, Helman.⁶⁸ The Belknaps also seem to have held the manor of Baston, as Helman soon alienated that manor, along with Keston (and probably Southcourt), to Squerie of Squerie's-Court in Westerham, Kent.⁶⁹ West Wickham also made its way to the Squerie family, as in 1438/1439 Thomas Squerie died possessed of all our Kentish manors.⁷⁰ The manors remained with the Squerie family into the 1460s but, via a Trevillian and a Scrope, they passed to Henry Heydon of Baconsthorpe, Norfolk.⁷¹ Heydon had purchased his 'right, interest and title' in the manors from Richard Scrope in the autumn of 1468, and in 1476 John Squerie finally did 'release and quitclaim' all his rights in the manors.⁷² Heydon was later knighted and, while he seems to have been based at Baconsthorpe, he did invest in his Kentish manors.⁷³

Based on a terrier from 1485 and a rental of 1484, it seems that the vast majority of each of the manors was demesne land.⁷⁴ In 1484, tenants held varied amounts of land: a few held close to – and even well over – one hundred acres in one manor, while others held less than a rood.⁷⁵ Large acreages of over sixty acres were not uncommon in southern England and – more broadly in this period – a drop in land value had enabled tenants to build large holdings.⁷⁶ However, while not all

⁶⁷ 'Parishes: West Wickham', in Hasted, *Kent*, 2:29–37; 'The parish of West Wickham', in Lysons, *Environs of London*, 4:550–557.

⁶⁸ 'Parishes: Keston', in Hasted, *Kent*, 2:37–46.

⁶⁹ 'Parishes: Hayes', in Hasted, *Kent*, 2:22–29; 'Parishes: Keston', in Hasted, *Kent*, 2:37–46;.

⁷⁰ 'Parishes: Hayes', in Hasted, *Kent*, 2:22–29; 'Parishes: West Wickham', in Hasted, *Kent*, 2:29–37; 'The parish of West Wickham', in Lysons, *Environs of London*, 4:550–557.

⁷¹ 'Parishes: Hayes', in Hasted, *Kent*, 2:22–29; 'Parishes: West Wickham', in Hasted, *Kent*, 2:29–37; 'Parishes: Keston', in Hasted, *Kent*, 2:37–46; 'The parish of West Wickham', in Lysons, *Environs of London*, 4:550–557; 'Close Rolls, Edward IV: 1468–1469', in W. H. B. Bird and K. H. Ledward, eds., *Calendar of Close Rolls, Edward IV: 1468–1476*, vol. 2 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1953; British History Online), 81–89, no. 323, no. 324, accessed May 12, 2022.

⁷² The first quotation is from 'Close Rolls, Edward IV: 1468–1469', in Bird and Ledward, eds., *Close Rolls, Edward IV*, 2:81–89, no. 324; the second quotation is from 'Close Rolls, Edward IV: 1473–1477', in K. H. Ledward, ed., *Calendar of Close Rolls, Edward IV, Edward V, Richard III, 1476–1485* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1954; British History Online), 8–19, no. 42, accessed May 12, 2022. Also, see 'The parish of West Wickham', in Lysons, *Environs of London*, 4:550–557.

⁷³ 'Parishes: West Wickham', in Hasted, *Kent*, 2:29–37; 'Parishes: Keston', in Hasted, *Kent*, 2:37–46; 'The parish of West Wickham', in Lysons, *Environs of London*, 4:550–557. While Henry Heydon may not have been the only man with interests in these manors, he is named as the lord in the terrier of 1485. U312/M30 (Terrier, 1485), f. 2r; 'Close Rolls, Edward IV: 1473–1477', in Ledward, ed., *Close Rolls of Edward IV, Edward V, Richard III*, 8–19, no. 42. The Calendars of the Close Rolls of Henry VI and Edward IV provide more insight into the troubles of the Squeries and the transfers of the manors.

⁷⁴ U312/M29 (Rental, 1484); U312/M30 (Terrier, 1485).

⁷⁵ For instance, the widow Agnes Aleyns 'freely holds one parcel of land containing in length *per estimacionem* 6 perches and in width 2 perches' in Baston. Original: 'Agneta Aleyns Vidua . tenet \libere/ vnam parcellam terrae continentem in longitudine per estimacionem vj . perticatas et latitudine . ij . perticatas'. U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), f. 19r. Meanwhile, John Cook held over ninety acres, and John Frensshe had recently held over one hundred and twenty acres, in West Wickham. U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), ff. 3r–4r, 8v.

⁷⁶ Dyer, 'England's Economy', 222–223; Britnell, *Commercialisation*, 200–201; Peter L. Larson, 'Peasant Opportunities in Rural Durham: Land, Villages and Mills, 1400–1500', in *Commercial Activity, Markets and Entrepreneurs in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of Richard Britnell*, ed. Ben Dodds and Christian D. Liddy (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), 141–164 (142, 145–146, 151–153).

acreages were recorded, most tenants on these four Kentish manors seem to have held fewer than thirty acres in a single manor, with the greatest proportion of these holdings containing fewer than ten acres; indeed, such holdings were in the majority in many regions in this period.⁷⁷ Some lands were recorded as being held 'libere' – freely – while others were recorded as being held 'native' – as a villein tenure.⁷⁸

As was relatively common in the fifteenth century as a whole, there could be great continuity in rents over the period covered by our documents.⁷⁹ For instance, in the first half of the fifteenth century, in 1477, and in 1484 one rose garland was asked for a messuage called Fowlers or *ffewleras mese* in Baston, while in 1477 and 1484 4½d was asked for four acres of land called *Godrys lond* in the same manor.⁸⁰ Moreover, there was considerable continuity in the families who tenanted these manors.⁸¹ Although Mavis Mate has pointed to Kentish lords' reluctance to reduce their rents and make new rentals in the mid-fifteenth century, the rents of these manors do not seem to have been too onerous.⁸² The annotations made to a rental of 1486 suggests that the officers of these manors were usually rather successful when it came to collecting their rents at this time.⁸³ By 1495

⁷⁷ Britnell, *Commercialisation*, 200–201; Larson, 'Peasant Opportunities', 150. Most tenants did not hold land in more than one of these four Kentish manors; in 1484 only nine individuals did so, while eight families (there is some overlap between the two) also did. However, they may have held land in other neighbouring manors outside the four studied here.

⁷⁸ For instance, see U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), ff. 3r, 4v. For a study of the changes in villein tenure over this period, see Mark Bailey, 'The Transformation of Customary Tenures in Southern England, c. 1350 to c. 1500', *Agric. Hist. Rev.* 62, no. 2 (2014): 210–230.

⁷⁹ Britnell, *Commercialisation*, 193–194.

⁸⁰ Maidstone, KA, U312/M3 (Rental of Baston, c. 1400–1450), m. 1r (hereafter, U312/M3 (Rental, c. 1400–1450)); U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 2r; U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), ff. 18v, 20v.

⁸¹ For instance, William Causton the younger, John Causton, John Comporte, Thomas Shotte, and members of the Wodeward and Mountford or Momford families appear in both the firmal and the rental of 1484. U312/M24 (Firmal, 1495–1497), ff. 1r, 1v, 2r, 2v–3v, 4r; U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), ff. 5r–v, 7r, 11r, 13v, 14v, 15v, 18v, 19r, 19v, 23r, 24r. Caustons, Comportes, Wodewards, Shottes and Mountfords also appear in the rentals of 1477 and 1509, while a 1428/9 rental for West Wickham lists Caustons, Wodewards and Mountfords. U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), ff. 1v, 2r, 2v, 3r, 3v, 4r; U312/M28/3 (Abridged rental, 1509), ff. 2v, 3r, 3v, 5r, 6r, 6v; U312/M22/1 (Rental, 1428/1429), m. 1r. A rental for the same manor from the end of the fourteenth or the early fifteenth century lists Wodewards and Mountfords, while a rental for Baston from the first half of the fifteenth century lists a Shotte. Maidstone, KA, U312/M22/3 (Rental of West Wickham, fifteenth century), m. 1r (hereafter, U312/M22/3 (Rental, fifteenth century)); U312/M3 (Rental, c. 1400–1450), m. 1r. It is not uncommon to find the same names recurring in these documents. To focus on one of these families as an example, in 1484 William Causton the younger held only four acres, and John held over thirty three, both in West Wickham. U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), ff. 11r, 13v, 15v. William Causton the elder, on the other hand, had a substantial holding of over sixty acres in the same manor. U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), ff. 9r, 9v–10r, slip sewn to 10r, 14r–v. One of the Williams also held at least sixteen acres in Keston. U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), ff. 21v, 22r. William the younger appears again in the firmal as, by 1495, he had taken on a farm; as discussed below in note 84, he very shortly took on an even larger farm. U312/M24 (Firmal, 1495–1497), ff. 1r, 2v–3v.

⁸² Mate, 'Land: Kent and Sussex', 123. Britnell also discusses trends in rents during the fourteenth and fifteenth century, noting that 'tenants' rents were more commonly static or falling than rising'. Britnell, *Commercialisation*, 193. As discussed above, the rents of these four Kentish manors generally seem to share in this tendency.

⁸³ Maidstone, KA, U312/M28/2 (Rental of West Wickham, Southcourt, Keston and Baston, 1486) (hereafter, U312/M28/2 (Rental, 1486)). As discussed in note 104 below, it is possible that the 'r' abbreviation used in this rental indicates that a rent is being chased rather than that it has been paid. Here, I have erred on the side of it

the demesnes of the manors were being leased out – either whole or piecemeal – and often to men that are listed as tenants in other documents, while one of the farmers named in the firmal is described as the lord's bailiff.⁸⁴ The firmal from this period gives the most detail about West Wickham and shows that the demesne included a warren with rabbits, and the infrastructure for keeping cattle, sheep and doves, as well as a horse mill.⁸⁵

The creation of the documents from our four Kentish manors seems to have been initiated by the manorial or estate administration, as was conventional. The majority of these documents either refer to themselves as, or appear to be, rentals, but the collection also includes a terrier, firmals, a document which refers to itself as an extant, and one which may be an abridgement or summary of a more detailed rental.⁸⁶ Some of the documents in the collection are related, being either a series of copies or drafts.⁸⁷ Others seem to stand alone, although some relation may exist in certain instances: a detailed rental composed in 1484 and a terrier of 1485 seem to dovetail together, suggesting that they were both the product of a concerted push to document these manors.⁸⁸ Many of these documents were amended, annotated and consulted over the years, into the early modern period. These documents, therefore, attest to – and themselves demanded – the production, collection, negotiation and management of knowledge on these four manors across the fifteenth century and beyond.

indicating that rents have been paid, particularly due to the relatively low rents on these manors. However, that is open to reinterpretation.

⁸⁴ For instance, as noted above in note 81, William Causton the younger, John Causton, John Comporte, Thomas Shotte, and members of the Wodeward and Mountford or Momford families appear in both the firmal and the rental of 1484. U312/M24 (Firmal, 1495–1497), ff. 1r, 1v, 2r, 2v–3v, 4r; U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), ff. 5r–v, 7r, 11r, 13v, 14v, 15v, 18v, 19r, 19v, 23r, 24r. To take the Caustons as an example again, in 1484 William Causton the younger held four acres, while either he or William Causton the elder also held at least sixteen acres in Keston. U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), ff. 11r, 15v, 21v, 22r. However, by 1495, William the younger had taken on a farm worth over £14, and in 1496, he had graduated to a farm worth over £27. U312/M24 (Firmal, 1495–1497), ff. 1r, 2v–3v. Dyer discusses the changes which fifteenth century farmers sometimes made when they took over a demesne, while Britnell discusses leasing and, more specifically, the great opportunities it afforded for 'small farmers' in this period, including those of 'peasant origins'. Dyer, 'England's Economy', 211; Britnell, *Commercialisation*, 197–200 at 199. In 1495, the lord's bailiff was Clement Tuyslee and he had a farm focused on dove-keeping worth 13s 4d. U312/M24 (Firmal, 1495–1497), f. 1v. Dyer also discusses the life of a bailiff turned – admittedly more substantial – farmer. Dyer, 'Suffolk Farmer', 1–22.

⁸⁵ U312/M24 (Firmal, 1495–1497), ff. 1r, 1v, 2r, 2v–3v, 4r. The number of horse mills in England increased in the fifteenth century, but they were not commonplace. Gardiner and Whittick, *Accounts and Records of Mote*, xxxiii.

⁸⁶ On occasion, how some of these documents were defined by their makers does not map on to modern historians' definitions. The document which is potentially an abridged rental (U312/M28/3 (Abridged rental, 1509)) calls itself a 'Dokett[u/m?][[*]] rentale'. 'Dokett...' may mean that this is an abridgement of a more detailed rental, based on the Middle English verb 'dokken'. *MED*, s.v., *dokken* v., 2a. The *Oxford English Dictionary* states that docket, in the sense of a 'brief summarised statement or account; an abstract; an abridgement; a digest' has been attested from the last quarter of the fifteenth century and potentially earlier. *OED*, s.v., *docket* n.1, 2a.

⁸⁷ The series of copies: Maidstone, KA, U312/M22/2 (Rental of West Wickham, fifteenth century) (hereafter, U312/M22/2 (Rental, fifteenth century)); U312/M22/3 (Rental, fifteenth century); Maidstone, KA, U312/M22/6 (Rental of West Wickham, fifteenth century) (hereafter, U312/M22/6 (Rental, fifteenth century)). The series of drafts: Maidstone, KA, U312/M22/4 (Rental of West Wickham, 1428/1429) (hereafter, U312/M22/4 (Rental, 1428/1429)); U312/M22/5 (Rental, 1428/1429); U312/M22/1 (Rental, 1428/1429).

⁸⁸ U312/M29 (Rental, 1484); U312/M30 (Terrier, 1485).

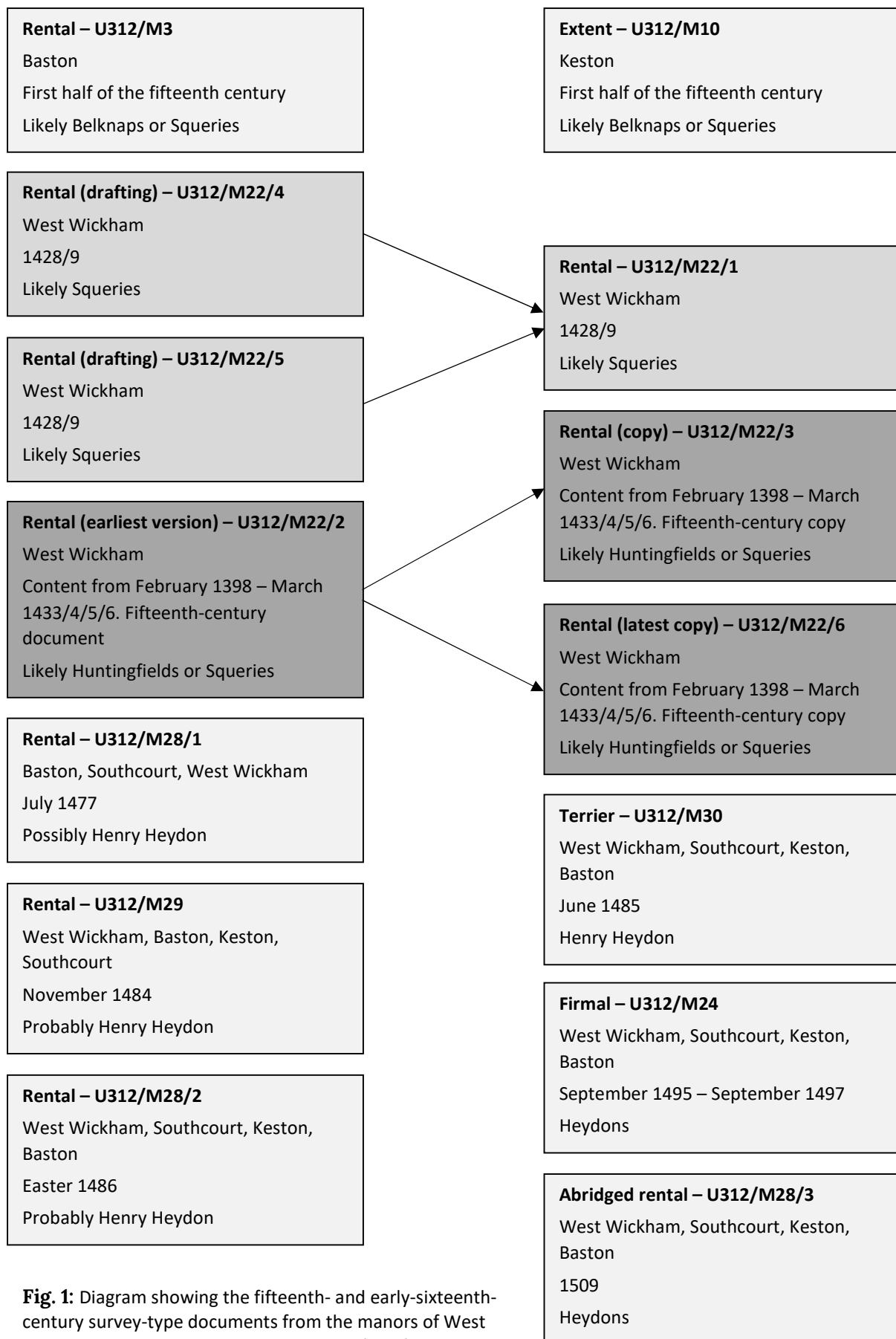


Fig. 1: Diagram showing the fifteenth- and early-sixteenth-century survey-type documents from the manors of West Wickham, Baston, Keston and Southcourt (Kent) and the relationships between them

To conclude this introduction, I will briefly introduce each of these documents in turn, progressing chronologically. First is a rental of the manor of Baston – which stands out as it is primarily in English – and a (self-described) extent of the manor of Keston.⁸⁹ These two documents are from the first half of the fifteenth century, possibly when both manors were held by the Squerie family. Both of these documents list the names of tenants, their holdings and their rents – some monetary, some including eggs and poultry. The extent also notes when the rents of some tenants were due.

Next there are two groups of documents which date from a similar period. First is a series of three documents from the manor of West Wickham, one of which is the ‘Rental of the demesne’ of West Wickham, renewed in 1428/9, while the two other undated documents seem to have been produced in order to facilitate that renewal.⁹⁰ The annotations made to one of these latter documents show part of the process of agreeing the rental value of different holdings with their tenants.⁹¹ The other draft continued to be used after the renewal had been completed: it is annotated both with the names of later tenants and with how much rent ‘T Styward [Thomas Styward or, perhaps, Thomas the steward]’ had received in money.⁹² The second group is a series of three copies of rentals, again for the manor of West Wickham. All three of these documents are undated but, based on external information, their contents seem to relate to a period between February 1398 and March 1433/4/5/6, while the copies themselves seem to have been made during the fifteenth century.⁹³ All of the above documents are in roll format, and each has a hole or slit cut into their top-left-hand corner, suggesting that at one point they were all bound together, perhaps for ease of consultation.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ U312/M3 (Rental, c. 1400–1450); Maidstone, KA, U312/M10 (Extent of Keston, c. 1400–1450) (hereafter, U312/M10 (Extent, c. 1400–1450)). The rest of the documents in this collection are predominantly in Latin, as is common. The extent of Keston calls itself such – ‘Extenta de Kestan’. U312/M10 (Extent, c. 1400–1450), m. 1r. An extent is usually understood to take the form of a detailed survey – detailing the buildings, resources and lands of the demesne, followed by information on services and rents – which provided a valuation of each item. Lennard, ‘Extent’, 256–263; Bailey, *The Manor*, 21, 24–25; Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 20–21. However, this document has more in common with a rental: it is organised by tenant and lists their rents and, for some, when and for what lands they paid. Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 22–23.

⁹⁰ It was renewed in the seventh year of the reign of Henry VI. Original: ‘Rentale dominij ibidem’. U312/M22/1 (Rental, 1428/1429), m. 1r. These documents seem to be drafts: U312/M22/4 (Rental, 1428/1429); U312/M22/5 (Rental, 1428/1429). Harvey notes that when renewed or renovatum appears in the headings of survey-type documents – as is common in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries – it usually means ‘no more than, simply, compiled’ as, during this period, survey-type documents were much more regularly produced than in earlier periods. Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 15.

⁹¹ U312/M22/5 (Rental, 1428/1429), m. 1r.

⁹² U312/M22/4 (Rental, 1428/1429), m. 1r. Another annotation notes that ‘Chelsham þe elder hath Caried breeke to the discharge offe all his rent off this yere’. U312/M22/4 (Rental, 1428/1429), m. 1r.

⁹³ U312/M22/2 (Rental, fifteenth century); U312/M22/3 (Rental, fifteenth century); U312/M22/6 (Rental, fifteenth century). I have compared the contents of these documents – in terms of who held which holdings – with information in other documents from this collection in order to suggest a date range. I have also drawn on the information – seemingly copied from court rolls – which appears on a slip sewn to a folio in the 1484 rental. My uncertainty over the final year is due to heavy creasing in this slip, which obscures part of the writing. Slip sewn to U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), f. 7v. It is unclear whether one of these three documents is an “original”, or if they are all copies. However, two of the documents (U312/M22/3 and U312/M22/6) both seem to be a copy of the third (U312/M22/2), although they do not seem to reference each other.

⁹⁴ An additional slip has been sewn to one of the copies of the West Wickham rental (U312/M22/6 (Rental, fifteenth century)), along with two long ties which could have been used to hold the documents together. A

The remaining six documents under examination come from the second half of the fifteenth century and the early years of the sixteenth. All but one relate to all four of the manors and seem to have been produced during the lordship of Henry Heydon or his heirs, and all but one is in the form of a booklet. A number of them are more detailed than the rentals I have already discussed, and their conventional phrases and gaps will provide much of the material for my analysis in this chapter. The first of these documents is a rental for the manors of Baston, Southcourt and West Wickham, renewed for July 1477.⁹⁵ The booklet is split into sections, and each section is dedicated to a particular manor. This rental is a little more detailed than the earlier documents. Each entry usually records who holds a certain piece of land, its size, its name, who held it previously, and what the tenant owes for it.

Another rental, this time covering all four manors, was renewed for November 1484.⁹⁶ The entries in much of this document are lengthier and more detailed than those of its predecessor. However, it is not simply an elaboration of the earlier document; instead, it seems to have different aims in mind regarding the knowledge it should contain. Its greater detail, particularly the information it provides on the size of landholdings and where they lie, brings to mind a terrier-style survey, so this rental could be considered something of a hybridised form.⁹⁷ This document also often notes how tenants hold their land – as bondsmen, freemen, or by right of their wives.⁹⁸ Slips were sewn into the booklet, further enriching the document's contents: one slip simply allows an entry to be substantially extended as its maker misjudged the amount of space it would require; two others, however, record information copied from court rolls relevant to the history of holdings which are listed in the rental.⁹⁹

later, perhaps sixteenth-century, hand wrote on the attached slip that 'In thys bondells there ar dyvers Wrytenges touchyng' various lands and tenements. Two other – even later – hands also added their own descriptions. Slip sewn to U312/M22/6 (Rental, fifteenth century), m. 1r. These documents clearly retained their reference value across the centuries, and it may have been one of these later writers who collated these documents and bound them together.

⁹⁵ U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477).

⁹⁶ U312/M29 (Rental, 1484).

⁹⁷ Its form chimes with Bailey's descriptions of late-medieval surveys, which have much in common with terriers and are humbler in scope than their magisterial thirteenth-century ancestors, but nimbler and less demanding to produce. This style of rental seems to have been the response of the officers of these four Kentish manors to the requirements of late-fifteenth century administration. Bailey, *The Manor*, 21, 23–24, 37–39, 40–41; Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 15–17.

⁹⁸ For instance, see U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), ff. 3r, 5r, 7v.

⁹⁹ Slips sewn to U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), ff. 5v, 7v, 10r. The slip sewn to f. 5v is particularly nicely inserted; it has been sewn to the folio facing the relevant entry so that the reader can comfortably consult both the entry and the slip at the same time. The slip sewn to f. 7v is sewn over the relevant entry so that the reader is required to "lift the flap". However, the placement of the slip is thoughtful in another way. The entry in this rental lists several pieces of land, but the slip relates to one in particular; the slip is sewn to the page so that it sits below this name, drawing an instructive connection between them. In terms of the slip which allows an entry to be extended, the document's maker simply seems to have underestimated how much space would be required – they had not left enough pages empty between the preceding and following entries. The rental does not, in fact, fill the whole booklet. Two blank pages remain at the beginning of the document and two at the end. The two at the end, however, were later used: one to make notes of two more entries which needed to be added into the main body of the document, while the final page has a new title added but no more. U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), ff. 24v, 25r. At one point, therefore, a scribe and/or officer may have considered broadening out, or deepening, the contents of this booklet.

The next document is a terrier of all the lands, tenements, closes, woods and pastures held by the lord in the manors of West Wickham, Southcourt, Keston and Baston.¹⁰⁰ It was renewed for June 1485. At the end of each section which is dedicated to a particular manor or tenement, the scribe and/or officer calculates how much land in total, and of each type, the lord holds in that area.¹⁰¹ As I have noted, this document, which focuses on the land of the lord, seems to dovetail with the detailed rental of 1484, which focuses on tenants' holdings. As the latter was produced only seven months earlier, they may have been produced as part of the same drive to record the manor anew.

The final three documents are made up of another rental, a firmal, and what is, potentially, an abridgement of a rental.¹⁰² The rental was renewed for Easter 1486.¹⁰³ Its shorter and simpler contents and format are similar to those of the earlier rentals and, like them, it is a roll. It continued to be annotated after its renewal: this is a dynamic document which layers knowledge of tenants' rents – and sometimes a little about their holdings – with knowledge about who had paid and, importantly, who had not met their obligations.¹⁰⁴ The firmal is, in fact, a booklet containing two firmals.¹⁰⁵ The first was renewed for the year beginning September 1495, and it records the rights and holdings of various farmers across all four manors.¹⁰⁶ The second, on the other hand, only relates to two tenants.¹⁰⁷ It was renewed for 22 February 1496, ready for the year which was to begin at Michaelmas 1496, 7 months away; the officer responsible for this document was well-prepared.¹⁰⁸ The final rental was renewed in 1509.¹⁰⁹ Once again, it is a booklet, and it records the names of tenants and their rents, first listing the monetary rents by manor and then the rents paid in eggs, poultry, or in other forms, by type. The document is unusual in that large gaps were left between each entry, spreading its contents sparsely across every page of the booklet. This provided some useful space for a few later annotators, but it is unclear whether this is the use that the document's maker had in mind. If this is an abridgement or digest of a more detailed rental, perhaps that was why these gaps were left.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁰ U312/M30 (Terrier, 1485). Harvey notes that, rather than surveying the entire manor, it is not unusual for a terrier to only survey the demesne or, indeed, some other area such as the lands of a particular tenant or of a certain parcel of fields. Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 22.

¹⁰¹ U312/M30 (Terrier, 1485), ff. 6r, 7v, 8r, 10v, 11r, 12v, 14v.

¹⁰² See note 86.

¹⁰³ U312/M28/2 (Rental, 1486).

¹⁰⁴ A small lower case 'r' with an attractively curled arm is written into the left-hand margin beside most of the tenants' names, presumably indicating that they had paid their rent. I understand the 'r' to stand for 'reddit', 'reddidit', 'redditus' or 'redditur' ('he/she pays', 'he/she paid', 'paid' or 'it is paid'). *DMLBS, s.v., reddere*, 6; *Cappelli*, 319. Alternatively, it is possible that this 'r' may, in fact, communicate the opposite – that rent was being chased – as it may be an abbreviation of *requisitus* (requested or demanded). *DMLBS, s.v., requirere*, 2; *Cappelli*, 319.

¹⁰⁵ U312/M24 (Firmal, 1495–1497).

¹⁰⁶ U312/M24 (Firmal, 1495–1497), ff. 1r–2r.

¹⁰⁷ U312/M24 (Firmal, 1495–1497), ff. 2v–4r.

¹⁰⁸ U312/M24 (Firmal, 1495–1497), f. 2v.

¹⁰⁹ U312/M28/3 (Abridged rental, 1509).

¹¹⁰ See note 86.

Gaps

The scribes and officers who composed these survey-type documents for these four Kentish manors often did not write them in a single, fluid pass. Instead, they left gaps in their texts which they could return to later. They might leave a short gap for the name of a past or present tenant, the size of a piece of land, its name, its rental value, where it lies, who it had been acquired from, the acreage of an entire holding, or how much of it is comprised of demesne lands or woods. They could also leave a much more substantial gap, waiting to be filled with a detailed description of where a holding lies and whose lands surround it. Some of these gaps have been filled in, while others remain.¹¹¹ Some gaps are the result of the process of composition: the skeleton of the document was written out, presumably drawing on earlier records, and then new details were added into the gaps which had been left.¹¹² Other gaps seem to be the result of the decision being taken to include new types of information in a document.¹¹³

Historians have noticed the gaps – filled and unfilled – that appear in manorial documents, and have paid attention to how these gaps relate to, and reveal, the processes of their composition.¹¹⁴ However, their analysis of gaps has generally been brief. On the other hand, scholars of medieval literature and, in particular, medieval art have found the study of gaps, spaces, and emptiness to be fruitful.¹¹⁵ Elina Gertsman's work on voids in manuscript illustration and decoration provides an interesting and illuminating parallel to the gaps found in manorial survey-type documents.¹¹⁶ Gertsman describes the medieval manuscripts and architecture which brim with images, carvings and decorations, writing that these 'all contribute to a collective conception of medieval art as a paragon of crowded spaces, which strives ... to plug and veneer every possible gap ... generating content through sheer profusion'.¹¹⁷ Similarly, historians have delighted in the

¹¹¹ **Examples of gaps which were left unfilled:** U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), ff. 2r, 2v, 3r, 4r, 4v; U312/M22/1 (Rental, 1428/1429), m. 1r; U312/M22/5 (Rental, 1428/1429), m. 1r; U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), ff. 3r, 4v, 9v, 10r, 12r, 14v, 15r; U312/M30 (Terrier, 1485), ff. 3r, 3v, 11v; U312/M24 (Firmal, 1495–1497), f. 2r; U312/M28/3 (Abridged rental, 1509), f. 6v. **Examples of gaps which were filled in:** U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), ff. 3r, 3v, 4r; U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), ff. 14v, 15r, 15v, 17r, 17v, 18r, 18v, 19v, 20r, 20v; U312/M28/2 (Rental, 1486), m. 1r; U312/M30 (Terrier, 1485), ff. 3v, 10r, 11r.

¹¹² This can be seen in U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477). This process of composition is similar to one which Birrell suggests for customals, whereby tenants were asked to respond to a pre-prepared draft customal, which likely drew on earlier documents. Birrell, 'Customals Reconsidered', 12–13.

¹¹³ For instance, including the sizes of pieces of land in the 1484 rental – particularly in the section related to West Wickham – seems to have been a newer endeavour. U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), especially ff. 3r–16r.

¹¹⁴ Harvey discusses this in the context of manorial accounts. Harvey, *Cuxham*, 45–46, 49–50.

¹¹⁵ For instance, see Daniel Wakelin, 'When Scribes Won't Write: Gaps in Middle English Books', *SAC* 36, no. 1 (2014): 249–278; Phillipa Hardman, 'Reading the Spaces: Pictorial Intentions in the Thornton MSS, Lincoln Cathedral MS 91, and BL MS Ad. 31042', *Medium Ævum* 63, no. 2 (1994): 250–274; Elina Gertsman, *The Absent Image: Lacunae in Medieval Books* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2021); Patricia R. Bart, 'Intellect, Influence, and Evidence: The Elusive Allure of the Ht Scribe', in *Yee? Baw for Bokes: Essays on Medieval Manuscripts and Poetics in Honour of Hoyt N. Duggan*, ed. Michael Calabrese and Stephen H. A. Shepherd (Los Angeles: Marymount Institute Press, 2013), 219–243 (especially 220–221, 232, 235–236); Michael Camille, *Master of Death: The Lifeless Art of Pierre Remiet, Illuminator* (London: Yale University Press, 1996), 13–25, 104.

¹¹⁶ Gertsman, *Lacunae*.

¹¹⁷ Gertsman, 28.

fastidious excess of manorial survey-type documents, and their ‘great, almost pedantic, detail’.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, as I have noted, officers and scribes layered more writing and more knowledge into these documents over time.¹¹⁹ However, Gertsman points out that the excesses of illustrated manuscripts were counterpointed by the ‘persistent presence’ of gaps and emptinesses.¹²⁰ She argues that it is this contrast between profusions and voids which draws our attention to ‘emptiness as a potent site of meaning-making’.¹²¹

Likewise, the recurrent gaps in survey-type documents are a contrast to the abundance of these documents’ contents and, indeed, to the way they have been imagined by historians. Gaps visually disrupt the carefully blocked text of these documents. The pen strokes and script which surround them act as frames, making their ‘emptiness visible’.¹²² Gaps thereby become features in these documents. Even when scribes and officers returned to fill them in, they often left these former gaps still visible.¹²³ Some scribes and officers even decided to leave gaps unfilled; instead, they chose to add new details into the margin of their document.¹²⁴ Like the voids in Gertsman’s illustrations and decorations, the gaps in these documents are remarkable but ambiguous, rich with potential interpretations.

In what follows, I will consider the ‘generative’ potential of these gaps, exploring the meanings they may have had for their broad audience of lords, officers and tenants.¹²⁵ I suggest that gaps, as they demand to be filled, show a drive for the accretion of knowledge. But gaps also provoke imaginings of the possibilities of the failure of this project: on the part of the officer; in the processes by which manorial knowledge was co-produced; as the inevitable result of an impossible task. Most strikingly, these gaps can conjure up the threat – or the, somewhat ambivalent, promise – of seigneurial power’s vulnerability. Yet they remain ambiguous; finally, therefore, I explore a range of alternative readings of the gaps which scribes and officers left in these documents. Gaps might reassure tenants that officers did not simply make assumptions, and communicate to lords that

¹¹⁸ Bailey, *The Manor*, 23. See page 95–96.

¹¹⁹ See page 91.

¹²⁰ Gertsman, *Lacunae*, 28.

¹²¹ Gertsman, 26, 28.

¹²² Gertsman, 26, 101, 129. The way that Gertsman delineates intention and reception is also instructive. For instance, she describes two manuscripts, one whose ‘blank rectangles’ are likely the incidental result of a changing illustrative plan which left them redundant, while the ‘framed squares’ of the second were intentionally left blank. She argues that ‘from the point of view of reception ... this difference is incidental: in both manuscripts these visual lacunae are ... productive’ as both would have been subjected to the same ‘practices of viewing’, thereby kindling the imaginations of both their viewerships. Gertsman, 115. Philippa Hardman’s analysis of two fifteenth-manuscripts whose scribe is thought to have been Robert Thornton, an ‘active landowner’ and member of the Yorkshire gentry (Johnston, ‘Thornton’, 2, 9), does consider why Thornton never filled the gaps he had left for illustrations; he may, in fact, never have meant to. However, she also separates the reason for the gap from the experience of the reader. Like Gertsman, Hardman argues that these gaps, and others like them, provided a fruitful focus and spur for the reader’s ‘imagination’ and ‘meditation’. Hardman, ‘Pictorial Intentions’, 258–260 at 259. Similarly to Gertsman and Hardman, I will be exploring what interpretive potential and meaning the gaps in these documents could hold for their readers and viewers.

¹²³ For instance, see U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), f. 15v; U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 3v.

¹²⁴ U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 2r.

¹²⁵ Gertsman, *Lacunae*, 29.

officers were diligent in setting themselves to further enquiry and investigation. Gaps can do the important work of conveying the legitimacy of the knowledge which these documents contain.

To take a starting example, the composition of an entry in the 1484 rental suggests a hunger for more knowledge, more detail to be laid down in these documents. The entry initially read: 'The same Joanna Hever holds freely one piece of land called *Westfeld* another piece of land in the same place called *Vpperle* and another piece called *Stenhill*' recently of the said John Hever . and they lie near *Bastan heythe*'.¹²⁶ However, the description of these lands as being located near *Bastan heythe* was clearly found to be insufficient or inaccurate as this name was soon crossed out.¹²⁷ This crossing out demanded a reformulation of the knowledge encapsulated in this entry; it created a gap in this entry's knowledge, if not in its text. Another hand obliged, squeezing several lines of script into the gap between this entry and the next. The ambition of this annotation extends significantly beyond that of the original entry. Rather than simply describing the location of these lands as a single block, this writer attempts to provide a detailed locative description for each individual piece. Moreover, they also want to include the acreages of these lands. They cram this sizeable annotation into the gap:

therefore the said piece called *Westfeld*' contains 8 acres lying next to the Close of the lord pertaining to the Messuage of the lord called *Lambez* from the western portion of this piece and abutting on the land of the said Joanna [Hever] towards the north And the said piece called *vpperle* containing [blank] acres lying more towards the south by the northern boundary then abutting on the southern border of the said piece and abutting on the heath of *Kestan*' towards the south \and lying next to the said Close of the Messuage *lambez* from the western portion/ And the said piece called *Stonhill*' containing [blank] acres lying more towards the east and next to and abutting in the same manner towards the south¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Original: 'Eadem Johanna Hever' tenet libere . Vnam Peciam terrae vocatur Westfeld Aliam peciam terre ibidem vocatur Vpperle . et aliam peciam vocatur Stenhill' nuper dicti Johannis Hever . et iacentes prope Bastan heythe'. U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), f. 17r.

¹²⁷ Simply describing these pieces of land as lying near Baston heath might have seemed insufficient in terms of specificity – it is a much vaguer description than that provided by the later annotation. Whether the description was inaccurate is less certain. The later description does not mention Baston heath; instead, these pieces are closer to Keston heath. While this may simply suggest an inaccuracy over where these pieces lay – the heaths may have been confused, for instance – it is possible it was the result of a difference in interpretation as Baston and Keston heath lay close together, at times adjoining (U312/M30 (Terrier, 1485), ff. 12r–v). A location which one person thought of in terms of Baston heath, another may have envisioned in relation to Keston heath. Or, indeed, the scribe may simply have misread 'Kestan' as 'Bastan', or his exemplar may have done so. This crossing out in the 1484 rental was done in a slightly different colour of ink. It seems to be the same ink as was used both to fill in gaps in the document and to continue its composition. Examples of gaps being filled using this ink can be seen on ff. 17v–18r, while a wholesale switch to this ink can be seen on f. 18v. The hand remains the same. Therefore, I suggest that the deletion of 'Bastan heythe' was done relatively soon after the entry had first been written, during the period of the document's initial composition. U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), ff. 17v–18v.

¹²⁸ Original: 'unde dicta pecia vocatur Westfeld' continens viij acras iacens iuxta Clausum domini pertinentem ad Messuagium domini vocatur Lambez ex parte occidentale huius pecie . et abuttans super terram dicte Johanne [Hever] borealiter . Et dicta pecia vocatur vpperle continens [blank] acras iacens magis australiter fine boreali inde abuttante super finem australem dicte pecie . et abuttante super brueriam de Kestan' australiter \et iacens iuxta dictum Clausum Messuagii lambez ex parte occidentale/ Et dicta pecia vocatur

This hand even expands their own annotation in even smaller writing as they realise that more can be said about the position of *vpperle*. It is only the limitations of space – the edge of the page and the start of the entry below – which forces this annotation to end abruptly and self-referentially. Like the hand which crossed out *Bastan heythe*, this writer has aims for this entry's contents which they can not fulfil themselves. They have to leave gaps for the sizes of *vpperle* and *Stonhill*'. However, the acreage which they are able to include – that of *Westfeld*' – gives their ambition to formulate more manorial knowledge a sense of momentum and realism. The crossing-out of *Bastan heythe* and the gaps left in this annotation, therefore, communicate an aspiration for this document to contain *more*, to know *more*. As historians have suggested, precision and quantity of knowledge certainly had a place in survey-type documents and held an attraction for their creators.¹²⁹ These gaps are waiting, hungrily, to be filled.

If, then, these gaps are the product of the seigneurial administration striving to know more, the fact that they were never filled communicates, rather straightforwardly, the failure of that endeavour. The officer could have failed as an individual, or the process could have failed as a whole. The scope of the documents themselves may have set an impossible task. A number of the gaps which have been left unfilled in the 1477 rental seem to convey this sense of failure. In the rental of 1477, the vast majority of entries relating to the manor of West Wickham were first written out with a gap left for the name of the tenant.¹³⁰ Most of these gaps have been filled in, but 13 of these 49 entries have never been attributed to a particular tenant.¹³¹ Some of these gaps may have remained empty because the relevant holding did not have a tenant at that time. However, some were certainly not un-tenanted. For instance, two holdings – one of five croftes called *Croppettes* and another comprised of a tenement called *Chalkers* and one acre of land in *Westfeld* – are listed as being held by '[blank] recently the wife of William Walbron'.¹³² These holdings did have an identifiable tenant – William Walbroun's widow – and, indeed, they both remained in the hands of the Walbroun family for some time.¹³³ Therefore, this holding surely had a tenant whose name could

Stonhill' continens [blank] acras iacens magis orientaliter . et iuxta . et abuttans simili modo australi'. U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), f. 17r.

¹²⁹ See discussion on page 95.

¹³⁰ U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), ff. 3r–4v.

¹³¹ Some gaps for tenants' names were filled and then, at a later date, the name was crossed out with no alternative or explanation given. I have not included these in the number.

¹³² Original: '[blank] nuper vxor Willelmi Walbron' tenet quinque croftas . vocantur Croppettes nuper Ricardi Walbron'. Original: '[blank] nuper vxor Willelmi Walbron' tenet vnum tenementum \xv d/ vocatur Chalkers . et . j acram \j d/ terrae iacentem in Westfeld' nuper Johannis lambe'. U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 4r.

¹³³ The 1484 rental records that John Walbroun holds *Croppettes*, while the terrier of 1485 records that the lord now holds *Chalkers*, having acquired it from 'Walbrouns heirs'. It is unclear what became of the acre in *Westfeld*, but it may have been consolidated into the lord's holding in *Westfeld* which, according to the 1485 terrier, contained 101 acres. **1484 rental**: 'John Walbroun' holds freely diverse pieces of land ... called *Croppettes*'. Original: 'Johannes Walbroun' tenet libere diuersas pecias terrae ... vocantur *Croppettes*'. U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), f. 4v. **1485 terrier**: 'Also one settled Messuage with an adjoining croft, called Chalkers likewise containing 3 acres recently having been acquired from the Walbrouns heirs'. Original: 'Item vnum Mesuagium edificatum cum crofta adiacente vocatur Chalkers insimiliter continens iij acras nuper perquisitum de heredibus Walbrouns'. U312/M30 (Terrier, 1485), f. 5r. 'Also one piece called *Westfeld*' ... [[]] One hundredth 1 acres'. Original: 'Item vna pecia vocatur *Westfeld*' ... [[]] Centesima . j acris'. U312/M30 (Terrier, 1485), f. 2r.

have been ascertained and entered into the document – after all, this had been done for other entries.

Arguably, the appellation ‘recently the wife of William Walbron’ is knowledge enough to make this entry practically workable.¹³⁴ If an officer would not be hamstrung in collecting rents, enforcing obligations, or keeping track of a holding is this gap a failure? However, the creator of this document had carefully and thoughtfully left gaps specific to this woman’s name: they are half the length of the generic gaps left for most tenants’ names, long enough only for a forename and, thereby, follow the formula by which these documents usually refer to wives or widows.¹³⁵ The specificity of these gaps’ dimensions declare that this document *should* include her name. Their emptiness, therefore, communicates a failure to formulate and record manorial knowledge, whether that failure occurred in the process of enquiry, of discernment or of record. Moreover, other entries which still have empty gaps in place of tenants’ names do not benefit from such informative appellations as ‘the wife of William Walbron’.¹³⁶ While it is difficult to demonstrate conclusively that some of these holdings were tenanted at the time, since *Cropettes*, *Chalkers* and the acre in *Westfeld* were, it is not unlikely that some of these were too.¹³⁷ These gaps, however, lack the practical merits of the widow Walbron’s entry and, therefore, speak even more directly of the officer’s failure.

Moreover, gaps could express the threat – or ambivalent promise – of failure on a much larger scale. They could communicate the vulnerabilities, limitations, and failures of seigneurial power. Survey-type documents not only reflect close manorial or estate management, but were tools of it.¹³⁸ Collecting and controlling knowledge, specifically in documentary form, was closely entwined with the exercise and protection of seigneurial power and interests, both practically and symbolically. The fullness of these records was an important component of their power and protectiveness. The fifteenth-century *Tretyce off Housbandry* provides an extensive and almost breathless list of what an effective extent should cover, with frequent recourse to the words ‘euery’ and ‘all’: the extent should capture ‘**all** ... þynges whereby **eny** profet to you yerly may aryse’ [my emphasis].¹³⁹ With such an extent the *Housbandry*’s student will be able to ‘prudently’ judge their expenditure in order to avoid ‘waste or distrucyone’, more easily formulate agricultural plans, ‘redely discerne’ what their bailiff should be returning each year, and guard against his frauds.¹⁴⁰

Such documents were not only to be used to police bailiffs. Christopher Dyer argues that the ‘almost obsessive record keeping’ of the monks of Bury St Edmunds, and the resulting archive,

¹³⁴ Original: ‘nuper vxor Willelmi Walbron’. U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 4r.

¹³⁵ For instance, see U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), ff. 7v, 14v.

¹³⁶ Original: ‘nuper vxor Willelmi Walbron’. U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 4r.

¹³⁷ Using the documents available, it is difficult to demonstrate conclusively that these holdings were all tenanted. Even when these holdings appear in later documents, with a named tenant, it is still uncertain what the state of affairs was in 1477. However, since *Croppettes*, *Chalkers*, and an acre of *Westfeld* were certainly tenanted, it may suggest that some of these other holdings which are harder to trace were also tenanted at this time.

¹³⁸ Bailey, *The Manor*, 22–23, 37–41; Harvey, *Cuxham*, 73–74.

¹³⁹ ‘Tretyce off Housbandry’ in Lamond, *Walter of Henley*, 43.

¹⁴⁰ ‘Tretyce off Housbandry’ in Lamond, 43–44.

‘disadvantaged tenants whose obligations were never forgotten’.¹⁴¹ These documents could give written and material form to oppressive or contested relations.¹⁴² As we have seen, Steven Justice’s analysis both of acts of document burning during the rising of 1381 and of chroniclers’ descriptions of those acts, reveals the symbolic potential of these documents. Chroniclers conceived of writing as intrinsic to manorial authority.¹⁴³ Peasants, meanwhile, put manorial documents to work in a variety of strategic and symbolic acts which declared that these documents were redundant for their own purposes and self-governance; these documents hindered and restricted them, upholding the privileges and interests of lordship.¹⁴⁴ Their lack of unfettered access to these documents which lords hoarded to themselves, and their inability to determine what was to become of them, symbolised their exclusion from authority and the keeping of ‘trewþe ... under a lokke’.¹⁴⁵ Even as the composition of sweeping and exhaustive surveys dwindled and metamorphosed in the later medieval period, and the more regular production of briefer documents – such as rentals – increased, survey-type documents retained their potency as tools, symbols and repositories of lordly power.¹⁴⁶

Gaps in these documents are, therefore, chinks in the seigneurial armour through which unease and vulnerability can ooze. Gaps stimulate their observers to fill them with their own imaginations.¹⁴⁷ What might lords and tenants have imagined when faced with the gaps in these documentary symbols of lordly power? Tenants might have seen promise in these signs of failure, as they demonstrate the fallibility of the seigneurial administration and its reliance on their co-operation. They may have imagined how these gaps – in documents and in power relations – could be filled to their best advantage. However, the promise of seigneurial vulnerability and officers’ limitations might have been an ambivalent one. As I have discussed, tenants also drew on these survey-type documents for their own ends and saw benefits in the certainties which they proffered.¹⁴⁸ Gaps, therefore, could have been both promising and disquieting.

Part of the imaginative potency of the gaps in survey-type documents is the ambiguity of *why* the gap is there, and this may have had particular resonance for a lordly audience.¹⁴⁹ From a lordly perspective, gaps might induce imaginings of threats to, and the vulnerability of, their interests, and their own ignorance about the management of their manors and estates: do these

¹⁴¹ Dyer, ‘Suffolk Farmer’, 7.

¹⁴² Jack Goody, *The Logic of Writing and the Organisation of Society*, Studies in Literacy, Family, Culture and the State (1986; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 133; Andy Wood follows Jack Goody in his analysis of written custom in early modern England. Andy Wood, ‘Custom and the Social Organisation of Writing in Early Modern England’, *TRHS* 9 (1999): 257–269 (258).

¹⁴³ Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, 17–18.

¹⁴⁴ Justice, 1–2, 40–48 especially 45–47, 51, 69–70, 150–151, 155–156. Justice specifies that the destruction of manorial and estate records focused on documents such as customals, cartularies, extents and manorial court rolls. Justice, 42.

¹⁴⁵ Justice, 1, 69–70 at 69 quoting London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius C.viii, f. 174a, 71–72.

¹⁴⁶ Bailey, *The Manor*, 37–40; Wood, ‘Custom and the Social Organisation of Writing’, 262–264.

¹⁴⁷ Gertsman, *Lacunae*, 39, 103, 122, 127.

¹⁴⁸ See pages 91–93, and 95–97.

¹⁴⁹ When discussing fragmentariness, Arthur Bahr argues that ‘lacunae ... become spaces for current and future interpretive activity since their “true” cause is often as unknowable as the “true” originary form that their existence has altered’. Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages*, 47.

gaps intimate a recalcitrant tenantry, an ineffective officer, or one who keeps knowledge to himself while leaving his lord blind and open to fraud? A lack of documentary evidence left New College, Oxford, at the mercy of Great Horwood's tenantry as it searched for the manor's demesne lands – these had been leased to the tenantry some two hundred years before.¹⁵⁰ Even after a sixty-year legal battle, the College was not able to fully recover its demesne.¹⁵¹ In a suit brought in Chancery it asserts that its tenants had, 'in many years by cunning and practice amongst themselves concealed and suppressed the ancient bounds and marks of the demesne lands, and the terriers, boundary records and other evidences, in order to share the benefit of the lands amongst themselves'.¹⁵²

Not only tenants, but officers could be a danger to an unprotected lord. In its exhortation to landowners to compose a detailed extent, the *Housbandry* conveys the idea that it is essential that they have access to sources of knowledge distinct from the information offered up by their bailiff; this is what will allow them to effectively assess his activities and protect themselves from any potential frauds.¹⁵³ Gaps are a reminder that the lord can not escape their reliance on the knowledge formulated by their officer; they are at the mercy of their abilities and inclination. Gaps play on the fears about officers' incompetence and – especially – fraudulence which are expressed in the estate management literature I have discussed in Chapter One.¹⁵⁴

However, the memorandums and annotations which the officers of these Kentish manors added into their documents provide a potential rebuttal of these fears: they were continuing to formulate knowledge and offer it up in ways which were visible to their lord.¹⁵⁵ While these annotations and memorandums *could* reinforce the fear that officers held knowledge which did not enter into these documents, officers wrote their reassurance into their notes. The purchase of a new grove of wood in Keston 'is not yet enterid in the terror', but the implication is that it will be: the 'yet' promises the officer's good intentions.¹⁵⁶ Similarly, a tiny annotation added right at the bottom edge of one of the terrier's folios, positioned to avoid disrupting the neat and consistent layout of the page, intimates officers' continued endeavours. It reads: 'Memorandum that *parket* contains within ditches [or banks] — 10 acres 3 roods'.¹⁵⁷ Helpfully, another pen added the additional three roods to the appropriate entry in the main body of the page.¹⁵⁸ The officers and scribes of these Kentish documents did not intend their gaps to fan the flames of distrust. Rather, they laboured to counter that potential reading.

¹⁵⁰ Tompkins, 'Individualism, Community, and Lordship: The Peasant Demesne Lessees of Great Horwood, 1320–1610', 171–172.

¹⁵¹ Tompkins, 171.

¹⁵² Tompkins, 172 quoting Oxford, New College Archives, 4499/59 (spelling modernised by Tompkins). Matthew Tompkins notes that the College might have been hindered by 'some discontinuity in estate records' caused by several changes in lordship since the demesne had been leased, including one confiscation. Tompkins, 171.

¹⁵³ 'Tretyce off Housbandry' in Lamond, *Walter of Henley*, 43–44. See page 110.

¹⁵⁴ See pages 52–53.

¹⁵⁵ For instance, see U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), f. 24v; U312/M30 (Terrier, 1485), f. 15v.

¹⁵⁶ U312/M30 (Terrier, 1485), f. 15v.

¹⁵⁷ Original: 'Memorandus quod parket continet infra fossata — x acras iij rodas'. U312/M30 (Terrier, 1485), f. 11v.

¹⁵⁸ Original: 'Item vnus grovettus vocatur Parkatte iacet ibidem \iuxta/ magis borealiter . et continet — x acras \ij r[**]'. U312/M30 (Terrier, 1485), f. 11v.

Although stoking lords' fears may have had some utility in certain contexts or disputes, reading gaps only as sites of failure and of threat seems, therefore, to be insufficient.¹⁵⁹ Such a reading certainly undercuts the image of the officer, skilled in documentary labour and working hard on his lord's behalf, which the manorial account compiles. Copious quantities of gaps might always have suggested ineptitude, or a breakdown in the relation either between lord and officer, or between tenants and the administration. A modest quantity of gaps, however, may have allowed these documents' audiences to respond to the 'fecundity' of these empty spaces, and imagine possibilities which were rather more favourable to the officers who were responsible for their creation.¹⁶⁰

Gaps could reassure tenants that officers did not simply fill survey-type documents with assumptions. They acknowledge the boundaries of the knowledge which was held by officers, and by the wider manorial or estate administration and its archives. They depict an officer who professes that inquiry, investigation and the cooperation of the tenantry are essential to the process of composing these documents, and reiterate the importance of reckoning, judgement and discernment to the formulation of manorial knowledge. Tenants may have found such visual admittances of the officers' ignorance reassuring, as a lack of diligence and humility could be damaging to them. Such was the fate of the aforementioned tenants of Withyham, Sussex, who in 1435 ended up at the mercy of a newly-made rental which had – much to their fury – failed to record certain lands and rents.¹⁶¹ The tenantry were further enraged when they were excluded from the re-setting of one of these omitted rents; Johnson relates how one man was fined for responding to these events with 'malicious, hateful words [which] threatened both the steward and the court'.¹⁶² In contrast, a gap could be a reassuring sight.

In addition, gaps could communicate the officer's diligence to a lordly or superior audience. Daniel Wakelin's analysis of the gaps which scribes left in scholarly and literary texts provides an instructive parallel.¹⁶³ Wakelin argues that, 'while leaving a gap seems a failure of thought – not solving a puzzle, not understanding something – instead it suggests carefulness in copying'.¹⁶⁴ His work extends that of Patricia R. Bart, who saw the gaps left in one *Piers Plowman* manuscript as evidence for the 'pains' which the scribe (or their director) took over the interpretation of the text, their care for its quality, and their role as an 'active creator' of the text.¹⁶⁵ Wakelin suggests that

¹⁵⁹ Alisdair Dobie describes what may have been one such fractious situation. In 1308–1309, when the refectorer of Canterbury Cathedral Priory was 'removed from office' there was a real problem for the accounting process as 'his tallies could not be found'. Dobie suggests that his removal likely followed a visitation by the Bishop of Durham, suggesting that the refectorer had been involved in malpractice or dispute. The "loss" of the refectorer's tallies may have been calculated to hide evidence of his misconduct, or it may have been a final flaunting of disobedience to his overseers, who both demanded that he be accountable and that he collect and supply them with information and knowledge. Alisdair Dobie, 'A Review of the Granators' Accounts of Durham Cathedral Priory 1294–1433: An Early Example of Process Accounting?', *Account. Hist. Rev.* 21, no. 1 (2011): 7–35 (23).

¹⁶⁰ Gertsman, *Lacunae*, 29.

¹⁶¹ Johnson, *Law in Common*, 206–207.

¹⁶² Johnson, 207 quoting Cambridge, King's College, WIT/17 (Court rolls of Withyham), m. 4r (translation by Johnson).

¹⁶³ Wakelin, 'Gaps', 253.

¹⁶⁴ Wakelin, 252.

¹⁶⁵ Bart, 'The Ht Scribe', 232, 235, 236.

scribes' contemporaries made similar interpretations. In those moments where they refused to write, scribes revealed that they took a critical and judicious approach to their exemplars and their abilities, and envisioned an 'immaterial text' which they took pains not to disfigure with guesswork or banalities.¹⁶⁶ Wakelin suggests that gaps may not be the hallmarks of 'shoddy workmanship', but instead 'make visible the careful workmanship' that produced these works, specifically the scribe's active engagement with his text: his thoughtfulness, judgement and striving for quality.¹⁶⁷ Their display of skill and craft may have made gaps acceptable to patrons and to the owners of expensive books.¹⁶⁸ Similarly, the gaps in these Kentish documents communicate officers' commitment to producing documents which rely on fresh inquiry, investigation and the reformulation of manorial knowledge. Gaps can also reveal the increasing scope of their ambitions for these documents. In the 1484 rental the sections for Keston and Southcourt do not include gaps, but they are also less likely than the sections for West Wickham and Baston to include – or attempt to include – details of the size of holdings for instance.¹⁶⁹ Officers who left gaps were, therefore, careful and assiduous; they were not slapdash and nor did they supply 'fraudulent solutions' or 'invention' to complete their documents.¹⁷⁰

Indeed, the officers of these Kentish manors worked to remove assumptions from their documents. When the skeleton of the 1477 rental was first written out, the section for West Wickham began with a run of four entries, the first of which declared that several tenements were held jointly by William Wodeward and John Stone.¹⁷¹ The following three entries began, 'The same [blank] hold ...'.¹⁷² The scribe or officer seemingly expected that the following entries would be held jointly by the same tenants, but they did not want to go too far and fill in their names – they were balancing the aim of creating a conventionally formatted document with the aim of accuracy. And, indeed, their caution was justified. While Wodeward and Stone did hold the lands detailed in the second entry, the third entry had to be modified: 'The same \John Cook —/ hold one tenement called *Jeffreys broke*'.¹⁷³ The gap in the fourth entry was never filled. Gaps, therefore, demonstrate officers striving to remove assumptions from their documents and to avoid unthinkingly conforming to expectations. Gaps, therefore, can confer legitimacy on the knowledge which both surrounds and, indeed, has filled them as they communicate that the contents of these documents are not the product of assumption or conjecture but of discernment. Gaps communicated to lords that their officers were diligently engaged in the work of producing documents which contained reliable and legitimate knowledge.

¹⁶⁶ Wakelin, 'Gaps', 252, 269, 276–277.

¹⁶⁷ Wakelin, 276–277 at 277.

¹⁶⁸ Wakelin, 276–277.

¹⁶⁹ For the sections for Keston and Southcourt, see U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), ff. 21v–24r. For the sections for West Wickham and Baston, see U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), ff. 3r–21r.

¹⁷⁰ Wakelin, 'Gaps', 276.

¹⁷¹ Original: 'Willelmus . Wodeward' et Johannes . Stone . \tenent/ p̄ tenemento vocatur Elwyn . tenemento vocatur Goodman' tenemento vocatur Jerveys et alij alias/ terras . nuper Johannis Broke of the Nayssh .'. U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 3r.

¹⁷² Original: 'ijdem [blank] tenent'. U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 3r.

¹⁷³ Original: 'ijdem \Johannes Cook —/ tenent . vnum tenementum vocatur Jeffreys broke'. U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 3r.

The utility, and perhaps even the desirability, of gaps is suggested by the way that many of them remain visible despite having been filled in. This type of gap – an obvious former gap – demonstrates diligence fulfilled. They can be found in both the 1477 and the 1484 rental, where they communicate officers' labour in formulating legitimate manorial knowledge. As I have discussed, when the 1477 rental was compiled, gaps were left for the names of most of the tenants of the manor of West Wickham.¹⁷⁴ While the majority of these names were later filled in, the scribe or officer who added them did not strive to make their insertions seamless. The gaps which have been left are of a generous and uniform size, and are generally too large to be completely filled when a tenant's name is written in. Therefore, a space is often left between the tenant's name and the rest of the entry. Sometimes the scribe or officer fills this gap with a lightly flourishing line, sometimes with a hasty dash, while sometimes they merely leave a dot hinging the entry together.¹⁷⁵ An officer or scribe took a similar approach in the 1484 rental, when they found that a wood had a rather smaller acreage than the gap which had been left to record it: a substantial line fills the gap between the insertion, '1 rood', and the description of where this wood lay.¹⁷⁶ These scribes and officers, therefore, produce full lines of text – as is appropriate for these documents' layout of solid blocks of script – but they do so in a way which is visually insistent.

Even more insistent are those instances where the gap which had been left is too small to accommodate the relevant detail. Again, we can see this in the 1477 rental. When it came to writing the tenant's name into the entry for the 'tenement called *Osbernes* recently of William Toller', the scribe or officer ran into trouble as this holding did not have only one tenant.¹⁷⁷ Instead it was held by Richard Dyse and 'other fellow tenants [or coparceners] of his'.¹⁷⁸ The scribe or officer writes 'Richard Dyse and other' on the line of the entry, fills the remaining sliver of gap with a swiftly drawn line, before squeezing 'fellow tenants [or coparceners] of his' into the gap between this entry and the one above.¹⁷⁹ This disruption in the spacing of the page draws the eye, and the viewer's attention, to the place where a gap had once been. Both these methods of filling gaps make these points in the documents – and the existence of the original gap – conspicuous. They thereby draw attention to the labour and skill which had gone into filling the gap and make visible the work of inquiry, investigation and the co-production of knowledge with the tenantry. The use of the word '*parcenarij* [fellow tenants or coparceners]' also suggests the officer's care as they used this

¹⁷⁴ U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), ff. 3r–4v.

¹⁷⁵ Examples of a lightly flourishing line can be seen in the entry for John Cook and Jeffreys broke (U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 3r), and the entry for William Causton and *Infeld*, *Northfeld*, *lyndacre* and *Walsshcroft* (U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 3v). Examples of a hasty dash can be seen in the entry for Thomas Wodeward and *Osbernes tenement* (U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 3r), and the entry for William Chelsham and *Sanctus* (U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 3v). This entry for *Osbernes tenement* is distinct from the entry for a 'tenement called *Osbernes* recently of William Toller' ('*tenementum vocatur Osbernes nuper Willelmi Toller*') which I discuss in more detail above (U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 3v). The *Osbernes tenement* held by Thomas Wodeward had previously been held by John Nayssh (U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 3r). Examples of a dot acting as a hinge can be seen in the entry for Richard Momford and a cottage formerly of Walter Jetour (U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 3r), and the entry for William, later Richard, Chelsham and a tenement called *Carpenters* (U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 3v).

¹⁷⁶ Original: 'Et vnum grovettum continet \j rod —/ iacens'. U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), f. 15v.

¹⁷⁷ Original: '*tenementum vocatur Osbernes nuper Willelmi Toller*'. U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 3v.

¹⁷⁸ Original: '\Ricardus Dyse et Alij \parcenarij sui/ / tenet tenementum vocatur Osbernes nuper Willelmi Toller'. U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 3v.

¹⁷⁹ Original: '\Ricardus Dyse et Alij/'. Original: '\parcenarij sui/'. U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 3v.

technical and specific legal term.¹⁸⁰ Moreover, the inability to fit all that had been discovered into the gap left for the name of *Osbernes'* tenant, suggests how productive these processes were, again emphasising officers' labours.

However, even the gaps which had not been filled in this way do not have to simply communicate the officer's failure; even these gaps can still be positively communicative and productive. An annotation by the entry for *Osbernes* suggests one such possibility. Once the statement that 'Richard Dyse and other fellow tenants [or coparceners] of his' held *Osbernes* had been written into the entry, the same hand writes in the margin that: 'it will be enquired about the fellow tenants [or coparceners]'.¹⁸¹ Now that the gap was gone from that entry, the spur to further enquiry had been lost: a written direction was now required. Gaps, therefore, seem to have functioned for officers – and others – as a 'stimulus' for more work.¹⁸² These gaps may also have seemed productive to tenants. The possibility and productive potential of gaps for the peasantry is suggested by the way the rebels of 1381 utilised the destruction of documents as a way to open up space for new negotiations and documents.¹⁸³ Gaps which have never been filled, therefore, can communicate that survey-type documents are always works in progress and record only a particular moment on the manor.¹⁸⁴ They simultaneously communicate the legitimacy of the knowledge that these documents contain while suggesting their limitations. This may have allowed a desirable ambiguity to exist around these documents which were both relied upon and open to negotiation and reformulation.¹⁸⁵

'Per estimacionem'

While gaps draw our attention to the officer's labour, whether its failure or its quality, turning to examine the formula *per estimacionem* will allow us to examine how this phrase communicates more about his role in the formulation of knowledge and the character of his labour. And, as with gaps, we will consider how this phrase relates to the endeavour of presenting knowledge as legitimate. The phrase *per estimacionem* appears in a number of the survey-type documents from West Wickham, Baston, Keston and Southcourt. It is used in the rentals of 1477 and 1484, and in the terrier of 1485, attached to various pieces of information.¹⁸⁶ Tenants might be

¹⁸⁰ U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 3v; *DMLBS*, s.v., *parcenaria*, 1.

¹⁸¹ Original: 'Ricardus Dyse et Alij \parcenarij sui/ /'. Original: 'inquiretur de parcenariis'. U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 3v.

¹⁸² The quotation comes from Gertsman, *Lacunae*, 107 and 122. Gertsman, Hardman and Wakelin are discussing imaginative work. Gertsman, 107, 116–117, 121–127; Hardman, 'Pictorial Intentions', 260; Wakelin, 'Gaps', 277.

¹⁸³ Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, 47–48.

¹⁸⁴ Wood, 'Custom and the Social Organisation of Writing', 265; Birrell, 'Customals Reconsidered', 19.

¹⁸⁵ Bronach Christina Kane notes the opportunities that ambiguity offered parishioners when it came to payments. Kane, *Memory and Gender*, 188–189.

¹⁸⁶ In the rentals of 1477 and 1484, *per estimacionem* appears in every one of the sections which are dedicated to an individual manor. In the terrier of 1485, *per estimacionem* is applied to holdings from all of the manors except Southcourt.

recorded as holding ‘one piece of land containing *per estimacionem* 5 acres’, or ‘a parcel of land containing in length *per estimacionem* 6 perches and in width 2 perches’.¹⁸⁷ Other entries might record that a piece of land is ‘called \per estimacionem/ Kynges Dene’.¹⁸⁸ *Per estimacionem* is only used in a minority of entries, but it is always a noticeable and, on occasion, a substantial minority.¹⁸⁹ This expression, therefore, was a component of the repertoire of forms, structures and conventional phrases which the officers and scribes of these Kentish manors thought was suitable for their rentals, surveys and terriers; more specifically, it was part of the vocabulary of manorial knowledge.¹⁹⁰

Importantly, while *per estimacionem* is a formulaic phrase, it was not used thoughtlessly. Rather, officers and scribes used this phrase with care. In these Kentish survey-type documents, we can see moments when scribes and officers evaluated whether *per estimacionem* should be used in a particular entry. We can see this particularly clearly in the instances where officers and scribes altered entries, crossing out or inserting *per estimacionem*.¹⁹¹ Sometimes they did both, and we can see such wavering decision-making in the 1477 rental. In the entry for a piece of land lying next to *Westfeld* and ‘recently of Richard Shotte’, the annotation *per estimacionem* was squeezed into the gap between ‘Shotte’ and the final phrase of the entry, ‘And he pays therefore per year — 5d’.¹⁹² However, this light and spindly annotation, the ‘t’ of ‘*estimacionem*’ disappearing into the ‘E’ of ‘Et’, made only a timid appearance before being thought the better of and crossed out. Officers were thoughtful and, sometimes, conflicted about how they should use *per estimacionem*. This suggests there was both specificity and complexity to its meaning and its use, and this will be the starting point for my examination of *per estimacionem*.

In order to understand what *per estimacionem* communicates about the knowledge-labour of the manorial officer, we first need to examine what the phrase meant to the people who used it. In order to do this, I will first pay attention to the contexts in which officers and scribes used this phrase, as these are suggestive of its meaning; I will then use these insights to determine which translations of *aestimatio* are most useful when it comes to understanding *per estimacionem*. It is instructive that *per estimacionem* is not applied to only one type of knowledge, such as numerical

¹⁸⁷ Original: ‘vnam peciam terrae continentem per estimacionem v acras’. U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 1v. Original: ‘vnam parcella terrae continentem in longitudine per estimacionem vj . perticatas et latitudine . ij . perticatas’. U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), f. 18r.

¹⁸⁸ Original: ‘Willelmus Waleys . tenet vnam peciam vocatur . \per estimacionem/ Kynges Dene’. U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 2v.

¹⁸⁹ The incidence of this phrase varies across these documents, and across the sections dedicated to each manor. For instance, *per estimacionem* appears in less than 5% of the entries related to West Wickham in the terrier of 1485, but in more than 45% of the entries related to Keston in the rental of 1484.

¹⁹⁰ This phrase was also used by the officers and scribes of other manors. For instance, see London, The National Archives, DL 43/6/32 (Saltfleetby: Detailed Rental of the Manor (1505)), m. 1r.

¹⁹¹ For instances of *per estimacionem* being inserted, see U312/M30 (Terrier, 1485), f. 14r; U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 2v. For an instance of *per estimacionem* being crossed out, see U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 4r.

¹⁹² Original: ‘tenet vnam peciam ~~vocat~~ur iacentem iuxta Westfeld’ nuper Ricardi Shotte \per estimacionem/ Et reddit inde per annum — v d’. U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 2r.

figures or the pronouncements of inquests. Instead, it is brought to bear on almost all the key categories of knowledge contained within the rentals, terriers and surveys of these Kentish manors. *Per estimacionem* was most frequently used in relation to the size of a holding. The line, 'Thomas Bedyll' holds freely two pieces of land containing *per estimacionem* 10 acres', is representative of the majority of the phrase's appearances.¹⁹³ However, *per estimacionem* is also applied to a holding's rental value or, suggestively, to categories of knowledge which are wholly lacking in numbers.¹⁹⁴

Scribes and officers applied *per estimacionem* to tenants' names, particularly when holdings changed hands or the identity of a tenant was uncovered.¹⁹⁵ It is also paired with the names of past tenants. For instance, the 1477 rental notes that 'William Shalsham holds one parcel of land called *Jelyans Hawes* and *Busshes* recently of Richard Carpenter and *per estimacionem* afterwards of John Aleynes'.¹⁹⁶ *Per estimacionem* is also used in relation to the names of the holdings themselves. For instance, those same holdings – *Jelyans Hawes* and *Busshes* – required further attention during the production of the 1484 rental: 'John Ellesdale holds freely ... two pieces of land containing three acres ... and called *per estimacionem Julyans Hawes*'.¹⁹⁷ Finally, *per estimacionem* is also applied to the manner in which land is held. For instance, the same man, John Ellesdale, holds another piece of land 'by right of his aforesaid wife *per estimacionem* as a villein'.¹⁹⁸ *Per estimacionem*, therefore, is brought to bear on tenants' names, the size and history of a holding, the terms by which it is held and the rent that is owed for it.¹⁹⁹ These categories are varied, including both qualitative and quantitative knowledge, the past, the present and the quotidian; it is clear that *per estimacionem* refers to a widely applicable mode of formulating knowledge.

Considering how *per estimacionem* might be translated allows us to understand more of the character of the knowledge-labour which it communicates. The *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* offers two distinct paths to choose from when translating *aestimatio*. The first set of meanings is *valuation* and *reckoning*, suggesting that *per estimacionem* may refer to a fundamentally mathematical, numerical, economic or financial process.²⁰⁰ The second set of meanings is *judgement*, *discernment*, and *apprehension*, suggesting that *per estimacionem* may indicate a more generic process of analysis and evaluation.²⁰¹ Both of these strands of meaning are appropriate for

¹⁹³ Original: 'Thomas Bedyll' tenet libere duas pecias terre continentes *per estimacionem* xx . acras .'. U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), f. 20v.

¹⁹⁴ For instance, see the entry relating to *Westfeld*', recently held by Richard Shotte, discussed above, and the entry relating to *Rowes tenement*, held by Stone's heirs, which will be discussed later in this chapter. U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), ff. 2r, 3v.

¹⁹⁵ For instance, see the entry relating to *Westfeld*', recently held by Richard Shotte, and the entry relating to *Rowes tenement*, held by Stone's heirs. Later in this chapter I will discuss how *per estimacionem* is appended to the names of the tenants in both these entries. U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), ff. 2r, 3v.

¹⁹⁶ Original: 'Willelmus Shalsham tenet . vnam parcellam terrae vocatur *Jelyans Hawes et Busshes* . nuper Ricardi Carpenter . et *per estimacionem* postea Johannis Aleynes'. U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 3v.

¹⁹⁷ Original: 'Johannes Ellesdale . tenet libere ... duas pecias terre continentes tres acras ... et vocantur *per estimacionem lulyans Hawes*'. U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), f. 7v.

¹⁹⁸ Original: 'in iure praedictae vxoris sue *per estimacionem* natiue'. U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), f. 8r.

¹⁹⁹ Interestingly, the only major category of knowledge to which *per estimacionem* is not applied is the description of where a holding is located.

²⁰⁰ DMLBS, s.v., *aestimatio*, 1.

²⁰¹ DMLBS, s.v., *aestimatio*, 2.

these documents. *Valuation* and *reckoning* work well in the context of documents which record the sizes of pieces of land and the income which a lord could hope to glean from his tenants' holdings. Meanwhile, *judgement*, *discernment* and *apprehension* are more expansive and can be applied to a much broader range of knowledge, including both the quantitative and the qualitative. Therefore, while *per estimacionem* may encompass *valuation* and *reckoning*, it is this latter constellation of meanings which seems to best capture what *per estimacionem* indicates when it is used in the context of these Kentish documents: it had been *discerned* or *apprehended* that John Aleynes had held *Jelynas Hawes* and *Bussches* after Richard Carpenter; and it had, likewise, been *reckoned*, *judged* or *discerned* that Thomas Bedyll's holding contains ten acres.²⁰²

But who was doing this *discerning*? As I have discussed, officers initiated and managed the processes of inquiry, examination, and negotiation which resulted in the production of survey-type documents. Therefore, *per estimacionem* seems to direct attention to the officer and, moreover, to the quality of his labour – to his *discernment* and his *judgement* – and how he interacted with knowledge rather than to the processes of examination or measuring themselves.²⁰³ The sense of *judgement*, *discernment* and *apprehension* which *per estimacionem* communicates thereby enriches how the process of enquiry could or, more accurately, *should* be imagined. *Per estimacionem* elides the phases of searching and questioning, and instead focuses attention on to the implication that the process of inquiry did not necessarily produce a single neat answer which the officer could simply write into his survey-type document. He was not extracting knowledge from the tenantry; rather, he formulated knowledge by analysing, evaluating, and endeavouring to interpret and understand what he had either discovered or been told. Discerning knowledge could be very difficult; asserting that one was capable of it could, therefore, be a claim that one had expertise in that particular context.²⁰⁴ Therefore, when officers and scribes wrote *per estimacionem* into their documents, it could be a declaration of the officer's expertise in that manor and its management and, moreover, in the formulation of manorial knowledge.

It is likely that *discernment* is a particularly significant facet of *per estimacionem*'s meaning; historians have already recognised the value of discernment in relation to the courts and to the knowledge-work they required.²⁰⁵ Crucially, *discernment* has particular weight when it comes to intimating the officer's role in the process of formulating manorial knowledge. Discernment is a quality which was associated with fitness to be involved in governance and to deliver legal judgements and justice.²⁰⁶ This association between discernment, governance and legal judgement suggests that *per estimacionem* implies that officers not only sat at the heart of the formulation of manorial knowledge, but that they were fit to preside over it. But, more than that, it suggests that

²⁰² U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 3v; U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), f. 20v.

²⁰³ Harvey discusses officers at Cuxham coming to measure land themselves. Harvey, *Cuxham*, 76.

²⁰⁴ Fiona Somerset, "'Mark Him Wel for He Is on of Po": Training the "Lewed" Gaze to Discern Hypocrisy', *ELH* 68, no. 2 (2001): 315–334 (316–317, 319).

²⁰⁵ See this paragraph and the one following, especially Johnson's work.

²⁰⁶ James Tait, *The Medieval English Borough: Studies on Its Origins and Constitutional History* (1936; repr., Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1968), 161 n. 1, 279, 306–307, 313, 322–323; Richard M. Fraher, 'Conviction According to Conscience: The Medieval Jurists' Debate Concerning Judicial Discretion and the Law of Proof', *LHR* 7, no. 1 (1989): 23–88 (28, 56–60); Penny Tucker, 'London's Courts of Law in the Fifteenth Century: The Litigants' Perspective', in *Communities and Courts in Britain 1150–1900*, ed. Christopher Brooks and Michael Lobban (London: The Hambledon Press, 1997), 25–42 (40); Johnson, *Law in Common*, 190.

the formulation of manorial knowledge required the officer to manage disparate assortments of knowledge and multiple parties. The officer might have to deal with fragmentary, and occasionally contradictory, pieces of knowledge and evidence; he would need to weigh them, interpret them, and fit them together, or judge when others had done so convincingly.²⁰⁷ This type of discernment also required the officer to manage multiple parties – likely an essential skill in a process which might involve a jury (which might not have always spoken with one voice), individual tenants, or even the whole body of the tenantry, as well as officers, multiple documents, and even the lord.²⁰⁸ The officer might need to separate out and balance various interests, evidences, and different claims to knowledge. The phrase *per estimacionem*, therefore, suggests that the officer had facilitated the formulation of a piece of manorial knowledge which satisfied the parties involved – or could at least be accepted by them. Discernment was both a marker and a function of wisdom and decision-making which convinced others; a lack of discernment, on the other hand, could lead to '[g]reat discords'.²⁰⁹

Discernment was also a mode of formulating knowledge which imparted legitimacy on its findings. Johnson deftly outlines how, in the eyes of law courts, knowledge that had been produced by discernment was legitimate, while people who were discerning were wanted as 'knowledge workers'.²¹⁰ For instance, the leet court of Willoughby decreed that the inhabitants of the manor should graze their cattle according to the directions of 'six or seven of the most discerning men of this lordship'.²¹¹ The process of formulating legitimate manorial knowledge would, it is clear, have demanded some discernment from numerous participants, not just from officers; indeed tenants' discernment could also be encompassed within *per estimacionem*. However, as it was officers and scribes who decided when and where *per estimacionem* should be written in these Kentish documents, the final, and highest, act of discernment is reserved for the officer: he decides when others have been discerning and when legitimate manorial knowledge has been produced. The officer either transforms the results of inquiry and examination into a coherent, cohesive and complete statement of manorial knowledge, appropriate to be recorded in these documents, himself or he judges when others had done so. *Per estimacionem*, therefore, does not present the tenantry as the body 'rubber-stamping' manorial knowledge, but seems to confer that authority onto the officer.²¹² This phrase, therefore, presents officers as fundamental actors in the formulation of manorial knowledge. They are not extractors of knowledge, but judges, discerners, evaluators and managers of knowledge and of people. The character of the officer's work – their discernment – argues for the legitimacy of the knowledge they produced but, importantly, the officer is also positioned as the judge of when knowledge was legitimate.

²⁰⁷ For discussion of these activities and skills in the context of making legal judgements, see Fraher, 'Conviction', 39–43, 52–53, 55–56.

²⁰⁸ See pages 90–91. Birrell, 'Customs Reconsidered', 3.

²⁰⁹ The quotation is from Tait, *The Borough*, 323. Penny Tucker describes the image of 'Solomonic wisdom and discretion' which was created by the courts of fifteenth-century London and their dispute resolution. Tucker, 'London's Courts', 40. Also, see note 226 below.

²¹⁰ Johnson, *Law in Common*, 186, 190–191, 206.

²¹¹ Johnson, 190 quoting Oxford, Magdalen College Archives, 45/1 (Court rolls of Willoughby) (translated by Johnson).

²¹² Birrell, 'Customs Reconsidered', 22.

Per estimacionem thus draws attention to the officer's labour and skill. As manorial accounts spoke to lords of the officers' labour and argued for their value, it seems that the image of the officer and his knowledge-labour which *per estimacionem* intimates likewise communicates the officers' worth to the lord.²¹³ However, unlike accounts, these survey-type documents were not directed solely at the lord, nor did they centre on the relationship between the lord and the officer. Therefore, this depiction of officers' labour may also have spoken to officers themselves. As officers returned to these documents time and again, referring to them and amending them, they were reminded – both by undertaking the acts of making and maintaining these documents, and by *per estimacionem* itself – that they were central to the process of formulating manorial knowledge.²¹⁴ Therefore, knowledge production may have become not only a key part of officers' labour, but of their professional identity.²¹⁵

²¹³ Although here I am focusing on lords' responses to *per estimacionem*, it is not impossible that some tenants would also have responded to its depiction of the officer. While gentry lords – especially those like Newton or Sir John Scott – may have been more likely than many of the tenants to have a good understanding of Latin, as I have discussed in the Introduction, rural communities did not lack any access to Latin education or experience with documents. Moreover, Reynes' commonplace book demonstrates that some members of the peasantry had both practical and nuanced understandings of Latin (see the discussion in the Introduction) and, moreover, considered Latin to be a capacious language. For instance, Reynes lists the 'Septem Virtutes Principales' (*The Seven Principal Virtues*) and the 'Septem Sacramenta Ecclesie' (*The Seven Sacraments of the Church*) in both Latin and English. Louis, *Commonplace Book of Reynes*, 244–245 (#62) at 244. However, while he gives each of the English lists the label, 'these ben the VII ...', each of them contain eight items. Louis, 244–245 (#62) at 244, at 245. He gives 'Trewth' as an additional virtue, while 'shryfte and penaunce' are both required to express what is encompassed within 'penitencia'. Louis, 244–245 (#62) at 244, at 245. Reynes seems to be mapping vernacular (both in the sense of language and 'popular' (Claire M. Waters, 'Talking the Talk: Access to the Vernacular in Medieval Preaching', in *The Vulgar Tongue: Medieval and Postmedieval Vernacularity*, ed. Fiona Somerset and Nicholas Watson (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 31–42 (31))) conceptions of the sacraments and the virtues on to the Latin terminology. The idea that translation can water down a word's meaning, requiring more words to explain what was originally encapsulated within one (Nicholas Watson, 'King Solomon's Tablets', in *The Vulgar Tongue: Medieval and Postmedieval Vernacularity*, ed. Fiona Somerset and Nicholas Watson (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 1–14 (2)), allows Reynes to encompass additional virtues, presumably crucial in his social context, within the authoritative Latin terms by an implicit claim that this is their 'entent', their 'abstract truth' (Ruth Evans et al., 'The Notion of Vernacular Theory', in *The Idea of The Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280–1520*, ed. Ruth Evans et al. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 314–330 (328)). People like Reynes amongst the tenantry, therefore, may have recognised the breadth of meaning that *per estimacionem* offered up for interpretation. The interpretation of *per estimacionem* which I have discussed above may, therefore, have been open to tenants – through either their own readings or the mediation of people like Reynes or hired law-workers (Tompkins, "'Kill All the Lawyers'", 74–75, 84–85, 87).

²¹⁴ The rental of 1477 shows evidence of updates being made, as well as annotations being made for ease of reference, particularly on U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 3r. Annotations and updates – for instance, the names of new tenants – were added to most of the pages in the 1484 rental. U312/M29 (Rental, 1484). It also shows annotations made by people referring to the document, such as writing 'copyhold' or 'villein holding' ('*tenura native*') in the margin of relevant entries. For instance, see U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), ff. 3r, 6r, 8r. A memorandum was also added on U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), f. 24v. Annotations and amendments also appear on the majority of the 1485 terrier's pages. Memorandums were also added to U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), ff. 11v, 15v.

²¹⁵ Esther Liberman Cuenca notes that the oaths of custumal-making town clerks could require them to make 'trew' records; it was an essential part of their role and contributed to their authority. Cuenca, 'Town Clerks', 190–193 at 190 quoting Norwich, NRO, KL/C9/1, f. 4r. This may provide an interesting parallel to *per estimacionem* as, while this phrase certainly does not constitute an oath, it does imply that formulating manorial knowledge provided the officer both with a source of authority and a space in which to exercise it.

Having considered what *per estimacionem* may have communicated to lords and to officers themselves, we should now consider how the phrase might have appeared to the tenantry as an audience. Officers seem to have hoped that *per estimacionem* could be used to communicate the legitimacy of particular pieces of knowledge to the tenantry; to explore this idea I will analyse three entries – two from the rental of 1477 and one from the terrier of 1485.

The two entries from the rental of 1477 suggest that *per estimacionem* is applied to moments where parties from the manorial administration and the tenantry had agreed that a piece of knowledge was legitimate and, moreover, that that legitimacy had been demonstrated through labour. The knowledge may have been co-produced by both parties but, as I have discussed in the previous section, it certainly implies the discerning knowledge-labour of the officer. The first of these entries relates to a holding on the manor of Baston, while the second relates to a holding on the manor of West Wickham. *Per estimacionem* makes an appearance twice in each entry. The Baston entry was written in two phases. The first phase of its composition read: '[blank] holds one piece ~~called~~ lying next to *Westfeld*' recently of Richard Shotte And he pays therefore per annum — 5d'.²¹⁶ The blank space left for the tenant's name was never filled in but, later, 'Thomas Bedill' *per estimacionem* holds', was written into the margin.²¹⁷ This is also the entry in which the wavering over the inclusion of *per estimacionem*, which I discussed above, appears: during the later phase of writing, *per estimacionem* was squeezed in between 'Shotte' and 'And' before being crossed out.²¹⁸ The entry for the West Wickham holding was also written in multiple phases. As in the Baston entry, the scribe and officer left a space for the tenant's name. In this instance the gap was soon filled and Richard Chelsham was named as the tenant. However, in later phases of writing this entry was significantly amended and it now reads: 'The same Richard \Stone's heirs *per estimacionem*/ holds a tenement called *Rowes tenement* recently of the said Richard Bolle And he pays per annum \per estimacionem/ 5 *bederepe* men and \in money/ 3s 6d'.²¹⁹ It seems that new tenants had taken over these holdings after the initial composition of the rental in 1477.²²⁰

Like the oaths of the town clerk, therefore, *per estimacionem* may suggest that this kind of work was part of the officer's professional identity.

²¹⁶ Original: '[blank] tenet vnam peciam vocatur iacentem iuxta Westfeld' nuper Ricardi Shotte . Et reddit inde per annum . — v d'. U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 2r.

²¹⁷ Original: 'Thomas . Bedill' . per estimacionem . tenet'. U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 2r.

²¹⁸ Original: 'Shotte'. Original: 'Et'. U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 2r.

²¹⁹ Original: 'Idem Ricardus . \heredes Stones . per estimacionem ./ tenet tenementum vocatur *Rowes tenement* nuper dicti Ricardi Bolle . Et reddit per annum \per estimacionem/ v *bederepe* men . et \in denario/ iij s vj d'. U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 3v. As explained in note 220 below, I think it is likely that the heirs of Stone were the heirs of William Stone. The *bederepe* was a labour service which required a tenant to provide the lord with one day of reaping. MED, s.v., *bed-rip(e)*, *bed-* n., 1a; Seebohm, *Village Community*, 56, 58–59. This entry, therefore, required the tenant of *Rowes* to provide five men who would each carry out one day of reaping.

²²⁰ Thomas Bedill (whose surname is variously written as 'Bethill' (U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 2r), 'Bedill' (U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 2r) and 'Bedyll' (U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), f. 20v)) was already active on the manor of Baston in 1477. He is listed in the 1477 rental as the tenant of two holdings at Baston, *le Redon* and *le Hoke*. U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 2r. He still held those lands in 1484, although by this point both pieces of land shared the name *le Redon*. U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), f. 20v. In 1477, he may already have been acting as the tenant of the piece of land by *Westfeld* unbeknownst to the officers of the manor. However, I think it is more likely that Bedill took over the tenancy some time after 1477 as the scribe or officer who added the

The insertion of the phrase *per estimacionem* alongside these tenants' names might imply that a process of inquiry involving the administration and the tenantry had revealed that Thomas Bedill and Stone's heirs were already acting as the tenants of these holdings or that, in the case of Stone's heirs, this holding was part of their inheritance and they were due to take responsibility for it. However, it is more telling that in both these entries *per estimacionem* was inserted, either briefly or permanently, beside a pre-existing detail – the rental value of the holding. This suggests that it is not necessarily the discovery of “new” knowledge which makes *per estimacionem* an appropriate annotation, but the formulation of knowledge to the satisfaction of parties from both the manorial administration and the tenantry.

Moreover, *per estimacionem* indicates that discerning knowledge-labour – perhaps of both parties, but certainly of the officer – had been crucial in demonstrating the legitimacy of each of these holdings' rents to their new tenants' satisfaction. As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, producing a rental required the officer and the tenant to come to some agreement over rents.²²¹ In that earlier rental 'confessus' does the work of arresting negotiations and demonstrating agreement as it declares that the tenant had admitted that this rent is right.²²² Meanwhile, in the 1477 rental, *per estimacionem* plays a similar role in signalling that a rent is right and agreed – or at the very least should have been agreed – by the officer and tenant. In contrast, however, *per estimacionem* puts the emphasis not on the tenant's acknowledgement of the rent, but on the way that knowledge-labour – and particularly the knowledge-labour of the officer – had demonstrated the legitimacy of that rent.²²³ The clarification of the terms by which Stone's heirs should have their holding – that the rent should be paid 'in money' – is significant as it emphasises that while this knowledge was not new, it has been revisited and honed.²²⁴ Some discussion or negotiation surely took place, and some type of inquiry, examination, or documentary review seems to have been required to demonstrate the basis of this rent to the new tenant. The officer and scribe's decision to commemorate this

annotation regarding Bedill's tenancy was careful to keep this information separate from the main body of the text. Keeping Bedill in the margin of the entry, rather than writing him into the invitingly empty space at its start, allowed the writer to create and maintain a distinction between the manor in 1477 and the manor as it was later. Turning to Stone's heirs, the Stones were a family who seem to have held land in West Wickham over a number of years. John Stone is listed as holding land in West Wickham in 1477, while in 1484 Robert Stone held land both alone and jointly with his daughter, Joanna Stone, and the heirs of William Stone. U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 3r; U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), ff. 10v, 15r. Also in 1484, William Wodward held land by right of his wife, Anastacia, who was the former wife of Thomas or William Stone. These lands are noted as recently having been held by Thomas Stone. U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), f. 14v. I think that it is likely that the Stone heirs written into the 1477 rental were the heirs of William Stone, and that they took over the holding some time between 1477 and 1484 (*Rowes tenement* was the holding whose entry to which they were added in 1477, and in the 1484 rental they jointly held at least part of the same tenement). U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 3v; U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), ff. 10v–11r. Stone's heirs may have been written into the body of the entry, rather than confined to the margin like Bedill, because the crossing out of the previous tenant's name serves to preserve the chronology of ownership.

²²¹ U312/M22/5 (Rental, 1428/1429).

²²² U312/M22/5 (Rental, 1428/1429), m. 1r.

²²³ Johnson discusses the appeal of truth which was made through 'craft' in the context of soothsaying and law courts. Tom Johnson, 'Soothsayers, Legal Culture, and the Politics of Truth in Late-Medieval England', *Cultural and Social History* 17, no. 4 (August 7, 2020): 431–450 (439–440 at 440). He draws attention to the efforts made to emphasise the 'craft' of the 'trustworthy men' who pronounced truth to the courts, arguing that these were 'designed to reinforce the legitimacy of decision-making, and truth-pronouncing, that was built upon hierarchy rather than craft, upon pure authority rather than expertise'. Johnson, 440.

²²⁴ Original: 'in denario'. U312/M28/1 (Rental, 1477), f. 3v.

labour in the rental's text was perhaps a response to the relative strength of tenants' economic negotiating position in this period combined with the likelihood of them falling into arrears; officers needed to manage their tenants and their rents 'sensitively', and *per estimacionem* intimates the labour they had undertaken to demonstrate the legitimacy of the rents they would ask of their tenants.²²⁵ Moreover, it implies the new tenants' agreement, and even begins to prepare a defence of this level of rent in anticipation of any future backsliding, dispute, or change of tenant.

Why then would an officer or scribe have crossed out the *per estimacionem* inserted into Thomas Bedill's entry? Why would they remove this marker of knowledge-labour and legitimacy? The motivation or utility of such an action is suggested by my earlier argument that the presence of gaps suggests that assumption and speculation is absent from officers' work and, therefore, imparts greater legitimacy on to the knowledge which these survey-type documents do contain. The *per estimacionem* which was deleted from Bedill's entry may have been added mistakenly, more in hope than certainty, or in anticipation of discussions which did not take place or were not successful; perhaps an officer had exercised his judgement somewhat clumsily. Therefore, like a gap, the sight of this crossing-out could be reassuring. The officer had made a momentary misjudgement rather than being duplicitous or overpowering or, at the very least, such impulses had been checked. This crossing-out demonstrates that the officers of these Kentish manors would not simply claim that they had engaged in knowledge-labour which had satisfied a tenant and resulted in agreement. Instead, it suggests that honesty went along with their discernment, and thereby confers greater legitimacy on those instances where *per estimacionem* still stands.²²⁶

Many of the pieces of knowledge in these documents to which *per estimacionem* is appended are more mundane and less obviously negotiated than rents – *Chapmans*, held by Richard Joury, contained '*per estimacionem* 2½ acres'.²²⁷ However, the inclusion of this formulaic phrase suggests that officers had effectively orchestrated and undertaken knowledge-labour of a kind which tenants were expected to find convincing. Therefore, when scribes and officers wrote *per estimacionem* into these survey-type documents, they seem to have been responding to an

²²⁵ The quotation is from Bailey, *The Manor*, 41. For further illustrations of the above points, see Bailey, 'Rural Society', 154–157; Britnell, 'Pastons', 132, 136–137, 140–142. The activities of the Pastons' officers and servants are instructive. They collected rents and let out lands, often struggling to reach a bargain with potential tenants. Colin Richmond, *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century: The First Phase* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 23–27, 25–26 n. 10; Britnell, 'Pastons', 135, 137; Colin Richmond, 'Landlord and Tenant: The Paston Evidence', in *Enterprise and Individuals in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. Jennifer Kermode (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1991), 25–42 (33, 34, 35, 37); Colin Richmond, *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century: Fastolf's Will* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 189; Bennett, *The Pastons*, 65, 190, 251–252. Their letters relate their travails and the tacks which they – and potential farmers – took in their negotiations. Richmond, *Pastons: First Phase*, 25–26, 26 n. 10; Britnell, 'Pastons', 137; Richmond, 'Landlord and Tenant', 33, 34–35; Bennett, *The Pastons*, 251–252; James Gairdner, ed., *The Paston Letters*, microprint edition (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1983), 292–293 no. 231. Once lets had been made, preserving those agreements could require unexpected work, including swift interventions in tenants' disputes. Richmond, *Pastons: First Phase*, 25; Richmond, 'Landlord and Tenant', 32–33, 36; Gairdner, ed., *The Paston Letters*, 292–293 no. 231.

²²⁶ Johnson, *Law in Common*, 186–187, 190–191. Johnson notes that discernment was an integral part of honesty, which 'comprised both the respectability and responsibility that people wanted from those who produced legitimate knowledge'. Johnson, 191.

²²⁷ Original: 'Ricardus Joury tenet libere ... unam peciam terrae continentem per estimacionem . ij acras dimidium . vocatur Chapmans'. U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), f. 6v.

imagined – and perhaps sometimes present – tenant audience. Through this phrase, they argue that the manorial knowledge in these documents is legitimate, and it is legitimate because it depends upon discerning knowledge-labour which they had presided over and, indeed, in which tenants were often involved. Moreover, as *per estimacionem* appears in these documents again and again, it builds a sense that these rentals, surveys and terriers had been produced by officers and scribes who share an understanding with tenants of what made knowledge legitimate and, therefore, their contents can be depended upon.

However, when it is considered from a different angle, *per estimacionem*'s strength in communicating the officer's discerning knowledge-labour can, in fact, undercut the legitimacy of the knowledge it is applied to. As a final point, it is worth turning to one entry from the terrier of 1485 which reveals that manorial officers were alive to the limitations and weaknesses inherent in this phrase when it came to presenting knowledge as legitimate to the tenantry. I have been arguing that *per estimacionem* positions the officer as the central agent in the formulation of manorial knowledge and, moreover, as the judge of when knowledge had been discerned. Therefore, *per estimacionem* is in danger of marking knowledge as seigneurial rather than as truly manorial. In this entry, we can see these Kentish officers and scribes applying and struggling with the slipperiness of *per estimacionem*.

The entry relates to a piece of heathland in Baston which was held by the lord. It describes where this particular nineteen acres of heathland lies before noting that this 'heath in the pasture is common and \per estimacionem/ in all other benefits is for the lord in severalty'. The people of the village of Hayes, on the other hand, 'claim that the heath is their common land and thus so are the revenues in all matters'. The entry either directs or records that the 'evidence is thus examined and interrogated', before it ends with another command: 'Therefore it is to be remembered'.²²⁸ In this entry, *per estimacionem* has been added as an annotation, pointedly slipped in before the lord's claim to the heathland's other benefits. The enquiry process which is described in this entry – the scrutiny of evidence and the interrogation of people – sits in between these two competing claims, like the central pillar of a pair of scales. The addition of *per estimacionem* seems to be a scribal and officerial move to bolster and legitimise the lord's claim, tipping the scales in his direction, by asserting that his claim was underpinned by the kind of discerning knowledge-labour which created legitimate manorial knowledge.

²²⁸ The entry reads: 'Also another piece of heathland ... in which heathland [right of] pasture is [held in] common and \per estimacionem/ all other benefits [profits, uses] belong to the lord in severalty and it contains in total 19 acres despite the evidence being examined then interrogated the community of *hese* claims that that heath is their common land in all [its] benefits [profits, uses]. Therefore it is to be remembered'. Original: 'Item alia pecia brueriae ... qua brueria in pastura est communis et \per estimacionem/ in omnibus alijs proficius est domino separalis . et continente in toto xix acras tamen perscrutatur evidetia inde quaeritur villata de hese illam brueriam clamat fore sua Comuna in omnibus proficius . Ideo Memorandum'. U312/M30 (Terrier, 1485), f. 14r. Due to the suspension mark used in the document, I am quite sure that 'p'scrut' should be expanded as a verb with a -ur ending – as I have done – rather than as a noun. However, *perscrutatur* is usually a deponent, whereas here I have translated it as a passive verb for sense. It may be that the abbreviation mark was actually intended to denote a participle or the present tense of *perscrutare* or, indeed, it is very possible that this abbreviation mark disguises some uncertainty or lack of specificity in the Latin. A further possibility is that this portion of the entry could be translated as something similar to: 'by scrutiny of the evidence it is thus to be enquired of the vill of Hayes that claims it to be their common'.

It is not certain when *per estimacionem* was inserted into this entry. It might indicate that an earlier process of inquiry and discernment had already found in the lord's favour. On the other hand, if it was inserted later, it might mean that the processes of inquiry and interrogation which the entry refers to – and which the people of Hayes are supposed to be part of – had been completed and their results supported the lord. Legitimate knowledge had – at some point – been discerned and, thankfully, in the lord's favour. However, this inserted *per estimacionem* does not seem to have the strength of the tenantry's endorsement; rather, it seems to be the hopeful judgement of the officer. He may have hoped that this formulaic phrase would contribute to the effort of convincing the community of Hayes who were involved in this dispute. Their agreement was essential to ensuring that the lord could actually extract his other benefits, revenues and profits from this heathland. If the community of Hayes refused to recognise his claim, there would be a continuing and labour-consuming tussle over these rights.

The writer of the terrier used *per estimacionem* to free the record of this dispute from being stuck between the competing claims of the lord and the community of Hayes; he endeavoured to swing the pendulum towards his lord. The insertion of *per estimacionem* insinuates that these rights had been settled, and the lord's possession of them was now certain and legitimate manorial knowledge. However, the phrase 'Therefore it is to be remembered' reveals the officer's recognition that this dispute is neither decisively nor permanently settled: it is important to remember the details of this dispute because it might rear its head again and the lord's claim will require reiterating.²²⁹ This lack of confidence is underlined by the terrier's final calculation of the lord's lands in Baston. Here, the officer and scribe note that they have not included these nineteen acres of heathland in the total because of the competing claims of the community of Hayes.²³⁰ It seems that the implication that *per estimacionem* marks out authoritative and legitimate manorial knowledge can only be sustained so far when this phrase ultimately only delivers the judgement of the officer. Despite the legitimising associations of the labour of discernment, the officer's alignment with the lord left his judgement open to denial by the tenantry. This entry, therefore, suggests that the Kentish officers and scribes who created these survey-type documents saw the strengths and the limitations inherent in *per estimacionem* and its depiction of their knowledge labour. They wrote with a pressing awareness of these documents' broad audience of tenants, lords and other officers, and of the way that this complicated their interpretation.

²²⁹ Original: 'Ideo Memorandum'. U312/M30 (Terrier, 1485), f. 14r.

²³⁰ The relevant part of this statement reads: 'and it [these nineteen acres of heathland] is not part of the aforesaid total [of the lord's lands in the manor of Baston] for the reason that [those] dwelling in the aforesaid hese claim that [heath] is their common land Therefore the evidence is examined carefully'. Original: 'que non est parcella summe praedictae eo quod commorantes in hese praedicta illam clamant fore sua Comuna . Ideo perscrutatur Euiden[]'. U312/M30 (Terrier, 1485), f. 14v. Here, again, I have expanded 'p'scrut' as *perscrutatur* as the same -ur abbreviation is used. See the discussion in note 228.

Conclusion

Both officers and tenants were involved in the production of survey-type documents. However, while historians have substantially developed our understanding of tenants' influence and agency in this process, officers have not received the same sustained study. Therefore, in this chapter I have set out to explore how survey-type documents communicate manorial officers' role in the formulation of manorial knowledge and the quality of their knowledge-labour. However, these documents anticipate a broad audience, encompassing lords, tenants, and officers themselves, with varied – and sometimes competing – interests, requirements and perspectives. The interpretations of these documents' intimations and depictions of officers' knowledge labour therefore proliferate and, crucially, are complicated. While one mode of communicating the character and quality of officers' knowledge-labour can argue for the legitimacy of these documents' contents, a shift in perspective and in reading can undercut its claims. While knowledge-labour seems to have been a vital and valuable part of officers' work, they seem to have been alive to the ambiguities, limitations, and potential power of communicating it.

I began by examining the gaps which were left in these Kentish documents. Drawing on Gertsman's work on illustrated manuscripts, I have considered the rich interpretive potential of these recurrent spaces. I have first discussed how gaps can communicate failure: of processes, of officers and, more potently, of seigneurial power and its efforts at self-protection. Gaps could, therefore, have communicated an ambivalent sense of promise to tenants. Seigneurial power, symbolised by these knowledge-hoarding documents, is visibly not total and these chinks – in documents and in power relations – could be filled to tenants' advantage. However, tenants also drew on survey-type documents themselves and could value the information and the certainty they could provide; their inadequacy, therefore, could be frustrating for them too. From the perspective of lords, on the other hand, this sense of failure could have been unambiguously unsettling, or even threatening, as it played into the fears of seigneurial vulnerability and of fraud which I have discussed in Chapter One.

However, I have argued that failure is only one potential way of interpreting the gaps in these documents; moreover, it is one which the officers and scribes who composed these Kentish documents seem to have worked to counter. I have suggested that the ambiguity of gaps, in concert with the breadth of these documents' audience, opened up space for other interpretations. Gaps could reassure tenants that officers were careful and honest in their work – they did not assume, gloss over, or invent – and, therefore, communicate that the knowledge which these documents *did* contain was legitimate. Similarly, drawing on Wakelin's work on literary manuscripts, I have argued that gaps could communicate the quality and diligence of officers' labour to their lord. Gaps both demonstrate that officers were committed to the labour of examination, inquiry and investigation, and act as spurs to further work.

I then turned to consider the thoughtful way in which officers and scribes used the formulaic phrase *per estimacionem* in these documents. I have argued that *per estimacionem* communicates an image of the officer reckoning, judging, apprehending and, crucially, discerning knowledge. Moreover, *per estimacionem* intimates that the officer presided over the formulation of manorial knowledge, judging when the process had been completed and when legitimate manorial knowledge

had been discerned. *Per estimacionem*, therefore, draws attention to the officer's labour and skill, and positions him as an essential agent in the formulation of manorial knowledge; he was not simply a conduit or an extractor of the tenantry's knowledge or perspective. Therefore, I have suggested that not only could *per estimacionem* communicate the officers' worth to their lord, but that – in combination with the practice of returning to and maintaining these documents – this formulaic phrase may have encouraged officers to develop a professional identity of which their knowledge-labour was a valuable constituent.

Finally, I considered the tenantry as an audience for *per estimacionem*. I have argued that the character of the officers' knowledge-labour which *per estimacionem* communicates – particularly its relation to discernment, its reliance on work and, potentially, the involvement of the tenantry themselves – engages with ideas about what made knowledge legitimate which would have been recognised – and appreciated – by the tenantry. Therefore, officers could use *per estimacionem* to mark knowledge as legitimate and agreed; indeed, this sense of legitimacy could even permeate through these documents more widely. However, as I have discussed, the interpretation of these documents could shift and complicate along with their audience's perspectives and interests. While I have argued that, in the case of gaps, this opens up the potential for readings which advocate for the officer, here I have suggested that *per estimacionem*'s depiction of the officer's role and his knowledge-labour creates an inherent limit on this phrase's efficacy as a marker of legitimate knowledge. As *per estimacionem* positions the officer as a judge and decision-maker it has the potential to communicate to the tenantry that this knowledge was simply what the seigneurial administration claimed to be true. The way that these Kentish officers and scribes used *per estimacionem* in their survey-type document suggests that they were alive and responsive both to the potential power and the vulnerabilities of using *per estimacionem* and, more broadly, communicating the character and quality of their knowledge-labour.

Like the manorial account, these survey-type documents depict the labour and skill of the manorial officer. Their gaps and their formulae encouraged their audience of tenants and lords to imagine the officer at work and, moreover, these documents reflected an image of the officer back to themselves. While in Chapter One I explored how the accounts displayed the officer's documentary-labour to his lord, I have found that these survey-type documents effectively communicated their knowledge-labour to a broad audience. This awareness of a broad audience for these documents contributes to our understanding of officers' participation in a rural writing culture. Unlike Cade's rebels, manorial officers did not have the luxury of making different documents for different audiences; instead, these survey-type documents suggest that they were aware of and responsive to the tensions inherent in writing for a wide – and sometimes opposed – audience.²³¹ This audience could also engage with these survey-type documents in different ways: they could read their visual cues or their text, and expand the meaning of their Latin formulae in shifting ways. Moreover, the documents themselves shifted over time through different phases of composition and officers' additions of layers of annotations. While historians have often focused on the certainties provided by this genre of manorial documents and its stasis, my analysis has demonstrated that there are facets of these documents which are unstable, interpretable and which

²³¹ Scase, *Literature and Complaint*, 113–115.

– despite their sometimes diminutive scale – have the potential to spark a range of significant imaginings.

CHAPTER THREE

John Skayman's Remembrance Book

Introduction

Shortly after he had celebrated Easter in 1516, John Skayman, an energetic bailiff and 'receiver-general' on the Norfolk estate of Roger Townshend II, settled himself with paper and pen and began to write a 'Remembrans of al my masters besenes fulfullyd *and* done by me'.¹ He immediately set about recording his labours, beginning with the Monday after Easter and then continuing, 'Item a Tuysdey ... Item a Wedonsdey ...', and on through the week.² These entries not only record the immediate events of Skayman's days, but are peppered with managerial knowledge and detail: on that Monday he was at Shereford, where he saw a fence which Townshend's tenant had erected around 'hys copy grownd the wych he pay yerly for v. s.', while on the Wednesday he was at Helhoughton because another lord's bailiff was claiming an acre and a half of land which, Skayman wrote, Townshend had in fact 'purchesyde of John Lely'.³ Regarding Sunday, Skayman's remembrance book is silent; on that day he did not labour on Townshend's behalf.

And so Skayman's remembrance book continues, recording his labours as they took him across the Townshend estate and the wider region, from the parishes of Burnham by Norfolk's north coast to Saham and Carbrooke in the south, and from King's Lynn and Gaywood in the west to Salle and Heydon in the east.⁴ Skayman's work was varied. He laboured with the estate's sheep from April to September and at the harvest in the late summer and early autumn, while in the winter and the spring he focused on land management and hedging.⁵ Throughout the year he went to fairs and

¹ Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 95–97 at 97; Charles Moreton, *The Townshends and Their World: Gentry, Law, and Land in Norfolk c. 1450–1551*, Oxford Historical Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 138; BL/T 13/28, f. 1r. For a discussion of the varied – and overlapping – role of another 'receiver-general' on a late medieval Norfolk estate, see Richard Britnell's discussion of the role of Richard Calle and his successor, William Pecok, who served the Paston family in the later fifteenth century. Britnell, 'Pastons', 135–136 at 135.

² BL/T 13/28, f. 1r.

³ BL/T 13/28, f. 1r. Shereford is about seven miles both from Skayman's primary residence in South Creak and from his second residence in Stibbard (this was probably his second wife's property and he bequeathed it to her in his will, directing that she remove there after his death). It is around three miles from the Townshend's seat at East Raynham. Helhoughton is about nine miles from both South Creak and Stibbard, and about 2 miles from East Raynham. Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 100, 145–146 editing Norwich, NRO, NCC Will Register Robinson 77 (Registered copy of John Skayman's will dated 19 December 1519 and proved 8 February 1520) (hereafter, NCC Will Register Robinson 77 (Skayman's will)).

⁴ Burnham: BL/T 13/28, ff. 5r, 9r, 12r, 13v, 14v, 18r, 18v, 19v, 20v, 22r, 22v, 33v; Moreton, *Townshends*, 38, 114 (Map 1). Saham: BL/T 13/28, f. 29r. Carbrooke: BL/T 13/28, f. 10r. King's Lynn: BL/T 13/28, f. 23r. Gaywood: BL/T 13/28, f. 11r. Salle: BL/T 13/28, ff. 6r, 11v, 20r, 22r, 22v, 23v, 24r, 29v, 31v. Heydon: BL/T 13/28, ff. 8r, 20r.

⁵ Examples of Skayman labouring with the estates sheep from April to September: in May and June Skayman worked at washing and clipping sheep, and gelding and healing lambs (BL/T 13/28, ff. 3v, 4r, 4v, 24r, 24v); in

attended and kept courts, often assisting in their business.⁶ He leased various properties, and he also paid and collected rents, debts and other monies, received and delivered monies, and paid taxes and wages.⁷ Skayman spent time combing through, consulting, and sorting the documents such as accounts, rentals, court rolls and indentures held by the Townshends, sometimes alongside Townshend himself.⁸ He laboured to make indentures, a host of bills, and a range of manorial, estate and household documents, including rentals, terriers, dragges (which were probably field books),

June and July there was earmarking (BL/T 13/28, f. 5r), and he also collected sheep Townshend had bought and delivered others to the grazier or butcher (BL/T 13/28, f. 5r; Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 139 n. 23; Moreton, *Townshends*, 170–171). Examples of Skayman labouring at the harvest in the late summer and early autumn: in August Skayman stooked sheaves of corn and loaded carts, and was 'besy in hervest' into September (BL/T 13/28, f. 9v). Examples of Skayman focusing on land management and hedging in winter and spring: between October and February Skayman was concerned with procuring and readying fencing and hedging materials (BL/T 13/28, ff. 11r, 14r, 18r, 19v), and overseeing the work down by hedgers and dykers (BL/T 13/28, ff. 14r, 19v); between October and January he might be engaged in laying out or renewing pasture and 'tylth' – cultivated land or area to be cultivated ('Glossary' in Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 155; *MED*, s.v., *tilth* n., 3a) – and measuring out land (BL/T 13/28, ff. 11r, 18r, 18v, 19v, 29r, 32v).

⁶ Skayman attended fairs alone and with Townshend, often so that he could speak to particular people there. For instance, see BL/T 13/28, ff. 3v, 11r, 13v. James Davis describes the marketplace as a 'hive of haggling, shouting and gossip', and Skayman seems to have used fairs for the opportunity they afforded for talk. James Davis, *Medieval Market Morality: Life, Law and Ethics in the English Marketplace, 1200–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 3. Skayman attended various courts – such as the sheriff's tourn, a leet court and various manorial courts (BL/T 13/28, ff. 1r, 2r, 8r, 15r, 24r, 31v) – and he also kept several courts, including the court held at 'crowchemes' (BL/T 13/28, f. 3r) – the Feast of the Finding of the Holy Cross on 3 May ('Glossary' in Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 150. Skayman also collected and received amercements and fines (BL/T 13/28, ff. 3r, 4r, 11v, 22r), distrained crops (BL/T 13/28, f. 3r), assessed damages (BL/T 13/28, f. 6r), and dealt with drifts and the strays they captured (BL/T 13/28, ff. 4r, 11v, 15r, 20r). For useful information and comparisons, especially on distrains, courts, drifts, and strays, see Claridge and Gibbs, 'Property Rights', 50–82; Britnell, 'Pastons', 135, 136, 140–141; Harold S. A. Fox, 'Lords and Wastes', in *Survival and Discord in Medieval Society: Essays in Honour of Christopher Dyer*, ed. Richard Goddard, John Langdon, and Miriam Müller, vol. 4, *The Medieval Countryside* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2010), 29–48 (39–40).

⁷ For examples of Skayman letting various properties and farms, see BL/T 13/28, ff. 3v, 4r, 32r. Britnell describes Calle undertaking some similar tasks. Britnell, 'Pastons', 135. For examples of Skayman's activities relating to collections and payments, see BL/T 13/28, ff. 1r, 5r, 8r, 9r, 10v, 12r, 14r, 17r 18v, 21r, 22v, 28r, 31r. Skayman also collected corn and barley rents, particularly on behalf of one of Townshend's feoffees. BL/T 13/28, ff. 1r, 21r, 22v; Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 138 n. 8. For discussions of the use of barley rents in fifteenth-century Norfolk, their importance to landlords and their difficulties, see Britnell, 'Pastons', 134, 137–139; Moreton, *Townshends*, 147.

⁸ For examples of Skayman combing through, consulting, and sorting documents, see BL/T 13/28, ff. 2v, 3v, 7r, 7v, 8r, 20r, 20v, 21r, 24r, 24v. Moreton describes the Townshends' storage practices. Moreton, *Townshends*, 104.

and accounts, as well as writing at audit.⁹ Of course, he also wrote this remembrance book.¹⁰ Skayman was continually dealing with people, including tenants and those who lived on or around Townshend's Norfolk estate. He engaged with their disputes, oversaw their customary knowledge-producing boundary perambulations, consulted them, took their 'avyse' as he renewed manorial or estate documents, and examined them.¹¹ Skayman's final entry in his remembrance book is in this vein: in 1518 he recorded the 'seyng' of a man who had first been a farmer in Shereford thirty four years before and whose 'remembrans' bore on Townshend's pasture there.¹² Again, Skamyman was dealing with someone from the Townshend estate, drawing on their memory and knowledge – and making records of them – to further his master's interests.¹³

John Skayman's remembrance book is a wonderful, and very unusual, record of an officer's labours.¹⁴ Unlike the manorial accounts of Mote and survey-type documents of West Wickham, Baston, Keston and Southcourt, Skayman's book does not belong to an established genre of manorial documents. Yet its contents, form and conception allow us an extraordinary insight into how officers themselves represented their labour outside the discursive strictures and conventions of accounts and surveys. In Chapters One and Two I have explored how manorial accounts and survey-type documents communicate officers' labour; this is echoed in Skayman's remembrance book. Skayman conceived of his book, and explicitly defines it, as a record of an officer's labour done for his master. It is not *his* work – as we often speak of “our” work – or simply *work* that Skayman labours over, but

⁹ For examples of Skayman making indentures, dragges, rentals, terriers and accounts, see BL/T 13/28, ff. 1v, 2r, 3r, 7r, 7v, 11r, 12r, 16v, 19r, 31r, 32v. Skayman records himself making a variety of bills. Amongst them are a bill of 'alle the Clippyng and wessyng of alle my Masters fflookes bis yer' (BL/T 13/28, f. 5r), a bill recording information on a particular topic which he had gleaned from accounts and court rolls held by the Townshends (BL/T 13/28, f. 2v), and a bill of 'alle my paymentes and Reseytes' from Michaelmas to Christmas (BL/T 13/28, f. 17v). Skayman was also engaged in making household documents, as well as documents for the estate. For example, from 18–20 September 1516 Skayman 'Was wrytynge w vppone the Shepardes a Cowntes', and from 22–27 September he was 'wrytynge vppone the Awdythe for the Cowntes of þe Sheppardes'. BL/T 13/28, f. 10v. In the next week, Skayman switched to working on household records, but as he wrote his remembrance book he struggled to move on to this new topic: 'I was besy in Wrytynge with my Master Mistres in makynge of her Boke for the Shepard Seruantes wages'. BL/T 13/28, f. 10v. Britnell notes that Calle made 'occasional' rentals and annual accounts, and certainly wrote letters, while 'some at least of the estate records were in his custody'. Britnell, 'Pastons', 135.

¹⁰ Skayman describes spending a morning 'besy in wrytynge and mak of my Remembrans', which is likely this remembrance book. BL/T 13/28, f. 20r.

¹¹ The quotation comes from BL/T 13/28, f. 2r. For examples of Skayman engaging with disputes, overseeing perambulations, consulting, examining, and being advised by tenants and others from the Townshend estate, see BL/T 13/28, ff. 2r, 6r, 14r, 16v, 20v, 21r, 25r, 34r. As I have discussed on page 95 in Chapter Two, walking the boundaries of a manor was an event which made communal knowledge. Susan Kilby stresses this element of rogationtide and, importantly, seigneurial administrators' recognition of it, as peasants walked the bounds and undertook a 'full inspection of the local landscape'. Kilby, *Peasant Perspectives*, 35. Tom Johnson discusses perambulation as a practice which created 'knowledge about the legal landscape'. Johnson, *Law in Common*, 154–158 at 154.

¹² BL/T 13/28, f. 34r. Skayman had recorded an earlier 'seyng' of this same man, again related to Townshend's lands in Shereford, in the autumn of 1517. BL/T 13/28, f. 25r.

¹³ This man – Richard Hooke – also seems to have joined Skayman when he went to Shereford to renew the dragge there in December 1516. BL/T 13/28, f. 16v.

¹⁴ Charles Moreton and Paul Rutledge note that no other document quite like Skayman's remembrance book survives from the Townshend estate of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Moreover, they suggest that Skayman's book is also unusual for the period in a wider regional and national context. Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 96.

‘my masters besenes’.¹⁵ He emphasises their relationship again as he introduces himself, ‘me, John’ Skayman *seruant unto master Roger Touneshend*’.¹⁶ Indeed, accounting may have inspired Skayman’s decision to begin this remembrance book and inflected how he frames it; the run up to Easter was an intensive period of accounting for him.¹⁷ He meant his remembrance book to run alongside this accounting cycle, intending to keep it ‘frome Esterne ... in þe vijth yere of the reigne of kynge Herry viijth vntyll Esterne nexte folowyng’.¹⁸ Therefore, while Skayman’s remembrance book is an uncommon document, it exists in relation to well-established genres of manorial documents. It chimes with manorial accounts and survey-type documents as being communicative of officers’ labour; this business is the organising principle of Skayman’s remembrance book.

Skayman’s book makes it clear that he was often engaged in the types of documentary and knowledge labour which I have discussed in previous chapters. But what it makes strikingly visible is another form of officers’ labour which leaves much less trace in traditional documentary sources: the work of agreement. As I will discuss below, this work encompassed a wide range of activities, from letting out lands and enforcing their terms, reckoning with others, negotiating solutions to complaints, making bargains, to engaging with communities’ practices of agreement-making, such as boundary perambulations. In what follows I analyse the contours of agreement and agreement-making as Skayman articulates them, and explore how he writes about himself in relation to that work, paying attention to the language he chooses, the narratives he builds, and the emphases and preoccupations he displays. I argue that Skayman depicts agreement and agreement-making as a discourse and an activity in which people across the Townshend estate participated and which they sustained. Skayman describes himself as being enmeshed in this same framework, while making and tending agreement seems to be a central part of Skayman’s work as an officer. Furthermore, as he chooses the right words and constructs narratives around agreement-making, he emphasises the importance of agreement to the function and relations of the Townshend estate, suggests his own expertise in it, and also works to sustain both individual agreements and the wider discourse which defined and legitimised them.

Agreement

As I have explored Skayman’s remembrance book, I have found the concept of ‘agreement’ useful because of its breadth. As I will explore later in this chapter, a broad range of types, registers,

¹⁵ BL/T 13/28, f. 1r.

¹⁶ BL/T 13/28, f. 1r.

¹⁷ Skayman describes the preparations he had made for the accounting period before Easter 1517, such as procuring paper, parchment and ink, and informing other officers what Townshend would require of his accounts this year and to be ready with their source documents. BL/T 13/28, ff. 21r, 21v, 22r. He records that he had spent the first three weeks of Lent ‘settyng vppon the cownte’, and then two days after that ‘in makyn owte of a byll of remembrans of the cowntes’. BL/T 13/28, f. 22v. He collected monies which would contribute to the ‘arrerages’ – the balance – of his own account, and assisted his mistress – Amy Townshend – in ‘wrytyng ... for the howsold’, which may have been related to household accounting. BL/T 13/28, ff. 22v, 23r; *MED*, s.v., *arrerage* n., 1b. Accounting could also spill over after Easter. For instance, in the week following the Easter holidays, John Skayman met with Roger Townshend II to reckon with him and to pay the ‘arrerages’ of his own account. BL/T 13/28, f. 23v.

¹⁸ BL/T 13/28, f. 1r.

and processes of agreement-making are apparent in Skayman's remembrance book. Moreover, agreement-making not only kept Skayman busy, but his writing bestows weight upon the concept and the labour of agreement; his remembrance book is suffused with agreement. Agreement can denote a state which exists between people (or objects, or ideas), and the thing itself on which they are agreed. And, while 'agreement' refers to an end-product or finished state, tucked within it is a process of coming to, or discovering, agreement. Agreement can exist between things which match each other; for instance, Skayman determines that documents agreed.¹⁹ It also describes the state which exists between two or more people who concur, for instance, on a certain opinion, plan, piece of knowledge, bargain, or state of affairs. They are in agreement with each other. It can also denote other forms of settlement, for instance, once a payment has been made or accounts squared – those parties are likewise agreed.²⁰ The tenor of this conformity between things and, more especially, between people is variable. Agreement can traverse happy and harmonious accord, solidarity, relieved settlement, neutral acknowledgement, or grudging concession.²¹ 'Agreement' can also refer to the thing made between these people, the settlement itself. The form and character of this agreement are also varied; historians have imagined agreement as a continuum which spans from implicit and unspoken agreements, to assurances made and accepted in casual conversation, to legally-enforceable contracts and dispute resolutions.²² In this sense it usefully captures and unifies many of the most critical officerial duties that Skayman records in his book.

This breadth does, of course, mean that there is no single historiography of agreement. Rather, agreement touches a range of studies – from examinations of bargaining and contracts in the context of markets, to explorations of promises made visible in church court records, and the historiography of arbitration.²³ However, as Skayman was an officer who engaged in legal work in the manor court – a forum attuned to dispute resolution – the historiography of arbitration provides a useful starting point.²⁴ The study of arbitration was particularly energised by Edward Powell in the early 1980s. He responded to the work of historians such as J. G. Bellamy, R. L. Storey and R. A.

¹⁹ After Skayman had examined a collection of documents he wrote: 'the Cowntes and þ hys byll agreid in euery parte'. BL/T 13/28, f. 21r.

²⁰ MED, s.v., *agree* v., 3b, 4a.

²¹ The definition for *agree* which is provided by the *Middle English Dictionary* encompasses more neutral terms, such as *assent* and *consent*, as well as more weighted ones, such as *please*, *gratify* and *satisfy*. MED, s.v., *agree* v., 1a, 2.

²² Ian Forrest discusses this continuum, or spectrum, in relation to promises. He writes, 'there was a continuum of words, gestures, and rituals surrounding promises and faith' with, at the one end 'unconscious signalling' of trust, faith and promises and, at the other 'a finely tuned vocabulary of promising associated with aspects of contract actionable in law'. Forrest, *Trustworthy Men*, 41. Between them sat a register of 'heightened formality' which 'had to borrow from the everyday language of intentions in order to seem sincere, but also from the precise vocabulary of the law in order to protect against future disagreement'. Forrest, 42.

²³ For instance, Davis, *Market Morality*, especially 61, 68–73, 178, 198–202, 205, 346; Forrest, *Trustworthy Men*, 33–62; Edward Powell, 'Settlement of Disputes by Arbitration in Fifteenth-Century England', *LHR* 2, no. 1 (1984): 21–43; Carole Rawcliffe, '"That Kindliness Should Be Cherished More, and Discord Driven Out": The Settlement of Commercial Disputes by Arbitration in Later Medieval England', in *Enterprise and Individuals in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. Jennifer Kermode (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1991), 99–117; Ben R. McRee, 'Peacemaking and Its Limits in Late Medieval Norwich', *EHR* 109, no. 433 (1994): 831–866; Lorraine Attreed, 'Arbitration and the Growth of Urban Liberties in Late Medieval England', *JBS* 31, no. 3 (1992): 205–235.

²⁴ Evans, 'Manorial Court', 160–161.

Griffiths who had argued that arbitration was a symptom of an inadequate legal system and disordered authority.²⁵ Powell, in contrast, argued that arbitration was an important means of dispute resolution on its own terms.²⁶ He delineated its relationship with the law, pointing out both where arbitration was 'influenced' by legal processes, and where its own peculiar strengths lay in contrast to the courts.²⁷ Moreover, he argued that arbitration and the law 'might complement one another and be combined in an overall strategy for the resolution of a dispute'.²⁸

Powell pointed out that a broad range of people and institutions turned to arbitration to manage their disputes, from 'leading magnates or the great urban and ecclesiastical corporations of the realm' to city and borough courts, guild members, apprentices and employers, and – more rarely – lords and tenants or villeins.²⁹ However, his own analysis focused on the gentry's use of arbitration; it 'flourished' in their communities and, moreover, Powell argued that studies of arbitration in these contexts would provide 'valuable insight into the workings of local society' and, thereby, into the polity of the realm.³⁰ The use of arbitration by the gentry and its exercise by magnates – who often acted as their arbitrators or umpires – received sustained attention in this period from a number of scholars. Joel T. Rosenthal outlined an instance wherein feuding members of the gentry sought private arbitration from the Duke of York, while Carole Rawcliffe, Susan Flower and Christine Carpenter examined how magnates could play the 'good lord' through offering themselves or their councillors as arbitrators, thereby increasing their influence and authority.³¹ M. A. Hicks argued that arbitration was a 'significant function' of the council of George, Duke and Clarence and, moreover, that Clarence took great trouble over it, exercising restraint and promoting compromise.³² Arbitration by magnates, therefore, was an attractive proposition for disputants.³³

Historians have since expanded the study of arbitration, particularly into urban contexts. Rawcliffe has also developed the exploration of arbitration in the commercial sphere and, like Powell, she has investigated the relationship between arbitration and the law.³⁴ A key element of her analysis is why merchants and craftsmen might 'prefer arbitration to litigation' and how that

²⁵ Powell, 'Settlement of Disputes', especially 21–24; J. G. Bellamy, *Crime and Public Order in England in the Later Middle Ages*, Studies in Social History (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), 114–120, especially 117–119; R. L. Storey, *The End of the House of Lancaster* (London: Barrie & Rockliffe, 1966), 121–122, 155; R. A. Griffiths, *The Reign of King Henry VI: The Exercise of Royal Authority, 1422–1461* (London: Ernest Benn, 1981), 595–597.

²⁶ Powell, 'Settlement of Disputes', 24, 26, 26–33, 37.

²⁷ Powell, 24, 35–37, 39–41.

²⁸ Powell, 24.

²⁹ Edward Powell, 'Arbitration and the Law in England in the Late Middle Ages: The Alexander Essay Prize', *TRHS* 33 (1983): 49–67 (52–53 at 52).

³⁰ The quotations are from Powell, 'Settlement of Disputes', 26, 42. Also see, Powell, 'Arbitration and the Law', 57–62, 66; Powell, 'Settlement of Disputes', 26–33, 42–43.

³¹ Joel T. Rosenthal, 'Feuds and Private Peace-Making: A Fifteenth-Century Example', *NMS* 14 (1970): 84–90 (85–88); Carole Rawcliffe and Susan Flower, 'English Noblemen and Their Advisers: Consultation and Collaboration in the Later Middle Ages', *JBS* 25, no. 2 (1986): 157–177 (168–170 at 168); Christine Carpenter, 'Law, Justice and Landowners in Late Medieval England', *LHR* 1, no. 2 (1983): 205–237 (220–221, 222).

³² M. A. Hicks, 'Restraint, Mediation and Private Justice: George, Duke of Clarence as "Good Lord"', *J. Legal Hist.* 4, no. 2 (1983): 56–71 (62–69 at 67).

³³ Hicks, 68–69.

³⁴ Rawcliffe, 'Arbitration', 99–117.

process was able to meet their very particular requirements.³⁵ Ben McRee, Lorraine Attreed and, more recently, Jane Laughton have studied arbitration in an urban and civic context.³⁶ Their studies have focused on arbitration as a mode of dispute resolution and peace-keeping. They have identified it as being part of a larger repertoire of measures – including litigation and other legal instruments, negotiation, and mediation – which civic and urban institutions used to manage their own external and internal relations, as well as the disputes of those whose lives went on within their jurisdictions.³⁷ Attreed, Laughton and Anthony Musson have reminded us that arbitration was also part of a continuum of formality, although the ‘neighbourly intervention’ which surely brought many disputing people to agreement has usually remained hidden from historians.³⁸ Often, it is only as a result of the rare occasions when such agreements were brought into the courts – for instance, to ratify or formalise a promise – that they become visible.³⁹

These studies of arbitration in gentry, magnate, and urban and mercantile contexts have generally shared an understanding that compromise (combined with equity) was an ideal of arbitration, and a significant factor in its appeal to those who used it. I draw particular attention to this strand of their analyses as I will return to it later in this chapter. Rawcliffe has noted that compromise made a frequent appearance in the rules, regulations, and ordinances of various bodies which provided arbitration in commercial disputes.⁴⁰ Similarly, Hicks has suggested that when magnates acted as arbitrators for their retainers, it seems to have been hoped that their lords would ‘bring them to compromise’.⁴¹ Various historians, including Rawcliffe, McRee and Powell, have argued that it was the promise of reaching compromise which made arbitration ‘irresistibly attractive’ to disputants: in addition to facing a lower risk of loss than was offered by litigation, each disputant would likely achieve some measure of satisfaction.⁴² Arbitrators made efforts to provide awards which, even when unequal, were neither ‘conspicuously unjust’ nor equivalent to a ‘victory’ for one party; it was not unusual for arbitrators to follow the ‘spirit of compromise’ and consider how to provide some compensation, redress or protection to the party who had been less favoured

³⁵ Rawcliffe, ‘Arbitration’, 99–117 at 99.

³⁶ McRee, ‘Peacemaking’, 831–866; Attreed, ‘Arbitration’, 205–235; Jane Laughton, ‘The Control of Discord in Fifteenth-Century Chester’, in *Survival and Discord in Medieval Society: Essays in Honour of Christopher Dyer*, ed. R. Goddard, J. Langdon, and M. Müller, The Medieval Countryside 4 (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2010), 213–229.

³⁷ McRee, ‘Peacemaking’, 833–835, 866; Laughton, ‘Control of Discord’, 214–228; Attreed, ‘Arbitration’, 205, 209, 210–213, 215–229.

³⁸ The quotation is from Laughton, ‘Control of Discord’, 221. Also see, Attreed, ‘Arbitration’, 210; Anthony Musson, *Medieval Law in Context: The Growth of Legal Consciousness from Magna Carta to the Peasants’ Revolt*, Manchester Medieval Studies (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 16.

³⁹ Forrest, *Trustworthy Men*, 53; Laughton, ‘Control of Discord’, 221.

⁴⁰ Rawcliffe, ‘Arbitration’, for instance, 101–102, 104–105, 106.

⁴¹ M. A. Hicks, *English Political Culture in the Fifteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2002), 159.

⁴² The quotation is from Rawcliffe, ‘Arbitration’, 113. Also see, McRee, ‘Peacemaking’, 833–834, 850; Powell, ‘Settlement of Disputes’, 24.

by the award.⁴³ Disputants, therefore, were more inclined to consider settlements guided by compromise as equitable.⁴⁴

Compromise thereby contributed to what Attreed has termed 'arbitration's most important contribution': it initiated the 'healing' of the rift between disputants, remaking a peaceful and amicable relationship and accord.⁴⁵ This was one of the key aims of arbitration, and the cause of some praise.⁴⁶ Powell has argued that arbitration excelled what the courts could offer in terms of repairing the relation between disputants; enacting compromise, for instance through 'reciprocal acts', could begin this repair.⁴⁷ Arbitrators could make the 'reestablishment of amity and concord' the focus of their awards, entwining this aim with the practical provisions of the settlement and, indeed, with the decision to and experience of entering into this process.⁴⁸ For instance, Laughton has described a 'conciliatory judgement', shaped around compromise, which was made by arbitrators in fifteenth-century Chester who commanded that the disputants be 'fully accordet and frendes'.⁴⁹

Agreement more broadly, as well as arbitration, has continued to interest historians more recently. Ian Forrest considers arbitration and promise-making in his distinguished study of faith and trust, while James Davis' cultural and economic analysis of medieval markets addresses bargaining.⁵⁰ These studies share some areas of examination with earlier works. For instance, Forrest develops historians' recognition that there was a continuum of agreement in terms of its formality and legality, evoking the commonplace communication which was likely woven through with 'all sorts of linguistic and gestural indications of intentions and promises, trust, and trustworthiness'.⁵¹ Moreover, both Davis and Forrest also examine the relation between agreement and the law, particularly in terms of legality and enforceability: in the context of bargaining and making contracts in the marketplace, it was important to outline what made an agreement binding; people could use church courts to enforce promises, arbitration awards and various types of breach of faith; litigants might ask a court whether an agreement concerning a marriage or a debt was legally enforceable

⁴³ The first and second quotations are from Hicks, *Political Culture*, 157; the third quotation is from Attreed, 'Arbitration', 228. Also see, Hicks, *Political Culture*, 157, 159–160; McRee, 'Peacemaking', 860–861; Hicks, 'Restraint', 66; Powell, 'Settlement of Disputes', 30, 36, 39–40; Attreed, 'Arbitration', 228–229; Carpenter, 'Law, Justice and Landowners', 223, 236.

⁴⁴ McRee, 'Peacemaking', 833–834, 850; Powell, 'Settlement of Disputes', 24.

⁴⁵ Both quotations are from Attreed, 'Arbitration', 234. Also see, McRee, 'Peacemaking', 833–834; Powell, 'Settlement of Disputes', 30, 35; Laughton, 'Control of Discord', 220–221. In the context of property disputes between laymen and a particular abbey in eleventh-century western France, Stephen D. White argues that compromise settlements often created new bonds between the abbey and its monks and their (former) opponents. Stephen D. White, "'Pactum... Legem Vincit et Amor Judicium": The Settlement of Disputes by Compromise in Eleventh-Century Western France', *Am. J. Legal Hist.* 22, no. 4 (1978): 281–308 (296, 300–301).

⁴⁶ Attreed, 'Arbitration', 234; McRee, 'Peacemaking', 834; Powell, 'Settlement of Disputes', 35; Laughton, 'Control of Discord', 220–221.

⁴⁷ Powell, 'Settlement of Disputes', 24, 28.

⁴⁸ Powell, 28, 30. Lorraine Attreed suggests that the 'voluntary nature' of arbitration prompted disputants to 'acknowledge that love, representing common sense, compromise, and bonds of affection' were vital to peaceful relations. Attreed, 'Arbitration', 210, 211.

⁴⁹ Laughton, 'Control of Discord', 222 and 222 quoting Chester, Cheshire and Chester Archives and Local Studies, ZMB 5, f. 182r.

⁵⁰ Forrest, *Trustworthy Men*; Davis, *Market Morality*.

⁵¹ Forrest, *Trustworthy Men*, 41.

and, if appropriate, to enforce it; and courts also offered a forum in which borrowers could take the opportunity to 'give faith'.⁵² For Forrest, an essential question is where in 'articulations' of faith and trust 'the balance lay between attempts to create a community-based good faith and attempts to enforce obligations through a system of legal rights'.⁵³

However, in contrast to earlier studies Forrest and Davis focus on exploring the cultural meanings and discourses which attended agreements and agreement-making. Davis' examinations of bargaining contribute to his analysis of the 'moral undercurrents and discourses that influenced medieval market practice' and, indeed, how they in turn were influenced by 'commercial developments'.⁵⁴ Forrest, meanwhile, analyses church court records in order to draw out the 'language and gestures' which people used as they made promises, agreements and gave their faith in a range of registers and contexts, as 'ideas and talk about trust bubbled up from the tumult of social interaction as much as they were imposed from above'.⁵⁵ He also explores how sincerity and the emotional experience of trust (or distrust) were manifested in agreements and promises, how one might become untrustworthy, and how it felt to lose trust in others.⁵⁶

Although Forrest's focus on faith and trust makes connections between different types of agreement which – often through disputes concerning them – had reached the church courts, much of this historiography has largely thought about different types of agreement – such as arbitration and bargains – separately and, moreover, as being distinct from each other. Manorial officers have made an appearance in this historiography. Hicks has pointed out that officers who served magnates could be delegated to act in arbitrations on behalf of their lords, extending their "good lordship", while Tom Johnson focuses on officers as legal actors, playing their part in arbitrations that took place in manor and leet courts.⁵⁷ However, officers' work in the courts and in peace-keeping has not been connected to the labour of agreement and agreement-making more broadly.

Neither dispute resolution, nor legal work, existed in a vacuum.⁵⁸ Skayman's remembrance book provides us with a valuable and unusual opportunity to view agreement through a much broader window than legal records often allow. While Skayman wrote within a manorial or estate context, he was not producing a document which sat within an established manorial or legal genre but one whose intentions, and whose relationship with enforceability, seem particularly elastic and uncertain. Skayman's remembrance book thus gives us the opportunity to consider agreement in a more expansive way. Rather than focusing on Skayman's depictions of agreement as sitting along a continuum of formality – from 'unconscious signalling' and 'implied promises' to 'careful gestures'

⁵² The quotation is from Forrest, *Trustworthy Men*, 60. Also see, Davis, *Market Morality*, 198–202; Forrest, *Trustworthy Men*, 34–35, 36–40, 41, 58–62.

⁵³ Forrest, *Trustworthy Men*, 35.

⁵⁴ Davis, *Market Morality*, 2.

⁵⁵ Forrest, *Trustworthy Men*, 33, 35–36 at 36.

⁵⁶ Forrest, 63–88.

⁵⁷ Hicks, *Political Culture*, 159–160; Johnson, *Law in Common*, 30–31, 32–33.

⁵⁸ Bailey, 'Emotions', 21, 22, 26; Simon Roberts, 'The Study of Dispute: Anthropological Perspectives', in *Disputes and Settlements: Law and Human Relations in the West*, ed. John Bossy, Past & Present Publications (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1–24 (20–22); Daniel Lord Smail, *The Consumption of Justice: Emotions, Publicity, and Legal Culture in Marseille, 1264–1423*, Conjunctions of Religion & Power in the Medieval Past (London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 28.

and oaths – or legality, I would like – to return to an image borrowed from Arthur Bahr – to think about them as a constellation.⁵⁹ By considering varied moments of agreement together we can trace the connections between them and explore the contours of a wider culture and discourse of agreement and agreement-making as it is articulated by Skayman. Furthermore, considering a variety of types of agreement emphasises the breadth of skills which officers were required to have. A crucial element of Skayman’s articulation of agreement – and of my analysis – is that it is work; indeed, it appears as a central aspect of manorial officers’ labour. While the historiography of arbitration – across gentry, magnate, urban and commercial contexts – has demonstrated that this form of agreement-making was a legal practice with a social function, thinking of agreement in terms of work can help to show how it was framed in cultural discourse.

Thinking about agreement as work also picks up a thread from Roberts’ discussions of arbitration: what were the interests and perspectives of the third-parties who got involved in resolving these disputes?⁶⁰ As I have discussed, the historiography of arbitration has often focused on what made this process appealing to disputants – although authorities, of course, also appreciated its peace-keeping potential.⁶¹ Magnates’ experience as arbitrators – their troubles, their obligations and responsibilities, their exercise of “good lordship”, and their expressions – has received more attention.⁶² It has also been noted that magnates could delegate this role to selected panels of arbiters, their councils – including senior administrative officers – or to others in their service.⁶³ But the recognition of officers’ role in arbitration at the level of the council has not resulted in significant study of their work in making agreements, particularly on smaller estates or at lower levels of the officerial hierarchy.⁶⁴ Skayman’s remembrance book allows us to explore how a professional officer employed on a gentry estate depicts his labour in making and sustaining agreement.

In this chapter, I will begin by demonstrating the prominence of agreement in Skayman’s remembrance book. I will discuss the variety of agreement-related work which he records, before considering how the language of agreement permeates both Skayman’s descriptions of his encounters with others and his writing more broadly. Then I will turn to two essential elements of Skayman’s articulation of agreement: consensus and emotion. Firstly, I will explore consensus. While Skayman depicts consensus in a variety of ways, the creation – or survival – of a single voice emerges as an important hallmark of legitimate agreement. As Skayman describes the creation of consensus – or asserted its existence – he communicates his skill and expertise in agreement-making. Moreover, he employs references to evidences and draws on the discourse of “good lordship” to further support and elevate his work. Secondly, I will discuss emotion. Skayman not only uses emotional

⁵⁹ The quotations are from Forrest, *Trustworthy Men*, 41. Arthur Bahr’s use of ‘constellation’ is inspired by Walter Benjamin’s *The Arcades Project*. Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages*, especially 12–14.

⁶⁰ Roberts, ‘Dispute’, 11, 19, 20.

⁶¹ For instance, see Hicks, *Political Culture*, 112–114, 179–180; Laughton, ‘Control of Discord’, 220–223.

⁶² For instance, see Hicks, ‘Restraint’, 57, 62–69; Hicks, *Political Culture*, 156–160; Rawcliffe and Flower, ‘English Noblemen and Their Advisers: Consultation and Collaboration in the Later Middle Ages’, 168–170.

⁶³ Rawcliffe and Flower, ‘English Noblemen and Their Advisers: Consultation and Collaboration in the Later Middle Ages’, 170–172; Hicks, *Political Culture*, 156–157, 159.

⁶⁴ For the recognition of officers’ role in arbitration at the level of the council, see Rawcliffe and Flower, ‘English Noblemen and Their Advisers: Consultation and Collaboration in the Later Middle Ages’, 172; Hicks, *Political Culture*, 159–160.

language to communicate when agreement was required and when it had been achieved, but to imply where right and legitimacy lay in disputes. His remembrance book entwines the labour of agreement with the labour of managing the emotional equilibrium of the state, and contentment is the result of Skayman's work. Finally, I will examine a case study – Skayman's description of the visit of Wolsey's commission on depopulation and enclosure to Helhoughton in 1517.⁶⁵ I will use this entry to explore how Skayman uses both images of consensus and references to emotion to construct his narrative of this event. Thereby, Skayman is able not only to undermine the men who had made a complaint against Townshend, but to justify why he and Townshend had needed to come to a compromise with these men, without having to admit to any fault. However, before I begin this analysis, I will first introduce Townshend's Norfolk estate and Skayman's remembrance book.

Roger Townshend's Norfolk estate and John Skayman's remembrance book

Roger Townshend's Norfolk estate was concentrated in the north-west of the county, an area dominated by sheep-farming, with a few manors scattered a little further afield to the south and the east.⁶⁶ Townshend had inherited his estate from his father (another Roger) in 1493 when he was still a minor, and his mother, Eleanor, had run the estate until her own death in 1499.⁶⁷ By the time his officer, John Skayman, had begun keeping a remembrance book in 1516, Townshend had entered Lincoln's Inn and begun his legal career, following in his father's footsteps as an energetic justice of the peace.⁶⁸ He had also married Amy Brewes, a well-connected and well-endowed co-heir, and he was a member of the county elite himself.⁶⁹ He had further enlarged the estate built by his parents and in 1515 the Norfolk portion of his estate was worth £260, which was nearly three quarters of its total value.⁷⁰ The family kept households in Whissonett, Wissett and Norwich, as well as at their centre at East Raynham.⁷¹ Importantly, he was already 'one of the greatest of the great sheep-farmers of early Tudor Norfolk' and, indeed, his sheep numbers peaked in 1516: in that year he had 18,500 sheep, kept in twenty six flocks.⁷² Charles Moreton has calculated that by 1524/5 Townshend could be ranked as having the greatest landed wealth of all Norfolk's gentry.⁷³ Interestingly, both Townshend and his father have left behind their own personal notebooks.⁷⁴

⁶⁵ For Wolsey's commission on depopulation and enclosure, see Edwin F. Gay, 'The Inquisitions of Depopulation in 1517 and the "Domesday of Inclosures"', *TRHS* 14 (1900): 231–303 (especially 231, 234–235, 237–238). See pages 172–175 below.

⁶⁶ Moreton, *Townshends*, 114 (see Map 1), 162.

⁶⁷ Moreton, 29.

⁶⁸ Moreton, 10, 27, 60–61.

⁶⁹ Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 97; Moreton, *Townshends*, 21, 49, 128.

⁷⁰ Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 97; Moreton, *Townshends*, 115–123, 125, 128, 129, 131, 164. Sheep-farming became more profitable when done at scale and, therefore, expanding his estate contributed to Townshend's success. Campbell, *Seigniorial Agriculture*, 156; Moreton, *Townshends*, 167.

⁷¹ Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 97; Moreton, *Townshends*, 135–136.

⁷² The quotation is from Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 97. Also, see Moreton, *Townshends*, 164, 166–167, 226.

⁷³ Moreton, 132–133.

⁷⁴ Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 96.

However, only the older man's multilingual book contained entries organised by day, as he kept a record of his work as an assize justice on circuit.⁷⁵

The Townshends primarily derived their wealth from sheep-farming for wool-production and from collecting rents and farms.⁷⁶ Agriculture in north-western Norfolk was focused on sheep-corn husbandry: sheep were pastured on the fallow land and, as they trod their manure into the ground, they replenished the fertility of the region's soil, which dried out quickly and was low in nutrients.⁷⁷ However, by the end of the fourteenth century, sheep-farming had become the more profitable element of the sheep-corn husbandry system.⁷⁸ Sheep-farming in this region was organised according to the foldcoursing system.⁷⁹ This system enabled flockmasters to exercise grazing rights for their sheep over expanses of pasture, whether or not they had rented that land out to tenants, it was common land, or it was owned by another.⁸⁰ Tenants whose land fell within a foldcourse would be compensated either with money or with demesne lands, the latter being more common on the Townshend estate.⁸¹ The Townshends primarily farmed their sheep for wool, although they also sold old, ill and superfluous stock on to butchers and graziers.⁸² In the second half of the fifteenth century, wool prices repeatedly rose and fell, dropping again at the start of the sixteenth century.⁸³ However, in the 1510s both wool and livestock prices climbed, resulting in a 'period of "remarkable prosperity" for sheep-farmers', including the Townshends.⁸⁴ In contrast, the 1510s were not a 'remarkable' period for rents and farms; however, as I will discuss later in the chapter, after landowners' struggles in the fifteenth century, from the 1510s the Townshends' position was beginning to strengthen.⁸⁵ Farms provided a more significant income stream than rents, but both

⁷⁵ Roger I wrote this section of his notebook in the summer of 1492. Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 96; Moreton, 'Diary', 27–45 (especially 27–28); Fakenham, Raynham Hall Library, drawer 58, memoranda book kept by Judge Townshend in the early 1490s, ff. 2v–5r.

⁷⁶ Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 99–100; Moreton, *Townshends*, 138–139, 162, 172.

⁷⁷ Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 97–98; Moreton, *Townshends*, 149, 162; Campbell, *Seigniorial Agriculture*, 154.

⁷⁸ Campbell, *Seigniorial Agriculture*, 154.

⁷⁹ Campbell, 154.

⁸⁰ Moreton, *Townshends*, 162–163, 187. K. J. Allison undertook a foundational study of the foldcourse system, derived from its form at the turn of the seventeenth century. K. J. Allison, 'The Sheep-Corn Husbandry of Norfolk in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Agric. Hist. Rev.* 5, no. 1 (1957): 12–30. Notably, Mark Bailey later nuanced this description, considering the development of the system from the period pre-1300 to c. 1600. Mark Bailey, 'Sand into Gold: The Evolution of the Foldcourse System in West Suffolk, 1200–1600', *Agric. Hist. Rev.* 38, no. 1 (1990): 40–57. Other useful descriptions and studies are: Moreton, *Townshends*, 162–163; M. R. Postgate, 'Field Systems of East Anglia', in *Studies of Field Systems in the British Isles*, ed. Alan R. H. Baker and Robin A. Butlin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 281–324 (314–319); Mark Bailey, *A Marginal Economy? East Anglian Breckland in the Later Middle Ages*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, Fourth Series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 57–85, 293–294; Campbell, *Seigniorial Agriculture*, 154.

⁸¹ Moreton, *Townshends*, 163; Allison, 'Sheep-Corn Husbandry', 20.

⁸² Moreton, *Townshends*, 169–172.

⁸³ Moreton, 175.

⁸⁴ Moreton, 175 quoting Peter J. Bowden, *The Wool Trade in Tudor and Stuart England* (London: MacMillan & Co, 1962), xvii; Bowden, xvii, 5.

⁸⁵ Bowden, xvii. See page 161.

required careful and active management by the Townshends and their officers, including John Skayman.⁸⁶

Skayman kept his remembrance book from March 1516 into 1518.⁸⁷ He wrote primarily in English, with the occasional use of Latin.⁸⁸ The vernacularity of this text is a stark contrast to the Latinity of Mote's manorial accounts and the survey-type documents from our four Kentish manors. It underlines the fact that Skayman was not producing a formalised document belonging to an established manorial genre and, therefore, he had more freedom in its form and composition. Moreover, while Skayman was demonstrably proficient in administrative Latin, it is likely that writing in the vernacular was, perhaps, a less restrained – or even constrained – endeavour.⁸⁹ It is more straightforward to understand Skayman's remembrance book as a creative document and, like the 'historical narratives' which Andrew Prescott celebrates in administrative records, it is far from a 'taciturn' record which has to be 'squeezed until [it] talk[s]'.⁹⁰ In comparison to the manorial accounts and survey-type documents which I have explored in earlier chapters, it is more easily open to readings that investigate its representative qualities.

Initially, Skayman intended to keep his book for one year, from Easter 1516 to Easter 1517.⁹¹ To that end, he folded ten sheets into a booklet (ff. 1–19 and f. 39) and began.⁹² However, it only took Skayman until 25 January 1517 to fill this booklet, and so he added another two gatherings (ff. 20–23 and ff. 24–27), which allowed him to continue past Easter 1517.⁹³ Skayman continued with his remembrance book until 29 May 1517, when he halted his endeavours, taking them up again on 8 September 1517 when he set down an earlier 'seyng' of the same farmer of Shereford noted above.⁹⁴ After leaving two blank folios, Skayman added a further gathering (ff. 28–38) and reaffirmed his intention to keep his remembrance book, inscribing a title which mirrored his first:

Remembrans of alle my Masters . [sic] fulfillyd and done by me John'
Skayman *seruant* vnto my Master Roger Touneshend' Squyr . frome the fest
of sent Martyn' in Wynter in the ixth yere of the Reigne of Kynge Herry the
vijijth vntille the same fest nexte folowyng⁹⁵

However, Skayman's use of his remembrance book became increasingly 'episodic' – Skayman was perhaps inspired to pick it up again by particularly significant events – and the book's final dated entry relates to 8 January 1518, followed by a short memorandum and the final 'seyng' of the

⁸⁶ Moreton, *Townshends*, 138–139, 142–144; Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 97.

⁸⁷ Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 95.

⁸⁸ For example, Skayman uses Latin in several headings: BL/T 13/28, ff. 3v, 4r, 8r, 9v, 10v, 11r, 12r, 12v, 13r, 15v, 18r.

⁸⁹ As well as the Latin he uses in his remembrance book, as I will discuss below, a Latin account written by Skayman also survives. Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 95. The account is archived as part of BL/T 13/28.

⁹⁰ The first quotation is from Prescott, 'Tall Tales', 356–359; the second and third quotations are from Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, 9.

⁹¹ BL/T 13/28, f. 1r.

⁹² Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 95.

⁹³ Moreton and Rutledge, 95.

⁹⁴ Moreton and Rutledge, 95; BL/T 13/28, f. 25r.

⁹⁵ Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 95, 131; BL/T 13/28, f. 28r. This is 11 November 1517–11 November 1518.

aforesaid farmer of Shereford.⁹⁶ What seems to be Skayman's final addition to the remembrance book – in terms of its position in the document and, most likely, also in terms of its date – is a series of pen trials dashed off along with a Latin note that Townshend was sheriff.⁹⁷ Skayman was seemingly well able to estimate how much paper would be required for the production of other documents; in February 1517 he had purchased ink, paper and parchment ready for the writing of the accounts.⁹⁸ Therefore, his initial underestimate of the amount of paper he would require to keep his book for a year, combined with his changing usage and eventual abandonment of it, suggests that Skayman did not have a model for his book and was likely the instigator of its creation.

Townshend did, however, read and annotate Skayman's remembrance book, adding marginal headings, summaries, or memorandums he had drawn from Skayman's entries.⁹⁹ Townshend continued to consult the remembrance book after Skayman himself had stopped keeping it. Above Skayman's final entry – the 'seyng' of the farmer of Shereford – Townshend wrote that he had had one of his servants read this 'remembrans' out to the said farmer on 5 December 1518, which was likely several months after Skayman had written this entry.¹⁰⁰ Skayman also added headings and marginal headings to his book – particularly in the earlier phases of keeping it. This may suggest that he was bearing an audience in mind and making it easier for them to navigate, as well as considering his own ease of reference.¹⁰¹

However, it is unlikely that Skayman took his remembrance book around the Townshend estate with him on his daily tasks. The book is quite large: the first 27 folios measure around 22 x 31.5cm, while the rest are only a little shorter at around 22 x 29.5cm.¹⁰² Given that it does not seem to show any signs of folding or rolling, it would have been a little unwieldy to take about the lands of the estate. For instance, although he copied out a bill which outlines the specifications for certain dykes and hedges into his remembrance book, it is difficult to imagine Skayman consulting it when he went to check on both the condition of materials and the progress of the hedgers in bad weather.¹⁰³ The portable books such as folded almanacs, girdle books, and *vade mecums* favoured by mendicants, medical practitioners, 'common people' and, arguably, manorial officers, tend to be

⁹⁶ Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 95–96 at 96; BL/T 13/28, ff. 33v–34r at 34r.

⁹⁷ BL/T 13/28, f. 39r. The pen trials cannot be definitively identified as Skayman's as they do not include letters, but the note certainly seems to be in his hand. The note likely relates to the second time that Townshend served as sheriff, in 1518/19. Townshend was first appointed sheriff in November 1511 and held the post for the third time in 1526; by that date, Skayman had died. Moreton, *Townshends*, 30; Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 96. Therefore, this note was likely made after the last dated entry in the remembrance book, discussed above. The final undated entry in the remembrance book, discussed below, had been composed before 5 December 1518 – possibly some time earlier – and, therefore, may also pre-date this note. BL/T 13/28, f. 34r.

⁹⁸ BL/T 13/28, f. 21r.

⁹⁹ For example, see BL/T 13/28, ff. 3v, 18v, 19r, 19v, 20r, 21r, 23v, 24v, 25r, 25v, 28r, 29r, 29v, 30r, 31r, 32r, 32v, 33r, 33v.

¹⁰⁰ BL/T 13/28, f. 34r. As I have mentioned, the last dated entry in the remembrance book refers to 8 January 1518. The following two entries – the last of which is the statement of the farmer of Shereford – were likely written not long after.

¹⁰¹ Youngs, *Newton*, 185.

¹⁰² Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 95.

¹⁰³ BL/T 13/28, ff. 12v, 16r.

much smaller in size.¹⁰⁴ A portable fourteenth-century manuscript, which was likely intended for a manorial officer and depicts Harry the Hayward and Peter the Pyndare alongside a range of useful information, was only 14 x 11cm.¹⁰⁵ Its fifteenth-century copies also mimic its size, while the folded almanacs which Hilary M. Carey describes vary between twelve and seventeen centimetres long, and between three and seven centimetres wide.¹⁰⁶ Skayman's remembrance book, therefore, seems to fall outside the realm of easily portable books, suggesting that Skayman both consulted it and wrote it up in one – or a few – more controlled environments.

Rather than sitting down each day to write his remembrance book, Skayman seems to have written it up in batches: on 27 January 1517 he describes spending a morning 'besy in wreyty wrytynng and mak of my Remembrans', which, as discussed above, is likely this remembrance book.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, in an entry describing a broken promise, Skayman must have written up his trip to receive the said promise after the deadline set in it had passed.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, it seems likely that Skayman wrote up his remembrance book using notes, his memory, and reference to other documents. Ann Blair articulates how note-taking '[perpetuates] a cycle of transmission and transformation of knowledge, ideas, and experiences ... from a moment of ... note taking to a later moment when the notes are read and sometimes rearranged and used in articulating a thought'.¹⁰⁹ Writing his remembrance book in such a way is likely to have provided Skayman with a staged drafting process, thereby encouraging him to consider the shape, narrative and details of his entries.

Legal historians have argued that witness testimonies gave people an arena in which to practise a strategic 'art' as they constructed narratives which suffused their 'personal "memories, actions and intentions" ... with wider social meaning' and brought their 'purposes and concerns'.¹¹⁰ Both Bronach C. Kane and Laura Gowing stress that constructing and 'telling stories', particularly in a context which recorded them in writing, provided witnesses with a 'way of putting themselves, as actors, at centre stage', taking up 'specific subject positions that conveyed elements of their personal identities'.¹¹¹ Similarly, his remembrance book provided Skayman with a space – and a process – in which to practise a similar strategic 'art', shaping his memories and aide-mémoires into meaningful narratives which, moreover, construct an image of his labour and express his identity as a manorial officer.¹¹²

¹⁰⁴ The quotation is from Hilary M. Carey, 'What Is the Folded Almanac? The Form and Function of a Key Manuscript Source for Astro-Medical Practice in Later Medieval England', *Soc. Hist. Med.* 16, no. 3 (2003): 481–509 (487). Also, see Carey, 'Folded Almanac', 485, 486; Friedman, 'Illustrated Girdlebook', 116.

¹⁰⁵ Friedman, 'Illustrated Girdlebook', 115, 116–119.

¹⁰⁶ Friedman, 133; Carey, 'Folded Almanac', 186.

¹⁰⁷ BL/T 13/28, f. 20r; Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 96.

¹⁰⁸ BL/T 13/28, f. 10r.

¹⁰⁹ Ann Blair, 'Note Taking as an Art of Transmission', *Critical Inquiry* 31, no. 1 (2004): 85–107 (85).

¹¹⁰ The first and third quotations are from Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (1996; repr., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 235–236 at 235; the second quotation is from Kane, *Memory and Gender*, 58 quoting J. D. Y. Peel, 'For who hath despised the day of small things? Missionary narratives and Historical Anthropology', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37 (1995): 581–607 (582).

¹¹¹ The first and second quotations are from Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, 234; the third quotation is from Kane, *Memory and Gender*, 58.

¹¹² Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, 235.

Skayman died in late 1519 or early 1520, still in the Townshends' service; in fact, he directed that Roger Townshend should be the 'supervisour' for his will.¹¹³ Skayman's remembrance book was stored with other administrative documents. At present it sits inside the cover of an account of payments which Skayman made between March 1518 and March 1519, and it seems that – at one time – it was sewn in behind it.¹¹⁴ Like the accounts, rentals, evidences, indentures and court rolls which Skayman spent time sorting and consulting, his remembrance book may also have been referenced not only by Townshend but by future officers.¹¹⁵ It does, after all, conform to Harvey's argument for the preservation of manorial documents: it 'provided evidence of practice and precedent' on the estate.¹¹⁶

Agreement in Skayman's remembrance book

As the scope of Skayman's writing is 'al my masters besenes fulfullyd *and* done by me' and, as we have seen, Skayman's days were varied, his book encompasses a range of types and registers of agreement, ones made in different contexts, between different people, and in which Skayman participated and to which he related in different ways.¹¹⁷ Rents and farms were an important source of income for the Townshends, and throughout the year Skayman let out lands and other property, finding new farmers or renegotiating with incumbent tenants.¹¹⁸ He also worked to ensure such agreements were fulfilled, collecting rents, farms and monies owed and, in turn, paying out those owed by the Townshends.¹¹⁹ New agreements could spring up during the course of this work as tenants and farmers 'promysid' Skayman that if he came again another day he 'schuld nat faylle' to have their money then.¹²⁰

Skayman's agreement-related work was also fed by the other great root of the Townshends' wealth – sheep-farming, with its complex foldcoursing system and often dominating flockmasters (the Townshends amongst them).¹²¹ Skayman 'rekenyd' with other sheep-farmers to determine how

¹¹³ Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 100, 146 editing NCC Will Register Robinson 77 (Skayman's will).

¹¹⁴ Moreton and Rutledge, 95. The account is archived as part of BL/T 13/28.

¹¹⁵ BL/T 13/28, ff. 2v, 3v, 7r, 7v, 8r, 20r, 20v, 21r, 24r, 24v.

¹¹⁶ The quotation is from Harvey, 'Estate Records', 108. For further exploration of this argument, see Harvey, *Cuxham*, 15.

¹¹⁷ BL/T 13/28, f. 1r.

¹¹⁸ Moreton, *Townshends*, 138–139; Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 99–100. For entries which record Skayman letting out lands and property, finding new farmers and negotiating with tenants, see BL/T 13/28, ff. 3v, 4r, 5r, 7r, 9r, 10v, 14v, 23r, 24v, 29v, 32r.

¹¹⁹ For entries which record Skayman collecting rents, farms and monies owed, see BL/T 13/28, ff. 1r, 1v, 2r, 2v, 3r, 3v, 5r, 5v, 6v, 9r, 10r, 11r, 11v, 12r, 13v, 14r, 15r, 18r, 18v, 19v, 20r, 20v, 21r, 21v, 22v, 23r, 24v, 29r, 29v, 32r, 33v. For entries which record Skayman paying out monies owed by the Townshends, see BL/T 13/28, ff. 1r, 2v, 10v, 11v, 14r, 15r, 15v, 18v, 20r, 22r, 29r, 29v.

¹²⁰ The first quotation is from BL/T 13/28, f. 20v; the second quotation is from BL/T 13/28, f. 11v.

¹²¹ Moreton, *Townshends*, 162; Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 99–100. Roger Townshend II's father, Roger I, was likely one of the 'foremost flock-masters of the late fifteenth century', while Roger II was still 'clearly among the leaders' of the region's flockmasters in the 1510s. Moreton, *Townshends*, 166, 167. His flocks peaked at Michaelmas 1516 when he had 18,000 sheep in twenty-six flocks. Moreton, 166. For

many acres they and Townshend had in each others' foldcourses, and what rent was owed for any imbalance.¹²² He also met with farmers and others for the 'leying owte' of pasture into the foldcourse and to '[e]xchong' it for other pieces from the demesne, as well as working with 'farmers' and tenants to agree where brecks should be situated; negotiation, discussion and agreement may also have preceded the days Skayman spent laying and treading out tillage and pasture.¹²³ Skayman was also involved in negotiating a solution to complaints – aired during Wolsley's enclosure commission of 1517 – which arose from Townshend's engrossment of pasture lands for grazing, converting it from arable.¹²⁴ Skayman also bought land, wrote indentures and bills of agreement, waited on his master while Townshend made bargains, made them himself, and investigated the details of past bargains.¹²⁵ He settled disputes about fences and boundaries, and copied bills of agreements into his remembrance book to ensure their precepts were abided by in the work he oversaw.¹²⁶ He kept or attended numerous courts which were frequent forums for the making and enforcement of agreements.¹²⁷ He drew on and engaged with the processes of agreement making and maintenance that took place in communities across the Townshend estate, joining in boundary perambulations, examining tenants and other inhabitants, and taking the 'avyse' of communities – often depicted with a singular, harmonious voice – as he renewed dragges of their localities.¹²⁸

overviews of the expansion – and eventual domination – of seigneurial sheep-farming and foldcoursing rights in East Anglia from the mid-1370s to the sixteenth century, see Bruce M. S. Campbell and Mark Overton, 'A New Perspective on Medieval and Early Modern Agriculture: Six Centuries of Norfolk Farming c. 1250–c. 1850', *P&P*, no. 141 (1993): 38–105 (77–80); Bailey, 'Foldcourse System', 46–51; Campbell, *Seigniorial Agriculture*, 160. For tensions and disputes related to foldcoursing, sheep-farming and flockmasters' activities, see Allison, 'Sheep-Corn Husbandry', 22–28; Alan Simpson, 'The East Anglian Foldcourse: Some Queries', *Agric. Hist. Rev.* 6, no. 2 (1958): 87–96 (90–93); Bailey, 'Foldcourse System', 47, 49–51; Moreton, *Townshends*, 177–184, 187–190; Postgate, 'Field Systems of East Anglia', 319–321; Diarmaid MacCulloch, 'Kett's Rebellion in Context', *P&P*, no. 84 (1979): 36–59 (51–52); Campbell, *Seigniorial Agriculture*, 160. Moreton provides details of 'discord' arising from the Townshend's sheep-farming activities. Moreton, *Townshends*, 184–187 at 184.

¹²² The quotation is from BL/T 13/28, f. 1v. Also, see BL/T 13/28, ff. 1v, 14v, 18v–19r; Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 98. Moreton notes that engrossment was the Townshends' 'particular sin'. Moreton, *Townshends*, 185.

¹²³ The first and second quotations come from BL/T 13/28, f. 15r; the third quotation comes from BL/T 13/28, f. 14v. For agreeing where brecks – outfields or 'sporadically cultivated land' ('Glossary' in Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 149) – should be situated, see BL/T 13/28, ff. 14v, 33r. For the development and use of 'brecking' in the sixteenth century, see Bailey, 'Foldcourse System', 49. For a longer view, see M. R. Postgate, 'The Field Systems of Breckland', *Agric. Hist. Rev.* 10, no. 2 (1962): 80–101 (90–96). For the renewing, laying and treading out of lands, particularly tillage and pasture, see BL/T 13/28, ff. 7v, 11r, 14v, 15r, 18r, 18v, 19v, 20r, 22v, 29r, 32v. When land was taken into the foldcourse, tenants or farmers or tenants would be allocated a commensurate portion of the demesne or, occasionally, receive paid compensation. Moreton, *Townshends*, 163; Joan Thirsk, 'The Farming Regions of England: East Anglia: Norfolk and Suffolk', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales: 1500–1640*, ed. Joan Thirsk, vol. 4, The Agrarian History of England and Wales (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 40–48 (42). For an entry which records Skayman paying compensation to tenants, see BL/T 13/28, f. 14r.

¹²⁴ BL/T 13/28, ff. 28r–v; Moreton, *Townshends*, 185; Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 99.

¹²⁵ For buying land, see BL/T 13/28, f. 17v. For writing indentures and bills of agreement, see BL/T 13/28, ff. 1v, 3r, 11r, 24r. For bargain-making and investigating past bargains, see BL/T 13/28, ff. 6v, 7r, 10r.

¹²⁶ For a dispute over fences and boundaries, see BL/T 13/28, f. 14r. For a bill of an agreement which Skayman copied into his remembrance book, see BL/T 13/28, f. 12v.

¹²⁷ See page 131 and note 6 above. BL/T 13/28, ff. 3r, 8r, 10v, 12r, 15r, 16r, 24r, 29v, 30r, 31r, 31v. Ralph Evans discusses the manorial court as a forum for settling disputes. Evans, 'Manorial Court', 160, 161.

¹²⁸ For boundary perambulation, see BL/T 13/28, f. 6r. For examining tenants and others, see BL/T 13/28, ff. 20v, 21r, 23v, 25r, 30r, 33v, 34r. For taking communities' 'avyse', see BL/T 13/28, ff. 2r, 16v.

Skayman tended, cultivated and assessed agreements just as he did the Townshends' flocks and lands.

Agreement is not only prominent in the remembrance book because it kept Skayman busy, but because of the way that he writes about and weights it. The language of agreement pervades the book in various ways. For instance, Skayman frequently frames people's speech as promises, thereby constructing their – often informal – interactions as a faithful agreement.¹²⁹ Plenty, like Cresmes who 'promysyd me ... that he schuld Come to my master ether a munday or a Tuysday', are said to have made promises about when they would visit him or Townshend, or make payments.¹³⁰ John Barnysdell 'promysyd me that my Master schuld have al thos Evidens that he hath' about certain lands.¹³¹ Hedgers and dykers working through the winter made repeated promises to work 'as fast as pei Cane' as soon as the weather begins to improve, while others made promises about overseeing that work.¹³² *Promising* was not only to make an assurance; the word aligned these interactions between Skayman and others with the act of making a binding agreement or pledge, claiming trustworthiness and asking for faith.¹³³ As Forrest demonstrates, ambiguities existed between the different registers of promising.¹³⁴ Here, Skayman is able to use this ambiguity to slide the interactions he describes along the registers of promising, from an assurance given in everyday conversation to a more intentional, even binding, giving of faith. He gives these promises weight.

Skayman did this especially effectively when he chose to describe an assurance made to him as a promise, even though he knew as he wrote that it had not been kept. He writes that he had gone to Styeny of Cressingham to collect £7 10s that Townshend 'schuld haue of hyme' for his farm.¹³⁵ Styeny 'promysyd me to Come to my Master and pay hyme the seyd vij li x s with \in/ a ffortneyth', but Skayman and Townshend were disappointed.¹³⁶ Skayman concludes, 'and soo he keps no Ponwtement for he payd hyme no parcell therof in that tyme'.¹³⁷ Skayman's use of 'promysyd' allows him to effectively and disparagingly characterise Styeny as someone lacking in faith and trustworthiness who did not keep his agreements.¹³⁸ This is strengthened by the present tense 'keps': not only is this a practical reminder that the money is still owed, but it underscores that Styeny continues to be actively untrustworthy – avoiding any potential appointment and not paying even part of what he owes – and stretches that state of being out beyond the fortnight.¹³⁹ Through framing such dealings as promises, Skayman conjures up the estate as a place where almost all interactions – not only those which result in a bill of what is 'couenantyth and grantyth' – are

¹²⁹ Forrest, *Trustworthy Men*, 35, 36, 41–44.

¹³⁰ BL/T 13/28, f. 2v. For other examples, see BL/T 13/28, ff. 10r, 11r, 11v, 14r, 16v, 20v, 21v, 23v, 24v, 33v.

¹³¹ BL/T 13/28, f. 12r.

¹³² For promises by the hedgers and dykers, see BL/T 13/28, ff. 16r, 20v. For promises about overseeing, see BL/T 13/28, f. 18r.

¹³³ *MED*, s.v., *promisen* v., 1, 2, 3. Forrest, *Trustworthy Men*, 39.

¹³⁴ Forrest, 42–46.

¹³⁵ BL/T 13/28, f. 10r.

¹³⁶ BL/T 13/28, f. 10r.

¹³⁷ BL/T 13/28, f. 10r.

¹³⁸ BL/T 13/28, f. 10r.

¹³⁹ BL/T 13/28, f. 10r.

conducted and seen through this prism of agreement.¹⁴⁰ This way of framing assurances solidifies them – and marks out those who do not act in accordance with this system.

The language of written agreement also emerges in Skayman's remembrance book. For instance, Skayman often paraphrases the terms of any lets he had made that day and on occasion he copies, or intends to copy, bills recording other agreements into his remembrance book.¹⁴¹ It also surfaces in entries which deal with the fulfilment of agreements made in the past, in ways which are reminiscent of the implicit referencing I have discussed in Chapter One. Through this mode of writing, Skayman is able to bring agreements' past and present – and the chain of work and actions which connects them – to life simultaneously. When he describes collecting the half year rent at Bircham, Skayman briefly and smoothly slips into the language of the original contract governing that payment and back out again, before referencing the materiality of another related document:

Item a Tuysdey I receywyd the halffe yere ferme at Byrcham ... wych
extendyth to þe some of xlix s x d in ~~elene~~ good and lefull mony
besyd the allowans as yt doth appere by a byll of þe *parsons* hand for
reparacion and rentes payd owte as yt appere by þe seyd byll¹⁴²

Skayman's work riding to collect rents was underpinned by the work of finding and understanding a string of related documents, carefully ensuring that the agreement was upheld by both sides – that monies owed were paid but allowances were not forgotten. This entry and its slight and swift shifting of language bind together a whole chain of moments in the life of this agreement: the original negotiation and the creation of the document which, with its particular voice, recorded it and which Skayman echoes here; later fulfilments and (potentially) renegotiations of that agreement and the process of their record; Skayman '[r]ansakyng' the store of documents and evidences at Raynham, reading these specific records, pulling out the relevant information and recognising hands and witnesses; the act of rent collection itself; and then the writing up of the day's work in his remembrance book, with Skayman switching perspective from a voice reanimating those first documents and agreements, to an observer of them at a much greater distance in time.¹⁴³ In Skayman's remembrance book all these moments are simultaneously alive, the agreement growing

¹⁴⁰ BL/T 13/28, f. 12v.

¹⁴¹ An example of a paraphrased let: 'Item vppone Mondey be forne lammes I was at Oxwick with John' Wlffe in makyn of terraire of Bougeres londes and leyth them owte to Thomas Cattone of Oxwick for the space of v yerres to begeyne at Michelmes nexte comynge and lete hyme a Mese conteyning iij acres *dimidia* and ciij acres in the feyld of Oxwick and pattesley and he \to/ pay yerly to my Master xvij s iij d'. BL/T 13/28, f. 7v. For other examples, see BL/T 13/28, ff. 9r, 10v, 11r, 15v, 32r. For examples of Skayman copying, or intending to copy, bills of agreement into his book, see BL/T 13/28, ff. 12v, 13r.

¹⁴² BL/T 13/28, f. 1v. Skayman also uses the phrase 'good and lefull mony of Eynglond' when paraphrasing agreements he made with Edmund Hoker and Heygrene the Shepherd when he let them certain lands. BL/T 13/28, f. 32r. This suggests that Skayman is drawing on a legally meaningful phrase regularly used in contracts to specify the precise terms of the agreement. This phrase is not exclusive to the agreements made on the Townshend estate, but it – and similar phrases – are used in other contracts or indentures. For instance, see *MED*, s.v., *mon(ei)* n., 1b (associated quotations: London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius F.12 (Indenture between the Mayor of London and warden of the Friars Minor); Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson B.408 (English Register of Godstow Nunnery, Oxfordshire)).

¹⁴³ The quotation comes from BL/T 13/28, f. 20r. In an earlier entry, Skayman similarly records that he had been with his master to 'Ransaycke the Cowntes and a the Rentalles of Scales'. BL/T 13/28, f. 3v. Moreton discusses how the Townshends kept and stored their documents at Raynham. Moreton, *Townshends*, 104.

and flexing and being tended by him, his competent management and control of it symbolised by its condensation into just a few lines.

Agreements and agreement-making are thus prominent features of Skayman's remembrance book. They took up a great deal of his time and energy and, moreover, Skayman weights agreement in his writing to a striking degree. His descriptions of his dealings and interactions on the Townshend estate are shot through and laden with promises, and Skayman's writing effectively marks out those who did not abide by them. The language of written agreement is also a notable feature of Skayman's writing, bringing agreements – and Skayman's work in making, upholding and researching them – to life. Having drawn attention to the value which Skayman's writing placed on agreements and the labour of making them more broadly, I will now focus on two recurrent elements of the narratives which he composes around agreement: consensus and emotion. After analysing these themes in depth, I will turn to explore how Skayman brings both elements to bear on his relating of a dispute between Townshend and four other men and, of course, the agreement which resolved it.

Consensus

The importance of consensus as a concept in Skayman's remembrance book is often pointed to – ironically – by his use of the word 'verians' to describe disputes or conflicts.¹⁴⁴ 'Verians' has the meaning of disagreement or contention, even a specifically legal dispute.¹⁴⁵ However, it also has strong tones of change, variety, diversity, discrepancy or inconsistency.¹⁴⁶ This combination creates a sense in Skayman's writing that it is the discrepancy in position that is the root of the strife. Even in instances where one party is engaged in enacting an 'One ryth full [unrightful] Custum', the description of the situation as a 'verians' suggests that the solution does not lie in forcing the wrongdoer to conform to the "correct" position.¹⁴⁷ Rather, it lies in bringing the two parties to a convergence and finding a single path that they could share and agree on, thereby reaching a consensus. This can be seen in the case of Thomas Smith of Saxthorpe, a tenant of Sir Humphrey Grey, who had been grazing his livestock on Thewsmor common at the Townshend's manor of Salle.¹⁴⁸ However, in the eyes of Skayman and the tenants of Salle, and the townships of Corpusty and Heydon, he did so in accordance with the aforesaid 'One ryth full [unrightful] Custum'.¹⁴⁹ They seem to have argued that only those from the townships of Corpusty and Heydon (and, presumably Townshend's tenants at Salle) had intercommoning rights at Thewsmor, not those from the

¹⁴⁴ For example: 'wich Comone is in verians betwyne the Townsheip of Corpusty and the Townshyp of Saxstrop' (BL/T 13/28, f. 8r); 'and the townseyp and Shynfeild my Masters tenant þ wher in veriansse for a Certene Grownd' (BL/T 13/28, f. 14r).

¹⁴⁵ MED, s.v., *variaunce* n., 4a.

¹⁴⁶ MED, s.v., *variaunce* n., 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 2c, 5.

¹⁴⁷ BL/T 13/28, f. 6r.

¹⁴⁸ Moreton, *Townshends*, 114 (Map 1), 220.

¹⁴⁹ BL/T 13/28, ff. 6r, 8r.

township of Saxthorpe.¹⁵⁰ At the Lammas and leet court there was an interim ‘Grement takyne by twyne’ Smith and the township: neither Smith nor any of Sir Humphrey’s other tenants in Saxthorpe were to common in Thewsmor ‘vntylle the tyme that sy Master Grey Brengyth downe the best evidens that he hath and Shew them to Master and my master and he to Sette thorow the mater’.¹⁵¹ Although the interim agreement had stopped all “unrightful” commoning, the plan for further investigation and discussion meant that there was potential for that position to change. Therefore, what was more important than just stopping Smith’s improper grazing was finding a position that could be shared peacefully by Townshend, Sir Humphrey, and their respective tenants, now and in the future. The aim was to reach a consensus.

The favouring of consensus over the absolute protection of rightful custom – albeit resting on an examination of evidences – suggests that harmony and equilibrium were prized in this manorial context.¹⁵² Here, Skayman’s book suggests that the work of making agreements was the process of bringing two parties to a single shared point, underpinned by evidence, discussion and, ideally, fairness, with Townshend and Sir Humphrey acting as quasi-arbitrators (although they may also have had an interest in how this decision would affect their respective jurisdictions). This process would create a new and rightful custom by which both parties could abide, and in this respect, echoes the value placed on compromise in other contexts.

As I have discussed, compromise (combined with equity) was a fundamental ideal of arbitration.¹⁵³ Compromise was praised as it was considered more likely to offer disputants a route back to peaceful or amicable relations, which was one of the chief aims of arbitration.¹⁵⁴ Therefore, it held great appeal for disputants, and was valued and promoted by authorities; for instance, the ordinances of the Guild of Tailors in Lyn instructed that if any dispute arose between members of the guild, then the ‘2 hedesmen’ were ‘to do ther partes to drawe hem to accord’, while the duties of the Mayor of Bristol included endeavouring ‘to sett parties in rest and ease by their advertysen, compromesse, or otherwise’.¹⁵⁵ Achieving compromise was often supported by practical elements of the arbitration process such as the selection of arbitrators and the examination

¹⁵⁰ BL/T 13/28, f. 6r, 8r. Intercommoning rights are an arrangement by which tenants of various manors, or the residents of various settlements, all had common rights in the same piece of land.

¹⁵¹ BL/T 13/28, f. 8r. Although the townships of both Heydon and Corpusty commoned in Thewsmor common, Skayman’s account of the court suggests that it was the township of Corpusty which was particularly irked by Smith’s actions. It may, therefore, be correct that Smith made an agreement with the township of Corpusty alone. However, it is possible that Skayman simply missed the ‘s’ off the end of ‘Townshyp’ and the agreement was made with both townships.

¹⁵² Johnson argues for the importance of harmony and peace in communities as an ideal in rural legal culture more broadly. Johnson, *Law in Common*, 45–54.

¹⁵³ See pages 136–137.

¹⁵⁴ McRee, ‘Peacemaking’, 833–834; Powell, ‘Settlement of Disputes’, 30, 35; Laughton, ‘Control of Discord’, 220–221.

¹⁵⁵ Rawcliffe, ‘Arbitration’, 104–105 at 105 quoting L. Toulmin, ed., *English Gilds: The Original Ordinances of More Than One Hundred Early English Gilds, Together with þe Olde Vsages of þe Cite of Wynchestre, the Ordinances of Worcester, the Office of the Mayor of Bristol, and the Costomary of the Manor of Tettenhall-Regis from Original MSS. of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (1870; repr. London: Early English Text Society, 1892), 426, 106 quoting D. M. Owen, ed., *The Making of King’s Lynn: A Documentary Survey, Records of Social and Economic History 9, new series* (London: Oxford University Press, 1984), 267–268. See pages 136–137.

of evidence. As the examples from Lyn and Bristol suggest, arbitrators had a crucial role to play in bringing disputants to compromise; who the arbitrators were could also have a critical impact on disputants' willingness to accept their award as equitable, and disputing parties would often select a set of arbitrators each to ensure that they both felt that they had access to equal favour.¹⁵⁶ If this was not done, it was essential that disputants trusted in the impartiality of their arbitrator, and arbitrators might be described as 'endeferently name and chosen', 'trustie and wel disposed persons'.¹⁵⁷ We can see similar considerations and practices at work on the Townshend estate during the dispute over Thewsmor common, as the two disputing parties would each be represented by their respective lords in the discussions over its resolution.¹⁵⁸ As I will discuss in more detail below, the examination of evidences also played an important part in achieving equitable compromises through arbitration; again, we can see this echoed in Skayman's description of the dispute over Thewsmor common.¹⁵⁹

It is clear from Skayman's description of the dispute over Thewsmor common and the agreement taken at the Lammas and leet court that, firstly, consensus was a vital concept on the Townshend estate and, secondly, that this type of agreement-making had much in common with the process and ideals of arbitration, particularly compromise. However, Skayman's remembrance book also offers a broader range of depictions of consensus. In this section I will explore how Skayman's writing communicates consensus, demonstrates his labour and skill, and asserts the legitimacy of the agreements which he had made.

In his remembrance book, Skayman often uses a single voice to signal that he has successfully created consensus – or, indeed, that consensus already exists over some particular matter. He streamlines conversation or the back and forth of competing voices until a single voice remains, either through the creation of a chorus or by silencing disagreement; the latter is a particularly striking feature of his writing. Moreover, Skayman asserts the legitimacy and truth of others' statements by repeatedly drawing attention to the lack – even the impossibility – of voices which deviate from the stated consensus. Skayman's use of a single voice is reminiscent of the legal concept of *fama*.¹⁶⁰ *Fama* referred to 'widely believed facts or collective judgements about a person's reputation', and it could be recounted as though it belonged to a single body and was expressed through a single voice.¹⁶¹ For instance, in 1500 a woman from Upton, Lincolnshire, was labelled a soothsayer 'just as the public voice and fame bear out'.¹⁶² The claim that such knowledge

¹⁵⁶ Hicks, *Political Culture*, 157; Hicks, 'Restraint', 62–63; McRee, 'Peacemaking', 851, 853.

¹⁵⁷ Hicks, 'Restraint', 63, 64 quoting Birmingham, Birmingham Archives and Heritage, MS 3521/1 (finding number [DV 591] 437204).

¹⁵⁸ BL/T 13/28, f. 8r.

¹⁵⁹ See pages 156–157.

¹⁶⁰ For discussions of the concept of *fama*, see Thelma Fenster and Daniel Lord Smail, 'Introduction', in *Fama: The Politics of Talk and Reputation in Medieval Europe*, ed. Thelma Fenster and Daniel Lord Smail (Ithaca: Cornell University, 2003), 1–14 (1–10); Marie A. Kelleher, 'Law and the Maiden: *Inquisitio*, *Fama*, and the Testimony of Children in Medieval Catalonia', *Viator* 37 (2006): 351–368 (352, 357–367).

¹⁶¹ Johnson, *Law in Common*, 36.

¹⁶² Johnson, 36 quoting Lincoln, Lincolnshire Archives, Vj5 (Visitation book for Lincoln deanery), f. 7v (translation by Johnson).

was common or shared conferred legitimacy and, similarly, Skayman's use of a single voice communicates consensus and, thereby, the legitimacy of the agreements he has made or recorded.¹⁶³

In two entries related to his dealings with the farmers of Barmer, we can see Skayman writing a chorus into being. Firstly, on 21 November 1516, Skayman had gone to Barmer to 'pownte a day with the fermers a to ley owte the Bryke [breck] ther'.¹⁶⁴ In this entry the farmers appear as a single body, while Skayman is distinct. However, when Skayman came to record his return to Barmer, just under a week later, he took a different approach. In this second entry Skayman subsumes himself into the body of the farmers, describing them acting as one as they decided what land would be brought in and out of cultivation: 'and so **we** leyd owte of the pasture ther in to the Tylth ... and ... **we** receywyd in to ... the pastur ...' [my emphasis].¹⁶⁵ Through his use of 'we', Skayman creates an image of himself and the farmers working in concert and, moreover, suggests the formation of a singular voice which speaks in chorus about the management of the estate's lands. Skayman thereby communicates that he and the farmers of Barmer have come to a consensus and have made a successful agreement.

More often, however, Skayman does not suggest consensus with a chorus, but with a lone voice surrounded by silence. We can see this in instances when Skayman herds people towards agreement. Skayman's descriptions of his engagements with others often follow a back and forth pattern. There are repetitions of 'he seid' and 'I seid' and other variations of these phrases.¹⁶⁶ In particular, the phrases 'he gaffe me hansware' and 'I gaff hyme hansware' intensify these entries' sense of back and forth, sally, response, and rebuttal.¹⁶⁷ Skayman's writing is reminiscent of the 'two-handed cut and thrust of a commercial transaction' which can be seen in Caxton's 'Dialogues', printed in 1483.¹⁶⁸ Davis suggests that Caxton's 'Dialogues' hint at an 'etiquette' which informed bargaining and, similarly, Skayman seems to have his own models of how a negotiation should be recounted.¹⁶⁹ As he writes these back and forth negotiations, Skayman depicts himself as increasingly hedging in his opponents. He closes different avenues at each turn, and agreement was reached because the other party had neither further options nor room to manoeuvre. At this point there is simply nothing more that they can say; Skayman, therefore, often signals the conclusion of a negotiation by implying another's silence. We can see this pattern in Skayman's rather rushed record of his investigation in January 1517 into how much of Danyell's lands was in Thomas Grey's foldcourse.¹⁷⁰ Grey 'seid he had had none of Danyelles landes in hys pasture and so I and John' wlf

¹⁶³ Johnson, 36–37.

¹⁶⁴ BL/T 13/28, f. 14v.

¹⁶⁵ BL/T 13/28, f. 15r.

¹⁶⁶ BL/T 13/28, ff. 11v, 13v, 19v, 28v, 33v.

¹⁶⁷ BL/T 13/28, ff. 11v, 13v, 33v.

¹⁶⁸ Davis, *Market Morality*, 69–71 at 69; Henry Bradley, ed., *'Dialogues in French and English' by William Caxton (Adapted from a Fourteenth-Century Book of Dialogues in French and Flemish)*, Extra Series 79 (London: Early English Text Society, 1900), for instance, 15–18.

¹⁶⁹ Davis, *Market Morality*, 70.

¹⁷⁰ BL/T 13/28, f. 19v. Moreton and Rutledge identify Thomas Grey as a 'yeoman' from North Creake. He died in 1528. Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 138 n. 9. The Danyell in this entry may be Henry Danyell, who was a priest and a relative of the first duke of Norfolk. In 1510 Townshend had renewed a lease of the manor of Marches from the said Danyell. Moreton and Rutledge, 141 n. 80. Since Skayman had gone to North

shewid hyme vnto ij five rod and Canne nat deneyyt [deny it]'.¹⁷¹ The phrase 'Canne nat deneyyt [deny it]' silences Grey and forces him into a tacit agreement with Skayman and Wolf's position.¹⁷² In this entry consensus and consent are created and given through silence.

In Skayman's remembrance book, silence can be enough, in its own way, to create a legitimate agreement and a rightful consensus.¹⁷³ Although active and positive consensus or verbal affirmation may be absent, a consensus characterised by silence does not seem to be considered lacking, despite the reluctance or seething indignation which we may read into Skayman's opponents. In fact, the scent of such ire in Skayman's writing may even strengthen the sense of such agreements' legitimacy: it emphasises the power of an argument which has been able to silence any desire on the opposition's part to respond. Grey, for instance, may have *wanted* to deny Skayman and Wolf's assertions but he simply *could* not; instead, he had to join them in consensus and stand in silent, if reluctant, agreement. Wendy Scase argues that the mid-fourteenth-century poem *Croniques de London* uses the silence of Sir Richard Willoughby – a royal justice of Edward III – to demonstrate the strength and volume of the 'barrage of complaints' made against him.¹⁷⁴ In the poem these complaints are analogous to a storm, and the 'noise, wind, and rain that destroy the fabric of the ... church parallel the clamour that has finally silenced Willoughby'.¹⁷⁵ Similarly, the silence which Skayman bestows upon his opponents serves to invigorate his voice and strengthen the image of his position and his evidence.

In the entry related to Grey and Danyell's lands, for instance, Skayman's choice of the word 'shewid' – he 'and John' wlf shewid hyme vnto ij five rod' – and his portrayal of Grey's silence – he 'Canne nat deneyyt [deny it]' – work in concert to produce an atmosphere of incontrovertibility.¹⁷⁶ It is ambiguous how Skayman and Wolf 'shewid' Grey those 'ij five rod'.¹⁷⁷ It may have been something which they declared or convinced him of through speech alone, or showed him in the landscape or in some other evidence; I suspect that the latter is more likely. *To shew* was to tell, make clear, proclaim, and it was also used in legal contexts (being the English version of the French, *moustre*) as a plaintiff might shew evidence or a grievance.¹⁷⁸ However, it also resonated with the visual – to

Creake to see Grey 'for' the portion of these 'Danyelles landes' which he believed Grey had in his foldcourse, these lands may also have been leased from Danyell or, indeed, there may have been some other arrangement involved here. BL/T 13/28, f. 19v.

¹⁷¹ BL/T 13/28, f. 19v. Skayman's reference to 'ij five rod' likely means that he and Wolf 'shewid' Danyell two pieces of land which were each of five rod in size. BL/T 13/28, f. 19v.

¹⁷² BL/T 13/28, f. 19v.

¹⁷³ In his exploration of *arrangements* – 'an agreement between two individuals or two groups as well as a way of resolving disputes if and when the initial agreement broke down' (Alain Corbin, *The Life of an Unknown: The Rediscovered World of a Clog Maker in Nineteenth-Century France*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, European Perspectives: A Series in Social Thought and Cultural Criticism (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001 in translation), 105) – in the world of a nineteenth-century French clog maker, Alain Corbin discusses how such *arrangements* could be tacit, conducted in and affirmed by people's silence. It was when disputes erupted over them that speech could too. Corbin, 105, 109, 112.

¹⁷⁴ Scase, *Literature and Complaint*, 54, 57–58 at 57.

¹⁷⁵ Scase, 57–58 at 58.

¹⁷⁶ BL/T 13/28, f. 19v.

¹⁷⁷ BL/T 13/28, f. 19v.

¹⁷⁸ For to tell, make clear, proclaim, see *MED*, s.v., *sheuen* v.1, 7a, 7c. For the legal context, see *MED*, s.v., *sheuen* v.1, 7b; *AND*, s.v., *mustrer*, 1 (law), 2 (law), 4 (law); Wendy Scase, 'Complaint Literature', in *The*

bring out, to exhibit, to be plain to see.¹⁷⁹ This visual resonance makes a claim for reliability and truthfulness.¹⁸⁰ Looking was meant to give greater power and discernment to the watcher over the observed, so *to shew* suggested that nothing was hidden or veiled from the other's sight. Everything was out in the open, ready to be inspected free from the mediation of the speaker or the "shewer".¹⁸¹ However, in this entry Skayman weaponises the idea that he could neither dissemble with his speech, manipulate his evidence, or hide from Grey's examination; he implies that what he and Wolf 'shewid' was so clearly and manifestly true that Grey was driven and constrained into silent agreement.¹⁸² The only voice left is Skayman's. By muting his opponents in his writing, Skayman implies his skill and labour in providing himself with a position which compels them into silence. Such entries, therefore, not only demonstrate the legitimacy of their agreement, but Skayman's expertise in making them.

Skayman also uses references to others' silence to communicate the reliability of the testimony which he both elicited and relied upon during the course of his work. As I have mentioned, on two occasions Skayman recorded a 'seyng' of a certain farmer of Shereford.¹⁸³ This farmer was Richard Hooke, and his two 'remembrans' usefully, even supportively, bear on Townshend's property rights in Shereford and, moreover, relate to rents, shack, tathing, foldcoursing and Townshend's pasture there.¹⁸⁴ Skayman's records of Hooke's speech often include the phrase they, he, or 'no mane denyyd it'.¹⁸⁵ Skayman's usage of this phrase is particularly heavy in his record of Hooke's first statement, often appearing in quick succession as it is paired with successive assertions. For instance, in relation to the prior of Hempton's tathing practices, Hooke:

seith that ~~he may~~ the seid prior may whene he breyk vpp is landes tath
 \the same/ is landes with is owne folde and no mane denyyd it and he

Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Law and Literature, ed. C. Barrington and S. Sobceki, Cambridge Companions to Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 95–107 (95).

¹⁷⁹ *MED*, s.v., *sheuen* v.1, 2a, 4a, 5e, 7a, 7c, 10a, 10c, 10d. Skayman seems to use *shew* both to indicate that an assurance was being made and to mean *showing*. For examples which seem to refer to assurances or speech, see BL/T 13/28, ff. 2r, 5v, 6v, 9r, 11v, 12r, 18r, 28v, 33v; For examples which seem to mean *showing*, see BL/T 13/28, ff. 3r, 8r, 10v. In some instances, such as the one I am discussing, it is ambiguous as to which meaning is uppermost. For instance, see BL/T 13/28, ff. 5v, 6v. I think that the visual meanings of *shew* continue to resonate through Skayman's descriptions of himself and others making assurances in order to indicate the reliability, truthfulness, and solidity of this speech.

¹⁸⁰ Johnson, *Law in Common*, 158–159; Irus Braverman, 'Hidden in Plain View: Legal Geography from a Visual Perspective', *Journal of Law, Culture, and the Humanities* 7, no. 2 (2010): 173–186 (174–175, 179). The *Speculum Sacerdotale* uses metaphors of sight to encourage penitents to confess without shaping their own narratives, instead asking them to reveal to the priest the unadulterated truths and secrets which they held within them. Weatherly, *Speculum Sacerdotale*, for instance, 108.

¹⁸¹ C. M. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* (London: Yale University Press, 2006), 178; Braverman, 'Legal Geography', 183–185.

¹⁸² BL/T 13/28, f. 19v.

¹⁸³ BL/T 13/28, ff. 25r, 34r.

¹⁸⁴ BL/T 13/28, ff. 25r, 34r; Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 95. *Tathing* is when sheep tread their own manure into the soil as they walk across it. 'Glossary' in Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 155; Campbell, *Seigniorial Agriculture*, 154. *Shack* is when livestock are allowed to graze on the stubble in the fields after harvest, and it can be used to refer to the feed itself, the period of time when this can be done, or the right to do so. 'Glossary' in Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 154.

¹⁸⁵ BL/T 13/28, f. 25r.

may ley a parte of his Shepys pasture with yne the same feild and no
mane denyyd it and so he deid the tyme that I [sic] was fermer ther¹⁸⁶

This phrase may also have been a feature of Hooke's speech – the telltale 'I' in the final line reveals that Skayman was working from a more immediate memory or record of Hooke's account given in the first person.¹⁸⁷ However, in the first two lines Skayman made amendments to his writing to increase its clarity. This suggests, therefore, that Skayman reviewed his record and – whether they were his addition or Hooke's – saw, at the very least, no harm and perhaps even utility and rhetorical power in the repeated 'and no mane denyyd it'.¹⁸⁸ The silence on the part of these other men – real, rhetorical or both – shores up Hooke's statements, attesting to their truth. It also allows his statements to become more than the recollections of a single man: others' silence allows Hooke's single voice to expand and stand in for a broader communal voice.¹⁸⁹ Hooke's testimony, therefore, can become an individual's articulation of a much broader consensus. Once again, a single voice accompanied by silence indicates consensus and agreement.

Having considered how Skayman uses a single voice to communicate consensus, I will now delve further into how Skayman describes the labour of bringing people to agreement, particularly his use of evidences to compose convincing narratives about the making of legitimate agreements which, furthermore, communicate his labour and his skill. Studies of arbitration have noted the importance of examining evidence to the process of producing an equitable and acceptable award.¹⁹⁰ Disputing parties were enjoined to bring evidences for arbitrators' inspection. The Duke of Clarence and his council examined the 'fair and notable evidence and proves' of disputing parties, while experts were often employed in the arbitration of commercial disputes to ensure that arbitrators were up to the task of analysing what was often highly technical and complex evidence.¹⁹¹ Arbitrators were able to consider a greater breadth of evidence than trial judges, alongside the wider context of the dispute.¹⁹² Considering the potentially 'long and complex history of the dispute' further encouraged and enabled arbitrators to make a 'sensitive decision', while their diligence could also encourage disputants to accept their awards.¹⁹³ Evidences were understood to have a crucial role to play in the outcome of arbitrations as the fifteenth-century gentleman Robert

¹⁸⁶ BL/T 13/28, f. 25r. Moreton and Rutledge suggest that the prior likely did not have the liberty of a foldcourse here, but some kind of 'lesser fold right'. BL/T 13/28, 143 n. 110.

¹⁸⁷ BL/T 13/28, f. 25r.

¹⁸⁸ BL/T 13/28, f. 25r.

¹⁸⁹ The phrase, *no man denied it*, may be a formula which asserts general assent, perhaps as would be given by a jury. *MED*, s.v., *denien* v., 1b (associated quotation: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson B.520 (Statutes of the Realm in England)); *AND*, s.v., *denier*², 1, 3 (law). This possibility reinforces the sense that Hooke is speaking with a communal voice and asserting a communal truth.

¹⁹⁰ For instance, see Hicks, *Political Culture*, 158–159; Hicks, 'Restraint', 64–66; Powell, 'Settlement of Disputes', 34; Rawcliffe, 'Arbitration', 103.

¹⁹¹ Hicks, 'Restraint', 64–65 at 65 quoting Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, MS 214/8 (modernised by Hicks); Rawcliffe, 'Arbitration', 100–101.

¹⁹² McRee, 'Peacemaking', 212.

¹⁹³ The quotations are from Attreed, 'Arbitration', 229. Also, see Powell, 'Settlement of Disputes', 36; McRee, 'Peacemaking', 853.

Armburgh wrote to another that ‘who can show best evidence rejoice the livelihood’ that was in contention.¹⁹⁴

Skayman deploys references to evidences in his descriptions of agreement-making in a range of contexts, from the formality of court – as in the case of Thewsmor common – to well-organised examinations, to informal wrangling. Such references communicate the discursive, documentary, and strategic skill which Skayman brought to bear on agreement-making. Moreover, as Skayman describes himself searching for and revealing consensuses between evidences he conveys the legitimate and rightful nature of the agreements he has made. He has not simply bulldozed others into accepting certain terms; rather, evidences have set the terms and Skayman has used his skill and labour to ensure that they are complied with.

In an entry for 15 May 1516, Skayman draws attention to both the discursive and the documentary skills which he brought to bear on a disagreement with an officer from another estate. The disagreement was with John Wager of Tittleshall, who may have been an officer of West Acre Priory, over 12d of yearly rent. Skayman writes that the rent ‘schuld be payd owte of þe maner of Godwick’, a manor of West Acre Priory, ‘unto þe maner of Scales’, which belonged to the Townshends.¹⁹⁵ Wager, on the other hand, did not agree that this payment should be made. However, in Skayman’s telling, Wager’s denial swiftly slides into an admission:

and he gafe me hansware ageyne and Seyd who [sic] þat þer was newer
none payd syne my lord Scales \died/ but þen he confessyth þat yt was payd
pesabely a a now and yt apperyth \soo/ by þe Cowntes¹⁹⁶

In Skayman’s telling, Wager moves from one position to another. At first he denied this payment, making a claim which – his quick *volte-face* implies – he knew to be untrue. Finally, however, Wager admits the “truth” of the matter and, implicitly, comes to an agreement with Skayman concerning this rent. Although Skayman does not relate any of his own statements in this entry – he is a silent figure – his decision to describe Wager’s speech with the word ‘confessyth’ is instructive.¹⁹⁷ By introducing this confessional dynamic into his narrative of agreement-making, Skayman casts himself as the professional and prepared questioner and discerning judge who authoritatively engages with Wager and successfully enjoins him to ‘Telle me’, counteracting any subterfuges and shepherding him towards his confession.¹⁹⁸ Through this limited but pointed description, Skayman prompts us to

¹⁹⁴ Hicks, *Political Culture*, 158–159 at 159 quoting Christine Carpenter, ed., *The Armburgh Papers: The Brokholes Inheritance in Warwickshire, Hertfordshire and Essex c. 1417–c. 1453, Chetham’s Manuscript Mun. E.6.10 (4)* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1998), 175 (spelling modernised by Hicks).

¹⁹⁵ BL/T 13/28, f. 3v. For the manor of Scales being part of the Townshend estate, see Moreton and Rutledge, ‘Skayman’s Book’, 138 n. 5; Moreton, *Townshends*, 119–120. For Godwick being a manor of West Acre Priory, see Moreton and Rutledge, ‘Skayman’s Book’, 139 n. 27; Francis Blomefield, *An Essay towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, vol. 9 (London: W. Miller, 1808; British History Online), 509–510, accessed April 29, 2023.

¹⁹⁶ BL/T 13/28, f. 3v.

¹⁹⁷ BL/T 13/28, f. 3v.

¹⁹⁸ The quotation is from Mirk, *Mirk’s Instructions*, 114. Mirk’s *Instructions for Parish Priests* advises confessors how to coax confessions from penitent. Mirk, 108–155. The *Speculum Sacerdotale* similarly gives guidance to priests on eliciting confessions and identifying those who were not confessing truthfully, contritely or penitently. Weatherly, *Speculum Sacerdotale*, 65, 69. Michel Foucault argues that confession ‘unfolds within a power relationship’ in which the confessor stands in the position of ‘authority’ as a judge and possesses the

imagine the skilful discursive work – compressed into the space between these two clauses – whereby he corralled Wager into speaking the truth he had known all along and joining him in consensus.

However, Skayman does not end his record of this negotiation with Wager's confession. Instead, he provides another moment of consensus: that between Wager's testimony and the evidence of the 'Cowntes'.¹⁹⁹ This reference supports the agreement which has been made as it affirms Skayman's position, Wager's confession and, moreover, the assertion that the payment had previously been made 'pesabely'.²⁰⁰ The peaceableness of the past payments is significant, and Skayman's insertion of 'soo' into this line ('and it apperyth \soo/') strengthens the sense that the accounts align with the specifics of Wager's confession.²⁰¹ Johnson outlines that peace was a 'normative concept' in late medieval rural communities, central both to the discourse of their various courts and to the way that the ideal community was imagined: peacefulness was their '*a priori* state of being'.²⁰² Skayman seems to draw on this same discourse to suggest that this payment should be made. To make it would be to return to a suggestively peaceable and, therefore, a rightful state of affairs.²⁰³ Skayman's reference to the accounts and the consensus that he has found there reinforce the agreement which he has made with Wager; it obliquely demonstrates the thorough documentary labour which Skayman brought to bear on negotiations and agreements.

In an entry for 16 February 1517, Skayman puts a greater focus on the documentary labour which had allowed him to bring about an agreement. Moreover, in this entry the consensus of evidences does not only support an agreement, but heralds its making. Here, Skayman recounts an

'agency of domination'. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley, vol. 1 (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984), 61–62 at 61, at 62. Similarly, Thomas Tentler explores the ways in which confession expressed the 'dominance' and 'superiority' of the priest; moreover, his 'expertise bolstered this superior status'. Thomas N. Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 345–346 at 345. In the context of inquisition, John H. Arnold discusses how the inquisitor took the position of power in that confessional dynamic, while the ideal inquisitor was 'diligent' and 'able to discern ... a truth that may be hidden beneath deceit and uncertainty'. John H. Arnold, "'A Man Takes an Ox by the Horn and a Peasant by the Tongue": Literacy, Orality and Inquisition in Medieval Languedoc', in *Learning and Literacy in Medieval England and Abroad*, ed. Sarah Rees Jones, Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy 3 (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2003), 31–47 (31, 33–34 at 33, at 33–34). Significantly, Arnold argues that literacy was a crucial part of this inquisitorial and discerning identity. Arnold, 34. While, here, I have emphasised the way in which the dynamic of confession elevated the confessor, scholars of inquisition have interrogated this dynamic and exposed its complexities. For instance, see Arnold, 31–47. In analyses of literary works scholars have explored how characters standing in the position of 'penitent' could parody and take ownership of confessional models of speech, using it in the service of 'self-presentation and self-knowledge' (Jerry Root, '*Space to Speke*': *The Confessional Subject in Medieval Literature*, American University Studies II: Romance Languages and Literatures 225 (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1997), 4). Jeremy Tambling, *Confession: Sexuality, Sin, the Subject*, Cultural Politics (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 48–49; Root, *Confessional Subject*, 3–5, 103–118.

¹⁹⁹ BL/T 13/28, f. 3v.

²⁰⁰ BL/T 13/28, f. 3v.

²⁰¹ BL/T 13/28, f. 3v.

²⁰² Johnson, *Law in Common*, 45–47 at 45, at 46.

²⁰³ Johnson, 45–47. Rosamund Faith's work demonstrates both the appeal and the legitimising power which the claim of a return to past practice and tradition held for the late medieval peasantry. Faith, "'Great Rumour'", 59–60, 63, 65–68. She argues that the peasantry 'looked back to an idealised past' more than 'forward to an idealised future'. Faith, 70.

enquiry which he undertook to determine whether Reymys – a farmer on the Townshend estate who may also have acted as an officer – had been ‘owerchargid’ in his account or whether he did, indeed, owe Townshend money.²⁰⁴ A week before, Skayman and Reymys had chosen a day on which they would meet to determine the issue. The farmers or tenants would attend so that they could be examined, Skayman would bring the accounts of the relevant manors with him, and either he or Reymys would bring Reymys’ bill of receipts.²⁰⁵ Examining each of these sources would determine ‘þe very sertenty’ of the matter.²⁰⁶ When the day came, Skayman writes that he ‘examynd the a Cowntes both of Eshalle and of Marches [the two relevant manors] and hys [Reymys’] bylle of receytes together and the Cowntes and þ hys bylle agreid in euery parte’.²⁰⁷ Skayman also examined the tenants and they likewise agreed that Reymys had ‘had euery fardynge’ from them for which he had been charged.²⁰⁸ This consensus between evidences brought Reymys to agreement and he was ‘content to pay’.²⁰⁹

Both Wager’s confession and Skayman’s findings regarding Reymys’ debt are crystallised as the final conclusions of these matters by the agreement of documents and testimony and the accordance of evidence. Skayman’s work in crystallising these agreements is not confined to the events themselves, but bookends them: before the encounter he found, selected and assessed the relevant documents, perhaps considering them strategically, while afterwards he may have returned to the archive for further investigations, finally turning to his remembrance book to produce narratives of evidentiary consensus and agreement.²¹⁰ Skayman’s use of documents and enquiries in his dealings with Reymys mirror the argumentative techniques which Wager’s confession imply and, moreover, the “herding” of negotiation which I have discussed above: Skayman was hemming the other party in. Skayman describes the inquiry into Reymys debt as being conducted in a series of phases; moreover, the phrase ‘euery parte’ breaks the examination of each document down into even smaller segments.²¹¹ This phased description not only indicates Skayman’s thorough work, but creates a sense that Reymys’ options in this negotiation were being increasingly restricted. Skayman’s construction of this narrative of incremental examination, driving Reymys towards agreement, therefore communicates a strategic sensibility and expertise.

However, while Skayman communicates his discursive, documentary and strategic skills through these two entries, he also performs a deft feint away from taking full responsibility for

²⁰⁴ BL/T 13/28, ff. 21r–v at 21r. Reymys accompanied Skayman and John Wolf, who served the Townshends as a shepherd from 1497 and as sheep-reeve from 1509 (Moreton and Rutledge, ‘Skayman’s Book’, 138 n. 7), to make an indenture between Townshend and others, suggesting the possibility that he had some official responsibilities. He also certainly returned accounts, but this may have been either as an officer or as a farmer. Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 35. For other moments where Reymys makes an appearance in Skayman’s remembrance book, see BL/T 13/28, 1v, 12r, 18r, 20v.

²⁰⁵ BL/T 13/28, f. 20v. In the first entry relating to this issue Skayman refers to them as ‘farmers’, while in the second he refers to them as ‘Tenentes’. BL/T 13/28, ff. 20v, 21r.

²⁰⁶ BL/T 13/28, f. 20v.

²⁰⁷ BL/T 13/28, f. 21r.

²⁰⁸ BL/T 13/28, f. 21r.

²⁰⁹ BL/T 13/28, ff. 21r–v.

²¹⁰ In the case of his discussions with Wager it is ambiguous whether Skayman inspected the accounts before or after their meeting.

²¹¹ BL/T 13/28, f. 21r.

determining the *content* of these agreements. Instead, he turns the reader's attention towards documents as another, essential and authoritative, agent in these interactions, one which he manages and examines. In the case of the agreement with Reymys, the documents almost appear as another character: it is they who were 'ag Reid' and Skayman who discovered that; moreover, it was the contents of the documents which hemmed Reymys in while, again, Skayman revealed them.²¹² It seems to have been important to Skayman that the agreements which he made do not appear to have been the product solely of his discursive skill or of a potential power differential. Instead, he draws attention to the consensus of documents and testimony in order to affirm the legitimacy of these agreements. Therefore, the narratives which Skayman constructs in his remembrance book, placing evidences centre stage, work to sustain these agreements by silencing any potential rebuttals from Wager or Reymys. Wager can not deny the evidence from the accounts with which Skayman ends his narrative. In Reymys case, Skayman actually ends his account of the examination with a repeat of Reymys' explanation of why he had initially refused to pay: Reymys had 'stopped it ... vn'tylle it was other wyse provideid'.²¹³ In this entry, therefore, Skayman both defines Reymys' requirement for agreement and demonstrates that he has fulfilled it. What more could be said?

We can see Skayman responding to a similar impulse to thread legitimising discourses through descriptions of agreement-making in a detailed entry from early January 1518. In this entry, Skayman recounts a negotiation he had conducted with a farmer. Here, Skayman shows off his skill as a negotiator and, moreover, he seems to enjoy the strength of his bargaining position. However, he also draws on the discourse of "good lordship" to suggest that this agreement – and his labour – has brought into being a meaningful and mutual relationship between Townshend and his farmer. Moreover, Skayman implies that he himself has been appropriately restrained and constrained in his negotiations by the desire to act in accordance with "good lordship".

Gordon McKelvie argues that "'good lordship" was an elastic concept that defies a precise formulation ... Contemporary understandings of what "good lordship" meant were tonal and impressionist rather than scientific and rigorously defined', and yet it seems to have been 'implicitly and widely understood'.²¹⁴ It certainly encompassed the idea that a lord should provide patronage, access to offices or other opportunities, and further his men's interests, support them in 'just causes' whether that be through bodily protection, help in lawsuits, or as a trustee or executor, and could also act as an intercessor, arbitrator or mediator (or provide these services through delegation).²¹⁵

²¹² BL/T 13/28, 21r. This echoes Johnson's argument about the increasingly constraining use of documents – including manorial documents – in later medieval legal settings. Johnson, *Law in Common*, 263–268.

²¹³ BL/T 13/28, f. 21v. As I have noted above, Skayman had initially described Reymys' claim that he was overcharged in his account in an earlier entry. BL/T 13/28, f. 20v.

²¹⁴ Gordon McKelvie, 'Kingship and Good Lordship in Practice in Late Medieval England: Henry VII, the Earl of Oxford and the Case of John Hale, 1487', *J. Mediev. Hist.* 45, no. 4 (2019): 504–522 (516–517 at 516).

²¹⁵ The quotation comes from Hicks, 'Restraint', 59. For discussions of 'good lordship' in terms of patronage and good favour, and the provision of access to offices and other opportunities, see Hicks, 'Restraint', 58–59, 62, 69; McKelvie, 'Kingship and Good Lordship', 517, 520–521; R. R. Davies, *Lords and Lordship in the British Isles in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Brendan Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 208; Hicks, *Political Culture*, 19, 149, 154–156. For discussions of 'good lordship' in terms of assisting with 'just causes', providing protection, support in lawsuits, or acting as a trustee or executor, see Hicks, 'Restraint', 59, 69; McKelvie,

This good lordship would be exercised in ways which were appropriate to the social levels of the lord and his man, and to the relation between them.²¹⁶ Both the fourteenth-century custumal of the manor of Alrewas and the fifteenth-century custumal of the manor of Worfield, analysed by Jean Birrell and Spike Gibbs respectively, suggest that, for the peasantry and tenantry, good lordship also required the lord to exercise restraint and to respect customary rights and the customs of the manor; ideally he would govern ‘amicably and graciously’.²¹⁷

In one entry, Skayman describes a negotiation between himself and a certain Richard Clerke over the renewal of a lease. Skayman’s account of the negotiation is particularly detailed and he seems almost to revel in his negotiating skill, the strength of his position and the options which were open to him. The process of driving another party towards the point of agreement is particularly visible here. Skayman describes the negotiation like this:

I was at Burnham ... And ther the same day I mette *with* Richerd Clerke and I was in hand *with* hyme for the fferme of my Masters howsse and land in Burnham to have it ageyne And so at the last he seid he wilde be contentyd to have it ageyne to a lese *price* And I gaff hyme hansware and Shewyd hyme that it schuld be latene for no lesse for I hadde ~~lever~~ levyr [rather] late it owte by *parcelles* And so ~~as~~ at the last he see that ther was none other Remydy And thene he shewid me that he wild be contentyd to have it ageene for new yerys soo that my Master wild be good master vnto hyme And soo at the last I deid late it to hyme in leke weysse as he hade it a forne in every condicion ~~A~~ for the terme of vij yeres to be ~~h~~ gyngye at the ffeft of sent Michelle tharcanngelle last past be forne the Date of thys remembrancze And Indentures to be mayd leke vn’to the other Indentures in euery Condicion²¹⁸

Skayman begins his narrative of the negotiations at – what appears to be – a point part-way through the discussions, when Clerke ‘at the last’ declared what his position was: Clerke wanted to renew the lease at a lower price.²¹⁹ Skayman’s decision to begin his description of the negotiations in this way puts the spotlight onto how he had been able to herd Clerke from *his* “final” position to the final agreement with which Skayman was happy. Skayman marked the moment of his success with the next ‘at the last’; this is when Clerke realised that ‘ther was none other Remydy’ than to accept Skayman’s terms.²²⁰ In this entry, Clerke appears to have been corralled into a position where he had no other options and no room for manoeuvre. In contrast, Skayman did have other options: he

‘Kingship and Good Lordship’, 517; Davies, *Lords and Lordship*, 200, 214; Hicks, *Political Culture*, 19. R. R. Davies also discusses the concept of ‘maintenance’, which imputed that a lord was providing ‘improper and excessive support’. Davies, *Lords and Lordship*, 213–214 at 213. For discussions of ‘good lordship’ in terms of acting – either directly or through delegation – as an intercessor, arbitrator or mediator, see Hicks, ‘Restraint’, 62–69, McKelvie, ‘Kingship and Good Lordship’, 517, 520–521; Hicks, *Political Culture*, 107–108, 149, 156–159.

²¹⁶ Davies, *Lords and Lordship*, 201; Hicks, *Political Culture*, 19, 153–156.

²¹⁷ The quotation is from Birrell, ‘Customals Reconsidered’, 3 quoting London, British Library, MS Stowe 880 translated in Jean Birrell and Dick Hutchinson, ‘An Alrewas Rental of 1341’, in *A Medieval Miscellany*, ed. M. W. Greenslade, Collections for a History of Staffordshire 20, fourth series (Stafford: Staffordshire Record Society, 2004), 76. Also, see Birrell, ‘Customals Reconsidered’, 3–4; Birrell, ‘Rereading Customals’, 10–11; Gibbs, ‘Manorial Officeholding’, 179–180.

²¹⁸ BL/T 13/28, f. 33v.

²¹⁹ BL/T 13/28, f. 33v.

²²⁰ BL/T 13/28, f. 33v.

asserts that he could let the land out in parcels if he so chose. Both Skayman and Clerke appear to regard this as an entirely viable – and potentially profitable – course of action; it features as the decisive blow in the negotiation.²²¹

Skayman's approach to negotiating with farmers is likely to have been influenced, and even permitted, by landlords' slowly growing advantage over their potential lessees as demand for land increased.²²² It certainly sits in contrast to the methods recounted and commended by the Pastons and their officers as they endeavoured to let lands and retain farmers in the later fifteenth century when landlords tended to be at a disadvantage in negotiations.²²³ At the end of the fifteenth century and into the early sixteenth century, the Townshends had begun to transition to shorter leases – seven year leases, such as the one offered to Clerke, were usual – which gave them greater opportunities for 'rent revision'.²²⁴ While rents and leases do not seem to have leapt upwards in the early sixteenth century – and, in this instance, Skayman let the farm to Clerke for the same price as before – the landlord's growing advantage on the Townshend estate is suggested by the fact that from the later 1510s lessees, rather than the Townshends, increasingly bore the burden of repairs.²²⁵ Here, in 1518, Skayman seems to be both feeling, and exercising, this growing advantage.

However, in contrast to the examples I discussed above, Skayman does not depict Clerke as silent at the conclusion of the agreement. Instead, Clerke says that he will accept Skayman's terms 'soo that my Master wild be good master vnto hyme'.²²⁶ Skayman still does not leave Clerke the last word: he follows the record of this request with a phrase that maintains the sense of his own dominance in this negotiation – 'And soo at the last I deid late it to hyme' – when he graciously allowed Clerke the farm at the final moment.²²⁷ Nevertheless, his striking decision to include Clerke's request in his narrative suggests that he found it significant and meaningful. Clerke was asking for Townshend's "good lordship" and, whatever Clerke and Skayman understood that precisely to mean, Skayman may have noted this request in his remembrance book to assist in managing the relation between Clerke, Townshend and the estate's administration going forward. This entry could

²²¹ Moreton notes that 'a greater total farm might sometimes be realised through piecemeal leasing', and that Skayman had successfully used the threat of this action in his negotiation with Clerke. Moreton, *Townshends*, 139.

²²² Whittle, *Agrarian Capitalism*, 84, 175; Peter J. Bowden, 'Agricultural Prices, Farm Profits, and Rents', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales: 1500–1640*, ed. Joan Thirsk, The Agrarian History of England and Wales 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 593–695 (674–675); Moreton, *Townshends*, 141.

²²³ Bennett, *The Pastons*, 252; Richmond, 'Landlord and Tenant', 32–33, 34, 36; Richmond, *Pastons: First Phase*, 23, 26, 29; Britnell, 'Pastons', 136–137; Moreton, *Townshends*, 141; Bowden, 'Agricultural Prices', 594, 675.

²²⁴ The quotation is from Bowden, 'Agricultural Prices', 675. Also, see Moreton, *Townshends*, 140. Christopher Dyer discusses how, in contrast, the estates of the bishopric of Worcester continued to offer long-term leases of demesne lands – often up to ninety nine years – into the sixteenth century, without any rise in rents. He argues that ecclesiastical landlords more broadly failed to 'benefit from the economic upswing in the early sixteenth century' and, in the case of the bishopric of Worcester, he points to administrative and officerial failings. Dyer, *Lords and Peasants*, 190–191 at 190.

²²⁵ Bowden, 'Agricultural Prices', 674–675, 681, 690; Dyer, *Lords and Peasants*, 190–191, 211; J. C. K. Cornwall, *Wealth and Society in Early Sixteenth Century England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988), 161, 162, 164, 165; Youngs, *Sixteenth-Century England*, 56–57; Moreton, *Townshends*, 140–141.

²²⁶ BL/T 13/28, f. 33v.

²²⁷ BL/T 13/28, f. 33v.

act as a reminder of Clerke's expectations and, while Skayman had argued that he could find alternative lessees, retaining a good and known farmer – by treating him well – might still have been simpler and more desirable.²²⁸

However, Skayman's decision to include Clerke's request in this entry does more than provide useful information. It also colours his narrative of their agreement with an air of reciprocity and 'mutuality', and emphasises the discursive character of their negotiation, adding greater dimension to its depiction of Skayman's labour.²²⁹ Similarly to what we saw in the way that he uses evidences in descriptions of agreement-making, Skayman again seems to be loth to depict himself as having forced Clerke into agreement purely through brute bargaining power. Such a negotiation may not have undermined the legal legitimacy of the contract – even a contract entered into under duress could still be enforced by common law.²³⁰ However, it seems to have been important to Skayman to draw on broader ideas of what made negotiations legitimate and to present this agreement – and, by extension, his labour – in a way which suggests further dimension and meaning.

Firstly, as well as letting land to farm, Skayman's record of Clerke's request communicates that he was bringing into being a relation of lordship between Clerke and Townshend which was 'constructed around [an] expectation of mutuality', and at which '*both* parties had to work ... to establish it and to keep it in good heart'.²³¹ In Skayman's narrative, Clerke had accepted his obligations and – in a written expression of that mutuality – Skayman inscribes those of his and his master – to be a 'good master'.²³² This obligation may have been less specific than those to which Clerke had agreed and which Skayman would detail in the indenture, but it was still weighty. Therefore, in this entry Skayman depicts himself as someone who formed relationships and communities through agreement. Moreover, as he wrote his remembrance book he continued to write them into being.

Secondly, it implies that Skayman himself was engaged in exercising good lordship even as he negotiated with Clerke and made this agreement.²³³ This ratifies the style of Skayman's negotiation, reconciling his dominant bargaining position with the positive facets of consensus which I have discussed above, such as its potential to form community and chorus, the ideal of compromise, and the prizing of harmony and equilibrium.²³⁴ While discussing negotiation in the context of dispute resolution, Roberts stresses that the party 'with superior bargaining power ... is likely to be able to coerce the other notwithstanding the operation of some normative constraint'.²³⁵

²²⁸ Colin Richmond states that, in the context of the Paston estates, it is 'clear, or was to Richard Calle, if a good farmer was hard to find, once found he had to be favoured'. Richmond, *Pastons: First Phase*, 29. While, as I have discussed, Skayman was working in a different context to Calle, it may still have been worthwhile to consider how best to retain a farmer.

²²⁹ Davies, *Lords and Lordship*, 200.

²³⁰ Bailey, 'Emotions', 4; A. W. B. Simpson, *A History of the Common Law of Contract: The Rise of the Action of Assumpsit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 99, 537.

²³¹ Davies, *Lords and Lordship*, 200, 209.

²³² BL/T 13/28, f. 33v.

²³³ Lords could exercise 'good lordship' through their officers. McKelvie, 'Kingship and Good Lordship', 514; Hicks, *Political Culture*, 159–160. See page 78 for a discussion of officers acting as extensions of their lords.

²³⁴ See pages 149–151, 152.

²³⁵ Roberts, 'Dispute', 19.

Skayman seems to have written this entry with some awareness that his negotiation with Clerke might be read as unbalanced to his discredit. He counters this by writing his own constraint into his record of their agreement: he and Townshend were to be ‘good master[s]’; in fact, by writing this stipulation into his remembrance book he was already demonstrating his enactment of good lordship.²³⁶ While, as I have discussed, equitable and acceptable arbitrations often rested upon the character of their arbitrators, here it seems that presenting a bargain as acceptable similarly involved the character of those who made it.

This entry, therefore, demonstrates Skayman’s expertise both in negotiation and in forming relationships – through agreement – on the Townshend estate. He weaves the concept of good lordship into this narrative in a way which supports, and even elevates, this agreement and his labour, thereby connecting his negotiation to wider discourses of consensus and legitimate agreement. Finally, Clerke is again ‘contentyd’ and this description, with its peaceful emotional resonance, communicates the success of this agreement and reiterates that Skayman’s stance in the negotiation had been an appropriate one; ‘immoral action’, on the other hand, could be communicated by immoderate emotion.²³⁷ In the next section of this chapter, I will explore in more detail how Skayman uses emotion in order to express such agreement.

Emotion

Skayman frequently writes an emotional dimension into the work of agreement-making, both at an individual and a community level. He often uses descriptors which have emotional resonances. For instance, when discussions are concluded, indentures completed and agreements made, Skayman often describes people as being ‘Contentyd’ or ‘content’.²³⁸ On the other hand, when agreements fail or are broken – or, indeed, when one is required to settle a dispute – people ‘suffyrd’ and ‘Conpleynyrd’.²³⁹ In Skayman’s remembrance book, therefore, emotional language often frames the labour of agreement-making.

Arbitration was intended to resolve discord and restore concord between disputing parties, and historians have recognised that late medieval discussions of arbitration made reference to the emotional dimension of this process of agreement-making. For instance, the Mayor of York might ‘impose’ ‘peace, luffe and amyte’ on disputants, while the emotional nature of the discord which came before might be communicated by a disputant’s reference to ‘all manere hevynesses et grevances’.²⁴⁰ Arbitrators may make reference to the heart – long imagined as a centre for the

²³⁶ BL/T 13/28, f. 33v.

²³⁷ BL/T 13/28, f. 33v; Bailey, ‘Emotions’, 14–16.

²³⁸ For example, BL/T 13/28, ff. 3r, 28v.

²³⁹ For example, BL/T 13/28, ff. 23v, 22r.

²⁴⁰ The first quotation is from Rawcliffe, ‘Arbitration’, 106; the second quotation is from Rawcliffe, 106 quoting Angelo Raine, ed., *York Civic Records*, vol. 2, The Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series 103 (Leeds: Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1941), 161; the third quotation is from Rawcliffe, 109 quoting N. H. Nicholas, ed., *Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council of England, 8 Henry VI. 1429 to 14 Henry VI. 1436*, vol. 4

production and experience of emotion – and profess a wish for, or a promise of, emotional transformation within the disputants.²⁴¹ An arbitrating lord might assert that he would resolve a dispute ‘as shall be to your heart’s ease and worship’, or an award might contend that disputants should cleanse their hearts of any grudge or envy and be good and loyal friends.²⁴² Similarly, when a disputant accepted a mediator’s award, they might do so not only ‘with mouth’ and ‘with his hond’ in the mediator’s hand, but also ‘with ... hert’.²⁴³ McRee draws attention to the expressive choice, made at the end of an arbitration in fifteenth-century Norwich, to seal the final agreement on St Valentine’s Day, ‘in whose day þe Cite chaasce be loue of her to be here make pees unite and acord poore and ryche to ben oon in herte loue and charite’.²⁴⁴ Furthermore, as I will discuss later in this chapter, Sarah Rees Jones argues that the ‘rhetorical use of emotion was essential to the inscription of the change of will’ that was required for the ‘achievement of concord’.²⁴⁵

However, while emotion has certainly featured in analyses of this form of agreement-making, it has more rarely been the focus of such studies.²⁴⁶ In this section, I will explore how emotion figures in the agreements which Skayman depicts in his remembrance book. Rather than seeking to identify the authentic emotions which have been mediated through Skayman’s writing, I will focus on how Skayman uses references to, and descriptions of, emotion communicatively in his writing, and the narratives, arguments and explanations which they help to form, specifically in relation to the labour of agreement. My approach is influenced by Bailey’s study of emotion in Chancery petitions.²⁴⁷ Building on the well-developed approach that understands legal records as ‘highly narrativised’, Bailey focuses on the narrative and persuasive power of emotion.²⁴⁸ As I explore emotion in Skayman’s remembrance book, I will primarily be analysing words which were ‘consonant with emotions’: specifically, I will examine how “contentment”, “complaint”, and

(London: G. Eyre and A. Spottiswoode, 1835), 85–86. *Hevines* can describe emotions such as ‘sorrow, grief, woe, dejection’, or ‘displeasure, annoyance, vexation, rancour, hostility’. *MED*, s.v., *hevines*(se n., 4a, 5a.

²⁴¹ For the heart as the centre of the production and experience of emotion, see Laura Varnam, ‘“A Booke of Hyr Felyngys”: Exemplarity and Margery Kempe’s Encounters of the Heart’, in *Encountering The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Laura Kalas and Laura Varnam, Manchester Medieval Literature and Culture (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), 140–159 (142). When discussing emotions, pastoral manuals and sermon collections also envision the heart as the seat of feeling and a storehouse of emotional memory, for instance, see John Mirk, *John Mirk’s Festial: Edited from British Library MS Cotton Claudius A.II*, ed. Susan Powell (Oxford: Early English Text Society, 2009), 12; Weatherly, *Speculum Sacerdotale*, 29, 120; Mirk, *Mirk’s Instructions*, 118, 131–132.

²⁴² Hicks, *Political Culture*, 157 quoting Joan Kirby, ed., *The Plumpton Letters and Papers*, Camden Fifth Series 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 52 (spelling modernised by Hicks); Powell, ‘Settlement of Disputes’, 27. Thank you to Katy Bennett for assistance with the Old French quoted by Powell.

²⁴³ McRee, ‘Peacemaking’, 856 quoting Norwich, NRO, 17/b (Book of Pleas), f. 73r. Forrest discusses the significance of hand gestures in arbitration. Forrest, *Trustworthy Men*, 48.

²⁴⁴ McRee, ‘Peacemaking’, 853 quoting William Hudson and John Cottingham Tingey, eds., *The Records of the City of Norwich*, vol. 1 (Norwich: Jarrold & Sons, Ltd., 1906), 94.

²⁴⁵ Sarah Rees Jones, ‘Emotions, Speech, and the Art of Politics in Fifteenth-Century York: House Books, Mystery Plays and Richard Duke of Gloucester’, *Urban History* 44, no. 4 (2017): 586–603 (594).

²⁴⁶ Studies of the law and courts more broadly have considered the role of emotion. For instance, see Smail, *Consumption of Justice*; Daniel Lord Smail, ‘Hatred as a Social Institution in Late-Medieval Society’, *Speculum* 76, no. 1 (2001): 90–126; Paul R. Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation in Medieval England*, *Conjunctions of Religion & Power in the Medieval Past* (London: Cornell University Press, 2003). Merridee L. Bailey discussed this movement: Bailey, ‘Emotions’, 2–3.

²⁴⁷ Bailey, ‘Emotions’, 1–28.

²⁴⁸ Bailey, 6. See pages 42–44 for a discussion of this historiographical approach.

“suffering” figure as themes which help Skayman to dramatise both legal and emotional resonances in the making of agreements.²⁴⁹

To describe someone as ‘Contente’ suggests that they are satisfied, pleased, or gratified.²⁵⁰ Skayman often uses variations on ‘contente’ to mark the moment when an agreement is finalised, pairing this peaceful emotional state with the act or state of being in agreement.²⁵¹ For instance, after drafting an indenture between Thomas Baret of Stanhoe and Townshend which ‘dimised granted and to farme letten’ twenty seven acres to Baret in return for 18s a year, Skayman went to Stanhoe on 9 May 1516 to read this draft to Baret.²⁵² He wrote that he did so ‘to know whether he wer content *with yt* or no and so he ys weyll Contenth *with yt*’.²⁵³ It is Baret’s contentment which communicates that the agreement and its documentary form are complete, pleasing, and ready to be finished and sealed.²⁵⁴

Similarly, contentment marks the renewal of an agreement which Skayman made at Stanhoe, though this time it was with Gregory Deyns.²⁵⁵ Skayman had gone to Stanhoe to collect 20s from Deyns when further discussions arose. Deyns had been owed £5 by Townshend which had been paid – he ‘scheid me he weild desyvre my master to hawe a quittans of v li paid’.²⁵⁶ However, Deyns still owed Townshend a separate 20s which ‘he wer Contente to pay the seid xx s at alle tymis whene yt schuld be askid hym’.²⁵⁷ Deyns further stated that he would give the 20s to John Wolf to keep until the acquittance had been made, presumably so the two debts would not become

²⁴⁹ Bailey, 11–12 at 11, 13. Here, Bailey discusses the methodological challenges of her approaches, for instance the subjectivity inherent in identifying words which have emotional resonances, the regularity with which ‘the historically and culturally contingent nature of emotions and language’ are lost or misunderstood (as seen in Ute Frevert’s work on ‘lost’ emotions (Ute Frevert, *Emotions in History – Lost and Found*, The Natalie Zemon Davis Annual Lectures Series (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011), especially 10–11, 12, 22–27, 30–36, 38–48, 64–65, 80–85, 216–219)), and the difficulty of taking words ‘outside the stated legal domains in which they were created’. Bailey, ‘Emotions’, 11–13 at 12, at 13. She explains how she addresses these challenges, for instance by examining contemporary ‘contextual evidence’ to assist her in identifying words which had ‘emotional valence’. Bailey, 11–13 at 12. She also makes use of legal historians’ work – such as that of Anthony Musson and Frances Dolan (Musson, *Law in Context*, 84–134; Frances E. Dolan, *True Relations: Reading, Literature, and Evidence in Seventeenth-Century England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 120) – on how ordinary people understood the law and legal language. This enables her to explore the emotional resonances and ‘extralegal connotations’ of legal terms. Bailey, ‘Emotions’, 13.

²⁵⁰ *MED*, s.v., *contenten* v., 1b; for example, BL/T 13/28, f. 5v.

²⁵¹ For example, BL/T 13/28, f. 13v.

²⁵² As Moreton and Rutledge note, a draft or copy of this indenture still survives and is held by the Norfolk Record Office. The indenture describes Thomas Baret as a ‘husbandman’. Moreton and Rutledge, ‘Skayman’s Book’, 138 n. 12; Norwich, NRO, BRA 926/17, 372X8 (Lease for twenty years from Roger Townshend, Esq., to Thomas Baret of 27 acres (described) of tenement Cockes and Downinges in the fields of Stanhoe, July 12 1516), f. 1r. The entries in which Skayman describes this work appear at BL/T 13/28, ff. 1v, 3r.

²⁵³ BL/T 13/28, f. 3r.

²⁵⁴ As I discussed in the previous section, Skayman finally ‘fenyssyd and sellyd and delyuerd’ the indenture to Townshend in October 1516. BL/T 13/28, f. 11r.

²⁵⁵ This is likely the same Gregory Deyns who served as a shepherd from 1510 to 1512. Moreton and Rutledge, ‘Skayman’s Book’, 140 n. 47.

²⁵⁶ BL/T 13/28, f. 5v.

²⁵⁷ BL/T 13/28, f. 5v.

confused. This agreement – that Deyns is pleased to pay at ‘alle tymis whene yt schuld be askid hyme’ – may be an example of a debt or loan which was ‘payable upon request’.²⁵⁸ Using evidence from fifteenth-century London, Matthew Stevens argues that such terms for loans and sales became common from the 1430s, and that this practice likely ‘radiated outwards’ from the capital.²⁵⁹ However, I would argue that this phrase also has an emotional resonance which amplifies the emotional import of ‘Contente’.²⁶⁰

The phrase has an amicably acquiescent, almost effusive (‘alle’), flavour and it echoes a similarly generous mode of speech which Skayman uses to relate the promises which hedgers and dykers made to him as they worked through the winter and spring of 1517.²⁶¹ Skayman writes that the hedgers ‘promysyd me that they schuld **as sone** as the wether brakevppe [breaks up] they schuld be heggynne ther **as fast as bei Cane**’ [my emphasis] for now the ground is so hard ‘bei Canne sette no Stakes’.²⁶² The dykers, meanwhile, ‘promysid me ~~that~~ that yf opene wether Came neuer soo sone but thei weild geit **alle the help they may**’ [my emphasis] so that they might finish by the day Skayman wishes.²⁶³ Forrest describes an intermediate register of promising which sat between the extremes of, at the one end, the ‘unconscious signalling’ of trust, faith and promises and, at the other, a ‘finely tuned vocabulary of promising’ which was integrated with legally-enforceable agreements.²⁶⁴ This intermediate register drew on ‘the everyday language of intentions in order to seem sincere’, and Skayman seems to be writing in this register in these three entries to communicate the sincerity with which the hedgers, dykers and Deyns approached their agreements with him.²⁶⁵

Moreover, Skayman’s reports of the speech of the hedgers, dykers and of Deyns are reminiscent of the ‘good conversation’ which Sarah Rees Jones analyses in the civic records of York, particularly in relation to concord.²⁶⁶ She notes that conversation did not simply mean talk but also ‘making society through intercourse with others’.²⁶⁷ She argues that, as such, good conversation was central to promoting ‘collective endeavours’ and concord – including through arbitration.²⁶⁸ Moreover, it was an emotional and emotionally involving mode of communication.²⁶⁹ Records of the ‘achievement of concord’, therefore, commonly made rhetorical use of the language of emotion.²⁷⁰ While the examples which Rees Jones draws from the records of York made use of explicitly emotional language, Skayman shows rather than tells the emotionally concordant nature of these

²⁵⁸ BL/T 13/28, f. 5v; Matthew Frank Stevens, ‘London Creditors and the Fifteenth-Century Depression’, *Econ. Hist. Rev.* 69, no. 4 (2016): 1083–1107 (1092).

²⁵⁹ Matthew Stevens suggests that this practice may have begun to decline – but by no means swiftly – in London from the 1490s. Matthew Frank Stevens, ‘London Creditors’, 1090, 1092, 1101, 1104, 1105.

²⁶⁰ BL/T 13/28, f. 5v.

²⁶¹ BL/T 13/28, f. 5v.

²⁶² BL/T 13/28, f. 16r.

²⁶³ BL/T 13/28, f. 20v.

²⁶⁴ Forrest, *Trustworthy Men*, 41–42 at 41.

²⁶⁵ Forrest, 41–42 at 42.

²⁶⁶ Rees Jones, ‘Emotions, Speech, and Politics’, 593–594 at 593.

²⁶⁷ Rees Jones, 593.

²⁶⁸ Rees Jones, 593–594 at 593.

²⁶⁹ Rees Jones, 593.

²⁷⁰ Rees Jones, 594.

agreements through his phrasing of others' keen and willing speech.²⁷¹ In the case of the hedgers and dykers, this emotional element further weights their promises as they appear in the remembrance book, implying that they asked for Skayman's trust and he gave it: a relationship of concord had been brought into being between them. This would also give any future record of their failure greater import; Skayman took such an approach in another entry, to disparaging effect, when he chose to describe an assurance – which he knew as he wrote had not been kept – as a promise.²⁷² In the case of Deyns, it not only amplifies the emotional import of 'Contente', but gives a positive characterisation to the relationship between Deyns, Skayman and, by extension, Townshend.²⁷³ It suggests that Deyns was making a concerted effort to show his goodwill as he reminded Skayman of their mutual credit relations.

Skayman therefore entwines the making of agreements with emotion in his remembrance book. We can see him writing in this same mode in contexts where a group is involved in the making of an agreement. When, in November 1517, Wolsey's commission came to Helhoughton (where Skayman was bailiff) Skayman recorded that four men complained of Townshend's engrossment.²⁷⁴ I will discuss Skayman's description of the commission's visit in more detail in the following case study, but here I want to draw attention to Skayman's description of the agreement which was made between Townshend and the aggrieved parties. Skayman writes that:

they seid in Conclusion of the mater ~~that thei were þei~~ Seid that thei þat
thei ware Contentyd if so be thei mythe ~~nat~~ haue ther Comone more in
pese le syngulary to the Townsheip ... as it was \had/ a forne²⁷⁵

Although Skayman vacillated in the construction of his sentence, he was always intent on reporting the speech of the complainants and stating that they had declared themselves to be contented.. He thereby suggests that his writing was a true report of their response and, moreover, that their contentment was certain and not simply a figment of his interpretation. Skayman's use of 'Contentyd', with its emotional valences, is particularly effective here as it accompanies a transition from dispute to accord and, to bring Rees Jones' argument to bear again, emotional language was often used rhetorically to fix a 'change of will', as well as new accord, into record.²⁷⁶ Skayman has the complainants themselves declare their transition from dispute and disgruntlement to contentment and peace.

Skayman reinforces the sense that the dispute had been successfully ended and some kind of harmony restored by describing Townshend as the complainants' mirror image: 'And so my *Master* is Contentid that the seid Comone more schalle be kepte none other wyse but as it was a forne'.²⁷⁷ It was when both parties were contented that dispute ended. Moreover, their contentment suggests it ended in quietness and peace. This echoes the connection between finality

²⁷¹ Rees Jones, 593–594. In her analysis of Chancery records, Bailey discusses the inference of emotions from petitioners' descriptions and narratives. Bailey, 'Emotions', 12, 16–18.

²⁷² BL/T 13/28, f. 10r. See page 147.

²⁷³ BL/T 13/28, f. 5v.

²⁷⁴ Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 97, 99; BL/T 13/28, f. 28r.

²⁷⁵ BL/T 13/28, f. 28v.

²⁷⁶ BL/T 13/28, f. 28v; Rees Jones, 'Emotions, Speech, and Politics', 594.

²⁷⁷ BL/T 13/28, f. 28v.

and quiet which, as I have discussed, appears in Skayman's writing in relation to consensus. It also has a similar emotional tenor to that which Rawcliffe finds in records relating to civic arbitrations and mediations. For instance, one of the 'duties' of the Mayor of Bristol, recorded in 1479, was to 'sett parties in rest and ease', while a 1457 act of the court of the Mercer's Company of London laid down regulations for arbitration within the Company 'for unite rest and peas to be had withyn the Felyshipp'.²⁷⁸ For Townshend and the complainants at Helhoughton, this emotional peace in the moment of agreement was a gateway to a sustained state of peacefulness: they will 'haue ther Comone more in pese'.²⁷⁹

The contentment of both the complainants and Townshend communicates the making of the agreement and the end of the dispute. Moreover, this emotional dimension and, importantly, the connection drawn between that emotional peace and the peaceful use of the community's resources, argue that this agreement had longevity. It also seems significant that, once again, Skayman draws a connection between peacefulness and a return to a past state of affairs.²⁸⁰ This, likewise, suggests that the agreement would have longevity. As I will discuss further in the final case study of this chapter, Skayman presents himself as being closely involved in these negotiations. Combined with his description of both parties' contentment and the implication of the agreement's potential longevity, this entry thereby communicates the value of Skayman's labour. It also suggests that emotional discourses were tools to be applied in agreement-making and estate management.

While contentment signalled the creation of an agreement with the potential for longevity, it was not a guarantee that this agreement and the peace that accompanied it would continue indefinitely; work was required. Contentment had to be maintained for an agreement to be upheld and for peace to continue. For instance, in November 1516 Skayman went to speak to Westow about the farm of the rabbit warren at Barsham and, furthermore, about 'xl Cope/ of Conys wych my Master schuld haue of hyme'.²⁸¹ However, Westow 'gafe [him] hanswar' that he could not supply these rabbits as 'ther wher nat xl Cope/ in all the Grownd'.²⁸² However, Westow promised that when Townshend was at home 'he wyld come owere and Contente hyme for them'.²⁸³ Here, 'Contente' seems to have a double meaning.²⁸⁴ Westow would make a payment to Townshend in lieu of the rabbits, thereby contenting him in terms of compensating or settling a debt.²⁸⁵ Moreover, this would result in Townshend's emotional contentment and satisfaction. This return to contentment would enable the agreement and the relationship to continue peacefully. This double reading of 'Contente' – economic and emotional – is intensified by the hyperbolic protestations which Skayman records.²⁸⁶

²⁷⁸ The first quotation is from Rawcliffe, 'Arbitration', 104; the second quotation is from Rawcliffe, 105 quoting Toulmin, ed., *English Gilds*, 426; Rawcliffe, 106–107 at 106 quoting Lætitia Lyell and Frank D. Watney, eds., *Acts of Court of the Mercers' Company*, 1453–1527 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), 43.

²⁷⁹ BL/T 13/28, f. 28v.

²⁸⁰ See pages 156–157.

²⁸¹ BL/T 13/28, f. 13v.

²⁸² BL/T 13/28, f. 13v.

²⁸³ BL/T 13/28, f. 13v.

²⁸⁴ BL/T 13/28, f. 13v.

²⁸⁵ *MED*, s.v., *contenten* v., 2a, 2b.

²⁸⁶ BL/T 13/28, f. 13v.

Skayman's decision to include this exclamation allows him to cast Westow as someone who wanted to maintain this agreement and soothe a potentially displeased Townshend.

Skayman's record of Westow's exclamation suggests an additional dimension to the idea that agreement went hand in hand with quiet. Certainly, agreements which functioned were fulfilled quietly, harmoniously and honestly – we have seen this in Wager's agreement that he would return to making the payments which had once been made 'pesabely'.²⁸⁷ As we have seen, Skayman uses silence to convey agreement, while the language of contentment also implies calm and quiet.²⁸⁸ However, such peacefully running agreements and moments of quiet resolution, contrast with the volubility and action involved in keeping people content and contented, as we can see with Westow and his rabbits. The observation, judgement, interpretation, communication and record of emotional displays were part of Skayman's work maintaining agreements.

In Skayman's remembrance book, references to "complaint" – the antithesis of contentment – can signal that intervention and labour are required. Entries that begin with complaint often end, through the work of Skayman and others, with contented parties. The references which Skayman makes to complaining and complaints not only introduce an objection but draw attention to the emotional state of the discontented party. In the literature of complaint which Scase analyses, the state of complaint is often highly emotive. Plaintiffs 'cryeth owte' and are 'languysshynge of herte', and 'Most lamentably compleyneth theyre wofull misery'.²⁸⁹ Moreover, when wrongs are righted, so are emotions transformed: in *The Battle of Northampton*, a poem from the later fifteenth century which uses the 'discourse of complaint', when complaint is resolved, 'sorow is turned into ioyfulnesse'.²⁹⁰ In Skayman's writing, the use of complaint follows a similar pattern. Complaint demands action; in fact, it often demands the labour of agreement-making. And in the remembrance book it is through the making of that agreement that Skayman – and others – turn the complainant's emotions towards contentment.

We have already seen this pattern during the settlement of the dispute which was aired during the commission's visit to Helhoughton: four men had 'Compleynyde' and, as we have seen, through the efforts of Skayman and others it ended with both these men and Townshend being 'Contentid'.²⁹¹ We can see it again in an entry relating an incident from February 1517. Here,

²⁸⁷ BL/T 13/28, f. 3v. See pages 156–157.

²⁸⁸ See pages 152–155.

²⁸⁹ The first two quotations are from Scase, *Literature and Complaint*, 140 quoting *Ballad set on the Gates of Canterbury* in Rossell Hope Robbins, ed., *Historical Poems of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), no. 88, 207–210 (l. 21, l. 39); the third quotation is from Scase, *Literature and Complaint*, 151 quoting Frederick J. Furnivall, ed., *Supplicacyon for the Beggars ... by Simon Fish*, Early English Text Society, e.s. 13 (London: N. Trübner, 1871), 1. The *Ballad set on the Gates of Canterbury* is a poem from the later-fifteenth century which 'echoed' the 'grievances' of contemporary petitions as well as the 'voices of the petitioners and complainants'. Scase, *Literature and Complaint*, 139, 140. *A Supplicacyon for the Beggars* is a poem which used the form of a petition and was disseminated in London from mid-1529. Scase, *Literature and Complaint*, 151.

²⁹⁰ Scase, 140, 140 quoting Robbins, ed., *Historical Poems*, no. 89, 210–215 (l. 11).

²⁹¹ BL/T 13/28, ff. 28r, 28v.

Skayman not only shows himself responding to complaint, but he takes pains to specify that its resolution has not caused discontent to spring up elsewhere. Skayman had gone to Stanhoe because the son-in-law of Harry Serghant – who had the farm of one of Townshend’s foldcourses there – ‘Conpleynynd to my Master’ that Townshend had forty five acres of Serghant’s lands in his pasture but he had none of Townshend’s in his farm.²⁹² Skayman ends the entry: ‘and thys same day Johne wlf and I ~~with~~ have causyd that he hath the viijth parte in Marches ferme and the other mane that had it a forne weille contentyd *with* it’.²⁹³ Together, Skayman and Wolf have resolved the complaint of Serghant’s son-in-law, taking action and making a new agreement. Presumably this son-in-law is now content. However, the new agreement has ramifications for others, specifically the man who used to have the eighth part in Marches farm. The contentment that Skayman and Wolf had to manage was much broader than simply moving Serghant’s son-in-law from complaint to contentment; the agreements that they made involved and affected larger networks of people. The fact that Skayman’s description of the ‘mane that had it a forne’ is particularly emphatic – he was ‘weille contentyd’ – may suggest the pressure that such considerations put on him and other officers.²⁹⁴ In Skayman’s remembrance book the work of successful agreement-making can appear as the work of managing an estate-wide emotional equilibrium.

Skayman also uses references to emotions such as “suffering” to effectively imply or argue where right and legitimacy lie when he writes about disputes on the Townshend estate.²⁹⁵ ‘[S]ufferyng’ was caused by people such as Thomas Smith of Saxstrop, whose dispute with the tenants of Salle and the township of Corpusty I have discussed earlier in the chapter in relation to consensus.²⁹⁶ Smith had followed ‘One ryth full [unrightful] Custum’ with his commoning, and Skayman twice references suffering as he relates the dispute.²⁹⁷ It seems that the tenants had been ‘thowrow ~~sufferans~~ sufferyng’ Smith commoning there for five or six years past ‘thowrow sufferans’.²⁹⁸ As mentioned above, in relation to Chancery petitions, Bailey – drawing on the work of historians such as Dennis R. Klinck, Elizabeth Papp Kamali and Daniel Lord Smail amongst others – argues that ‘we need to take certain legal phrases and words seriously as having extralegal emotional context’.²⁹⁹ While she focuses on ‘good-conscience’ and ‘malice’ in the Chancery context, I think that her argument is instructive for understanding Skayman’s use of ‘sufferyng’ and ‘sufferans’.³⁰⁰ Skayman’s description of Smith’s commoning being tolerated ‘thowrow sufferans’ may

²⁹² BL/T 13/28, f. 22r. For Serghant farming one of Townshend’s foldcourses, see Moreton and Rutledge, ‘Skayman’s Book’, 143 n. 104.

²⁹³ BL/T 13/28, f. 22r.

²⁹⁴ BL/T 13/28, f. 22r.

²⁹⁵ For example, see BL/T 13/28, f. 6r. I will also discuss this in the final case study of this chapter but, rather than focusing on ‘suffering’, I will be discussing Skayman’s use of ‘Gruge’ (BL/T 13/28, f. 28v).

²⁹⁶ BL/T 13/28, f. 6r.

²⁹⁷ BL/T 13/28, f. 6r.

²⁹⁸ BL/T 13/28, f. 6r.

²⁹⁹ Bailey, ‘Emotions’, 13, 22; Smail, ‘Hatred’, especially 90–96; Elizabeth Papp Kamali, ‘*Felonia Felonice Facta*: Felony and Intentionality in Medieval England’, *Criminal Law and Philosophy* 9, no. 3 (2015): 397–421 (401–413); Dennis R. Klinck, *Conscience, Equity and the Court of Chancery in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), especially ix, 44–53.

³⁰⁰ Bailey, ‘Emotions’, 13; BL/T 13/28, f. 6r.

have legal connotations intended to assert that this practice remains outside true custom, whether or not it had been tolerated for some years.³⁰¹ Despite its repetition, his commoning has not become custom.

However, 'sufferyng' also has an emotional resonance and implies the endurance of pain; Townshend's tenants are suffering hardship, affliction, misfortune.³⁰² Scase argues that, from the fourteenth century, petitioners characterised themselves in ways which seem intended to engage the emotions of the recipient, describing themselves as 'pore' and drawing attention to their humble position in contrast to the addressee to whom they have turned for relief.³⁰³ Meanwhile, in Chaucer's 'Pity', which Scase describes as a poem in which Chaucer 'experiments with vernacularising plaint rhetoric', the bill of complaint is addressed to Pity, again suggesting that not only was complaint emotional but it elicited emotion – and thereby action – in return.³⁰⁴ This echoes Bailey's work, as she argues that petitioners to Chancery constructed narratives which focused on their suffering or 'vulnerability' and implied their extreme emotional distress.³⁰⁵ They thereby attempted to 'elicit sympathy' or pity and, therefore, a favourable outcome from the court.³⁰⁶ Laura Flannigan finds something similar in her examination of the Court of Requests. She argues that litigants used 'strategies of self-description' and 'intentional obfuscation' to present themselves as poor as they had a 'cognizance of the emphasis on conscience and royal mercy for vulnerable litigants'.³⁰⁷ Skayman's description of the dispute between Smith and Townshend's tenants seems to operate in a similar mode. His decision to name the predicament of Townshend's tenants as 'sufferyng', with its vital emotional resonances, casts Townshend's tenants as the wronged party and Smith as the aggressor and oppressor.³⁰⁸ '[S]ufferyng' parallels the 'sorrow' and 'hurt' which Bailey identifies amongst the vocabulary of 'legitimate' emotions which petitioners claimed, being both appropriate to, and indicative of, being wronged.³⁰⁹

Furthermore, the long standing nature of their 'sufferyng' – continuing over several years – implies a certain vulnerability to their position: action must be taken for their deliverance.³¹⁰ And, as we have seen, the wronged party, Skayman, and Smith all later attended the Lammas and leet court at Heydon where they made an interim agreement on this matter – one which favoured Townshend's tenants.³¹¹ This entry demonstrates how Skayman – and arguably Townshend's tenants – entwines legal arguments and emotional rhetoric as he frames disputes and characterises the disputants. This persuasive and emotive mode of expression may, therefore, have had potential utility in shaping how this dispute was progressed and in informing the negotiation of an agreement.

³⁰¹ BL/T 13/28, f. 6r.

³⁰² BL/T 13/28, f. 6r; *MED*, s.v., *sufferaunce* n., 1; *MED*, s.v., *suffering(e)* ger., 1.

³⁰³ Scase, *Literature and Complaint*, 88–89 at 88, at 89.

³⁰⁴ Scase, 181–182 at 181.

³⁰⁵ Bailey, 'Emotions', 12, 16–18.

³⁰⁶ Bailey, 12, 18.

³⁰⁷ Laura Flannigan, 'Litigants in the English "Court of Poor Men's Causes", or Court of Requests, 1515–1525', *LHR* 38 (2020): 303–337 (309, 310).

³⁰⁸ BL/T 13/28, f. 6r.

³⁰⁹ BL/T 13/28, f. 6r; Bailey, 'Emotions', 24.

³¹⁰ BL/T 13/28, f. 6r.

³¹¹ See pages 149–150.

In this entry, Skayman uses references to emotion to explain and define the situation at Salle, and to frame and inform his work as an officer as his entry implies that this dispute is why the perambulation and his presence at it were required.

As I have been suggesting here, Skayman uses emotion to communicate important elements of his labours in, and surrounding, the making and tending of agreements. Skayman uses emotion to signal when an agreement has been successfully made and to communicate the character of the relation that accompanies it. Loud or painful emotions signal that labour and agreement are required, while the way that Skayman assigns emotions to different parties in his writing can create compelling arguments about right and wrong. In particular, contentment – with its associations of quiet, calm and peace – emerges as a vital discourse in Skayman's book. It was not only something to inspire or sustain in an individual, but amongst larger parties and across wider networks on the estate. Crucially, contentment was the product, and the profit, of the labour of agreement. The importance in Skayman's remembrance book of creating and sustaining contentment parallels the concept of peace which Johnson finds in the discourses of rural courts; it was often set at odds with nuisance and disturbance as, in Skayman's remembrance book, contentment is often set against complaint or suffering.³¹² Skayman's remembrance book allows us to see that peace was not only maintained through courts and more formalised legal routes, but through the much broader work of agreement in which officers were regularly and intimately engaged. Moreover, the way that Skayman uses emotion to communicate the labour of agreement emphasises the broader importance of his work to the management of the estate: the care of emotion was in 'close alignment to maintaining social order'.³¹³ In the next section, we see how this plays out within the tense context of a royal inquisition, in order to explore how Skayman employs emotion to varied effect and in concert with other themes in his sustained account of this contentious event.

The visit of Wolsey's commission

In 1517 Henry VIII's Lord Chancellor, Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, initiated a commission into depopulation, enclosure and the conversion of arable lands to pasture.³¹⁴ In November 1517 the commission came to Helhoughton and, along with paying numerous taxes to various constables the day before, this event seems to have encouraged Skayman to take up his remembrance book again, emphasising the visit's significance.³¹⁵ Moreover, Skayman's description of this event is quite extensive, stretching well over a page. This entry will serve as a final case study as it allows us to explore how Skayman weaves together ideas about consensus and descriptions of emotion to create a pointed and persuasive narrative about the making of an agreement. In his remembrance book, Skayman writes that the 'Qweste ... be Chargyd by the Commysseners for to see what pasturs be moryd [increased or engrossed] withyne thys hundyrd by the space of xxviiij yere paste'.³¹⁶ Four men from the town had complained to the inquest that Townshend had engrossed Helhoughton pasture

³¹² Johnson, *Law in Common*, 45–48, 51–52.

³¹³ Bailey, 'Emotions', 27.

³¹⁴ Gay, 'Inquisitions of Depopulation', especially 231, 234–235, 237–238.

³¹⁵ Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 96; BL/T 13/28, f. 28r.

³¹⁶ BL/T 13/28, f. 28r.

‘withyne the same tym’e C ~~W~~ acres’, resulting in the decay of four ploughs – one from each of their tenements.³¹⁷ According to Skayman, their complaint is what brought the inquest to Helhoughton.³¹⁸ In this entry, Skayman depicts himself taking an active role at the centre of the inquest. He acted to protect Townshend’s position: he was, seemingly, successful in undermining and rebuffing the four men’s accusations. As he infuses this entry with images of consensus and descriptions of emotion, Skayman shrewdly continues these efforts into the writing of his remembrance book. His use of emotions in particular provides Skayman with a framework to explain why he and Townshend came to an agreement with these men without admitting fault.

In his description of the inquest’s visit, Skayman relates his own role in the proceedings. First, he describes his attempt to counter the four men’s complaints, but they rejected his contentions.³¹⁹ Then, Skayman intersperses the inquiries of the inquest with his own questions, noting the responses which Faulkener the younger, who seems to have been acting as some sort of mediator or spokesman for the four complainants, gave. Skayman positions himself as an integral part of this examination rather than as a worried or awkward bystander: the commissioners ‘Inqueryd’ and so he too ‘Inqueryd’, while Faulkener – and the complainants – answered them both.³²⁰ Finally, after writing that the commissioners themselves seemed unconvinced by the complaint – they ‘seid ther Cowde be no decay of iiij plow tylth for ther longyth \nat/ one plow tylth to them alle’ – Skayman launches his own attack.³²¹ While the complainants claim that their tenements were twenty acres – which crossed the threshold which would allow the inquest to inquire into their decay – Skayman retorts that ‘ther be longyth nat to the seid tenantes xvj acres of land both fre and bond’.³²² Having delivered his *coup de grâce*, Skayman immediately transitions to a narration of the dispute’s end – ‘And so they seid in Conclusion of the mater ...’ – suggesting that the former caused the latter.³²³ Thereby he bestows a starring role on himself (and his knowledge) in helping to drive this dispute towards agreement.

Skayman did not undermine these four men only on the day that the inquest came to Helhoughton. He also continues these efforts as he writes his remembrance book. He uses images of consensus and descriptions of the men’s emotional motivation to disparage them and their complaints. Skayman evokes a sense of suspicion about these men which both prefigures and reinforces the moment when he explicitly counters their claims about the size of their tenements. He threads the implication that their claims are both illegitimate and questionably motivated through his narrative. Indeed, he undermines these men by splitting them off from any sense of a larger consensus, as symbolised by the body of the community. In his narrative, Skayman separates these four complaining men from the rest of the community. These ‘iiij mene in the Towne’ who had

³¹⁷ BL/T 13/28, ff. 28r–v at 28r.

³¹⁸ BL/T 13/28, f. 28r.

³¹⁹ BL/T 13/28, f. 28v.

³²⁰ BL/T 13/28, f. 28v. It is striking that Faulkener the younger seems to have been a key figure at the inquest – and perhaps also in the following negotiations – and that it was agreed that ‘Comone more schalle be kepte ... as it was a forne þat Olde faulkener had the same ... foldegate’. BL/T 13/28, f. 28v.

³²¹ BL/T 13/28, f. 28v.

³²² BL/T 13/28, f. 28v. Skayman records that the men of the inquest ‘seid thei had non’ autoryte to Inquere vppon’ ð \non’ decay of tenemmentes/ except ther longyth to eche of þem xx acres . land’. BL/T 13/28, f. 28v.

³²³ BL/T 13/28, f. 28v.

complained appear in stark contrast to the image of the ‘hole Townesheyp’ who went about the pasture with Skayman and the men of the inquest.³²⁴ Indeed, Skayman goes on to individualise these men even further: he appends each of their names to each unconvincing claim for a decayed plough, thereby linking their individuality and their illegitimacy.³²⁵

Furthermore, these four outspoken and complaining individuals are juxtaposed against the silent, homogenous body of the township.³²⁶ Skayman puts no words in the mouth, or mouths, of the ‘hole Townesheyp’; indeed, they make no sound at all.³²⁷ As we have already seen, noise and complaint or discontent are connected in Skayman’s remembrance book. This chimes with Chris Fletcher’s exploration of a broader ‘model’, which he finds in the work of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century writers, which also saw noise and unrest as closely related: ‘popular discontent was imagined as beginning with a disgruntled “murmur”, which if not disciplined or answered would swell into an audible “clamor”, “cry”, or “noise”’.³²⁸ Chroniclers of the revolt of 1381 denigrated rebels’ protests as bestial and monstrous noise, but noise and voice could also be part of a ‘legitimate process of petitioning or “appeal”’.³²⁹ However, in Skayman’s remembrance book the ‘hole Townesheyp’ of Helhoughton do not even reach this latter threshold.³³⁰ They are lacking in noise and, therefore, in complaint. Their silent communal consensus upholds Townshend and his officers’ management of the pasture at Helhoughton. The four men, on the other hand, are positioned in opposition to this consensus, and their noise is, therefore, disruptive and illegitimate.

Skayman also uses references to the complainants’ emotions to further dismiss the grievances they had brought to the commission. The terms of the agreement which was made ‘in Conclusione of the mater’ actually dealt with the use of a common rather than ploughs, tenements and pasture because, as Skayman writes, ‘the ocupacion of the same Comone with my Masters flocke is alle ther ~~Gröge~~ Gruge’.³³¹ Labelling the issue with the common as ‘alle ther ... Gruge’ [my emphasis] insinuates that the four men’s complaints about the decay of ploughs had, in fact, been

³²⁴ BL/T 13/28, f. 28r.

³²⁵ ‘And morower is [sic] was Inqueryd of them who many plows ware decayd by the resone of the moryng’, and the answer was: ‘j plow to Robert poules tenement j to Johne poules tenement j to william fermor tenement and j to Johne westers tenement’. However, as quoted above, the inquest did not think this was possible. BL/T 13/28, f. 28v.

³²⁶ Here, I am not concerned with the reality of this group’s responses to the inquest or to the potential multiplicity of their motivations, opinions, aims or interests or, indeed, how their presence might actually have influenced the outcome of the day. Instead, I am concerned with how Skayman presents them in his remembrance book.

³²⁷ BL/T 13/28, f. 28r.

³²⁸ Christopher Fletcher, ‘News, Noise, and the Nature of Politics in Late Medieval English Provincial Towns’, *JBS* 56, no. 2 (2017): 250–272 (261, 261–262).

³²⁹ The quotation is from Fletcher, ‘News, Noise, and Politics’, 262. For a discussion of how chroniclers depict the rebels’ protests, see Crane, ‘Writing Lesson’, 208–209. For a further discussion of petitioning in relation to noise and voice, see W. Mark Ormrod, ‘Murmur, Clamour and Noise: Voicing Complaint and Remedy in Petitions to the English Crown, c. 1300–c. 1460’, in *Medieval Petitions: Grace and Grievance*, ed. W. Mark Ormrod, Gwilym Dodd, and Anthony Musson (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2009), 135–155 (138–139, 146–152).

³³⁰ BL/T 13/28, f. 28r.

³³¹ BL/T 13/28, f. 28v.

knowingly erroneous or a ploy; it was not their true complaint.³³² Moreover, Skayman's use of 'Gruge' stands in subtle contrast to his descriptions of the 'sufferyng' of the wronged which I have discussed earlier.³³³ Although a *gruge* could be the understandable product of an unjust injury, when considered in the broader context of this entry, this does not seem to be the resonance that Skayman is drawing out.³³⁴ Rather, his choice of 'Gruge' – with its overtones of bitterness and resentment – suggests that a slightly grubby emotional motivation lay behind these men's complaints to the commission, entering into the realm of a petty retaliation.³³⁵ 'Gruge' seems to provide Skayman with an evocative description of a complaint which – importantly – does not automatically cast the four men as unjustly injured and Townshend as their oppressor.³³⁶

In the final agreement it was Townshend who yielded ground in relation to the common.³³⁷ If – as Skayman has painted – these were belligerent and disingenuous men with illegitimate complaints, why would Townshend come to an agreement – that did not favour him – with them? Skayman's description of the complainants' emotions play an important part here: it provides a framework which justifies the need for agreement and compromise without directly admitting fault on the part of the lord or his officer. Although Skayman had undermined the legitimacy of these four men's complaints, their emotion – this 'Gruge' – necessitated management and transformation into contentment through the labour of agreement-making.³³⁸ And, as I have discussed, compromise and agreement could be prioritised over absolute right.³³⁹ Moreover, Skayman's assertion that the matter of the common was 'alle ther ... Gruge' places a boundary around the agreement and the compromise which was required.³⁴⁰ It also places a boundary around the emotions of the four complainants: since this matter had been agreed all should be contentment and everything should have been resolved. No corrupting emotion would be left to disrupt the peace of Helhoughton. Skayman thereby presents the matter as having been successfully concluded through the labour of agreement-making.

³³² BL/T 13/28, f. 28v. Lords keeping their livestock on commons appears to have been widely unpopular. As Diarmaid MacCulloch notes, during Kett's Rebellion in 1549 the camp at Mousehold (close to Norwich, Norfolk) produced a number of articles, two of which (articles three and eleven) declared that lord were to 'keep their beasts off the commons'. MacCulloch, 'Kett's Rebellion', 47, 51, 53.

³³³ BL/T 13/28, ff. 6r, 28v.

³³⁴ *MED*, s.v., *grucche* n., 1.

³³⁵ BL/T 13/28, f. 28v; *MED*, s.v., *grucche* n., 1.

³³⁶ BL/T 13/28, f. 28v. In the context of Chancery petitions, Bailey argues that petitioners were careful when they attributed emotion to different parties. She notes that 'anger or fury', or 'envy' were 'exclusively associated with the wrongdoer', while those who portrayed themselves as the wronged party claimed emotions such as 'fear, dread, sorrow, and hurt'. Emotions, therefore, seem to have been an important means of constructing these relations of wrongdoer and wronged and, crucially, identifying which party was which. Bailey, 'Emotions', 24.

³³⁷ Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 99; Moreton, *Townshends*, 185.

³³⁸ BL/T 13/28, f. 28v.

³³⁹ See pages 149–151.

³⁴⁰ BL/T 13/28, f. 28v.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored how John Skayman depicts agreement and the labour of making and tending it in his remembrance book. I have paid attention to the language he chooses and the narratives he constructs as he writes about this work. I found that Skayman's writing expresses his skill and expertise in agreement-making, and communicates the legitimacy of the agreements he made, the negotiating positions he took, and the testimony he collected. His writing also asserts who was rightful and who had committed wrongs. Agreement-making appears to have been a crucial component of Skayman's labour, and moreover, it was essential to the larger endeavour of sustaining peaceful relations and contentment across the Townshend estate. Setting his work into this larger frame provides Skayman with a more expansive way of thinking about his labour and its value.

I began by discussing the prominence of agreement in Skayman's remembrance book. His writing presents him as being kept busy making, tending, and drawing on a range of agreements. Moreover, as Skayman makes the decision to frame others' statements or conversations as promises, his remembrance book begins to compile an image of relations on the Townshend estate as being formed and sustained by agreements. Skayman is also able to evoke a sense of his own labour when he animates descriptions of agreements by slipping in and out of the language of written agreement.

Having demonstrated the weight which Skayman's remembrance book places on agreement, I have then turned my attention to two recurrent features of his writing on agreement: consensus and emotion. First, I have explored how Skayman uses images of consensus in depictions of the labour of agreement-making. I have argued that Skayman uses moments of consensus – often marked by a single voice, either in chorus or surrounded by silence – to denote the successful creation (or existence) of agreement. Skayman constructs narratives which display his discursive, documentary and strategic skill and expertise in agreement-making, as he hedges and herds people towards consensus. The discovery of consensus between documents and other evidences also serve an important purpose in Skayman's descriptions of agreement-making. These instances of evidentiary consensus not only support Skayman's negotiating position and the legitimacy of the agreements he makes but, strikingly, they also provide the terms of those agreements. While Skayman's skill was essential to bringing both the evidence to bear and the other party to agreement, his focus on the evidences involved implies that Skayman operated under constraints – and with restraint – as he negotiated and made agreements; he did not coerce agreement through force of will or brute bargaining power. Skayman produces a similar effect in a detailed description of a negotiation over a farm by employing the discourse of “good lordship”. Again, he writes his own constraint into the entry, even as he details the success of his assertive bargaining strategy. Moreover, recounting the farmer's request for “good lordship” allows Skayman to communicate that the agreements that he made brought vital and mutual relationships into being on the Townshend estate.

I then turned to consider how Skayman uses emotion communicatively as he describes the work of agreement-making. References to emotion not only communicate when his labour is needed but, importantly, that it is needed. Contentment signals that an agreement has been successfully

made, whereas complaint or suffering denote that Skayman's intervention is required: agreement is needed to enable a return to peace, quiet, and emotional equilibrium. Skayman also employs references to suffering to convey who is the rightful and wronged party in a particular dispute and, indeed, to suggest that they need support. Therefore, the language of emotion seems to have been a useful tool of estate management in terms of justifying labour, characterising tenants, and directing the conduct of ongoing or future agreements (or disputes). It offered Skayman a meaningful way to frame and imagine his work as an officer, and to express its value. Contentment, in particular, emerges from Skayman's writing as an important discourse: it was the profit of the labour of agreement and, through it, Skayman expresses the far-reaching consequences of his labour in making and tending agreements when it came to sustaining peace across the Townshend estate.

Finally, I have explored how Skayman weaves images of consensus and descriptions of emotion into his narrative of the commission's visit to Helhoughton in 1517. In this entry, Skayman describes himself attempting first to reason with the complainants, and then to undermine them. Skayman continues these efforts into the writing of his remembrance book, as he uses images of consensus and emotional language to further disparage the complainants and intensify the sense of suspicion which he creates around them. Moreover, Skayman's use of emotion fills in a crucial gap in his narrative: it justifies the need for agreement and compromise, while still upholding Townshend and his administration; the complainants are neither wronged, nor "suffering", men.

Writing his remembrance book was not an essential element of Skayman's role as a manorial officer, nor does it seem to have been a necessity for carrying out his work – after all, there seems to have been periods where he did not keep it and, as I have discussed, there was some flexibility in how he used it.³⁴¹ However, the fact that Skayman kept it consistently for a significant period – over

³⁴¹ Of course, it is possible that Skayman was keeping other notes elsewhere. However, it seems less likely that there were other gatherings – now lost – which were originally part of this remembrance book. Skayman broke off his writing during the third gathering of the remembrance book (ff. 24–27) after an entry for 29 May 1517 on f. 24v. Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 95; BL/T 13/28, f. 24v. He returned to this same gathering seemingly in September 1517, recording the 'seyng' of Richard Hooke on f. 25r and another memorandum on f. 25v. BL/T 13/28, ff. 25r–v. The rest of the gathering – ff. 26r–27v – he left blank. BL/T13/28, ff. 26r–27v. The lack of gap between the entries for May 1517 and September 1517 suggests that Skayman had not kept records elsewhere that he intended to copy into this remembrance book. Nor does it seem that further pages have been lost from this gathering that would account for the period between May 1517 and September 1517, as any additional folded pages would surely have fallen between f. 25 and f. 26, rather than between f. 24 and f. 25. The next gathering that the remembrance book includes – ff. 28–38 – seems to represent a fresh start. Skayman began it with a fresh title – something which he had not done at the start of any previous gatherings. Moreover, this gathering uses a different fount of paper and is slightly smaller than the others. Moreton and Rutledge, 'Skayman's Book', 95; BL/T 13/28, f. 28r. This gathering may not have been bound to the earlier booklet straight away. It is possible that Skayman had chosen to put aside his earlier booklet and begin another series of smaller booklets, each of which were to have their own heading. Perhaps he meant to make notes about the events from September 1517 up to 16 November 1517 on the last blank folios of gathering ff. 24–27 (ff. 26r–27v), although this would have been very tight, as the same period in the previous year had covered ff. 9v–14r (with one blank page); or perhaps he had mislaid this earlier booklet and recorded the events of these "missing" months on another, separate gathering. BL/T 13/28, ff. 9v–14r, 26r–27v. While this is certainly not impossible, I think it is more likely that Skayman – while he may have been making other kinds of notes elsewhere – was not producing other booklets in same style as the remembrance book we have, firstly, because it seems rather coincidental that this new gathering opens with some rather important events, including the visit of the commission discussed earlier, and, secondly, because this final gathering follows the same pattern as his earlier booklet: it begins with daily entries but then, again, begins to include gaps, be used

a year – and then continued to return to it sporadically demonstrates that, while writing it may not have been a necessity, it was still a useful, worthwhile, and meaningful exercise. Skayman's remembrance book is not only a record of his labour but a continuance of it. As he constructs narratives about the making and tending of agreements, he continues to shape and sustain them through his writing. For Skayman, writing his remembrance book seems to have been a means by which he made sense of and articulated his work, his identity as an officer, and the contours and character of the relations and agreements which constituted the Townshend estate. Skayman's remembrance book makes manorial officers' creative participation in a rural writing culture patently visible. Moreover, while I have suggested that his remembrance book was conceived of in relation to well-established genres of manorial documents – particularly the manorial account – it provides us with an insight into manorial officers' vernacular writing, and how they represented their labour and their professional context outside the discursive strictures and conventions of accounts and surveys.

in a more flexible way, and to peter out. After f. 34r, the rest of the gathering is blank. BL/T 13/28, ff. 34v–38v. Therefore, I think it is more likely that Skayman produced only these two portions of his remembrance book in this style or form, beginning afresh and petering out each time, rather than that there existed at one time a much more complete remembrance book. Indeed, if there are any "lost" portions of Skayman's remembrance book I would expect them to follow this same pattern, with gaps between them where Skayman was not keeping this remembrance.

CONCLUSION

Unfortunately, I cannot simply end this thesis with a pen trial and a note of my master's accomplishments, or a memorandum to be dealt with another day, perhaps by someone else.¹ Instead, I must make some account. I have set out to gain further insight into late medieval rural writing culture through an exploration of the writing which professional manorial officers on lay gentry estates created and for which they were responsible. I have examined a series of manorial accounts compiled on the manor of Mote, a collection of survey-type documents from four related Kentish manors, and the remembrance book in which John Skayman recorded the business he undertook on his master's behalf. Manorial documents have been well-studied by historians and form the foundation of extensive historiographies across the spectrum of our discipline, from legal, administrative and economic studies to social and cultural investigations. However, responding to the promptings of Prescott and inspired by approaches developed in the study of legal documents and by literary and art history scholars, I have taken what is – for manorial documents more generally, but particularly for these classes of them – an unusually imaginative approach.² I have understood these documents as creative cultural productions and paid close attention to the decisions which officers and scribes made as they produced them, their forms and formulae, the processes of their composition, their gaps and shifts in language, the narratives they construct and the audiences which they anticipate. This mode of analysis has opened up a range of questions, but I have been drawn towards the images, narratives, and arguments which emerge around manorial officers' labour. Communicating officers' labour feels like a particularly pressing feature of these documents.

It was as I studied Mote's accounts – documents which establish what the officer and his lord owed to each other – that the question of how these documents communicate the officer's labour first arose. In Chapter One I have asserted that the form and the process of creating the manorial account were essential to its interpretation and, drawing on the work of Arthur Bahr, I have argued that it should be read as a compilation.³ Over the course of my analysis, I have argued that the manorial account compiles images of officers' labour. It demonstrates officers' documentary labour and – through that – their trustworthiness. Documentary labour seems to have been an important element of officers' work, and a skill worthy of display. Moreover, both the form of the account and the processes of its compilation also build images of other aspects of their work and, indeed, allow narratives about different officers' labour to unfold. The manorial account, therefore, displayed officers' labour to their lord, arguing for their value and, implicitly, their reward. Importantly, I have suggested that documentary labour was a mode of expression and argumentation for officers, while the manorial documents themselves were a medium through which they could express a professional identity.

¹ BL/T 13/28, f. 39r; U312/M29 (Rental, 1484), f. 24v.

² Prescott, 'Tall Tales'.

³ Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages*.

Therefore, my analysis of Mote's accounts not only points towards the importance of officers' labour in the interpretation of manorial documents, but indicates manorial officers' participation in a rural writing culture. They worked intensively with writing and documents, and produced creative and vital documents which showed off their documentary labour and skill. Moreover, the conventions and form of the accounts, along with the processes and signs of its compilation, seem to have provided officers and scribes with a structure and a language which had communicative and argumentative potential. This suggestion can be broadened beyond the manorial account, and I argue that manorial documents more generally provided the material and the means for officers and scribes to layer their writing with arguments, images, implications and narratives beyond the baldest requirements of administration. These documents are still pragmatic, but my analysis has accorded with the argument – noted in the Introduction – that a sharp distinction cannot be drawn between 'pragmatic literacy' and its productions and more literary texts.⁴ I have demonstrated that inherent within these pragmatic documents – and, indeed, often working to support the practical aims of the seigneurial administration or its officers – is a capacity for creativity and for performance, particularly for a performance of the labour of the manorial officer. As I have discussed, Prescott argues that 'bureaucratic forms' can 'constitute sophisticated rhetorical genres' and in this thesis I have explored and demonstrated the distinctive artistry and rhetoric of these genres of manorial documents and of their creators; indeed, this element of such men's labour and skill has rarely been recognised. There is a specificity to the rhetoric of each genre of manorial documents, with different documents offering different formulae, processes, structures and audiences; different documents, therefore, offered different "vocabularies" with different emphases and subjects.

This specificity is apparent in my analysis of the survey-type documents from West Wickham, Baston, Keston and Southcourt. In Chapter Two I have studied the gaps which the officers and scribes of these manors left in their writing and their use of the formula *per estimacionem* in order to explore how these documents communicate manorial officers' labour. While the manorial account communicates officers' documentary labour particularly strongly – alongside a range of other endeavours and skills – I have found that these survey-type documents draw our attention to officers' vital and valuable role in the formulation of manorial knowledge and the quality of their knowledge-labour. Survey-type documents also anticipate a different audience to that of the manorial account, encompassing lords, tenants, and officers themselves. I have demonstrated that an awareness of this broad audience is – and was – essential to the interpretation of these Kentish documents. As each segment of this audience had varied – and sometimes competing or shifting – interests, requirements and perspectives, the interpretations of these documents' intimations and depictions of officers' knowledge-labour therefore proliferate and, crucially, are complicated. Viewed from different angles, gaps and *per estimacionem* can either speak of the officers' diligence, honesty and discernment, thereby buttressing the legitimacy of these documents' contents, or intimate the failure of their work, and the vulnerability or self-interest of the seigneurial administration.

⁴ For 'pragmatic literacy' and the sharp distinction between it and recreational or literary literacy, see Britnell, 'Literacy in Christendom', 3–4 at 3; Clanchy, *From Memory*, 249; Parkes, 'Literacy', 275. For a discussion of pragmatic literacy, and its criticisms, see page 23–24 and notes 82, 118 in the Introduction.

Crucially, I have argued that officers and scribes seem to have been alive to the ambiguities, limitations, and potential power of communicating the quality and character of officers' knowledge-labour. This responsiveness to audience – who might also engage with different features of a document – seems to have been an important facet of officers' writing; this responsiveness may have been amplified by the complexities of survey-type documents' audience, but we have also seen similar consideration in the manorial account. Moreover, my analysis of these Kentish survey-type documents reveals that they are far from 'static', but are unstable and interpretable.⁵ Manorial officers wrote in ways which endeavoured both to exploit and mitigate their volatile imaginative potential.

In the final chapter of this thesis I have turned to a very different – perhaps unique – document: John Skayman's remembrance book. As Skayman wrote up his remembrance book, batching days together, he transformed his notes, memories, and snatches of other documents into effective narratives. Paying attention to the narratives which Skayman constructs and the language he chooses illuminates a further element of officers' labour and professional identity. I have argued that Skayman's writing places great significance on agreement and on the labour of agreement-making. I have explored how he uses images of consensus and references to emotion to communicate his skill and expertise in agreement-making. He is also able to assert the legitimacy of the agreements he made, the negotiating positions he took, and the testimony which he collected; he marks out those who had been wronged and those who had caused them to suffer. Importantly, Skayman's writing communicates the value of his labour: making and maintaining agreements was essential to sustaining the peace, contentment and relations which held the Townshends' substantial and dispersed estate together.

I have argued that Skayman's remembrance book is not only a record of his labour but a continuance of it. As he constructs narratives about the making and tending of agreements, he continues to shape, perfect, and sustain them through his writing. As a vernacular document, more freely composed than either the manorial account or survey-type documents, it seems particularly clear when we look at Skayman's remembrance book that we are examining the product of a manorial officers' creative participation in a rural writing culture. Writing his remembrance book seems to have offered Skayman a way to make sense of and articulate his work, his identity as an officer, and the contours and character of the relations which constituted the Townshend estate. However, this was not unique to Skayman's remarkable remembrance book; rather, it points to a similar potential in our more established and conventional genres of manorial documents.

Writing these documents provided the space for the creation of a textual manor. Historians have long discussed the importance of manorial documents to the integrity, the protection, and the flourishing of the manor, particularly as an economic and legal unit.⁶ Moreover, several have noted that manorial documents contain "fictional" or 'notional' elements, and might present an "ideal"

⁵ Birrell, 'Confrontation and Negotiation', 210.

⁶ For instance, see Briggs, 'Monitoring Managers', 181; Dyer, *Lords and Peasants*, 67; Stone, *Decision-Making*, 13–14, 78; Harvey, *Cuxham*, 15; Stone, 'Profit-and-Loss', 25, 26; Dyer, 'Suffolk Farmer', 7; Bailey, *The Manor*, 23, 41; Kilby, *Peasant Perspectives*, 35–8; Tompkins, 'Individualism, Community, and Lordship: The Peasant Demesne Lessees of Great Horwood, 1320–1610', 171–172. See discussions throughout the thesis.

manor – the manor as it *should* be.⁷ In this thesis I have drawn these two points together, taking the latter as more than a methodological challenge: the textual – or fictional – manor which officers create in these documents also had significance when it came to conceptualising and managing the manor. In Mote's manorial accounts we see relations and negotiations between officers and lords being constituted, defined, and played out through this writing. On our four Kentish manors, writing these various survey-type documents made and legitimised a manorial knowledge which was moulded by the conventions, categories and requirements of the rentals, terriers, firmals and extent which contain it. As I have discussed, Skayman's writing establishes, shapes and sustains the agreements which, in the world built by his remembrance book, compose the Townshend estate. Finally, throughout this thesis I have drawn out how each of these documents writes manorial officers, and their labour, into being, providing officers with the means to develop and express their value and their professional identity.

Writing and working with documents were important elements of officers' work – and writing, as has been noted elsewhere, was in itself labour – but it is significant that officers themselves were responsible for the creation of the textual manor.⁸ We should, therefore, perhaps consider this as an important element of manorial officers' work and, moreover, consider officers as important participants in a rural writing culture. Officers were attuned and responsive to their varied audiences. They were comfortable in a multilingual textual space, working with and creating Latin, vernacular, macaronic, and potentially French, documents and manuscripts. Moreover, they found creative potential in the forms, processes, language and conventions of manorial administration, from the looser, narrative writing of Skayman's remembrance book to the formulae and careful compilation of more established manorial genres. Their work attests to the cultural vitality of the late medieval manor and its writing.

There is significant scope for the insights offered by this thesis to be developed and extended. Firstly, it would be worthwhile to consider a wider range of manors and estates. My study has been limited to manorial documents produced on lay gentry estates, whose administration was somewhat different from, for instance, the complex bureaucracies of the large ecclesiastical or institutional estates whose documents have been studied by Harvey and Butcher.⁹ Moreover, although the manors I have selected have provided me with some variety – importantly, I have been able to study documents which were produced under different forms of estate management – they are all confined to the south-east and east of England.¹⁰ However, across the country there was substantial variation in the organisation, size, composition, customs, and style of lordship of manors, and historians have drawn attention to regional trends.¹¹ Differences in areas such as administration, lordship, official hierarchies and responsibilities, and peasant-lord relations likely influenced the

⁷ The quotation is from Bailey, *The Manor*, 102. For further instances which illustrate this point, see Dyer, *Lords and Peasants*, 162; Harvey, 'Estate Records', 115; Harvey, *Cuxham*, 41; Birrell, 'Confrontation and Negotiation', 210.

⁸ For officers writing and working with documents, see Bennett, *The Pastons*, 114–118; Hanna, *Penn Commentary*, 2: 22; Clanchy, *From Memory*, 118–119. Also, see the discussion in the Introduction.

⁹ Harvey, *Cuxham*; Butcher, 'Textual Production', 295–323.

¹⁰ As I have discussed, several of the manors went through periods of leasing and direct management, while the organisation of sheep-farming in north-west Norfolk was distinctive and had significant effects on relations and administration in the region.

¹¹ Bailey, *The Manor*, 4, 6–9.

creation and interpretation of manorial documents, thereby modulating the writing culture of different types of manors. It may be fruitful, therefore, to extend my approach to a greater diversity of manors, to explore the contours of these differences. Similarly, manorial administrations, economies, documents, and officerial hierarchies changed over the medieval period; selecting a different period for study, therefore, may also reveal a writing culture which is distinct from that which I have explored here, and in which manorial officers participated differently.¹²

Secondly, while I have looked at a spectrum of manorial documents, there are many that fall outside the scope of this thesis. Bringing letters and muniments into this study would surely enrich it.¹³ Moreover, court rolls may make an interesting point of comparison, as they had their own distinct process of composition and, in addition, the manorial court heavily involved elected officers from amongst the tenantry.¹⁴ Officers might also find themselves being presented or examined before the court, and their performance scrutinised, again suggesting that the court roll may be an interesting point of comparison to the documents considered in my thesis.¹⁵ Finally, bringing manorial documents into conversation with other forms and instances of rural writing would be an illuminating proposition; Robert Reynes' commonplace book shows us that, for some officers at least, manorial documents were part of a much wider written world.

I am not sure how much resonance my thesis would have for the men whose writing I have been studying; I suspect that they would rather I remembered them in a way which would be more useful to their passage through purgatory. But it has felt important and meaningful for me to think about these men, and people like them, being creative, and to bring a lively dimension to these documents, which have so often been thought of as rather dry. When we think about what these officers say about themselves through these documents, they are not dry. Nor are these men only competent managers or frauds, extensions of their lords or useful to the tenantry; I hope I have enriched how we imagine them. In the spring of 1517, Skayman settled himself to write up the work he had undertaken in the week before Easter; he had been busy, and on Thursday and Good Friday he had been engaged 'wrytyng with my Mistress for the howsold'.¹⁶ However, as he began to record what Saturday had held, he was interrupted – perhaps by another's call on his time, or a sudden impulse that he must, immediately, attend to something else. He broke off – 'Item one Esterne Ewyne [blank]' – and left his writing behind.¹⁷

¹² See the discussion on the development of manorial documents in the Introduction.

¹³ The numerous studies of the Paston letters are, of course, a testament to the fascinating potential of this source type. However, while the letters of the Paston women (and the women who wrote to the family) have been studied individually, there is still scope to think about the writing of their officers and servants as a distinct group. For examples of such work on the letters on the Paston women, see Roger Dalrymple, 'Reaction, Consolation and Redress in the Letters of the Paston Women', in *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450–1700*, ed. J. Daybell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 16–28; Margaret Jane Clayton, 'A Study of the Letters and Wills of the Lesser-Known Paston Women' (PhD diss., University of Surrey, 2020), 41–147.

¹⁴ Tompkins, "'Kill All the Lawyers'", 73–87; Olson, *A Chronicle*, 6, 7–9, 12; Gibbs, 'Manorial Officeholding', 8–9, 28–64, 68.

¹⁵ Briggs, 'Monitoring Managers,' 179–195.

¹⁶ BL/T 13/28, f. 23r.

¹⁷ BL/T 13/28, f. 23r.

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