

CRAFTSMEN AND INDUSTRY IN  
LATE MEDIEVAL YORK

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
List of tables .. .. .	viii
List of maps .. .. .	xi
Abbreviations .. .. .	xii
Chapter 1: Introduction .. .. .	1
Chapter 2: The textile crafts .. .. .	27
Chapter 3: The leather crafts .. .. .	91
Chapter 4: The victualling crafts .. .. .	123
Chapter 5: The metal crafts .. .. .	179
Chapter 6: The building crafts .. .. .	212
Chapter 7: Miscellaneous crafts .. .. .	269
Chapter 8: Craftsmen and the government of the city .. .. .	300
Chapter 9: Craftsmen and commerce .. .. .	349
Chapter 10: Craftsmen in the social structure of late medieval York .. .. .	402
Chapter 11: Conclusion .. .. .	471
Appendix A: Wills and inventories of some York craftsmen .. .. .	480
Appendix B: A note on testamentary practice in late medieval York .. .. .	507
Bibliography .. .. .	516

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation is primarily concerned with the industrial structure of late medieval York and, by comparison, with that of other late medieval provincial towns. Medieval industry has here been discussed largely in terms of the craftsmen employed in manufacture as this approach has given the best impression of the realities of industrial organization, as opposed to the ideal expressed in official regulations. The range of urban industry has been described, as have the division of labour between the craftsmen, and the basic units of industrial production. An assessment has been made of the economic importance of the various branches of urban manufacture and the way that this varied over the period of some 250 years which are under consideration. The first half of the dissertation deals with these issues in six chapters corresponding to the six main divisions of manufacturing industry.

The second half of the dissertation places industry in the context of urban society as a whole. As far as possible explanations have been given for the way in which York's industry was affected by the political structure and by the commerce of the city. Once again the most fruitful approach to this problem has been through a discussion of the political, economic and social status of the medieval craftsmen. An assessment is made of the place of the craftsman in urban society. Distinctions have been made between the varying opportunities and status found within the crafts and account taken of the way that such opportunities altered during the course of the period. It has been found that in many ways

the industrial structure of York was typical of other medieval towns,  
and that the experience of York's craftsmen was frequently echoed  
elsewhere.

LIST OF TABLES

	<u>Page</u>
1:1 Entrants to the freedom of York 1273-1534, decadal totals: occupational groups .. .. .	24
2:1 Number of apprentices indentured by year from the weavers' apprenticeship book .. .. .	46
2:2 Five year totals of admissions to the freedom as linenweavers, 1476-1520 .. .. .	55
2:3 Fifty year totals of tapiters admitted to the freedom, 1351-1534 .. .. .	66
2:4 Annual totals of tailors admitted to the freedom, 1331-40	74
2:5 Decadal totals of drapers admitted to the freedom, 1351-1534 .. .. .	78
2:6 Entrants to the freedom of York, decadal totals: textile crafts .. .. .	87
3:1 Fifty year totals of glovers, pointmakers and pouchmakers admitted to the freedom, 1301-1534 .. .. .	106
3:2 Fifty year totals of skinners admitted to the freedom, 1301-1534 .. .. .	110
3:3 Entrants to the freedom of York, decadal totals: leather crafts .. .. .	119
4:1 Fifty year totals of admissions to the freedom as bakers to 1534 .. .. .	134
4:2 Fifty year totals of admissions to the freedom as butchers to 1534 .. .. .	146

	<u>Page</u>
4:3 Fifty year totals of admissions to the freedom as fishmongers to 1534 .. .. .	156
4:4 Fifty year totals of admissions to the freedom in the wine trade to 1534 .. .. .	164
4:5 Entrants to the freedom of York, decadal totals: victualling crafts .. .. .	176
5:1 Entrants to the freedom of York, decadal totals: metal crafts .. .. .	206
6:1 Employment of carpenters by the Minster, 1360-1530 .. ..	235
6:2 Entrants to the freedom of York, decadal totals: building crafts .. .. .	266
7:1 Fifty year totals of physicians, doctors and leeches admitted to the freedom, 1301-1534 .. .. .	278
7:2 Entrants to the freedom of York, decadal totals: miscellaneous crafts .. .. .	297
8:1 Decadal totals of admissions to the freedom, 1291-1380 ..	305
8:2 Fines for faulty work recorded in the chamberlains' rolls, accounted for by the craft as a whole .. .. .	319
8:3 Craft representation in the 1517 constitution .. .. .	341
8:4 Craftsmen elected as mayor, 1401-1534 .. .. .	343
8:5 Occupations of sheriffs, 1397-1417 and 1485-1504 .. ..	344
8:6 Occupations of chamberlains, 1396-1405 and 1489-1498 ..	346
9:1 Fifty year totals of ironmongers admitted to the freedom to 1534 .. .. .	367
9:2 Cloth exports from Hull: five year totals 1351-1510 ..	386



	<u>Page</u>
9:3 Haberdashers admitted to the freedom, 1301-1510 .. ..	400
10:1 Surviving wills of York craftsmen c. 1320-1534 .. ..	406
10:2 Proportion of wills surviving from fifteenth century	
York, by craft .. .. .	410
10:3 Wealth of craftsmen: bequests in wills .. .. .	416
10:4 1524 lay subsidy. Income from goods: distribution by	
craft .. .. .	424
10:5 Occupations of craftsmen's sons taking up the freedom by	
patrimony 1397-1534 .. .. .	450

LIST OF MAPS

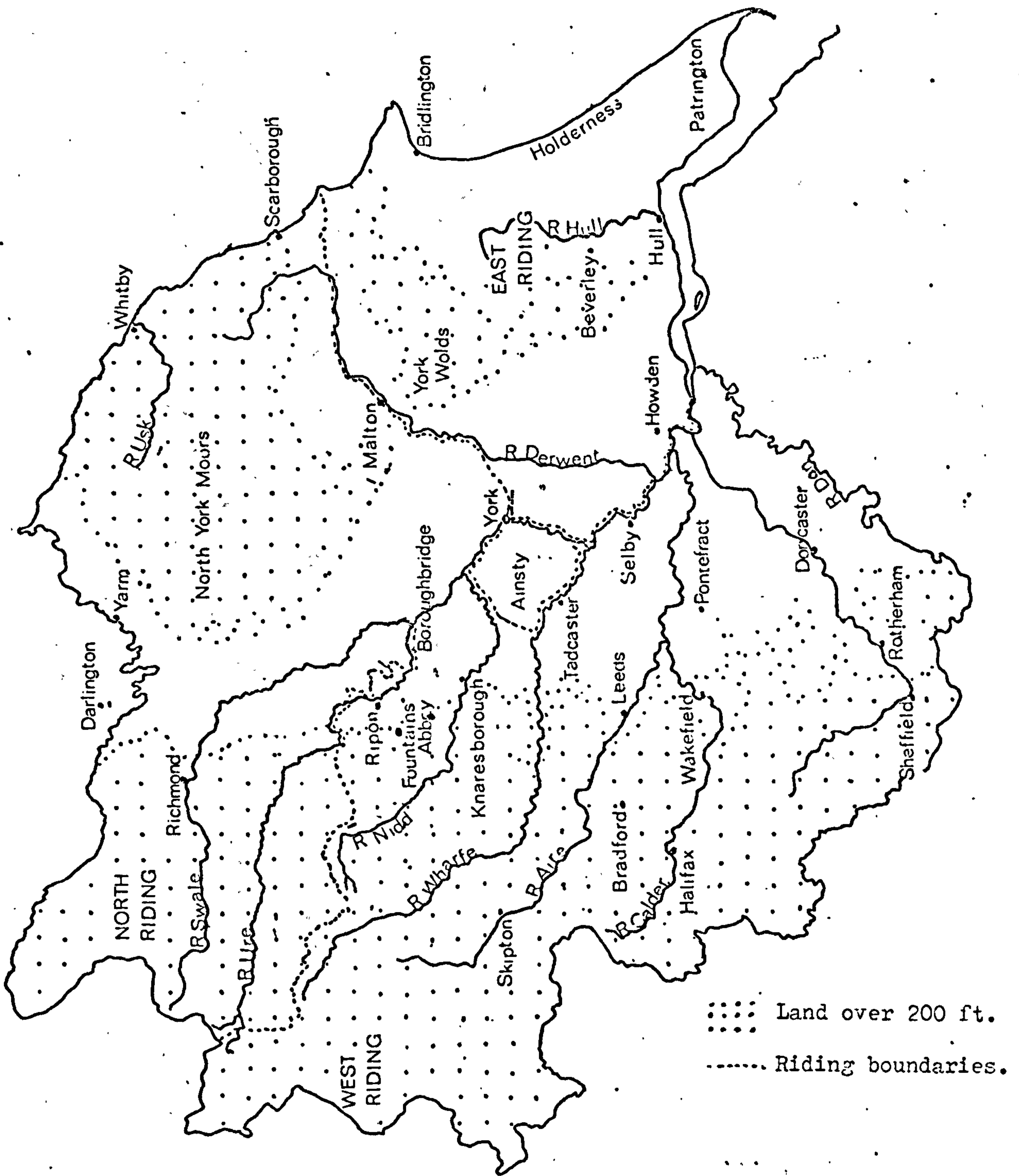
Map 1: Yorkshire, showing the principal places mentioned in  
the text .. .. . xiii

Map 2: Street map of York c. 1500 .. .. . xiv

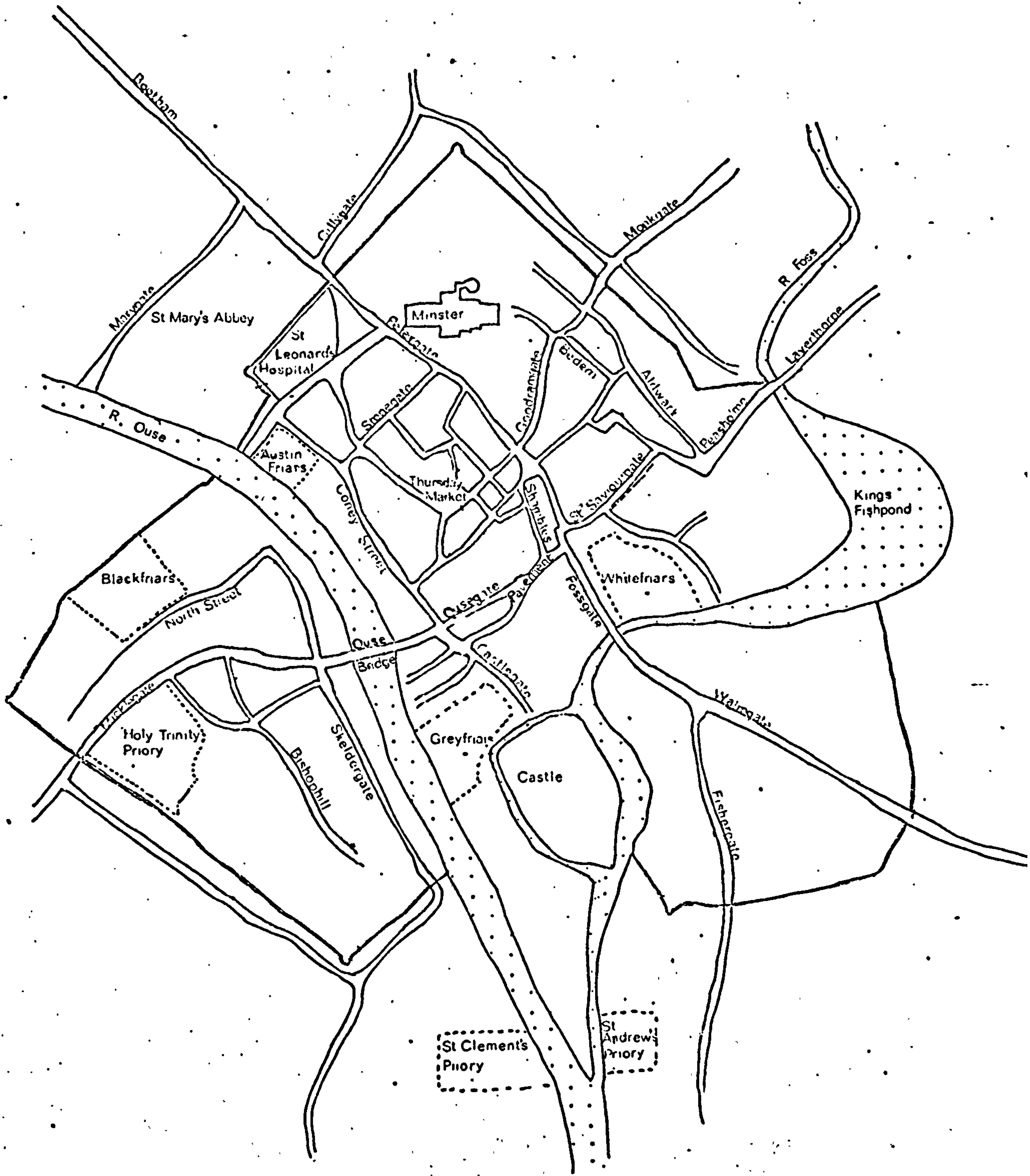
Map 3: Parish map of late medieval York .. .. . 455

## ABBREVIATIONS

B.I.	Borthwick Institute.
<u>C.C.R.</u>	<u>Calendar of close rolls.</u>
<u>C.Inq.Misc.</u>	<u>Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous.</u>
<u>C.P.R.</u>	<u>Calendar of patent rolls.</u>
<u>Cal.Plea and Mem.Rolls.</u>	<u>Calendar of the plea and memorandum rolls of the city of London 1323-1482.</u>
<u>C.L.B.</u>	<u>Coventry Leet Book.</u>
E.E.T.S.	Early English Text Society.
<u>Ec.H.R.</u>	<u>Economic History Review.</u>
<u>E.H.R.</u>	<u>English Historical Review.</u>
Prob. Reg.	Probate register.
P.R.O.	Public Record Office.
<u>Test. Ebor.</u>	<u>Testamenta Eboracensia.</u>
<u>T.R.H.S.</u>	<u>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society.</u>
<u>V.C.H.</u>	<u>Victoria County History.</u>
Y.C.L.	York City Library.
<u>Y.C.R.</u>	<u>York civic records.</u>
<u>Y.M.B.</u>	<u>York memorandum book.</u>
Y.M.L.	York Minster Library.
<u>Y.A.J.</u>	<u>Yorkshire Archaeological Journal.</u>
Y.A.S.R.S.	Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series.



Map 1. Yorkshire, showing the principal places mentioned in the text.



Map 2. Street map of York c.1500.

## Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

It has long been appreciated that York was one of the major industrial centres of late medieval England. But while the importance of urban manufacturing, both in York and elsewhere, is recognized, hitherto there have been few detailed investigations either of the organization of urban industry or of the craftsmen who most probably constituted the majority of the working population. In consequence, although in recent years a great deal of attention has been paid to the problems of urban history, the industrial structure and the craftsmen of medieval towns still remain something of an unknown quantity.<sup>1</sup> Medieval craftsmen are seldom well documented and are usually elusive; attention has tended therefore to be focussed on more prominent individuals, the governing elite and the merchant class.<sup>2</sup> The evidence from York helps to redress this imbalance and to give substance to a class of society that is all too frequently very obscure. It is the intention of this thesis to provide therefore a detailed treatment of the manufacturing crafts and craftsmen of late medieval York, to present a description of the industrial structure of

1. S. Reynolds, An introduction to the history of English medieval towns (Oxford, 1977) summarizes much of the new material on urban history. A more varied approach to the problem of urban history is presented in Towns in Societies, ed. F. Abrams and E.A. Wrigley (Cambridge, 1978).
2. Reynolds, English medieval towns, pp. 74, 80, 133, 160-4; S. Thrupp, The merchant class of medieval London (Michigan, 1948); A.B. Hibbert, 'The origins of the medieval town patriciate', Past and Present iii (1953), pp. 15-27; G. Williams, Medieval London (1963); J.W.F. Hill, Medieval Lincoln (1948), p. 295; C. Platt, The English medieval town (1976).

the city that does not have to be wedded purely to a statistical analysis drawn from the register of the city's freemen.<sup>3</sup>

Craft guilds have for a long time been the subject of such interest. Current work has reversed the traditional picture of the guild as a restrictive and regressive element in medieval industry; the craft fellowship has recently been described as 'no more than an interest group concerned with industrial relations', and the continued vitality of such fellowships into the Elizabethan period has been demonstrated.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless late medieval city councils undoubtedly saw the potential of craft organizations as an effective executive arm and were tempted to utilize craft guilds, and indeed to impose them on industry, as 'a straightjacket ... to solve some of the problems of the municipal control of trade'.<sup>5</sup> It is only in London that these craft guilds have been related to the actual processes of manufacture and the experience of London cannot be applied with any confidence to that of provincial towns.

Recent surveys of industry in medieval towns have depended largely on numerical analysis for which much of the evidence only begins

3. The 'City of York freemen's roll, 1272-1671' in the York city archives (Y.C.L., D.1), has been published by the Surtees Society in two volumes, the first of which runs from 1272-1588: Register of the freemen of the city of York, i, ed. F. Collins (Surtees Society xcvi, 1896), hereafter cited as Freemen's Reg.
4. C. Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a city (Cambridge, 1979), p. 108; the author also argues that 'The craft system ... had nothing to do with industrial organization or capital investment', (pp. 104-5). D.M. Palliser, 'The trade guilds of Tudor York' in Crisis and order in English towns, 1500-1700, ed. P. Clark and P. Slack (1972), pp. 86-116.
5. E. Veale, 'Craftsmen in the economy of London in the fourteenth century' in Studies in London History ed. A.E.J. Hollaender and W. Kellaway (1969), p. 138.

to survive from the early sixteenth century.<sup>6</sup> The use of freemen's registers provides very unreliable evidence for occupational structure because of the uncertain basis of the urban franchise and the discrimination so evident against certain crafts.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore numerical estimates in themselves provide little help in establishing the relative standing and wealth of particular groups of craftsmen. Only a handful of medieval industries have been the subject of specific studies, most notably of course the cloth industry.<sup>8</sup>

This study of the industry and craftsmen of medieval York is intended to give some substance to the bare framework provided by the statistics of York freemen and the bald statements of official policy found in the gild regulations. It sets out to establish the basis of industrial organization in the city of York; the relationship of crafts to each other and of craftsmen to other sections of society; and the social and economic status of the craftsmen. The period studied runs from c. 1300 to 1534. The beginning of the period is marked by the increasing availability of documentary evidence, most importantly the freemen's register which commences in 1273, though the lists of names

6. Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a city, p. 100; D.M. Palliser, Tudor York (Oxford, 1979), p. 159; W.G. Hoskins, Provincial England (1963), p. 99.
7. R.B. Dobson 'Admissions to the freedom of the city of York in the later middle ages', Ec.H.R. 2nd. series, xxvi (1973), pp. 1-22.
8. E.M. Carus-Wilson, 'An industrial revolution of the thirteenth century'; 'The English cloth industry in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries'; 'Trends in the export of English woollens in the fourteenth century' in Medieval merchant venturers (1967); The expansion of Exeter at the close of the middle ages (Exeter, 1963); E. Miller, 'The fortunes of the English textile industry in the thirteenth century', Ec.H.R. 2nd. series xviii (1965), pp. 64-82.



for several years between 1273-90 are missing.<sup>9</sup> The year 1534, a crucial date in the progress of the Reformation in England, signalled the beginning of a series of changes that were to undermine much of the social and religious structure of the medieval town; as such it can be seen as marking the end of an epoch.<sup>10</sup> The extension of the period studied into the 1530's means that account can be taken not only of the years of great prosperity experienced in the city from c. 1350-1450, but also of the decline evidenced thereafter and its consequent effect on the structure of industry. The adoption of a long time span has made it possible to avoid giving an over+static description of the industry of the medieval city, and to convey some sense of change and decay.

Whenever possible the particular experience of York has been put into a national context by analogy with other English towns. Obviously enough the study of the industry of medieval York is also relevant to a series of wider problems in English urban history. A constant preoccupation in urban history has been the attempt to

9. The dating in the published edition of the freemen's register is inaccurate by approximately one year: Dobson, 'Admissions to the freedom', p. 4. Where dates for entry have been given in the text of this study they therefore do not accord entirely with the date given in the printed Freemen's Reg.
10. C. Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the citizen: the communal year at Coventry 1450-1550', in Crisis and order in English towns, 1500-1700, ed. Clark and Slack, pp. 57-85; 'The economy and social structure' in The fabric of the traditional community (The Open University, course A 322, English Urban History 1500-1700, unit 5, 1977).

define the place of towns in society.<sup>11</sup> Attempts to categorize towns are open to many pitfalls, more particularly in the medieval period when the precise quantitative data on which many categorizations depend is simply not available.<sup>12</sup> It seems reasonable to suggest that all such discussions about urban function and especially the urban economy cannot be fully substantiated without detailed study of urban industry and the market within which it existed.

Arising from the problem of the function of medieval towns is the equally difficult question of their decline in the later middle ages. Although evidence for urban decline in the later middle ages would seem to be becoming increasingly conclusive, there has by no means been unanimity on this point. Moreover the consequences of this decline for much of urban industry have not hitherto been closely analyzed. Likewise, although the fifteenth century arguably brought greater purchasing power and increased standards of living to large sections of society as a result of the fall in population after the Black Death, the effects of this major change on urban industry can only be appreciated through a detailed study of craftsmen.<sup>13</sup>

11. For a discussion of the categorization of towns see P. Clark and P. Slack, English towns in transition (Oxford, 1976), where a threefold division of county towns, new towns and provincial capitals is adopted. For reservations about this approach see R.B. Dobson, 'Urban decline in late medieval England', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 5th series xxvii (1977), p. 2 where he writes 'the definition and the categorization of the urban communities of provincial England is never likely to lead to any positively illuminating general conclusions'.
12. Dobson, 'Urban decline'; C. Phythian-Adams, 'Urban decay in late medieval England' in Towns in Societies ed. Abrams and Wrigley, pp. 159-185. For the opposite point of view see A.R. Bridbury, Economic growth: England in the later middle ages (1962), pp. 56-64.
13. J. Hatcher, Plague, population and the English economy, 1348-1530 (1977), pp. 33, 47-52; F.R.H. de Boulay, An age of ambition (1970), pp. 34-6.

Although this study is therefore based largely on the evidence of one city, the experience of York's manufacturing craftsmen is likely to illuminate issues common to many English towns in the later middle ages.

Recent work on the city of York has established the nature of the government and economy of the city in the later middle ages, and archaeological evidence is now filling out the topographical picture. The most comprehensive survey of medieval York itself has been that of Professor Miller in the *Victoria County History*, while the economy of the city has been analysed by Dr. J.N. Bartlett.<sup>14</sup> Tudor York by Dr. D.M. Palliser, published recently, looks back to the fifteenth century to establish the origins of the sixteenth century economy.<sup>15</sup> The history of the Minster, the most influential institution in the city, together with a description of its archaeology and architecture, has been the subject of a recent work edited by Professor G.E. Aylmer and Canon R. Cant.<sup>16</sup> The physical appearance of the city is currently being described in the volumes of the Royal Commission on historical monuments.<sup>17</sup> Additionally there have been a number of

14. E. Miller 'The later middle ages', V.C.H., City of York, pp. 54-116; J.N. Bartlett, 'Some aspects of the economy of York in the later middle ages, 1300-1500' (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of London, 1958); J.N. Bartlett, 'The expansion and decline of York in the later middle ages', Ec.H.R. 2nd. series xii (1959), pp. 17-33.
15. D.M. Palliser, Tudor York; D.M. Palliser 'Some aspects of the social and economic history of York in the sixteenth century' (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1968).
16. A history of York Minster, ed. G.E. Aylmer and R. Cant (Oxford, 1977).
17. Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, An inventory of the historical monuments of the city of York, 4 vols. (1962-1975), i Eburacum, ii The defenses, iii South west of the Ouse, iv Outside the city walls east of the Ouse.

recent works relating to specific aspects of the economic history and ecclesiastical institutions of the city.<sup>18</sup>

One crucial fact about late medieval York must however always elude historians, for the population of the city cannot be accurately assessed. The detailed lay poll tax returns for York only survive in part for 1377, and those from 1381 appear to have been 'a deliberate fraud'.<sup>19</sup> Neither can therefore be used with any confidence as a basis for calculations and the device of assessing population on the basis of the freemen's register has been shown to be equally misleading.<sup>20</sup> Two existing calculations for the late fourteenth century based on these figures do give a population of some 11-13,000, but no real reliance should be based on these totals.<sup>21</sup> A population figure for the early sixteenth century has been calculated from the 1524 lay subsidy return, giving some 8,000 people, as does a calculation based on the 1548 chantry returns.<sup>22</sup>

Given the uncertainty of population and taxation statistics, it is

18. In particular: Dobson, 'Admissions to the freedom'; J.I. Leggett, '1377 poll tax returns for the city of York', Y.A.J. xliii (1971), pp. 128-146; 'Lay poll tax returns for the city of York, 1381', ed. J.N. Bartlett reprinted from Transactions of the East Riding Antiquarian Society xxx (1953); R.B. Dobson, 'Foundations of perpetual chantries by the citizens of medieval York', Studies in Church History iv, ed. G.J. Cuming (1967); M. Prestwich, York civic ordinances, 1301 (Borthwick papers xlix, York 1976).
19. 'Lay poll tax York, 1381', p. 7; J.C. Russell, British medieval population (Albuquerque, 1948), p. 142 gives a figure of c. 11,000 based on the 1377 poll tax.
20. Dobson, 'Admissions to the freedom'.
21. V.C.H., City of York, p. 84; Bartlett, Expansion and decline of York, p. 33.
22. V.C.H., City of York, pp. 121-2; D.M. Palliser, Tudor York (Oxford, 1979), pp. 111-2.

perhaps unwise to be too positive about the position of York in relation to other towns in the county. The 1334 lay subsidy returns appear to place York in terms of assessed wealth second in rank among provincial towns; only Bristol, assessed at £2,200 ranked higher. In comparison with other towns in Yorkshire the assessed wealth of York at this time, calculated at £1,620, was well over three times that of Beverley assessed at £500; Hull, Scarborough and Cottingham were each assessed at £330.<sup>23</sup> The poll tax returns also gave an obvious pre-eminence to York, with once again Hull, Beverley, Scarborough and additionally Pontefract as the only other substantial towns.<sup>24</sup> Of these towns Beverley was probably the most akin to York in the fourteenth century; indeed in the early years of the fourteenth century it was the Beverley merchants rather than those of York who were found to be most numerous in the wool export trade.<sup>25</sup> The prosperity of Hull was based on its role as an export port and entrepôt; although the river Ouse was navigable as far as York for sea-going traffic, by the fourteenth century the bulk of overseas shipments were handled at Hull.<sup>26</sup> Scarborough was also an export port in a small way, but the

23. New historical geography of England before 1600, ed. H.C. Darby (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 182, 184. A detailed account of the 1334 subsidy is given in R.E. Glasscock, The lay subsidy of 1334 (1974).
24. Russell, British medieval population, pp. 142-3 gives the numbers taxed in 1377 as Hull 1557, Beverley 2663, Scarborough 1393, Pontefract 1085.
25. T.H. Lloyd, The English wool trade in the middle ages (Cambridge, 1977), p. 128; Beverley town documents, ed. A.F. Leach (Selden Society xiv, 1900).
26. For Hull see: V.C.H., Yorkshire: East Riding i, esp. pp. 54-70; A.L. Poole, From Domesday Book to Magna Carta 2nd. ed. (Oxford, 1955), p. 96 shows that by 1203-4 Hull was handling more than double the amount of overseas trade of York.

main industry there was that of the North Sea fishing fleet.<sup>27</sup>

None of these towns retained their prosperity throughout the period. By the early sixteenth century many of the towns of England's east coast seem to have been in considerable economic distress; Scarborough, Beverley and Hull all show signs of contraction by this date.<sup>28</sup> York itself had fallen in a table of rankings among provincial towns from second place to eleventh.<sup>29</sup> In contrast to the failure of the old-established corporate towns, the growth areas in Yorkshire in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were the industrial villages of the West Riding.<sup>30</sup>

The pre-eminence that York retained in the north for much of the middle ages was based on its rôle as a centre for a multitude of functions. Firstly it was an excellent centre of communications, a feature which had attracted the Romans to adopt the site for their fort of Eboracum.<sup>31</sup> York lies in the Vale of York, a lowland area running northwards and bounded on either side by high ground, the North York Moors to the East and the Pennines to the West. In consequence most of the rivers of Yorkshire drain into the Vale of York finding their way to the sea via the Ouse or the Humber. York sited on the Ouse

27. P. Heath, 'North Sea fishing in the fifteenth century; the Scarborough fleet', Northern History iii (1968), pp. 53-69.
28. Phythian-Adams, 'Urban decay', p. 168; Heath, 'North Sea fishing', pp. 65-6; V.C.H. Yorkshire: East Riding i, pp. 69-70, 86-89.
29. New historical geography, p. 243.
30. H. Heaton, The Yorkshire woollen and worsted industries, 2nd. ed. (Oxford, 1965), pp. 68-84.
31. R.C.H.M., Eboracum, p. xxix.

was therefore at the centre of a river network which stretched through most of the county and southwards into Lincolnshire.<sup>32</sup> Although road traffic was more difficult than that by water, York was linked with important land routes southwards towards Doncaster and northwards over the Pennines towards Carlisle.<sup>33</sup> In consequence York acted as a major communications and market centre for Yorkshire and indeed in many respects for the whole of the north. Additionally, by the fourteenth century York merchants, using the port of Hull for transhipment, were playing a prominent part in international trade.

Undoubtedly the economic activity of the city was further encouraged by the fact that York as an important ecclesiastical and administrative centre attracted large numbers of people. It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of the role played by the church in York. The Minster acted as a centre of administration and ecclesiastical jurisdiction for the large northern province and in addition attracted crowds of pilgrims. York in the later middle ages was teeming with clergy and both institutions and individuals alike provided custom for a wide variety of industry ranging from carpenters to chandlers, from the detailed work of vestmentmakers to the heavy

32. B.F. Duckham, The Yorkshire Ouse (1967), pp. 29-34; V.C.H., City of York, p. 98. When the Exchequer removed to York in 1322 they came by sea from Torksey in Lincolnshire: D.M. Broome, 'Exchequer migrations to York in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries' in Essays in medieval history presented to Thomas Frederick Tout, ed. A.G. Little and F.M. Powicke (Manchester, 1923), pp. 294-5.

33. Based on the Gough map of roads c. 1360: New historical geography, p. 175.

industry of the bell founders.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to being a major ecclesiastical centre York was, in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, the centre for national administration for periods of time when the government moved north in order to prosecute more effectively the war against the Scots, a temporary migration which probably had a profoundly important effect on the economy of the city.<sup>35</sup> York was taken temporarily into the king's hands in the years 1280-2 and 1292-7 but apart from this hiatus, the acquisition of civic liberties proceeded steadily throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries until York was finally granted county status in 1396.<sup>36</sup> The extensive jurisdictional powers vested in the city were exercised in a number of courts and included the commission of the peace, courts of common pleas and recognizances for debt.<sup>37</sup> As elsewhere considerable authority in the later middle ages rested with the mayor who was assisted by a council of twelve aldermen.<sup>38</sup> In effect mayor and aldermen operated as an oligarchy, although formal consultations were held with a council of twenty-four and even less frequently with a further council of forty-eight, called also the commonalty.<sup>39</sup>

34. In addition to the Minster, York contained some 40 parish churches, the number varying slightly over the period studied; four monasteries and a nunnery; four orders of friars and well over 30 hospitals and maisonndieus, the largest of which, St. Leonards Hospital, supported some 200 cremits. These institutions must have accounted for between 600 and 700 clergy in the city at any one time: V.C.H., City of York, p. 366.
35. Broome, 'Exchequer migrations to York'; Prestwich, York civic ordinances; see below pp. 74-75, 306.
36. V.C.H., City of York, pp. 31-3, 69.
37. V.C.H., City of York, pp. 75-7.
38. V.C.H., City of York, pp. 70-2.
39. V.C.H., City of York, pp. 77-9; see below p. 336-7.



However within the city the powers of the mayor and corporation were not absolute. Certain areas were distinguished as liberties belonging to the major ecclesiastical corporations, particularly the Minster, St. Mary's Abbey and St. Leonards Hospital.<sup>40</sup> Because the area of the liberties lay outside the authority of the city council the inhabitants were not subject to civic taxation and it was this issue in particular that gave rise to the immensely protracted conflict between the city and St. Mary's Abbey over the status of the suburb of Bootham, a conflict eventually decided in favour of the city.<sup>41</sup> Additionally craftsmen could theoretically work within the liberties without taking up the freedom. It is hard to assess the economic significance of this particular loophole, but it was probably very small.<sup>42</sup> Civic legislation was certainly directed against the employment of unfree labour in the liberties.<sup>43</sup> Surviving evidence from craftsmen's wills suggests however that the liberties only in fact sheltered a handful of master craftsmen, generally men such as goldsmiths who may have been working exclusively for the clergy anyway.<sup>44</sup>

The earliest extant map of York is that of John Speed made in

40. V.C.H., City of York, pp. 38-40, 68-9.
41. V.C.H., City of York, pp. 68-9.
42. Palliser, Tudor York, pp. 89-90.
43. E.g. the ordinances of the glovers and the cappers: Y.C.R. iii, p. 183; Y.M.B. ii, p. 285 (1483, 1482).
44. It seems likely that by the fifteenth century the relevant area of the Dean and Chapter's liberty was restricted to the Minster close. The Dean and Chapter rent rolls give evidence of one or two unfree craftsmen resident in the close who worked regularly in the Minster e.g. Arnaldo Goldsmith: Y.M.L., E3.34, 3.35.

1610. Apart from the absence of religious houses, it seems probable that Speed's map can afford some impression of the appearance of the city in the early sixteenth century; certainly the city had not expanded much physically since then for the size of the population in 1600 was probably very similar to that of 1400.<sup>45</sup> The inner city was bounded by the medieval walls beyond which lay the less populous suburbs and the common lands which fell under the city's jurisdiction.<sup>46</sup> Within the walls York was divided into a multitude of small parishes; one of the most striking physical features of the city must have been the number of churches. However apart from the churches, the Minster, and the houses of the religious orders there were few other stone buildings. During the course of the fifteenth century one or two public buildings such as the Guildhall and St. Anthony's Hall were built in stone, but the vast majority of buildings were of wood. The Roman street pattern had in many places disappeared and the city was crossed by a multitude of narrow streets and alleys which focussed on the market and the river crossing.

The Ouse was crossed by only one bridge, Ouse bridge; this connected the main road from the south, which came through Micklegate Bar and down Micklegate, to the commercial heart of the city north east of the river. The main markets lay in the parishes of St. Sampson and All Saints Pavement. All the city centre parishes were densely

45. A sketch plan of York survives from 1545; for a list of the maps and plans made of York see R.C.H.M., South west of the Ouse, p. xxxii. For a description of Tudor York see Palliser, Tudor York, pp. 22-9.

46. V.C.H., City of York, p. 317 maps the city boundaries.

populated, but they show a fairly clear differentiation of wealth following the distribution of industry.<sup>47</sup> Many of the more expensive shops and affluent citizens were to be found in the parishes near Ouse Bridge, particularly St. Michael Spurriergate and All Saints Pavement, or along Stonegate, near the Minster gates, in the parish of St. Michael le Belfrey. Ouse Bridge and the smaller Foss Bridge, which crossed the river Foss shortly before its confluence with the Ouse, were natural focal points for commerce and both bridges were crowded with shops.

By 1500 there is evidence that much of the housing stock of the city was becoming delapidated. The commerce and hence the prosperity of the city was by this date severely diminished in comparison to the expansive days of the fourteenth century. Recent work on the urban economy has established that York, in common with other major provincial towns such as Coventry, Norwich, Southampton and Bristol, experienced a period of great prosperity, positively a golden age, in the hundred years or so following the Black Death.<sup>48</sup> York's expanding fortunes, based on the growth of the cloth industry and expanding overseas trade, were brought to a standstill by the mid-fifteenth century, and from the 1460's onwards the city appears to have experienced an increasingly rapid descent into commercial depression.<sup>49</sup> The scale of the depression

47. See below p. 454ff.

48. V.C.H., City of York, pp. 101-4; Bartlett, Expansion and decline of York, pp. 25-7; Reynolds, English medieval towns, pp. 154-5; Phythian-Adams, 'Urban decay', pp. 166-7. This prosperity was far from being an ubiquitous feature of medieval towns however,

49. Bartlett, 'Some aspects of the economy of York', pp. 150-5; Bartlett, 'Expansion and decline of York', pp. 27-33; Dobson, 'Urban decline', p. 20.

was apparent in falling rents, a reduction of the population, frequent attempts to avoid civic office and the impoverishment of civic finances, so that by the late fifteenth century the city could be described as in a state of 'miserable ruyne and decaye'.<sup>50</sup> The depression appears to have lasted until the mid-sixteenth century, giving way to gradual recovery in the 1560's.<sup>51</sup>

Of the sources for a study of the industry of medieval York, the freemen's register of the city, despite the pitfalls that yawn before those who would use it, must remain one of the most important, and indeed its very failings and omissions can sometimes be as informative as the statistics that it provides.<sup>52</sup> From 1290 the register contains a full record of all those admitted to the freedom by redemption or apprenticeship, although as the payment seems to have been the same in either case, no distinction was made in the record between the two categories.<sup>53</sup> From 1397 entrants to the freedom by patrimony are recorded as well; as only a very small proportion of freemen were admitted by patrimony, their absence from the fourteenth century register means that statistics drawn from the years before 1397 are not entirely invalidated.<sup>54</sup>

50. York civic records, ed. A. Raine ii (Y.A.S.R.S. cii, 1940), p. 102.

51. Palliser, Tudor York, pp. 211, 260-4.

52. For a description of the manuscript register see Dobson, 'Admissions to the freedom', pp. 2-7.

53. See below p. 308-9.

54. Dobson, 'Admissions to the freedom', pp. 8-10; less than 8% of registered freemen were admitted by patrimony between 1397-1401 and 1409-18; by 1479-88 this had risen to 14%.

Details of the city's administration were selectively recorded in the civic memorandum books; two of these relate to the medieval period, those lettered A/Y and B/Y in the civic archives.<sup>55</sup> A/Y covers the years 1376-1547; B/Y is a much shorter document largely comprising gild regulations of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The memorandum books were clearly working documents. Entries are not consecutive and cover a wide variety of subjects including customals, taxation records, regulations for defence, the running of the municipal chapel, directions for the Corpus Christi plays and a very large number of ordinances for the craft gilds.

The minute or house books of the city corporation date from 1476.<sup>56</sup> They are far fuller than the memorandum books and record daily decisions taken by the council and transcribed by the town clerk. The house books have been selectively published as the York civic records, but recourse has had to be made on occasions to the manuscript volumes for items excluded by the editor from the published version.<sup>57</sup>

Valuable information concerning the regulation of industry and on terms of employment can also be obtained from the chamberlains' account rolls and the account rolls of the bridgemasters of the city.

55. Y.C.L., E20, 20A. A/Y was badly damaged by flood in the late 19th century, but had happily already been transcribed: York memorandum book, ed. M. Sellers 2 vols. (Surtees Society cxx, cxxv, 1911, 1914). B/Y is transcribed in: York memorandum book, ed. J. Percy (Surtees Society clxxxvi, 1969). For a technical description of these documents see Records of Early English Drama: York, ed. A. Johnston and M. Rogerson, 2 vols. (Toronto, 1979), pp. xix-xx.
56. Y.C.L., Class B1-36 (1476-1650): Records of Early English Drama: York, pp. xvii-xviii.
57. York civic records, ed. A. Raine 8 vols. (Y.A.S.R.S. xcvi, cxiii, cxvi, cxviii, cxxi, cxxiv, cxxvii, cxxx, 1938-52).

Neither series is complete. One fourteenth century account roll survives from the chamberlains' office, dated 1396-7; eighteen further rolls in various states of repair cover the years 1433-1500.<sup>58</sup> These account rolls summarize the receipts and expenditure which were recorded in detail in the chamberlains' account books. Regrettably the account books themselves only survive for a few years in the mid-fifteenth century and the 1480's.<sup>59</sup> The accounts of the bridgemasters of Ouse and Foss bridges also survive in an incomplete sequence from the fifteenth century. The funds of the bridgemasters were largely drawn from rents so that the bulk of the accounts are concerned with receipts of rents and expenditure on repairs of tenements, with some details of the expenses entailed in the upkeep of the chapels located on the bridges.<sup>60</sup> Many of the surviving accounts are faded, but sufficient remain legible to give a wealth of information on the building industry in the fifteenth century. Accounts from other institutions such as those of the custodian of the fabric of York Minster and the Vicars Choral also provide information about employment, particularly among building workers; the fabric rolls of the Minster have been published in part, but the record of routine work done in the Minster has unfortunately generally been excluded from the printed edition.<sup>61</sup>

58. The medieval chamberlains' accounts have been edited: York city chamberlains' account rolls, 1396-1500, ed. R.B. Dobson (Surtees Society cxcii, 1978-9).

59. Y.C.L., CCl, CCl a; Chamberlains' rolls, p. xvi; for a further description of the account books see below pp. 159, 308.

60. Y.C.L., C80-87, Chamberlains' rolls, pp. xxvii-xxviii.

61. Y.M.L., E3.1-40 (Fabric rolls c. 1360-1530) published in Fabric rolls of York Minster, ed. J. Raine (Surtees Society xxxv, 1858); Y.M.L., Class V (Vicars choral accounts).

The vast majority of the records of the craft guilds have not survived. Amongst the civic records there are however a few papers relating to the weavers, and of particular interest is an apprentices' book which covers the years c. 1450-1507.<sup>62</sup> Because of the absence of gild records, the wills of York craftsmen have been the main source of information in supplementing the limited record of the crafts found in official documents. The wills of 1048 craftsmen have been used together with 118 made by their female relatives, usually their wives. A very limited number of wills survive from the early fourteenth century, from the 1320's onwards, but wills only occur in substantial numbers after the 1390's. The earliest wills, dating from the 1320's were made by men and women living in parishes that fell under the peculiar jurisdiction of the Dean and Chapter; their wills were therefore proved before the court of the Dean and Chapter. The vast majority of wills surviving from medieval York were proved in the Exchequer court of the archbishop; the surviving records of this court commence in 1389. There are two volumes of Dean and Chapter probate registers which cover the period up to 1534 and nine volumes of the registers of the Archbishop's court.<sup>63</sup> Most of the wills are in Latin; the earliest recorded craftsman's will in English is that of John Croxton, a chandler, dating from 1392.<sup>64</sup> This however was exceptional;

62. Y.C.L., E58A, D11; for a description of these manuscripts see below pp. 38-9, 41.

63. Y.M.L., D/C L2/4, L2/5a (hereafter referred to as D/C Prob. Reg. 1,2); B.I., Prob. Reg. 1-9. These wills are indexed in: Index of wills in the York registry i, 1389-1514, ii, 1514-1553 (Y.A.S.R.S. vi, xi, 1888, 1891); Index of wills from the Dean and Chapter's court at York 1321-1636 (Y.A.S.R.S. xxxviii, 1907).

64. Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 111.

there were no others until the late 1480's and 1490's when five more wills in English were made, but such wills did not become common until the sixteenth century. In addition there are a handful of probate inventories made within the jurisdiction of the Dean and Chapter dating from the mid-fifteenth century.

Taxation records are of varying use depending on the credibility of the account and the chance of identifying the occupations of those taxed. The lay subsidies of 1327 and 1524 have proved the most valuable in this respect.<sup>65</sup> Some use can also be made of the poll tax returns for Yorkshire and in particular those of the West Riding for 1379.<sup>66</sup> Though much doubt has been thrown on the aulnage accounts, one of the rolls of particulars surviving from 1394-5 for York gives valuable information on the manufacture of cloth in the city.<sup>67</sup> The best impression of the trade undertaken by the citizens of York is obtained through the customs particulars of Hull.<sup>68</sup> Other useful national records are the accounts of purchase of military supplies, of

65. 'Lay subsidy rolls 1 Edward III, North riding of Yorkshire and the city of York', ed. Col. Parker, Miscellaneous (Y.A.S.R.S. lxxiv, 1929), pp. 160-9 (hereafter cited as Lay subsidy, 1327); 'Subsidy roll for York and the Ainsty', ed. E. Peacock, Y.A.J. iv (1875-6), pp. 170-191.
66. 'Rotuli collectorum subsidii regi a laiciis anno secundo concessi in Westrythyngo in Comitatu Eboraci', Yorkshire Archaeological and Topographical Journal v, vi, vii (1879-2) (hereafter cited as 'Lay poll tax West Riding, 1379'); 'A poll tax of the East Riding with some account of the peasants revolt of 1381', ed. J.C. Cox, Transactions of the East Riding Antiquarian Society xv (1908), pp. 1-70.
67. P.R.O., E101/345/16 transcribed in The early Yorkshire woollen trade, ed. J. Lister (Y.A.S.R.S. lxxiv, 1923), pp. 47-95. E.M. Carus-Wilson, 'The aulnage accounts: a criticism' in Medieval merchant venturers, pp. 279-291.
68. P.R.O., E122 (Exchequer K.R. Customs accounts, List and Index Society ix, 1970).



purveyance and other wardrobe accounts, particularly for the reigns of Edward I and III.<sup>69</sup>

In the early twelfth century John of Salisbury when describing the work of 'lanificii artesque mecanicae'; whom he included amongst the 'feet of the commonwealth', commented that 'Haec autem tot sunt res publica non octipedes cancris sed et centipedes pedum numerositate transcendat'.<sup>70</sup> The writer on late medieval industry may justifiably feel somewhat shy therefore in attempting to categorize the manufacturing crafts. The freemen's register gives evidence of an enormous variety of occupations in the late medieval city, although it must be admitted that much of this variety can be accounted for in terms of changing terminology rather than a vast proliferation of specialist manufacture. Of course not all crafts can be comprehended in this survey. Where a particular manufacture supported only a few freemen or none at all it is usually impossible to get any information about it. For the crafts, such as spinning or weaving for example, where a high percentage of women were employed there is very little evidence, as is the case for work of an unskilled or semi-skilled nature such as the making of earthenware or the rough daubing of walls. In part too the arrangement of this work has been dictated by the survival of craft ordinances.<sup>71</sup> However wills survive from men employed in a remarkably large number of occupations, around eighty distinct crafts in fact, and it is essentially on the basis of these occupations that

69. P.R.O., E101 (P.R.O., List of various accounts preserved in the Exchequer, Lists and indexes xxxv, 1912).

70. John of Salisbury, Policraticus vi, 20.

71. Craft ordinance survive for 57 manufacturing, victualling and building crafts within the years 1376-1534, although the number of course varied over time.

the selection of crafts for this study has been made. Indeed a comparison between the evidence of the wills and that of the craft regulations can sometimes be used to establish how far the craft structure imposed an artificial rigidity on industrial organization.

The terminology of craft organizations is liable to be confusing. As far as possible the word gild has been avoided because it is so ambiguous. The term mystery has sometimes been used when referring to the functions of the craft organization which relate to the practice of manufacture; likewise the word fraternity had been applied on occasion to the purely social or religious functions of these organizations. Such a clear cut distinction between functions cannot in reality have been maintained, but the almost total absence of internal as opposed to official records of the craft guilds makes it impossible to describe their structure and organization. Because of this the word craft has most commonly been used here to describe the organizations or groups of craftsmen occupied in particular branches of manufacture. The terms craft and craft fellowship have connotations of association and cooperation without imputing to the various groups a degree of formality and organization which they might not all share, and which indeed some might not have at all.

The crafts have been divided into six groups, mainly on the basis of the material in which the craftsmen worked, as this follows most closely their industrial and frequently their social relationships. The groups are: textile, leather, victualling, metal and building crafts; the sixth group has inevitably had to be headed

miscellaneous.<sup>72.</sup> In general service industries have been excluded save where they have particularly close connections with other craftsmen as did the barbers with the chandlers. The first six chapters discuss medieval industrial practice within these six groupings; they have been surveyed in order of size according to the tables for admission to the freedom. Detailed tables for the admission to the freedom in the relevant crafts follow each chapter; a general table of admissions follows this chapter. Some discussion of the technology of the various medieval industries has been included in order to distinguish between the crafts but this has only been extended if no authoritative work on the subject has been published. The second half of this study deals, in three chapters, with issues common to all the crafts: their political role; their involvement with trade; the wealth and status of the craftsmen. There are two appendices: appendix A contains transcriptions of four wills and two inventories; appendix B provides an outline of testamentary practice in late medieval York.

72. This has meant abandoning the classification used in: Hoskins, Provincial England, p. 60.

TABLE 1:1. ENTRANTS TO THE FREEDOM OF YORK, 1273-1534, DECADAL TOTALS: OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS

	-1290		1291-1300		1300	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Textile	6	2.1	12	4.8	18	3.3
Leather	85	29.4	55	21.8	140	25.9
Victualling	44	15.2	51	20.2	95	17.6
Metal	13	4.4	13	5.2	26	4.8
Building	1	0.3	4	1.6	5	0.9
Miscellaneous	2	0.7	3	1.2	5	0.9
Mercantile & Transport	23	8.0	18	7.1	41	7.6
Agricultural <sup>1</sup>						
Clerical & Religious <sup>2</sup>			2	0.7	2	0.4
Gentlemen <sup>3</sup>						
Services <sup>4</sup>			2	0.7	2	0.4
No trade <sup>5</sup>	115	39.8	92	36.5	207	38.3
Total	289		252		541	

	1301-10		1311-20		1321-30		1331-40		1341-50		1301-50	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Textile	19	4.8	35	7.6	37	7.5	88	13.4	121	16.1	300	10.9
Leather	71	17.8	69	15.1	85	17.3	126	19.2	155	20.6	506	18.4
Victualling	61	15.3	97	21.2	98	20.0	97	14.8	87	11.6	440	16.0
Metal	31	7.8	53	11.6	33	6.7	68	10.4	68	9.1	253	9.2
Building	10	2.5	7	1.5	15	3.1	17	2.6	19	2.5	68	2.5
Miscellaneous	5	1.3	6	1.0	6	1.2	21	3.2	23	3.1	61	2.2
Mercantile & Transport	25	6.3	75	16.4	57	11.6	101	15.4	124	16.5	382	13.9
Agricultural					1	0.2	4	0.6	1	0.1	6	0.2
Clerical & Religious	2	0.5	2	0.4	6	1.2	7	1.1	13	1.7	30	1.1
Gentlemen												
Services			5	1.1	3	0.6	4	0.6	4	0.5	16	0.6
No trade	175	43.9	109	28.2	150	30.5	124	18.9	136	18.1	694	25.2
Total	399		458		491		657		751		2756	

TABLE 1:1 (continued)

	1351-60		1361-70		1371-80		1381-90		1391-1400		1351-1400	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Textile	183	22.5	293	27.9	239	28.8	204	21.8	275	23.3	1194	24.8
Leather	141	17.3	185	17.6	114	13.8	131	14.0	142	12.0	713	14.8
Victualling	85	10.5	92	8.7	73	8.8	85	9.1	115	9.7	450	9.4
Metal	78	9.6	98	9.3	90	10.9	98	10.5	110	9.3	474	9.6
Building	38	4.7	69	6.6	70	8.4	89	9.5	102	8.6	368	7.6
Miscellaneous	31	3.8	56	5.3	45	5.4	52	5.6	56	4.7	240	5.0
Mercantile & Transport	136	16.7	158	15.0	147	17.7	152	16.2	236	20.0	829	17.2
Agricultural	4	0.6	2	0.2					2	0.2	8	0.2
Clerical & Religious	11	1.4	14	1.3	8	1.0	26	2.8	37	3.1	96	2.0
Gentlemen									1	0.1	1	
Services	2	0.2	5	0.5	3	0.4	13	1.4	17	1.4	40	0.8
No trade	104	12.8	80	7.6	40	4.8	86	9.2	88	7.4	398	8.3
Total	813		1052		829		936		1181		4811	
	1401-10		1411-20		1421-30		1431-40		1441-50		1401-50	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Textile	138	17.2	202	16.7	211	20.2	170	18.0	193	19.7	914	18.4
Leather	95	11.8	164	13.6	138	13.2	107	11.3	119	12.2	623	12.5
Victualling	70	8.7	147	12.1	120	11.5	115	12.2	135	13.8	587	11.8
Metal	70	8.7	112	9.3	83	8.0	86	9.1	109	11.2	460	9.2
Building	68	8.5	115	9.5	97	9.3	74	7.8	83	8.5	437	8.8
Miscellaneous	51	6.4	65	5.4	53	5.1	60	6.3	35	3.6	264	5.3
Mercantile & Transport	129	16.1	194	16.0	208	20.0	174	18.4	145	14.9	850	17.1
Agricultural	2	0.2	4	0.3	9	0.9	28	3.0	39	4.0	82	1.6
Clerical & Religious	18	2.2	36	3.0	37	3.5	67	7.1	58	5.9	216	4.3
Gentlemen	3	0.4	5	0.4	6	0.6	14	1.5	22	2.3	50	1.0
Services	6	0.7	10	0.8	13	1.2	13	1.4	8	0.8	50	1.0
No trade	153	19.1	156	12.9	68	6.5	38	4.0	30	3.1	445	4.5
Total	803		1210		1043		946		976		4978	

TABLE 1:1 (continued)

	1451-60		1461-70		1471-80		1481-90		1491-1500		1451-1500	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Textile	149	22.7	167	22.1	159	19.5	124	17.0	143	24.6	742	21.0
Leather	86	13.1	106	14.1	94	11.5	107	14.7	70	12.0	463	13.1
Victualling	108	16.4	125	16.6	109	13.4	103	14.2	85	14.6	530	15.0
Metal	58	8.8	73	9.7	78	9.6	64	8.8	67	11.5	340	9.6
Building	45	6.8	60	7.9	65	8.0	67	9.2	52	8.9	289	8.2
Miscellaneous	23	3.5	31	4.1	61	7.5	40	5.5	24	4.1	179	5.1
Mercantile & Transport	104	15.8	106	14.1	133	16.3	88	12.1	93	15.9	524	14.8
Agricultural	31	4.7	14	1.9	30	3.7	27	3.7	13	2.2	115	3.3
Clerical & Religious	21	3.2	38	5.0	50	6.1	42	5.8	17	2.9	168	4.8
Gentlemen	14	2.1	11	1.5	10	1.2	16	2.2	7	1.2	58	1.6
Services	12	1.8	9	1.2	12	1.5	15	2.1	9	1.5	57	1.6
No trade	6	0.9	14	1.9	13	1.6	34	4.7	2	0.3	69	2.0
Total	657		754		814		727		582		3534	
	1501-10		1511-20		1521-30		1531-34		1501-34		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Textile	100	18.0	103	19.3	92	17.7	37	18.0	332	18.3	3500	19.0
Leather	76	13.8	69	12.9	70	13.4	28	13.7	243	13.4	2688	14.6
Victualling	69	12.5	111	20.8	95	18.2	46	22.4	321	17.7	2423	13.1
Metal	57	10.4	63	11.8	51	9.8	16	7.8	187	10.3	1740	9.4
Building	40	7.3	41	7.7	61	11.7	28	13.7	170	9.4	1337	7.3
Miscellaneous	24	4.7	39	7.3	38	7.3	10	4.9	111	6.1	860	4.7
Mercantile & Transport	125	22.7	54	10.1	89	17.1	27	13.2	295	16.3	2921	15.8
Agricultural	3	0.5	10	1.9			2	1.0	15	0.8	226	1.2
Clerical & Religious	38	6.9	19	3.6	7	1.3	3	1.5	67	3.7	579	3.1
Gentlemen	6	1.1	4	0.7	2	0.4	2	1.0	14	0.8	123	0.6
Services	8	1.5	8	1.5	12	2.3	2	1.0	30	1.7	195	1.1
No trade	4	0.7	13	2.4	4	0.8	4	2.0	25	1.4	1838	9.9
Total	550		534		521		205		1810		18430	

TABLE 1:1 (continued)

Footnotes.

1. Agricultural: includes husbandmen, gardeners, yeomen and horse dealers.
2. Clerical: includes clerks, lawyers and religious and secular clergy.
3. Gentlemen: includes knights.
4. Services: includes officials, musicians, scribes.
5. No trade: servants have been included when their master's occupation is not given.

## Chapter 2. THE TEXTILE CRAFTS

The English textile industry in the later Middle Ages has been the subject of considerably more detailed investigation than the majority of medieval manufactures. The increasing importance of English cloth in the export market and the survival of the customs accounts whereby this growth can be measured distinguishes textiles from other medieval industries; but whilst there is a wealth of evidence for overseas trade, much is still obscure concerning the organization of the industry in English towns in the later middle ages. This chapter is concerned primarily with the way that the textile industry was organized in late medieval York, the strength of the industry within the city and the competition it faced from outside; the crafts and craftsmen concerned in this discussion are the weavers whose fortunes were closely associated with the linen weavers, the walkers and shermen, the litsters and the tapiters. A consideration of the marketing of cloth is postponed to a later chapter on the trade of the city; however one of the most important customers in the internal cloth trade was the garment making industry, an industry that in York came to rely increasingly on the supply of cloth from rural weavers. The latter part of this chapter therefore concerns the clothing crafts and the contrast that the economic performance of these secondary industries provides with the experience of the primary manufacturers within the city, the weavers.

York by the later middle ages already had a long history as an important centre of textile manufacture. In the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries it was one of the leading English cloth towns in



terms of quantity, though probably producing a cloth of slightly lesser quality than Stamford, Lincoln or Beverley.<sup>1</sup> Purchases of York cloth for the royal household are recorded fairly frequently in the thirteenth century; so for example York merchants were owed over £60 for cloth bought by Henry III in 1250; in 1252 £17 14s 2d was remitted from the farm of the city in respect of 500 ells of cheap cloth bought for alms and the same year saw additional purchases of cloth made for the use of the king's household when spending Christmas in the city.<sup>2</sup> In 1261 and 1272 there are records of York exports to the Mediterranean, the cloth in at least one instance being scarlets of high quality.<sup>3</sup> However the state of the urban cloth industry by the late thirteenth century remains problematic. It would appear by this date to have declined considerably since the earlier part of the century, but the extent and cause of this decline can only be conjectured. Competition from rural industry and from imports were likely to have been contributory factors.<sup>4</sup> The urban weaving guilds however appear to have been faced with a crisis at a very much earlier date than the cloth industry. A weavers' guild is recorded in York, in common with other major provincial towns in the twelfth century, the York guild appearing for the first time in the pipe roll of

1. E.M. Carus-Wilson, 'The English cloth industry in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries' in Medieval Merchant Venturers (1967), pp. 211-3; E. Miller, 'The fortunes of the English textile industry during the thirteenth century', Ec. H.R. 2nd. ser. xviii (1965), p. 67.
2. Liberate roll 1245-51, p. 321; 1251-60, pp. 14, 28-9.
3. R. Doehard, Les relations commerciales entres Genes, la Belgique et l'Outremer 2 vols (Brussels, 1941), i, pp. 65, 192, ii, pp. 519, 586-7; R. Reynolds, 'The market for northern textiles in Genoa 1179-1200', Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire viii (1935), pp. 840-1.
4. Miller, 'English textile industry in the thirteenth century', p. 77.

1164-5.<sup>5</sup> As in other towns, the grant of a charter to the weavers' gild in return for a fee was an attempt to secure royal protection against the power of merchants and litsters who were acting as entrepreneurs.<sup>6</sup> As the weavers' gild was by 1214 in debt to £60 for their farm it seems that their purchased privileges had proved ineffective.<sup>7</sup> Consequently the increase of arrears in weavers' payments of their farm to £420 by 1273 may reflect the inability of the gild to raise the money for the farm as well as the decline of the urban textile industry as a whole.<sup>8</sup> The depressed status of the York weavers themselves by the late thirteenth century is apparent in their complete absence from the register of freemen; the fact that no weaver took up the freedom from 1272-1318 and only three in all before 1330 implies that they had been barred from the franchise.<sup>9</sup>

Undoubtedly the York weavers of the thirteenth century did face considerable competition from rural industry and it seems likely that the monopoly they claimed over the manufacture of dyed and rayed cloth in Yorkshire was constantly infringed, to the extent that a royal

5. Pipe roll 12 Henry II (P.R.S. ix, 1888), p. 36. Weavers' gilds are recorded at London, Winchester, Lincoln, Huntingdon, Oxford and Nottingham in 1230: Carus-Wilson, 'English cloth industry', pp. 225-6.
6. Carus-Wilson, 'English cloth industry', pp. 226-7, 235-8. The York weavers' charter, confirmed at various intervals during the course of the later middle ages is given in Y.M.B. i, pp. 238-241; H. Heaton, The Yorkshire woollen and worsted industries 2nd.ed. (Oxford, 1965), pp. 27-8.
7. Pipe Roll 6 John (P.R.S. n.s. xxxv, 1959), p. 86.
8. V.C.H., City of York, p. 44. For the decline of English urban textile manufacture in the face of foreign competition during the 13th century see J. Bolton, The medieval English economy 1150-1500 (1980), pp. 155-8.
9. Dobson, 'Admissions to the freedom', p. 14; see below table 2:6.

investigation was undertaken in 1304 in response to a plea from the York gild.<sup>10</sup> The early fourteenth century may have marked the lowest point of their fortunes however. Although in some towns, notably Oxford, Lincoln and Stamford, the weaving industry was 'a permanent casualty of the thirteenth century changes',<sup>11</sup> in others, particularly Coventry, Salisbury and York the fourteenth century saw a revival in the manufacture of cloth.<sup>12</sup> The expansion of the English cloth industry in the fourteenth century would seem to have predated by some years Edward III's manipulation of the wool customs to the ultimate advantage of the cloth trade. In York the recovery of the woollen industry can be closely associated with the demands of the government, based in York for long periods during the Scottish wars, from 1298-1305 and again at varying dates between 1319-1338.<sup>13</sup> Purchases made by the wardrobe in 1334-5 show that while scarlets and other fine fabrics were generally bought from London, woollens up to the value of £4 a cloth, together with the cheaper fustians and linens were purchased from York mercers and drapers.<sup>14</sup>

10. C.C.R. 1302-7, p. 134.

11. Miller, 'English textile industry in the thirteenth century', p. 79.

12. V.C.H., Wiltshire iv, p. 124; Reynolds, English Medieval towns, p. 156; H.L. Gray, 'Production and export of English woollens in the fourteenth century', E.H.R. xxxix (1924), p. 32.

13. D.M. Broome, 'Exchequer migrations to York in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries' in Essays in medieval history presented to T.F. Tout (Manchester, 1925), pp. 291-2.

14. P.R.O. E101/387/13; Henry de Melton merchant of York sold material worth £8 a cloth to the king but this is the only instance of very high priced material sold by a York man in this account. E101/387/1 an account for 7 & 8 Edward II gives a similar picture.

The expansion of the English cloth industry in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries has largely to be measured in terms of the customs accounts. The expansion both overseas and in less detail, the capture of the home market have been described by Professor Carus-Wilson.<sup>15</sup> Despite periodic setbacks, exports had by the 1390's risen to over 35,000 cloths a year with London and Hull carrying the bulk of the Baltic and Low Countries trade. The Hull customs accounts do not of course reflect the output of cloth from York looms but they do afford an impression of the rate of expansion. In the decade 1347-57, 1000 cloths were exported from Hull; between 1357-67, 8,000 cloths; from 1387-97, 38,000 cloths, of which it has been reckoned that approximately half were carried by York merchants.<sup>16</sup> At a national level the impetus of expansion was lost in the first half of the fifteenth century; only in the 1440's were annual figures of over 40,000 cloths regularly recorded and only towards the end of the century did English cloth exports once again embark on a period of steady expansion.<sup>17</sup> Exports from Hull reflect the national trends in the first part of the fifteenth century, but the prospects in the second half of the century were considerably gloomier.<sup>18</sup>

15. E.M. Carus-Wilson, 'Trends in the exports of English woollens in the fourteenth century' in Medieval Merchant Venturers, pp. 239-264; E.M. Carus-Wilson and O. Coleman, England's export trade, 1275-1547 (Oxford, 1963); Miller, 'English textile industry in the thirteenth century', p. 80 believes that imports may not have fallen so rapidly and that their absence from the customs accounts means that they were carried in English ships.
16. Bartlett, 'Expansion and decline of York', pp. 24-5 and see below table 9:2. Wool was York's most valuable export; in the year 1398-9 cloth estimated at £1225 was exported by York merchants and wool worth £6110: Bartlett, 'Expansion and decline of York', p. 27.
17. Carus-Wilson and Coleman, England's export trade, pp. 138-9; H.L. Gray, 'English foreign trade from 1446 to 1482' in Studies in English trade in the fifteenth century ed. E. Power and M.M. Poston (1933), pp. 23-29.
18. See below, table 9:2.

In York itself weavers began to take out the freedom in large numbers from the 1330's onwards, probably because of a change in civic policy towards admissions to the franchise. The spectacular rise in the number of freemen in the textile crafts in the second half of the fourteenth century must reflect industrial growth which was offering increasing employment.<sup>19</sup> The rise cannot however be taken as a faithful index of growth for, as mentioned, the freemen's register is often more likely to be an index of mortality than of expansion. There is the further reservation that, as much of the woollen industry was organized on an entrepreneurial basis, there may have been little reason for weavers and walkers to take out the freedom. It also seems probable that conditions of manufacture found within the woollen cloth industry were rather different to those experienced by the tapiters in the worsted industry.

The wide variety of textiles made in the city in the later middle ages, were roughly divided between two crafts, the weavers and the tapiters, this latter group including the chaloners and the coverlet weavers. By the late fourteenth century (when their respective craft ordinances were enrolled) and probably earlier, the distinction between weaver and tapiter was clear cut. Fifty-six master tapiters agreed to ordinances of their craft in the 1380's and of the forty-one who can be traced in the freemen's register, only one described himself as a weaver, the rest being recorded as free as tapiters, coverlet weavers or chaloners.<sup>20</sup> Similarly of the fifty weavers' masters named in their late fourteenth-

19. See below table 2:6.

20. Y.M.B. i, p. 84.

century ordinances, the forty found in the Freeman's Register all took up their freedom as weavers.<sup>21</sup>

The weavers manufactured broadcloth, the fine heavily fullered cloth, made to a standard size according to national regulations first set out in 1278, the dimensions being some 26-28 yards long and 6-6½ quarters (about 1¾ yards) wide after fulling.<sup>22</sup> These dimensions were repeated in local regulations, such as those made in York in 1506, together with a statement of the amount of wool required to weave such a cloth.<sup>23</sup>

Evidence from the York aulnage and customs accounts implies that manufacture was concentrated on these cloths in the late fourteenth century rather than on the narrower straits and dozens or on worsteds.<sup>24</sup> It was the manufacture of broadcloth which the weavers were probably most anxious to control; narrow cloths must have been woven by a very wide variety of men and women. The tapiters in contrast made coverlets, beds and tapestry of worsted rather than woollen cloth. By their nature such items were likely to vary enormously in size, although in 1473 an attempt was made to regulate the manufacture of some goods: 'coverlett, called worstede ware of the moste assisse, shall halde and contente in lengthe thre yerdes and ane halfe, and in brede ii yerdes and ane halfe; and also every coverlett called worsett ware of the leste assisse, halde

21. Y.M.B. i, pp. 238-9.

22. C.C.R. 1272-79, p. 502 and repeated 2 Edward III c.14, 27 Edward III stat.1 c.4, 47 Edward III c.1, 7 Henry IV c.10, 13 Henry IV c.4, 11 Henry VI c.9, 4 Edward IV c.1, Statutes of the Realm i, pp. 330-1, 395, ii, pp. 154, 168, 284-5, 403-4.

23. Y.C.R. iii, p. 18.

24. A very full aulnage account has survived for York for 1394-5, i.e. P.R.O. E101/345/16 transcribed in The early Yorkshire woollen trade, ed. J. Lister (Y.A.S.R.S. lxiv, 1923), pp. 47-95. For an analysis of this see below p. 36; Bartlett, 'Some aspects of the economy of York', pp. 71-2.

and contente in length iii yerdes and a halfe quarter and in brede ii yerdes and i quarter. And every tapett called quarter clothe, shall halde and contente in length two yerdes and ane halfe, and in brede i yerde and iii quarters'.<sup>25</sup> A bed loom was rather wider; the bequest of two looms by John Aldefelde, a tapiter, in 1450, describes a bedloom three ells wide to go to his son and a coverlet loom of two ells to a relative.<sup>26</sup> The bedloom also seems to have been the more profitable for a ruling of 1490 allowed each master to have one bedloom and one coverlet loom or two coverlet looms.<sup>27</sup> Both tapiters and woollen weavers worked in linen as well as wool and an acrimonious tussle for the control of the linen weaving industry developed in the late fifteenth century when the woollen cloth industry was in a state of crisis.<sup>28</sup>

The distinction between different types of weaver and the degree to which this was recognised in the formation of craft guilds was of course entirely dependent on the nature and extent of the local cloth industry. In Norwich where there was a strong tradition of worsted weaving a distinction was made between bed or coverlet weavers and the worsted weavers.<sup>29</sup> The distinction in Durham was more akin to that in York

25. Y.M.B. ii, pp. 195-6. In 1331 regulations were laid down for London tapits which required them to measure either 4 by 2 ells or 3 by 1½ ells and that chalons should measure 2½ ells by 5 quarters: Memorials of London and London life, ed. H.T. Riley (1868), p. 178. Winchester chaloners had each to make a chalon 4½ by 4½ ells each year as a contribution to the king's farm: Hist. MSS. Comm. 6th Report, p. 602.
26. BI., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 210. In Norwich regulations of 1410 specified that beds should measure 14 by 4 ells, 12 by 3 ells or 10½ by 2½ ells: Records of the city of Norwich, ed. W. Hudson and J.C. Tingey, 2 vols, (Norwich, 1906-10), ii, p. 150.
27. Y.M.B. ii, p. 197.
28. See below, p. 52ff
29. Records of Norwich, ii, p. 230.

although more closely defined in the records: the wool weavers were to make woollen and linen cloth called 'playne lyn', 'caresay', sack cloth and hair cloth whilst the chaloners made tapestry, say, worsted, twill, motley and diaper.<sup>30</sup>

The textile trade in general and the manufacture of woollen cloth in particular, because of the numerous stages in production and the scale of manufacture, was from an early stage susceptible to organization by entrepreneurs on a putting out basis. The stages of manufacture of English cloth never became as highly specialized as in Italy or Flanders, largely because operations were not on such a vast scale, though there is evidence of considerable diversity in the way that the industry was organized in this country.<sup>31</sup> The textile entrepreneurs in York came mainly from the merchant class, men such as Robert Colynson, who in his will left 'tinctoris, fullonibus, cissoribus et textoris mecum operantibus ..... unum bonum prandium et cuilibet eorum xiid'.<sup>32</sup> Important operators also existed amongst the drapers and litsters: Thomas Carre, a draper who died in 1444, left bequests to six weavers and William Shipley, dying in 1435, bequeathed 6d 'cuilibet pauperi mulieri que michi operari et filare consuevit'.<sup>33</sup> William Crosby, a litster, bequeathed in 1466 'xx s dividendi per executores meos pauperibus mulieribus laborantibus et

30. 'Durham trade guilds', ed. C.E. Whiting, Transactions of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland ix (1939-43), pp. 148-9.

31. There were some two dozen specialized textile crafts in the continental cloth cities: E.M. Carus-Wilson, 'The woollen industry' in Cambridge Economic History of Europe ii (Cambridge, 1952), pp. 395, 424.

32. B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 378 (1440).

33. B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 79v-80v, 3 fo. 437.



operantibus ex consuetudine rendo et carpendo lanas meas'.<sup>34</sup>

Some of the most useful evidence for entrepreneurial activity comes from the 1394-5 aulnage account for the city of York.<sup>35</sup> A feature of this account is the very high number of small scale producers recording one or two cloths or less, but in fact the bulk of the cloth was accounted for by a fairly small group of men. Thirty-two men aulnaging more than thirty cloths each, accounted for 1734 of the 3300 total cloths. Of these thirty-two, six cannot be certainly identified but all the rest were mercers or drapers. Altogether sixty-six York mercers and twenty-six drapers can be positively identified as having aulnaged cloth. By contrast very few craftsmen can be so identified and they generally accounted for small quantities of cloth: of the fifteen weavers and tapiters only one accounted for more than three cloths. Apart from the textile workers, the craftsmen who aulnaged cloths came from the more prosperous crafts: John de Bokeland, a barber, aulnaged nine cloths and Edmund Gloffer, a glover, eighteen cloths.<sup>36</sup> The account also contains the names of four bowyers, John Pannal with one cloth, William Hillom with five, William de Lee with ten and a half and Robert de Gaynford with twenty-two and a half cloths; it seems likely that bowyers became involved in the cloth market as a result of trading

34. B.I., Prob. Reg. 4 fo. 70.

35. Other surviving aulnage accounts for York and Yorkshire are of doubtful value being a brief summary statement; the 1397 account for instance includes only 53 names taken from York's major mercers and drapers: P.R.O. E101/345/20.

36. Early Yorkshire woollen trade, pp. 50, 64, 72, 90; Buckland was free of the city in 1375 and Gloffar as Edmund Coddessbroke in 1375: Freemen's Reg., pp. 73, 64.

connections that they had established by importing bowstaves from Prussia. This supposition is strengthened by the fact that in his will dated 1398 Robert Gaynsford bequeathed money to two men in Hull.<sup>37</sup>

The manufacture of cloth was organized in stages, the work being put out to a succession of craftsmen of varying degrees of skill. The initial processes were the sorting, washing, carding and combing of the wool, much of which was done by men and women now almost totally obscure, although combing and carding wool, together with spinning were probably undertaken in virtually every household, rich as well as poor. The spinning wheel, introduced possibly in the thirteenth century was widely used by the fifteenth; for surviving inventories contain frequent references to it: for example Hugh Grantham, a mason, had in 1395 'ii rotis pro filatione'; John Stubbs, a barber who died in 1415 and John Tennand, a founder who died in 1516, also owned spinning wheels and William Coltman, a brewer had a separate spinning house in 1481.<sup>39</sup>

Spinners working for the textile industry were employed as piece workers, though the only evidence for the rates that they paid is of a rather late date. In 1484 in York spinners were to receive 2d. for every 'spynnyng ponde of corse wol for packing ware' with rates for

37. B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 6v, see below pp. 30-1 for the trading of the bowers.

38. Only one carder and two combers took out the freedom of the city, all three before 1360. For the techniques of wool preparation see T. Singer, A history of technology ii (Oxford, 1956), pp. 202-5.

39. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories; Test. Ebor. iii, p. 48. There are also references to spinning wheels in wills e.g. Isabelle Burton, a smith's widow, William Lydyate, cooper: Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo 214v (1423), B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 140 (1446). It seems likely that these wheels were simple spindle wheels for they were valued at small sums of 6d to 12d., rather than the more complex spinning wheel with flyer, a device which made possible the simultaneous spinning and winding of yarn and which may have been introduced in the early fifteenth century: Singer, History of technology ii, pp. 202-5.

'every ponde spynnyng of woll for cuttyng cloth as the awner and the spynner can aggre'.<sup>40</sup> Coventry spinners, according to a regulation of 1514, received 4d. for spinning two and a half pounds of low quality wool and 5d. for best quality.<sup>41</sup> The York rules required that 'every wever, walker, spynner, carder and kemster shalbe duely and truely content and paied in redy money and in no ware but at the pleasere of the pore labourer or labourers' and similar regulations in regard to the Coventry spinners shows that the problem was prevalent elsewhere.<sup>42</sup>

As the York regulations of 1484 imply, large numbers of weavers were also employed on a piece work basis, not only for the general market but also in small contracts for domestic work: John Grene, a glover, had when he died in 1525 'at ye webstere xl yerdes of hardyn'.<sup>43</sup> Not only were the weavers frequently obliged to work on raw materials supplied by others but it seems probable that many of them did not own their own looms. Perhaps this was inevitable in view of the fact that the loom, particularly the broadloom, was a large, complex and expensive piece of equipment: two looms belonging to Thomas Catton a weaver were valued jointly at 32s. when he died in 1418.<sup>44</sup> The only possible estimate for the number of looms in the city altogether comes from a fragmentary account of the weavers' gild from 1456-7 which contains the

40. Y.C.R. i, p. 95, the spinner was to be given sufficient wax with each weight of wool, 2 lb for every spun pound of wool.

41. Coventry Leet Book ed. M.D. Harris, vols. 1-3 (E.E.T.S. cxxxiv, cxxxv, cxxxviii, 1907-9), iii, p. 640.

42. Y.C.R. i, p. 95; C.L.B. iii, p. 658-9.

43. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1525).

44. For the structure of the loom see Singer, History of technology ii, pp. 212-3.

following entry:

"Received of Edward Garnter and John Skipwith of the King's farm collected within the time of this account £4.

Received from persons of the said craft towards the King's farm for the term of St. Michael the Archangel viz. for each instrument called woollenlomes within the city and suburbs as is contained in a bill shown and examined with this account .....

Received from the same persons for the like farm for the easter term 4d. for each instrument 37s."<sup>45</sup>

As 4d. was charged on each loom, 37s. should represent a total of 111 looms in the hands of the weavers of the craft as their contribution towards the expenses of the farm. The first entry in this account, the £4 paid by Edward Garnter and John Skipwith is rather cryptic. Garnter was an important litster trading on a large scale and Skipwith was a mercer.<sup>46</sup> The £4 for which they account to the King's farm is a suspiciously round number and may possibly be a lump sum paid by representatives of the entrepreneurs as their contribution for the looms which they owned, to the cost of the weavers' farm. If this is the case,

45. Only two fragments of weavers' accounts survive for 1438-9 and 1456-7, Y.C.L., E58A:2, E58A:3, each of one membrane; both are illegible in part and comparison is therefore difficult. The earlier account contains receipts of quarterage and of other unspecified dues, and expenses made on the feast of the assumption and the nativity of St. John Baptist; the later account includes payments made towards the farm with fines for faulty work and expenses for the feast of the assumption.

46. Freemen's Reg., pp. 157, 158; Y.C.L., House Books ii fo. 33v.

the £4 might be an approximation of the amount of money due at 4d. the half year for each loom; this would make a total of 120 looms. Even if the number is merely an estimate it would imply that at least half and probably more than half of the looms in the city and suburbs were not owned by the weavers who worked them.

The number of weavers working in the city at any one time cannot be accurately known. As there can be no certainty about the £4 contribution by the entrepreneurs, a safer if perhaps too conservative a calculation can be based on the weavers' contribution for looms. It seems probable that the woollen industry in the mid fifteenth century was rather less healthy than it had been at the end of the fourteenth century; it can be suggested therefore that the York weavers owned well over 120 looms in the late fourteenth century. The ordinances of the weavers drawn up in the 1380's give the names of only fifty masters who would represent therefore something over a third of all the master craftsmen in the city.<sup>47</sup> The number of servants that these masters employed cannot be assessed but as each broadloom required two operators there may have been at least as many servants as masters. Because of the uncertainty of the figures, direct comparison with other towns is dangerous, but Salisbury in 1421 had eighty-one masters and two hundred and seven weavers' journeymen or servants.<sup>48</sup>

47. Assuming, which may well not be the case, that each loom was worked by a master craftsman with assistant.

48. V.C.H. Wiltshire iv, p. 126; Salisbury in 1395 aulnaged about two times as much cloth as York: Bartlett, Some aspects of the economy of York, p. 63. There were about 57 master weavers in Coventry in 1450: C. Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a city (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 48-9.

Among the master weavers it was probably by no means necessary to take out the freedom, as many were manufacturing a product for the export market and did not need a retail outlet in the city. An estimate of the proportion of free to unfree masters can be obtained from a surviving weavers' apprentice book, a fragmentary volume covering the second half of the fifteenth century and the first few years of the sixteenth.<sup>49</sup> It is in poor condition and badly faded and has in time past been rebound in the wrong order; the correct order, though not often a precise dating, can be established by checking the date of entry to the freedom or the date of death of the various masters and apprentices referred to.<sup>50</sup> Entries were made annually with each section headed by the name of the current master of the gild and listing the names of the master craftsmen and the apprentices they had registered that year.<sup>51</sup> The names of these master craftsmen which are legible in the apprentice book have been checked against the Freeman's Register; of one hundred and fifteen masters in the former, thirty cannot be traced in the latter. Perhaps more startling is the fact that of the names of 375 apprentices, only forty five can subsequently be traced as freemen, though this proportion may have been so miserably small because of the problems which the weaving industry was encountering in the fifteenth century; indeed eight of the apprentices who did take out the freedom did so as

49. Y.C.L., D 11.  
50. In a few cases the date is given in the heading of the section: Y.C.L., D 11 9 (1482), 9v (1483), 10 (1488).  
51. The gild was headed by a master, assisted by keepers whose names are also given occasionally.

linen weavers.<sup>52</sup>

Apart from these large numbers of unfree masters and servants, women workers were also frequently employed; the 1394-5 aulnage account lists about 460 names, 180 of whom were women. It must have been common practice to employ a woman as a partner when working a broadloom, and the importance of their labour elsewhere can be judged by a Bristol ordinance which criticizes 'diverse persons of weavers crafts of the seid towne of Bristowe puttyn, occupien and hiren ther wyfes, doughtours and maidens, some to weve in ther owne lombes and some to hire them to wirche with othour persone of the seid craft, by which many and divers of the Kynges liege people likkely men to do the Kyng servis in his warris and in the defence of this his lond and sufficiently lorned in the seid crafte gothe vagaraunt and unoccupied'.<sup>53</sup> Women were never forbidden to work in York but the problems entailed in employing them were recognised by an ordinance of 1400 that 'decetero nulla mulier cuiuscumque status seu condicionis fuerit, ammodo sit posita inter nos ad texandum, causa perjoracionis pannorum venalium et prejudicii artificii nostri ac deterioracionis firme regie predicte nisi fuerit bene erudita et sufficienter approbata ad operandum in artificio nostro predicto'.<sup>54</sup> Only one woman is recorded as actually taking out the freedom as a weaver.<sup>55</sup>

52. Freemen's Reg., pp. 198, 203, 214, 221, 223, 224, 239.

53. The Little Red Book of Bristol ed. F. Bickley 2 vols. (1900), ii, p. 127 (1461). A Bristol weavers' ordinance of 1419 was also concerned with the problem of casual workers, particularly Irish, taken on without indentures: Little Red Book ii, pp. 123-4.

54. Y.M.B. i, p. 243.

55. Isabella Nunhouse in 1441, Freemen's Reg., p. 158.

Rates of pay in the thirteenth century and in the early fourteenth century seem to have stood at about ½d. for an ell of broadcloth; inevitably they rose after the Black Death.<sup>56</sup> In 1363 two women of Pocklington appeared before the royal justices because 'ceperunt pro ulna obulum ubi solebant capere pro v ulnis ii d.'; it seems likely that wage levels in urban industry were similar or perhaps marginally higher.<sup>57</sup> Attempts to keep wages this low were, given the shortage of labour, probably hopeless. By 1506 wages in York ran in theory at about 1d. an ell; a regulation laid down in that year that 'the wever to have for his wewyng of every such cloth of xxv yards long and vii quarters and an half brod betwix the lists ii s. viii d. in redy money'.<sup>58</sup> This level of payment would appear to compare rather badly with Coventry where weavers were to have 5s. for weaving a cloth containing eighty-eight and ninety-six pounds of wool.<sup>59</sup>

The vast majority of weavers in the city were probably paid on a

56. Records of the Borough of Leicester, ed. M. Bateson 2 vols (1899-1901), i, p. 105 gives rates as ½d for an ell for most cloths, but ¾d for an ell of russet.
57. Yorkshire Sessions of the Peace 1361-4, ed. B.H. Putnam (Y.A.S.R.S. c., 1939), p. 53. Y.M.B. i, p. 244 records wages paid to York weavers' servants in 1400. Miss Sellers interprets these wages as applying to each ell of cloth woven, so that for a cloth of 8 ells a servant was to receive 14d. and for one of 9-10 ells 16d. etc. These rates are impossibly high, particularly as a servant could normally expect to get one third part as his payment for weaving a cloth; C.L.B. i, p. 94 (1424), Little Red Book ii, p. 59 (1389). The payments in the York Memorandum Book are more likely to refer to the weight of wool being woven, as is probably the case with the payments to the Coventry weavers in 1518; C.L.B. iii, p. 660.
58. Y.C.R. iii, p. 21.
59. C.L.B., p. 689 (1525). In some cases weavers were paid by the day; the Flemish weavers in London apparently combined in 1355 to refuse to work for less than 7d. a day: Cal. Plea and Mem. Roll, 1323-64, p. 248.



piece work or a wage basis and had few resources of their own and fewer prospects.<sup>60</sup> There appears to be no parallel in the fifteenth century to the tough local legislation of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries which specifically excluded the weavers from the cloth market;<sup>61</sup> it seems likely, given the manifest subordination of the majority of weavers in the later middle ages, that the reiteration of such legislation was unnecessary as the major profits from the cloth trade were almost entirely in mercantile hands. Nevertheless a small minority of weavers did become successful and prosperous men. Thomas Bracebrig, a man whose great wealth brought him to the mayoralty in 1424, was outstanding and probably unique amongst the York weavers in the later middle ages.<sup>62</sup> There were other less spectacularly successful weavers, who owned more than one loom and had good sized workshops; the wills of John Nonhouse (d. 1439) and James Kexby (d. 1446) for example both contain bequests of two broadlooms.<sup>63</sup> The weavers' apprentice book also provides evidence of masters controlling large workshops. Unfortunately the entries in the apprentice book only begin in about 1450, but it seems clear that until 1460 it was relatively common for a master to take on two apprentices together; of seventy-seven masters who took on

60. For the wealth of the weavers in comparison to other crafts see below table 10.3.

61. Carus-Wilson, 'English cloth industry', pp. 235-8.

62. Y.C.L., R.H. Skaife, Civil officials of York and parliamentary representatives 3 vols. mss; B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 487-490 (1437). Bracebrig was the only weaver who accounted for more than three cloths in the 1394-5 aulnage account where he accounted for 38: Early Yorkshire woollen trade, pp. 54, 69, 70, 71, 81, 90.

63. B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 596, 4 fo. 25lv.

apprentices, fifteen indentured for two together. Few masters at this stage were employing more than two apprentices at a time though there were three masters who employed three apprentices together, one who took on four at once, one who took on five, and in c. 1464, John Baron indentured six apprentices together.<sup>64</sup> For the whole period covered by the apprentices' register the names of 375 apprentices can be deciphered; of these, seventy-eight were taken on by ten masters. There were therefore, at least in the mid-fifteenth century, some weavers with considerable numbers of servants in their employ.

The power that the weavers' gild exercised over the practice of the craft no doubt depended on what the city council was prepared to delegate. The surviving fragment of the accounts shows the gild levying fines of up to 3s. 4d. for offences against the craft.<sup>65</sup> Undoubtedly however the city council kept its own watch on such an important industry and in 1506 secretly delivered yarn to workers in York and in the country to compare and to check standards.<sup>66</sup> The authority of the York weavers' gild must however have been consistently undermined by its very insecure financial position. When threatened, as they claimed, by rural competition the weavers requested and obtained a royal inquiry in 1399 into weaving in Yorkshire.<sup>67</sup> Following on from this inquiry the weavers' charter was confirmed but on terms that make it clear that the fee farm was not

64. Y.C.L., D 11 fo. 4. See table 2:1, p. 46.

65. Y.C.L., E 58A:3.

66. Y.C.R. iii, p. 18. In Coventry in 1518 two searchers were chosen by the mayor to go into any weavers or walkers' house to make a search: C.L.B. iii, p. 660.

67. Inq. Misc. 1392-99, pp. 242-9.

TABLE 2:1. NUMBER OF APPRENTICES INDENTURED BY YEAR FROM THE WEAVERS'  
APPRENTICESHIP BOOK<sup>1</sup>

fo. no.	date	no. of apprentices	no. of masters
1	c. 1450	27	24
2	c. 1455	11	11
	c. 1456	illegible	
	c. 1458	20	10
3	c. 1460	31	21
	c. 1460	29	11
4	c. 1464	12	4
	c. 1465	12	11
	c. 1466	1	1
5	c. 1468	13	13
6	c. 1469	23	21
	c. 1470	22	21
7	1471	14	14
8	1473	11	11
	1474	12	?10
	1478	4	3
13	c. 1480	11	11
	c. 1480	10	10
16	1481	10	10
9	1482	16	14
	1483	5	5
	1483	no entries	
	1484	3	3
12	1485	5	?5
	1486	19	?18
10	1487	3	3
	c. 1488	11	11
	c. 1488	9	9
14	1493	17	17
	1494	14	14
	1495	8	7
11	1496	17	17
	1497	6	6
	c. 1498	10	10
15	1499	9	9
	1500	8	8
	1503	?12	?12
	1504	4	?4
	c. 1506	illegible	
	c. 1507	4	4

1. Y.C.L., D 11.

being paid and that the weavers' gild was in a state of considerable disarray: for example, new regulations were made to ensure that elections of officials were properly conducted and fees collected; the goods of anyone not making his contribution to the King's farm were to be promptly distrained.<sup>68</sup> Nor is this the only evidence of the weavers' financial difficulties; in 1442 the £10 farm 'and the arrears thereof' were granted to Humphrey of Gloucester. It seems probable that the gild was in fact in debt for much of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries and not merely in the years preceding the waiver of £5 of the farm in 1478 and its abolition in 1486.<sup>69</sup> Whatever the precise meaning of the £4 paid towards the King's farm by Edward Garnter and John Skipwith in 1456-7, whether it was for looms or for other unspecified rights claimed by litsters and mercers in the gild, it would imply that the only way the weavers could hope to meet their financial obligations was through assistance from the entrepreneurs.

Rural industry was always a potential and at times a very real threat to the urban cloth industry. This threat, which had been the cause of inquiry in 1304, was far from being eliminated by the revival of urban industry in the second half of the fourteenth century. The lay poll tax returns for the West Riding in 1379 show how widely cloth making was dispersed and the growing importance of weaving in the economy of the area can be best appreciated by entries such as those found for Burton Leonard and Kirk Deighton which give assessments for

68. Y.M.B. i, pp. 238-44.

69. C.C.R. 1441-47, p. 86; V.C.H. City of York, p. 89.

'Willelmus Palfreyman iiii d. Johanna uxor eius Textrix vi d.', Ricardus Broune ex uxor eius iiii d. Isolda filia eius Textrix vi d.'<sup>70</sup> The inquiry of 1399 revealed the existance of large numbers of part time weavers throughout the county, from Whitby to Wakefield, who wove cloth 'of divers men of the country'; most of these were agricultural workers who did their weaving in November, December, March, April and May and who had been doing so for up to twenty years.<sup>71</sup>

It would appear that the expansion of the cloth industry in York in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries was matched to some extent by a less well documented growth in commercial manufacturing in rural Yorkshire, though as yet the Yorkshire industry was on a very small scale compared to that found further south.<sup>72</sup> By the mid-fifteenth century the balance of advantage had turned in favour of the rural industry and particularly that of the West Riding centred on Halifax,

70. Heaton, Yorkshire woollen and worsted industries, p. 21; West Riding poll tax, 1379, Y.A.J. vi, p. 331, vii, p. 12.
71. Inq. Misc. 1392-99, pp. 242-9; sometimes a comparison can be made between the 1379 poll tax and the 1399 survey e.g. in 1379 John Godlay of Wakefield, no occupation given, paid 4d. tax, in 1399 he was described as having made 4 cloths a year for 20 years; in Ripon John Hungate weaver paid 6d. in 1379 and in 1399 John Hungate the elder was also listed as having made cloth for 20 years; West Riding poll tax, 1379, Y.A.J. vi, p. 152, vii, p. 21; Inq. Misc. 1392-99, p. 245.
72. E.M. Carus-Wilson, 'Evidence of industrial growth on some fifteenth century manors' in Essays in economic history ii (1962), pp. 151-167; Heaton, Yorkshire woollen and worsted industries, pp. 89-99. The growth of rural industry in the West Riding was not without its setbacks; Leeds, which had one fulling mill by the 1320's had acquired another by the 1350's, but by the 1390's, the farmers of this latter, one of them from Wakefield and the other from Scholes, had fallen into great financial difficulties: Documents relating to the manor and borough of Leeds 1066-1400, ed. J. le Patourel (Thoresby Society xiv, 1956), pp. 13, 47, 59, 74.

Wakefield and Leeds, for during the late fifteenth century York's broadcloth manufacture declined very rapidly. An ordinance passed in 1484, attempting to check this decline reveals that it was exacerbated by the action of York *drapers*: 'noon inhabitaunt, citizen, within the said Citie or liberties of the same shall make or cause to be made any wollen cloth to be weved or walked in eny othere place or places without this Citie and libertiez of the same undre the peyn of forfatur of the same cloth or clothez so wrought'.<sup>73</sup> Other clauses suggest that the mercantile capital which had been so important for the textile industry was no longer being invested in the city: 'every merchaunte or othere man being fre man of this Cite that bies eny lede shall mak for every ii fodre of lede by hym or thaim to be solde oon hold cloth of whit or other colour or colours upon his or thair awne propre costs within the said Citie and fraunchiez of the same'.<sup>74</sup> Such measures were unsuccessful so that by 1520 the city council declared that 'clothe mak yng in manner is laid aparte, whereby our said City was mayntened in tyme past'.<sup>75</sup> The extent to which York cloth had been overtaken by that manufactured either in the West Riding or further south can be best appreciated in the inventory of John Carter a tailor who died in 1485 with a shop full of southern and western cloth, much of this latter from

73. Y.C.R. i, p. 95; it seems likely that the crisis split the council into two factions, one attempting to protect the urban industry and the other concerned to exploit what rural weaving there was round York. For the dissension in the late fifteenth century council see V.C.H., City of York, pp. 82-3.

74. Y.C.R. i, p. 94. This ordinance was reiterated in 1505: Y.C.L., House Book ix fo. 33. For the importance of the lead trade in the fifteenth century see below pp. 365-6.

75. Y.C.R. iii, p. 72.

Halifax.<sup>76</sup>

The effect of this contraction on the weavers' craft was devastating. In 1478 the farm of the weavers' gild was reduced to £5 and in 1486 was waived altogether; such steps must have been taken as a result of years of accumulated debt, which it was finally accepted would never be paid.<sup>77</sup> Decadal totals for weavers taking out the freedom had averaged forty-one between 1404-50; between 1451-1500 this fell to twenty-six and after 1500 to under ten. Despite the uncertainty of the evidence from the freemen's Register, a reduction of these proportions reflected a very genuine crisis. The turning point for the York woollen industry would appear to have come in the 1460's, years that saw decline in all sections of the city's economy.<sup>78</sup> Within the weavers' craft the apprentices' register shows that after 1460 very few masters took on more than one apprentice at a time and the last example of one master indenturing a large number of boys was in c. 1464.<sup>79</sup>

The decay of York's cloth industry was paralleled elsewhere; in Coventry for example between 1450 and 1522-3 the number of master weavers had fallen by about a third and likewise textile manufacture in Bristol was undercut by rural competition.<sup>80</sup> As yet there is no entirely

76. Test. Ebor. iii, p. 301-3.

77. V.C.H., City of York, p. 89.

78. R.B. Dobson, 'Urban decline in late medieval England' Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 5th ser. xxvii (1977), p. 20.

79. See table 2:1.

80. Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a city, pp. 48-9; Phythian-Adams, 'Urban decay', pp. 168-9. The weaving industry of Salisbury by contrast remained profitable throughout the fifteenth century: V.C.H., Wiltshire iv, p. 128.

satisfactory explanation for this failure although a number of important factors have been distinguished. The city council of York themselves by 1561 had concluded that the advantages of the West Riding were 'the commodite of the water mylnes is there nigh hand, but also the poore folk as spynners, carders and other necessary work folks for the sayd webbyng, may there besyds their hand labour have kyen, fyre and other releif good and cheap, whiche is in this Citie very deare and wantyng'.<sup>81</sup> The fact that many rural weavers combined this occupation with farming may well have contributed to keeping the cost of production down but the argument that conversely the guilds by maintaining high wage rates and restrictive practices forced industry out of the towns cannot be substantiated, for the weavers of York could not exercise this degree of control over their craft in the face of the interests of the merchants and litsters who supplied the bulk of their raw materials.<sup>82</sup> The introduction of the rural fulling mills gave a significant cost advantage by the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century, a time of labour shortage when, simultaneously, the production of heavily fullled broadcloths was expanding.<sup>83</sup> There remains however the problem of why, having competed successfully against these advantages until the 1460's,

81. Y.C.R. vi, p. 17.

82. Heaton, Yorkshire woollen and worsted industries, p. 93; Carus-Wilson, 'Woollen industry', p. 412, both blame high wage rates; the few records of piece work rates to York weavers and walkers however show them to have been paid at a pretty economical level, see above p. 43 and below p. 57.

83. E.M. Carus-Wilson, 'An industrial revolution of the thirteenth century' in Medieval Merchant Venturers, pp. 183-209; Miller, 'English textile industry in the thirteenth century', p. 82. Bolton, English medieval economy, pp. 157-8 is inclined to minimize the effect of the fulling mill.



the York industry should have succumbed to their competition. It would seem that other factors must have been involved, but a consideration of these, which turn largely on the supply of raw materials to the urban industry and the involvement of the York mercers in the wool and cloth markets, is best included in a wider discussion of York's role in a regional and overseas market.<sup>84</sup>

The linen weavers were a fairly elusive group of craftsmen until the late fifteenth century, by which date their fortunes had become closely intertwined with those of the weavers. It was probably the crisis in the woollen industry which brought to the fore what had hitherto been an insignificant branch of the cloth industry. Linen cloth was undoubtedly being woven in quantity in York in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries and on a sufficient scale for there to be a body of linen weavers who on occasion produced their own pageant for the Corpus Christi play. The linen weavers appear in the list of pageants for 1415 as responsible for the play of Fergus, though they had lost it to the masons by 1423; in 1476 they were once again assigned Fergus, only to abandon it by 1485.<sup>85</sup> However the linen weavers did not constitute a separate mystery until the early 16th century. Regulations in 1471 imply that the tapiters had customarily had control over the linenweavers: 'it was used within the cite of York and suburbez of the same of auncien tyme that ech lynnenever, holding and occuppying lynnene

84. See below p. 384ff.

85. Toulmin-Smith, York plays, p. xxvii.

loymes or lynnyn loyme, payyed yerely into the craft and occupacion of tapiters, within the saide cite for everiche lynnyn loyme that he helde and occupyed ... iid. to the sustentacion of the charges of the saide crafte of tapiters ... and also that all thoo of the same crafte of lynnynwevers within the saide cite and surburbez of the same, were used at all dayes and tymes to be serched by the serchiours of the said craft of tapiters'.<sup>86</sup> Henceforth however the position was to be reversed; searchers were appointed among the linenweavers with the right to search all linen looms whoever owned them and the tapiters discharged of such search, and though the linenweavers were still to contribute to the tapiters' pageant, henceforth all tapiters were to pay 2d. to the linenweavers for each of their looms.<sup>87</sup> However these regulations do not mark, as they at first sight appear to, the creation of a new linen weavers' mystery from among the tapiters, for of the twenty-four linen weavers whose names were appended to the regulations, the seventeen who can be traced in the freemen's register were all made free as weavers. Moreover eleven of these appear as masters in the weavers' apprentice book and were men of considerable standing including John Thweng, Nicholas Friston and Thomas Geffray all of whom held office in the weavers' gild.<sup>88</sup>

What seems to have happened was that the weavers, unable to find

86. Y.M.B. ii, p. 243.

87. There were three tapiters who were allowed to retain their existing looms free.

88. The will of Thomas Geffray survives, dating from 1502: B.I., Prob. Reg. 6 fo. 58. Thweng was master of the weavers' gild in 1473, Friston a keeper in 1471 and Geffray master in c. 1488: Y.C.L., D 11 fos 9v, 7v, 10.

enough work in making woollen cloth had attempted to diversify. Presumably the tapiters had, by long custom, effectively barred them from the manufacture of worsted cloth, but the weavers were able to detach the manufacture of linen cloth from the tapiters, apparently with the approval and assistance of the council. Evidence from wills suggests that weavers had been working in linen for some time previously. The will of Henry Brown, a weaver who died in 1448, contains the bequest of one woollen loom and no less than three linen looms.<sup>89</sup> Many of the apprentices taken on in the 1450's and 1460's by weavers may well have been employed therefore to work linen instead of woollen looms.

In 1476 further regulations for the linenweavers were drawn up to consolidate their position, but apparently they did not yet constitute a separate gild.<sup>90</sup> As already noticed Thomas Geffray, linenweaver, was master of the weavers' gild in 1488; there is also an order of 1493 which required that fines levied by the linenweavers' searchers be paid to 'the commonaltie of this citie and the craftez of lyn and wulne wever evenly to be devyded'.<sup>91</sup> Only gradually did the personnel of the two crafts become distinct, but by 1515 it had become clear enough a distinction for 'diverse variaunces controversiez and debats ... betwixt the wollen wevers and the lyn wevers of the Citie of York for payng of certayne dutiez which the said wollen wevers claimeth upon them'.<sup>92</sup>

89. B.I. Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 189; similar bequests were made by John Kendale and William Holme; B.I., Prob. Reg. 5 fo. 424 (1492), 4 fo. 256 (1475).

90. Y.C.R. i, pp. 6-7.

91. Y.C.L., House Book vii fo. 107.

92. Y.C.R. iii, p. 47.

Finally in 1518 the linenweavers were made 'hensforth a craft distinct by ther self severed from the wollen wevers'.<sup>93</sup>

The freemen's register shows that admissions of men described as linenweavers were very sporadic.

TABLE 2:2. FIVE YEAR TOTALS OF ADMISSION TO THE FREEDOM AS LINENWEAVERS

1476-80	3	1501-5	1
1481-85	1	1506-10	0
1486-90	1	1511-15	2
1491-95	5	1516-20	6
1496-1500	3		

The total number of linenweavers recorded bears an unknown relationship to the amount of linenweaving done in the city, but what these figures do show is that at two periods when there was an official definition made of the craft of linen weaving, in 1493 and 1515-18 more people chose to describe themselves as linen weavers than by the general term weaver. The same must have been true of other crafts, so that the figures in the register are sometimes more a response to the promulgation of defining ordinances than an accurate reflection of the intake of men into a particular craft.

Woollen cloth, when it came off the loom was passed to the walkers for fulling and to shermen for finishing.<sup>94</sup> The walkers, like the

93. Y.C.R. iii, p. 65; they were reunited with the weavers in 1549; Y.C.R. v, p. 9.

94. Carus-Wilson, 'Woollen industry', pp. 380-1, for a description of the techniques.

weavers, were discriminated against in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries and similarly formed guilds in an attempt to defend their interests.<sup>95</sup> As there is no record of a distinct body of walkers in York before the fourteenth century, they may have united with the weavers at this early stage. During the later middle ages, walkers and shermen formed two separate crafts in York, but this was not always the case in textile towns. In Norwich the weavers and walkers united in 1421; in Coventry the cloth finishers were initially associated with tailors and only in 1448 did the walkers split off to form a guild of their own whilst the shermen maintained their connexion with the tailors.<sup>96</sup>

Although the walkers and shermen registered their ordinances independently in the 1390's and in 1405 respectively, the work of the two crafts constantly overlapped.<sup>97</sup> Walkers were allowed to shear the cloth that they had fulled themselves and they were also permitted to shear the cloth fulled by others, though they were obliged if they did so to contribute to the shermen's pageant.<sup>98</sup> The will of Robert Symson a walker who died in 1505, shows that he fulled, sheared and pressed cloth for he left one pair of shears and eight newly made tenter bars to his servant, a pair of tenters and a walker's press to his son and a pair of tenters with all other instruments of his craft to his son-in-law.<sup>99</sup>

95. Carus-Wilson, 'English cloth industry', pp. 223-8.

96. Records of Norwich ii, p. lxvii; Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a city, pp. 100-1.

97. Y.M.B. i, pp. 70-2, 106-8.

98. Y.M.B. ii, pp. 159-60 (1425).

99. B.I., Prob. Reg. 6 fos. 186-186v.

The same situation prevailed in Beverley where in 1503-4 it was ordered that every sherman who worked as a walker was to contribute 6s. 8d. to that craft and vice versa; earlier, in 1445, a walker who took out the freedom of the city pledged against payment of his fee a pair of sherman shears.<sup>100</sup> It would seem a reasonable assumption that in York the walkers sheared much of the mediocre cloth, the expertise of the shermen only being required to finish those of higher quality.

Many walkers worked almost wholly on commission. Rates of pay were set out in the ordinances of the 1390's at 1d. an ell for fulling and 2d. for fulling and burelling, a rate equivalent to that of 1506; when payment of 2s. 4d. a cloth was specified.<sup>101</sup> In Coventry similar payments were made to walkers according to a rule of 1518; 40d. for a 'lo price cloth', 4s. for a middle price and 5s. for a fine cloth, payments which were to include fulling and burelling.<sup>102</sup> Because work was on a piece rate basis there would seem to have been no pressing need for a walker to take out the freedom. Walkers were in fact forbidden to be freemen unless they owned 'de ses biens propres iiii marcz au meyns, a celle entent que si cas aveigne qil perde une drap en sa overaigne qil soit sufficient pur faire amendes pur ycelle'.<sup>103</sup> The fact that the walkers were doing shermen's work is another reason for treating the figures for the two crafts given in the freemen's

100. Hist MSS. Comm., Report on the MSS of the Corporation of Beverley (1900), pp. 128, 162.

101. Y.M.B. i, p. 71; Y.C.R. iii, p. 21.

102. C.L.B. iii, p. 659.

103. Y.M.B. i, pp. 71-2.

Register with considerable caution. There can therefore be no certainty about the numbers of walkers employed in late medieval York. The lay poll tax returns of 1381 are very misleading for they list only ten walkers, whereas the names of thirty masters were given in the walkers' ordinances of the 1390's.<sup>104</sup> The discrepancy probably reflects the low incomes of the craftsmen, for the surviving wills of walkers come from the Walmgate parishes or Bishophill, both areas that were under-represented in the poll tax because of their poverty. In contrast it seems probable that those cloth finishers who could afford to distinguish themselves as shermen, concentrating on high quality cloths, were more likely to have taken out the freedom. This supposition is strengthened by the fact that before 1350 shermen taking out the freedom outnumber the walkers by fifteen to six, a ratio which cannot represent the reality of cloth making. The figures for shermen taking out the freedom remained steady until 1500; the abrupt reduction in numbers after that date implies that the market for their services had failed and henceforth either walkers or tailors took on the available work.

York walkers, like the weavers, faced competition from rural

104. 'Lay poll tax York, 1381', p. 13; Y.M.B. 1, pp. 70-1. In comparison Salisbury in 1421 had 70 master walkers with 30 servants; the walkers in this case being responsible for all the finishing processes; V.C.H., Wiltshire iv, pp. 126-7. In 1346 87 fullers witnessed new ordinances for the Bristol finishing industry; Little Red Book ii, pp. 10-12; in view of their subsequent difficulties with the rural walkers this may have been the high point of the finishing industry in the city, see below p. 60.

manufacture. The former had the right to search the work of foreigners brought for sale in the city recognised in 1425, 'ita quod non ostendant eis odium nec maliciam in scrutando'.<sup>105</sup> The urban fulling industry was also seriously undermined in the growing practice of carrying town woven cloth into the country for finishing; by 1460 the craft claimed that whereas they 'wer wont to full and wirke all manere of clothe made within this citee, and also grete parte of clothe made in the contree aboute the saide citee, at whiche tyme were many honest and thrifty men of the said craft inhabitaunt in the same citee, and nowe thay be fewer and porer for lak of wark, that goethe at thies dayes into the contree'.<sup>106</sup>

It seems probable that the availability of fulling mills was an asset for the rural finishing industry; the effectiveness of the rural mills in fact gave rise to complaints from the urban finishing industry from the moment of their introduction.<sup>107</sup> Fulling mills were established in a number of places in the North and West Ridings by the mid-fourteenth century, mostly in the Dales and the upland villages around Bradford and

105. Y.M.B. ii, p. 159.

106. Y.M.B. ii, p. 207; Y.C.L., House Book i fo. 25v (1476) has an agreement between the searchers of the craft of walkers with Thomas Alman walker of Stamford Bridge that this latter was to pay 2s. a year as long as he conducted a carrying trade in cloth within the city of York.

107. Carus-Wilson, 'Woollen industry', pp. 410-11. Objections to the fulling mill were liable to alter once the urban walkers had become adapted to its use; in 1298 Londoners claimed that cloth was sent to the mills at Stratford 'to the grave damage of those to whom the cloth belonged and also the men using this office in the city'; by 1376 the complaint of the city walkers was that the cappers were fulling caps in the mills of 'Wandlesworth, Old Ford and Stratford and Enefeld' where walkers fullled their cloth, an evil practice as the caps crushed and tore the cloth: Riley, Memorials, pp. 400-1.



Halifax, but also in the vale of York as for example at Thorpe Arch.<sup>108</sup> York is sited in a broad flat plain at some remove from the uplands where the fast streams, suitable sites for mills, abound. This distance probably protected the York walkers to some extent from mechanical competition, whereas the Bristol walkers faced a constant threat from mills in the nearby hills. As early as 1346 the Bristol walkers tried to prevent anyone from taking 'hors de ceste ville nule manere drap a foler qe home appele rauclothe' and that 'nul folour de la diste ville ne receive drap qest fulee sur oppelonde pur rekker, ploter, namender,' and it is clear that in Bristol the interests of the fullers were at odds with those of the entrepreneurs, certain of whom 'have been accustomed to have cloth fullled in the country'.<sup>109</sup> A unanimous front by mercers and walkers against rural fulling mills is therefore likely to imply that the entrepreneurs within the town could not take advantage of country mills but were losing out to rural clothiers.<sup>110</sup>

The craft of the York litsters presents a considerable contrast to the depressed state in which most textile workers operated. However it

108. Carus-Wilson, 'An industrial revolution', p. 195.

109. The reiteration of these ordinances in 1381 and 1406 implies that they were not successfully enforced: Little Red Book ii, pp. 7, 14, 15-16, 78-9. Bolton, Medieval English economy, pp. 157-8 emphasises that East Anglia is entirely without fast upland streams and yet had a flourishing cloth industry; nevertheless contemporary opinion on the efficacy of mills should perhaps not be totally disregarded.

110. This may have been the case in Coventry in the sixteenth century: C.L.B. iii, pp. 704-5, 707, 723, 724.

is also true that the litsters comprised, perhaps to a greater degree than any other craft, two distinct elements, the mercantile on the one hand and on the other those who were jobbing craftsmen. This distinction seems always to have existed and turned on the supply of dyes, so that from the twelfth century onwards the industry was dominated by litsters who were 'merchants and entrepreneurs rather than artisans'.<sup>111</sup>

Evidence of the very considerable wealth of many litsters comes from their wills, while their trading activities are well documented in the customs accounts.<sup>112</sup> Evidence for their involvement in the manufacture of cloth is less forthcoming. Nine litsters or their wives appear in the aulnage account of 1394-5 but only two accounted for more than two and a half cloths; it may be that litsters were accidentally under represented in this account.<sup>113</sup> William Crosby bequeathed a sum of money to the women who combed wool for him and there is also the mysterious payment, already mentioned, made by a litster to the weavers' gild, which implies some involvement in the industry.<sup>114</sup> The 1386 ordinances imply however that much of the dyeing in the city was done as piece work and specific provision was made for prompt payment: 'que tost quant lour overaigne soit failt, en qiconqez colour soit il, en drap ou en layne ou en file, tantost sur la liverree du dit overaigne paiement soit fait pleinement saunz ascun aprest fair celle partie outre la somme

111. Carus-Wilson, English cloth industry, p. 222. In Coventry the leading litsters attempted to use this power to sustain artificially high prices in the mid fifteenth century: C.L.B. ii, pp. 418-9.

112. See below pp. 359-360.

113. Richard Howe and Richard Taunton's wife: Early Yorkshire woollen trade, pp. 55, 65, 89.

114. See above, pp. 39.

de iiii d. sur payne de xx s. apaiers'.<sup>115</sup> In the circumstances what differentiated the richer from the poorer litsters was the control they had over the supply of dyes.

Wool or cloth could be dyed at every stage of production: Laurence Litster in the 1390's was employed by Katherine wife of Sir John Ward, knight, to dye a quantity of raw wool; in 1449 John Bese, litster, was paid 2s. 1d. 'pro tinctura v ulnarum panni viridis pro le countour camere inferioris'.<sup>116</sup> Dyeing was a skilled process, whose complexity is perhaps best reflected in the long series of ordinances in the Bristol records covering the preparation of woad, specifications for the type of alum to be used as a mordant and the practice of the craft.<sup>117</sup> Nevertheless it is apparent that many craftsmen, not themselves litsters, were employed in dyeing; the fact that dyeing could be done at almost any stage in the production of cloth probably made this inevitable. A complaint registered in Bristol in 1407 claimed that 'certeyns persones de la dite ville de diversez artz nient sachautz en larte de Tincturie sur eux prenent diverses charges et bargaynes de tyncturer draps et leyens dez plusours gentz de mesme la ville et del pays envyron'.<sup>118</sup>

It is doubtful whether the York litsters in the later middle ages

115. Y.M.B. i, p. 115.

116. B.I., Cause Papers E 180; Chamberlains Rolls, p. 67. In 1346 the Bristol council decided that cloth of perse must always be dyed in the wool: Little Red Book, ii, p. 6.

117. Carus-Wilson, 'Woollen industry', p. 379; Little Red Book, ii, pp. 6-7, 16-22, 38-40, 81-9, 170-4 (1346, 1351, 1407, 1413, 1425). For a description of the preparation of woad see Singer, History of technology iii, p. 349, 365.

118. Little Red Book ii, p. 82.

had a monopoly of the actual process of dyeing. Towards the end of the fifteenth century they were involved in a long battle with the tapiters, for this latter craft claimed and had confirmed in 1468 the right 'to colour and litt thare awne garnez withoute lettyng or interupcion of eny dyer of this said cite, and also withoute payment of eny dewtie to the said dyers as have ben hertofore'.<sup>119</sup> More telling is an ordinance of 1472 which asserts the rights of the searchers of the litsters to search the cloth of 'all maner of men and women, within this liberte littyng any maner of colours as grene, rede, dorrey, yalowe or any othir colour in woll, clothe or yarne'.<sup>120</sup> The impression given in the York litsters' ordinances however is that the craft was not concerned so much with a monopoly of dyeing as with retaining control over the supply of dyes. The first surviving regulations, dating from 1386, contain the clause 'nul mestre du dit arte face partirer ou autre bargaigne pur les colours de son arte faire, pur layns, vynes, chivalx ou autres choses; mes soulement pur wadd, mader, alom ou cendres', presumably in order to prevent the indiscriminate distribution of the valuable commodities.<sup>121</sup>

During the course of the late fifteenth century the gild of litsters was thrown into considerable disarray. The tapiters in 1472 and 1478 successfully asserted their right to dye their own yarn without payment to the litsters. Furthermore in 1476 the tapiters actually won the right

119. Y.M.B. ii, p. 198, repeated Y.C.R. i, p. 27 (1478).

120. Y.M.B. ii, p. 212. The dyeing of cloth was thrown upon to all craftsmen in Coventry in 1528, though the real reasons for this action are obscure: Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a City, p. 213.

121. Y.M.B. i, p. 114.

to 'have and yerely perceyve of the litsters by the handes of the pageaunt maisters of the saide lytsters, in the feste of Corpus Christi, to the supportacion and sustentacion of the pageaunt of the tapiters iii s. iiii d.'<sup>122</sup> The litsters' ordinances were re-enacted in their entirety in 1472, a step only taken if a craft was undergoing considerable upheaval. The clauses of these ordinances have a very different emphasis from those of 1386: those of 1386 were almost entirely concerned with the provision and quality of dyes; in 1472 they were directed at the regulation of the labour force, and they imply that the control of dyeing had slipped from the hands of the gild.<sup>123</sup> Still more regulations were necessary in 1477.<sup>124</sup>

It would appear from the various ordinances of the 1470's that the increasing difficulties within the cloth industry had brought internal tension to the litsters' craft and that other crafts had taken advantage of their weakness; it is worth noting that in the 1470's the Coventry dyers were also under pressure, although in this case it was the drapers who were taking their work.<sup>125</sup> In York the successful stand of the tapiters was of great importance, for with the decline of the woollen cloth industry increasing emphasis was being laid on the manufacture of beds, coverlets and other worsted ware. The litsters had therefore lost one market without establishing another and this is reflected in

122. Y.M.B. ii, p. 197; there were further rulings on the subject in 1490 and 1492. Y.M.B. ii, p. 197; Y.C.L., House Book vii fos. 74v-75v.

123. Y.M.B. ii, pp. 210-2.

124. Y.C.R. i, pp. 20-1.

125. Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a city, p. 42.

the sharp decrease in the number of litsters becoming free after 1500.

The work of the tapiters differed considerably from that of the broadcloth weavers. Unlike the broadcloth industry, there was no staple product made of worsted; the different specifications laid down for tapiter ware by various towns are evidence of the variety of goods made to meet a wide range of needs.<sup>126</sup> Tapiters did their own dyeing and their products did not need the lengthy fulling and finishing of broadcloth. Finally they were apparently manufacturing for a home rather than an export market, for although beds and coverlets appear in the Hull customs particulars they amount to a very small proportion of the total value of cloth exports.<sup>127</sup> All these factors made the worsted industry in York less susceptible to organization by mercantile entrepreneurs; the tapiters were probably far more masters of their own enterprises in the fifteenth century than were the weavers.

The ordinances of the tapiters drawn up in c. 1380 were witnessed by thirty-three masters; added to this ordinance are the names of twenty-four more masters who joined the gild before 1391.<sup>128</sup> However of these

126. See above p. 33-4.

127. Bartlett, 'Some aspects of the economy of York', p. 75, suggested the annual value of exports of worsteds in the late fourteenth century was £60 compared to £4,000 for broadcloths; by the early sixteenth century some 20 dozens of worsted were exported each year, compared to about 1,100 broadcloths.

128. Y.M.B. i, p. 84. 17 tapiters were made free between 1381-90; of the names added to the 1380 ordinances, 11 were made free 1381-90, another 3 in 1380 and 3 in 1391. The number of servants that these masters had is unknown but because most of the looms used were double it is likely that servants equalled the masters in numbers. There is some evidence of a labour shortage in the late fifteenth century for any stranger coming to the town was to work with 'le dit mestre qe primerent a luy enparla luy eit pur salarie competent devaunt touz autres de mesme lartifice', Y.M.B. i, p. 86.

thirty-three masters only ten appear in the lay poll tax of 1381, three of them being disguised as weavers. The poll tax returns only give the names of fifteen tapiters in all, so it was clearly misrepresenting the size of the craft presumably because, as was the case with the walkers, tapiters tended to live in the poorer parishes.<sup>129</sup>

Although the tapiters of the late fourteenth century were, on the whole, fairly poor, it seems that during the course of the fifteenth century their prospects improved considerably. Surviving wills from the fifteenth century include a number of tapiters who were reasonably affluent and they had emerged as one of the most prosperous groups of craftsmen by the time of the 1524 lay subsidy.<sup>130</sup> Likewise the number of tapiters who took out the freedom showed a marked increase in the early sixteenth century, which is the more impressive when set against the decline in the broadcloth industry.

TABLE 2:3. FIFTY YEAR TOTAL OF TAPITERS ADMITTED TO THE FREEDOM, 1351-1534

	Total	Decadal average
1351-1400	95	19
1401-50	61	12
1451-1500	56	11
1501-34	59	17

The changing status of the tapiters resulted in a flurry of

129. Lay poll tax York, 1381', p. 13.

130. See below table 10:4.

legislation regulating the tapiters themselves and their relations with the litsters and the linen weavers. Craft ordinances tended to be revised only in times of upheaval and the fact that those concerning the tapiters were so revised on eight occasions between 1468 and 1492 implies that conditions in the industry had changed very considerably.<sup>131</sup> A large number of these regulations concerned the relationship between the tapiters and the litsters, but they also involved a restatement of the dimensions of worsted cloths and a tightening up of the tapiters' control of the upholders who were dealers in soft furnishings. In 1473 each master was permitted henceforth to have two apprentices, recognition of a situation which had probably existed for some time.<sup>132</sup> Regulation of the tapiters continued into the sixteenth century with the granting of permission to work motley in 1517 and culminating in a whole series of ordinances in the 1540's when an attempt was made to create a monopoly for the York industry by act of parliament.<sup>133</sup>

It is apparent from the act of 1543 that the tapiters faced, as the weavers had done, the problem of rural competition. Whereas the York tapiters attempted to create a monopoly against the country industry, Norwich, long established as a centre for the manufacture of worsted cloth, seems to have profited from a more integrated relationship with its hinterland. The city of Norwich did not ban the making of cloth in

131. Y.M.B. ii, pp. 195-9, 213-4, 242-5; Y.C.R. i, p. 27; Y.C.L., House Book vii, fos. 74v-75v.

132. Y.M.B. ii, p. 196.

133. Y.C.R. iii, p. 62, iv, pp. 55, 75, 92-3, 117-8, 122, 138, v, pp. 64-5; 34-35 Henry VIII c.10, Statutes of the Realm iii, pp. 908-9. Heaton, Yorkshire woollen and worsted industries, pp. 55-7.



the country but endeavoured to control it, an attempt which was feasible whilst Norwich still acted as a major market centre for the industry.<sup>134</sup> Such regulation took into account the rhythm of agricultural life and an order of 1511 required that 'the said craftymen shall yerely leve wewyng of worstedes, stamenys and sayes by the space of a hole moneth that is to say from the feste of the Assumption of Our Lady by the space of a moneth next after that be fully ended for the releffe and helpe of husbandry in the tyme of harvest'.<sup>135</sup>

The tapiters of York though resentful of rural competition, were however not unduly hampered by it in the early sixteenth century; demand for their products was increasing and surviving inventories show the houses of men of moderate means to have been well supplied with soft furnishings.<sup>136</sup> The tapiters' prosperity emphasises the fact that York continued to be in some respects an important centre of supply after its significance as a manufacturer of broadcloth had declined.

While English broadcloth was gaining a reputation for fine quality throughout Europe, the cloth on the backs of most Englishmen was cheaper stuff. The stock of John Carter, the tailor who died in 1485, consisted of West Riding cloth almost all of which was valued at under 1s. an ell, and 'Southeron cloth', mostly costing between 1s- 1s. 6d. an ell; his most expensive cloth was 'unum pece vocatum musterdwyrels cont. ix uln.

134. Records of Norwich ii, pp. lxi-lxx.

135. Records of Norwich ii, p. 377.

136. See below p. 440.

et quart, xxii s.'<sup>137</sup> Likewise although fashionable garments were, from the fourteenth century onwards, becoming increasingly tailored and fitted, for most people clothes remained relatively simple and comparatively shapeless.<sup>138</sup> The skill required by the provincial tailor depended to the extent to which fashionable clothes were demanded by local customers and while most medieval tailoring is likely to have been fairly unexacting, there is plenty of evidence that more distinguished garments, requiring skillful cutting were becoming increasingly popular in urban society in the later middle ages. The claim made in the mid fifteenth century that 'it is now harde to discerne and know a tapester, a Cokesse or an hostellers wyffe ffro a gentilwoman if they stonde in a rowe', probably applied more to London than a provincial town, but the sumptuary laws which, first appearing in the late fourteenth century, were constantly reiterated during the course of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, are ample evidence of the widespread adoption of

137. Musterdevils was a particoloured worsted interwoven to resemble veins of marble. Test. Ebor. iii, p. 301. The inventory of Thomas Lytster, hosier, has much the same kind of material; B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1528). The problem with calculating the value of cloth is that the widths are not given; wealthy mercers and drapers must have carried more expensive cloth and a good impression of the range of cloth available in a top draper's shop can be obtained from the inventories in the London Cal. Plea and Mem. Rolls 1413-37, pp. 2-3, 1437-57, p. 141 which include kerseys at 6d. a yard, broadcloth of 30-40s. a cloth and the finest woollens at anything from £5-£18 a cloth.
138. P. Cunningham and C. Lucas, Occupational costume in England, pp. 17, 21; C.W. Cunningham and P. Cunningham, Handbook of English medieval costume, (1973), p. 55; J. Evans, Dress in medieval France (Oxford, 1952) concentrates on the vastly opulent clothes of the French court but has some information on the clothes of the bourgeoisie.

fine clothes of fashionable cut amongst the wealthier sections of urban society and among the gentry.<sup>139</sup> Large towns provided craftsmanship in the making of clothes that was not generally available and consequently attracted work from a wide area. The Northampton tailors benefitted from the fact that during the fifteenth century 'full many gentilmen and other people of oure lorde the Kynge for the shapyng of their clothyng and of their servautes and of their lyvereyes' were daily attracted to the town.<sup>140</sup> In 1406 the Southampton tailors, seeking to limit alien competition, claimed that the 'greatest commodities and profit wherewith they maintain and sustain their poor estate ... were wont to arise from the alien folk coming into the port of the said town in carracks, galleys, ships of Spain, Portugal, Germany, Flanders, Zealand, Prussia and others who at their arrival there were wont for their use to have their cloths cut out by the tailors of the same town'.<sup>141</sup>

Within the city of York itself demand for fine clothing had by the fifteenth century extended beyond the urban élite and had become apparent amongst the most prosperous craftsmen, for fine garments containing yards of material were desirable as a manifestation of wealth. Amongst lesser men, one or two gowns of good cloth represented a considerable financial outlay, hence many wills include bequests of

139. Peter Idley's instructions to his son, ed. Charlotte d'Evelyn (Boston, 1935), p. 163; F.E. Baldwin, Sumptuary legislation in England (1926); 37 Edward III c. 9-14, 3 Edward IV c. 5, 1 Henry VIII c. 14, Statutes of the Realm i, pp. 380-2, ii, pp. 399-402, iii, pp. 8-9.

140. V.C.H. Northamptonshire iii, p. 28.

141. Black Book of Southampton, ed. A.B. Wallis-Chapman (Southampton Record Society i, 1912), pp. 98-9 quoted in C. Platt, Medieval Southampton (1973), p. 162.

clothes which were obviously valuable to their owners, but usually the references are unspecific and it is only from the inventories that any impression of the craftsman's wardrobe can be obtained.<sup>142</sup> Unfortunately it was not customary until the sixteenth century to include most of the clothes of the deceased in the inventory; for example only two gowns were listed amongst the goods of the very successful mason Robert Crackall.<sup>143</sup> More helpful is the inventory, dated 1460, of Robert Fawcett, a reasonably successful pewterer who owned three gowns of varying degrees of wear, two overgarments or 'cotes', two tunics and a cloak.<sup>144</sup> By the sixteenth century a change in fashions is very apparent: John Grene a glover who died in 1525, rather wealthier than Fawcett had been, owned two doublets and four jackets, one gown and four shirts; Robert Morlay, a barber, owned three gowns and five jackets, two of cloth and one of leather.<sup>145</sup> The value of these goods of course varied enormously; most craftsmen must have worn gowns like that of Robert Tankerd, made of russet and worth 3s.; at the other end of the scale were the clothes of Richard Wynder, an extremely wealthy pewterer, which included a 'cremsyn gown' worth 38s. 4d.<sup>146</sup>

142. The will of William Cottyngham, carpenter contains the bequest of a gown that had previously been given to him: Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 285v-286 (1457). For other bequests of clothing see the wills of Robert Denton and John Cheseman transcribed in Appendix A.
143. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1395).
144. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1460). For a description of these garments see Cunningham, English medieval costume.
145. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1525, 1522); see also the inventory of William Thwaite, founder, d. 1512, transcribed in Appendix A.
146. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1439, 1505).

Clothing manufacture in medieval towns was dominated by the tailors; there were various craftsmen who specialized in the manufacture of specific items such as the hosiers, cappers and vestmentmakers, but until the late fifteenth century they seldom formed distinct crafts. The tailors therefore were a very heterogeneous group. The tools that they used were simple and the only instruments bequeathed in wills were scissors and shears.<sup>147</sup> Beyond this the aspiring master tailor had to make only a small investment in stock; ordinances of the Bristol tailors drawn up in 1346 required that the charge for cutting and making a robe from the customer's cloth was to be 18 d. and that the tailor was to find thread, buckram and silk for linings.<sup>148</sup>

Whilst at one extreme there were tailors who worked the materials of others and did not deal in cloth themselves, at the other there were tailors who acted as drapers. The surviving inventories of John Carter and Thomas Lytster, a tailor and a hosier who died in 1485 and 1528 respectively, show that their shops were amply stocked with a wide variety of cloth; Carter's stock was worth nearly £30 and Lytster's, just over £11.<sup>149</sup> Both these inventories are late and date from a period when the tailors were becoming increasingly prosperous traders, but successful tailors had probably always been cloth sellers. Six tailors appear in the 1394-5 aulnage, although they only accounted for a

147. E.g. John Bolton bequeathed two pairs of scissors: Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 229v (1429).

148. Little Red Book ii, p. 31. Pricing of tailors' work is almost impossible because of the variety of clothing, though in London an attempt was made to fix prices in 1350: Riley, Memorials, pp. 254-5.

149. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories; Carter's inventory is printed in Test. Ebor. iii, pp. 300-4.

total of some eleven cloths in all.<sup>150</sup> Though few tailors are likely to have been full scale cloth entrepreneurs, it seems probable that many were involved in the finishing industry both in York and elsewhere. James Lonesdale, a York tailor who died in 1495 remitted 'omnibus fullonibus commorantis in Ebor' totum debitum quod michi debent'; in Beverley and Coventry shermen and tailors were members of the same craft gild.<sup>151</sup> The ambiguities of the word tailor are perhaps best demonstrated in the poll tax returns for York for 1381. Two men described in these returns as hosiers had been made free as tailors and two described as drapers had also been made free as tailors; Henry de Blaktoft entered as a labourer had been made free the previous year as a tailor and Thomas Boythorp entered as a tailor had taken out the freedom as a mercer in 1375.<sup>152</sup>

Tailors appear in the Freemen's Register of York from its inception. Until the 1330's at least it seems probable that for many craftsmen admission to the freedom of York remained a privilege rather than an obligation and the presence of so many tailors compared to the poor showing of the cloth crafts is witness to their relative strength; the tailors and hosiers accounted for two-thirds of all those involved in

150. Of these men Hugh Chartres, described as tailor and draper accounted for 7 cloths: Early Yorkshire woollen trade, pp. 52, 53, 55, 57, 77. His will was made in 1401: B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 71Av.
151. B.I., Prob. Reg. 5 fo. 464; Hist. MSS. Comm., Beverley, p. 65; Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a city, pp. 100, 103.
152. 'Lay poll tax York, 1381', pp. 32, 38, 47, 58, 62; the hosiers were Richard de Malton and Galfridus de Acclom, the drapers, William de Wyghton and John del Hale.

the manufacture of cloth and clothing who took out the freedom before 1301.<sup>153</sup> Records survive of the commercial activities of one tailor, Alan Segod, dating from the early fourteenth century which show him borrowing money from various sources, probably for trade; another York tailor appears as a crown purveyor in the same period.<sup>154</sup> It would seem therefore that from an early date some York tailors were in a position to extend their operations well beyond the boundaries of manufacture.

The number of tailors taking out the freedom rose very sharply during the course of the 1330's:

TABLE 2:4. ANNUAL TOTALS OF TAILORS ADMITTED TO THE FREEDOM 1331-40

1331	-
1332	2
1333	-
1334	18
1335	4
1336	5
1337	3
1338	4
1339	4
1340	1

153. For the meaning of the freedom of the city see below p. 300-5. As late as 1342 in Newcastle the craft of tailors was the only group of textile workers among the 12 crafts authorized to elect the mayor: C.M. Fraser, 'The pattern of trading in North East England, 1265-1350' Northern History (1969), p. 58.

154. For Alan Segod see below p. 383: V.C.H., City of York, p. 100.

The rise was so abrupt that it must have been a response to exceptional circumstances. Probably there was a deliberate change in policy towards the freedom.<sup>155</sup> However the demand for clothing made by Edward III's army in the Scottish wars may well have been the crucial factor for the Exchequer arrived in York in May 1333 and for five years the national government was based in the city.<sup>156</sup>

From the mid-fourteenth century it would appear to have been incumbent on any master wishing to sell retail in the city to take out the freedom; the nature of tailors' work meant that most masters were therefore obliged to become enfranchised. The freemen's Register cannot however give an indication of the size of the craft at any one time; only in one instance is this figure available, a figure which shows the craft to have been formidably large: 128 master tailors witnessed the ordinances of the craft drawn up in 1386.<sup>157</sup> The ordinances also make clear that there were a sufficiently large number of tailors' servants to compose their own fraternity and it was ruled that 'nullus serviens artis cissorum faciat congregacionem nec liberatam panni sine voluntate et consensu scrutatorum de la Tailleur crafte'.<sup>158</sup> Additionally the tailoring industry probably employed large numbers of women as semsters. Most of these women remain obscure but a few appear in the freemen's register and the wills of three semsters have also survived.<sup>159</sup>

155. See below p. 306.

156. Broome, 'Exchequer migrations to York', p. 292.

157. Y.M.B. i, pp. 95-6.

158. Y.M.B. i, p. 101.

159. Margaret Crossby, Margaret Firbank, Margaret Knaresborough: B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 603 (1431), 3 fo. 527v (1438), 2 fo. 14-14v (1398).



The number of tailors who took out the freedom was well sustained until 1500 though falling somewhat after that date. The numerical strength of the craft in other provincial towns such as Norwich, Oxford, Northampton and Leicester was also evident in the early sixteenth century.<sup>160</sup> Numbers alone however do not reveal much about the status of a craft and more significant in York was the fact that the tailors of the sixteenth century came to be recognised as merchant tailors. To a certain extent their prestige had been purchased at the expense of other crafts, most notably the skimmers and the drapers. The work of the tailors probably constantly overlapped with that of the skimmers and the earliest recorded regulations of the tailors, made in 1301 in an attempt to stop price rigging, assume that the tailors were responsible for furring garments.<sup>161</sup> Little information is forthcoming concerning the relations between the two crafts over the next two hundred years; in 1437 however Robert Dote, a tailor, bequeathed 2s. to the skimmers' fraternity in St. Giles church, implying he had close, probably commercial, links with the craft.<sup>162</sup> Ordinances of the skimmers in 1500 required that 'no taillour nor any other person fure no mans ne womans gowns, colers ne cuffez of any garments'.<sup>163</sup> It is likely that this ordinance was ineffective: in 1551 for example Robert Loksmith, vestmentmaker,

160. J.F. Pound, 'Social and trade structure of Norwich 1525-75', Past and Present xxxiv (1966), p. 55; V.C.H. Oxfordshire iv, p. 47; W.G. Hoskins, Provincial England (1963), p. 79.

161. M. Prestwich, York civic ordinances, 1301 (Borthwick Papers no. 49, 1976), p. 15; these ordinances were drawn up by royal command, for the arrival of the government and attendant officials in York in 1298 had sent prices upwards.

162. B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 511.

163. Y.C.R. ii, p. 151.

died owing money to William Tailleur 'for the workmanship of allyttyl dark tawney gowne and for iii blak lam skynnys ... and for a pursell of shankes and v taulynge of shankes'.<sup>164</sup> The skimmers appear to have faced a crisis of giant proportions in the mid-fifteenth century; many different elements contributed to this but it seems probable that the tailors may have helped to undermine them by appropriating much of the work of furring; especially in the locally available lamb skins.<sup>165</sup>

Where the tailors' relations with the skimmers were a straightforward tussle over the right to work furred garments, their relations with the drapers were rather more complex. Drapers, by definition, needed to be able to sell cloth retail and therefore needed to be freemen. The exact nature of their buying and selling is not easy to define, but the figures for drapers taking out the freedom seem to give an indication that their business depended on handling the products of York's textile industry and that when this collapsed the number of drapers dwindled very rapidly. (See Table 2:5 overleaf.)

In the absence of any registered ordinances of the drapers, in itself evidence that they tended to be classified with merchants rather than craftsmen, it is difficult to chart their progress.<sup>166</sup> They certainly formed a distinct craft, being responsible for their own pageant in the fifteenth century and as late as 1516 when the membership

164. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1531) transcribed in Appendix A.

165. See below p. 109-11.

166. The uncertain status of the drapers is found elsewhere; in Beverley the drapers did not form a fraternity till 1493: His. MSS. Comm. Beverley, pp. 103-5.

TABLE 2:5.      DECADAL TOTALS OF DRAPERS ADMITTED TO THE FREEDOM, 1351-1534

1351-60	9	1451-60	3
1361-70	29	1461-70	8
1371-80	25	1471-80	4
1381-90	18	1481-90	5
1391-1400	31	1491-1500	3
1401-10	7	1501-10	3
1411-20	17	1511-20	1
1421-30	17	1521-30	1
1431-40	9	1531-34	1
1441-50	10		

of the common Council was revised they theoretically constituted a separate body.<sup>167</sup> However since the late fifteenth century at least they were associated with the tailors in the search of cloth and the two crafts of draper and tailor were finally formally amalgamated in 1551.<sup>168</sup> By this time the tailors were clearly the dominant partners; they had managed to assert for themselves the right to search foreign cloth, and to take over in most respects the middleman position in the cloth trade that had been held by the drapers.<sup>169</sup>

167. Toulmin-Smith, York plays, p. xxvii; see below p. 341.

168. Y.C.R. ii, p. 90-1, v, pp. 57-62 (1492, 1551).

169. The failure of the drapers in York was not necessarily paralleled elsewhere; in Coventry in the early sixteenth century the drapers were still one of the largest and most prestigious groups: Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a city, pp. 103, 116.

Tailors, as mentioned, often possessed large stocks of material and the transition from the craft of tailor to dealer in cloth was not infrequent. The 1381 lay poll tax returns give two instances of men made free as tailors who were recorded by the collectors as drapers. From the fifteenth century the wills survive of four tailors and one hosier who were made free as craftsmen and died describing themselves as drapers. These men maintained a close connexion with the tailors; three of them, William Girlington, William Newland and Henry Holme made bequests to the gild of St. John Baptist of the tailors in their wills.<sup>170</sup> What is significant is that three other drapers, for whom there is no evidence suggesting that they had been tailors, also left money to this same gild; one of these men, Thomas Carre, who died in 1444, made his bequest at a time when the drapers' craft was apparently still strong and when the connexion between the drapers and the tailors was voluntary and informal.<sup>171</sup> These bequests raise the question of why there is no evidence of a separate drapers' gild or a drapers' hall, for the drapers were undoubtedly men of considerable wealth and importance: six drapers became mayors during the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, whereas the only tailor who did so was William

170. B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 83v-84v (1444), 2 fo. 525-525v (1427), 11 fo. 98 (1534), 2 fo. 173v-174 (1448), 3 fo. 437 (1435). The earliest reference found to the 'gild of the tailors of the Blessed John' is in the will of John Sevenhouse made in 1386: Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 85, though the fraternity was probably considerably older; B. Johnson, Acts and ordinances of the company of Merchant Tailors, (privately printed, n.d.), p. 26 is therefore mistaken in assuming that there 'is nothing to show that the tailors had adopted St. John Baptist as a patron saint up to 1423'.
171. B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 79v (1444); the others were John Carre and William Chymnay, B.I., Prob. Reg. 5 fo. 327v-329 (1487), 8 fo. 3-3v (1508).

Girlington, who by the time of his death described himself as a draper. It seems likely that there was relatively little need for regulation of the drapers' craft; their business and social connections were probably divided between the Mercers' Trinity gild and the tailors' gild of St. John, a division of interest that proved ultimately to their disadvantage.

It was the drapers rather than the tailors who suffered from the failure of the York weaving industry and it will be argued that the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries saw an increase in the activities of tailors as middlemen and cloth merchants.<sup>172</sup> The growing authority of the tailors' gild as a mercantile body is also apparent in the variety of craftsmen who were members of their fraternity. Perhaps unsurprisingly, four litsters made bequests to the gild of St. John Baptist of the tailors in their wills, the earliest recorded being Thomas Kelfield in 1408.<sup>173</sup> Other bequests were made by men of less closely related crafts such as William Barton, a skinner, John Preston, an ironmonger, and Robert Ecop, a baker.<sup>174</sup> By 1505, the horner William Nuby could be described as 'horne & tayler merchand'.<sup>175</sup>

172. Between 1505 and 1523 there were various attempts to get the tailors and other sellers of southern cloth to contribute to the drapers' pageant but with little success: Y.C.R. iii, pp. 25, 83, 87. For the trade of the tailors see below pp. 391-2.

173. B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 577. In 1415 John Mallom, litster was Master of the Confraternity of St. John Baptist of the Tailors; Johnson, Merchant Taylors, p. 23.

174. B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 408 (1434), 2 fo. 192 (1449), 2 fo. 426 (1460). These three wills specify the gild of St. John Baptist of the tailors; other bequests were made to the gild of St. John Baptist but it cannot be certain that they meant that of the tailors.

175. B.I., Prob. Reg. 6 fo. 200 (the will of Robert Rede).

Certain items of clothing, particularly hose and caps, were made by craftsmen who specialized in their production.<sup>176</sup> The wills of six hosiers survive, two of whom were made free as tailors; the poll tax return of 1381, as has been seen, describes two men as hosiers who also were made free as tailors.<sup>177</sup> Hosiers never had a monopoly of manufacture and do not appear to have been organized as a mystery wholly distinct from the tailors until the mid sixteenth century. Few men took out the freedom describing themselves as hosiers until the sixteenth century and yet by 1415 the hosiers were apparently responsible for producing their own pageant in the Corpus Christi play.<sup>178</sup> This would suggest that they had their own fraternity, if only to produce the play, but most of their members must have come from among the tailors. Indeed the lack of definition to be found in the hosiers' relations with the tailors affords a good example of the fluidity and informality of much craft organization.<sup>179</sup>

The making of headgear, including caps, was originally part of the work of the tailors.<sup>180</sup> Caps were for the most part made of cloth

176. The proliferation of specialists was far greater in the capital where there were for example wimplers and shirtmakers: Veale, 'Craftsmen and the economy of London in the fourteenth century', p. 144.

177. The inventory of Thomas Lytster, hosier, included a gift of 'i par stokes of hoise' to the tailors' fraternity: B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1528).

178. Toulmin-Smith, York plays, p. xx.

179. Ordinances of 1403 imply that the hosiers were negotiating independently with the drapers: Y.M.B. i, p. 251. The drapers of Beverley were in 1493 given the right to sew hose without contributing to the tailors' craft: Hist. MSS. Comm., Beverley pp. 104-5.

180. The Bristol tailors complained that their right to cut cloth for hose and caps was being infringed in 1346. Little Red Book ii, p. 26.

but probably not of best material; in York in 1430 the cappers ruled that 'noon of the said craft shal make no capez of webb garn nother blew ne meld nor noon other collour'.<sup>181</sup> As early as 1376 it was said that the London cappers were fulling their goods in the same mill as the walkers used for cloth, thereby tearing the broadcloth; the practice was forbidden that year and again in 1418 and 1514.<sup>182</sup> By the sixteenth century caps were probably often being knitted; for example a Coventry ordinance of 1520 required that 'no man put forthe nother spynnyng nor knyttyng unto none of them that usith to spyn or knyttythe any Journeymens Cappes tell they be brought before the Maisterers of the craft ...',<sup>183</sup>

The York cappers had their own ordinances by the early fifteenth century, with amendments added in 1440.<sup>184</sup> The number who took out the freedom remained low however until the late fifteenth century and it seems likely that much of the work was done on a piece rate for other masters. This was certainly the case in the late fifteenth century for an ordinance of 1482 ordered that 'no maistre of the said occupacion gyff no werk to wyrk to no maner of person dwellyng in Seynt Mary gate, ne in Seint Leonardes, ne odyr placez ne santuaries within this cite

181. Y.M.B. i, p. 78. The same ordinance is found in Coventry in 1538: C.L.B., iii p. 729. In both cases the intention may have been to protect the weaving industry.

182. Riley, Memorials, pp. 400-1, 667; C.L.B., iii, p. 640.

183. C.L.B., iii, p. 672. There is no certainty about when knitting was introduced; the earliest recorded use in the O.E.D. is early sixteenth century, but it has been suggested that it was known in the early fifteenth century: Evans, Dress in medieval France, pp. 48, 51, 66.

184. Y.M.B. i, pp. 77-8.

wher we have no power to correk tham'.<sup>185</sup> It is hard to say whether the increased number of cappers working in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries represents a genuine expansion in numbers or more accurately an advance in the status of the master cappers.<sup>186</sup> Individual cappers certainly seem to have become more prosperous as the century progressed; of eight cappers' wills that survive, one dates from 1407, one from 1447 and the rest from after 1476. National legislation on the cap-making industry from the reign of Henry VII onwards confirmed the increasing importance being attached to this branch of manufacture.<sup>187</sup>

The tailors, hosiers and cappers were the main groups of clothing manufacturers but there were also a number of craftsmen and women doing fine quality work, whose names occasionally appear in the freemen's register or the probate registers. Fine embroidery was done by men such as John Darras, broudster, who died in 1438, and also by women like Alys Legh who worked for the vestmentmaker Robert Loksmith and who was owed 26s. 8d. by him at the time of his death 'for feyne hemyng of broderye'.<sup>188</sup> Between 1390-1534 fifteen vestmentmakers took out the freedom, but as a large proportion of the vestments made were probably destined for the Minster there may well have been more vestmentmakers

185. Y.M.B. ii, p. 285.

186. There does not seem to have been an expansion in York on anything like the scale of that in Coventry where the number of master cappers nearly trebled between 1496-1550: Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a city, p. 44.

187. 4 Henry VII c.9, 3 Henry VIII c.15, Statutes of the Realm ii, p. 534, iii, pp. 33-4.

188. Y.M.L. D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 245v. Lytster's inventory is transcribed in Appendix A. The will also survives of Agnes Setter, silkwoman: Y.M.L. D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 241 (1435).



and brouderers working in York than appear in the records.<sup>189</sup>

The textile industries illustrate more than any other group of crafts the growth of York to a peak of prosperity in the late fourteenth century and the economic contraction experienced in the late fifteenth century; but the divergence of fortunes between the broadcloth and worsted manufacturers and between the cloth and the clothing crafts, were symptomatic of more complex changes in the urban economy than a simple expansion and decline. As will be argued, the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries saw a contraction of mercantile enterprise; York largely reverted to serving a regional market. This contraction can be seen most obviously in a contrast between the weaving and tailoring crafts. The weavers had depended heavily on the export market and once that had disappeared they were left in a state of acute distress, exacerbated by the financial burden of their charter. The tailors, serving a home market, although they showed some decrease in numbers as a result of falling population, increased in prestige both as a craft and as individuals. Again the increasing dominance of regional consumer demand can be seen in the relations between the tailors and the drapers, for the unification of these two crafts in 1551 was little more than the formal absorption of the few remaining drapers in the tailors' gild. The health of the local market would also account for the increased demand for the goods of the cappers, hosiers and the tapiters. The sustained profits of the clothing crafts and of those

189. This suspicion is increased by the fact that eight of those 15 were made free after 1501.

manufacturing soft furnishings however could not adequately compensate for the losses experienced by the weaving industry; the decline of this latter was to prove permanently damaging to the urban economy.

The changing industrial structure within the textile industries in York was paralleled elsewhere in England. There were exceptional towns such as Exeter where a cloth industry and a cloth finishing industry flourished in the late fifteenth century, drawing its strength apparently from the growing overseas trade of the town.<sup>190</sup> Generally however by the mid-sixteenth century the woollen industry had become almost entirely rural or centred on industrial villages, although the chronology of rural growth and urban decline varied very considerably from place to place.<sup>191</sup> As in York, the failure of the cloth industry in other provincial towns was probably not adequately compensated for by growth in other areas of the textile industry. The most obvious example is Coventry where the spectacular success of the capping industry in the early sixteenth century is in stark contrast to the decline experienced by the urban economy as a whole. Little is as yet known about the clothing industries in most provincial towns in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, although the numerical importance of tailors in places such as Leicester and Northampton can be demonstrated for the early sixteenth century. However although the tailors may have become proportionately more significant with the decline of the weaving

190. E.M. Carus-Wilson, The expansion of Exeter at the close of the middle ages (Exeter, 1963).

191. For the sixteenth century cloth industry see P.J. Bowden, The wool trade in Tudor and Stuart England (1962).

industry, in most provincial towns it is impossible to judge as yet whether they experienced any absolute growth in prosperity. It does however seem likely that the York tailors retained a distinct advantage over the tailoring industries in many other towns, for York as a provincial capital and a social centre of considerable importance continued to attract custom which sustained and probably encouraged the tailoring and allied crafts.<sup>192</sup>

192. For a discussion of the role of provincial capitals in the sixteenth century see P. Clark and P. Slack, English towns in transition (Oxford, 1976), pp. 53-4.

TABLE 2:6. ENTRANTS TO THE FREEDOM OF YORK, DECADAL TOTALS: TEXTILE CRAFTS

	-1290	1291-1300				-1300	
					No.	%	
Broudsters							
Cambers & Carders							
Cappers							
Drapers							
Dubbers							
Hatters		1			1	5.6	
Hosiers	1				1	5.6	
Linenweavers							
Litsters		1			1	5.6	
Semsters							
Shermen <sup>1</sup>							
Tailors	4	8			12	67.0	
Tapiters <sup>2</sup>	1				1	5.6	
Vestmentmakers							
Walkers		2			2	11.0	
Weavers							
Others							
Total	6	12			18		

	1301-10	1311-20	1321-30	1331-40	1341-50	1301-50	
						No.	%
Broudsters							
Cambers & Carders		1				1	0.3
Cappers							
Drapers	2		5	7	9	23	7.7
Dubbers		2	2	6	2	12	4.0
Hatters		2	3	4	1	10	3.3
Hosiers	2	4	4	2	5	17	5.7
Linenweavers							
Litsters	5	5	5	9	18	42	14.0
Semsters							
Shermen		1	1	5	8	15	5.0
Tailors	9	16	15	41	53	134	44.7
Tapiters	1	1		2	3	7	2.3
Vestmentmakers							
Walkers		2		2	2	6	2.0
Weavers		1	2	9	20	32	10.7
Others				1		1	0.3
Total	19	35	37	88	121	300	

TABLE 2:6 (continued)

	1351-60	1361-70	1371-80	1381-90	1391-1400	1351-1400	
						No.	%
Broudsters			1	2	1	4	0.3
Cambers & Carders	2					2	0.2
Cappers		4	4	2	2	12	1.0
Drapers	9	29	25	18	31	112	9.4
Dubbers	1					1	0.1
Hatters	5	2				7	0.6
Hosiars	1	2	3			6	0.5
Linenweavers			1	4	1	6	0.5
Litsters	28	27	24	26	33	138	11.6
Semsters							
Shermen	8	15	6	15	14	58	4.9
Tailors	60	97	74	67	83	381	32.0
Tapiters	8	22	34	17	20	101	8.5
Vestmentmakers					1	1	0.1
Walkers	16	23	13	16	22	90	7.5
Weavers	45	70	54	37	65	271	22.7
Others		2			2	4	0.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>1194</b>	
	1401-10	1411-20	1421-30	1431-40	1441-50	1401-1450	
						No.	%
Broudsters			1	2		3	0.3
Cambers & Carders							
Cappers	1	1	2	4	7	15	1.6
Drapers	7	17	17	9	10	60	6.6
Dubbers							
Hatters	1	1	1			3	0.3
Hosiars	2		1	4	1	8	0.9
Linenweavers		4	1	1	3	9	1.0
Litsters	13	24	22	14	26	99	10.8
Semsters				5	3	8	0.9
Shermen	9	12	14	8	7	50	5.5
Tailors	53	66	75	48	42	284	31.1
Tapiters	6	16	21	9	17	69	7.5
Vestmentmakers				2		2	0.2
Walkers	9	13	21	21	24	88	9.6
Weavers	36	46	33	36	53	204	22.3
Others	1	2	2	7		12	1.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>914</b>	

TABLE 2:6 (continued)

	1451-60	1461-70	1471-80	1481-90	1491-1500	1451-1500	
						No.	%
Broudsters							
Cambers & Carders							
Cappers		10	11	7	8	36	4.9
Drapers	3	8	4	5	3	23	3.1
Dubbers							
Hatters		7	6	1	4	18	2.4
Hosiers				3	2	5	0.7
Linenweavers		1	3	2	8	14	1.9
Litsters	17	18	29	11	15	90	12.1
Semsters	2	1			1	4	0.5
Shermen	13	10	10	11	9	53	7.1
Tailors	47	48	41	43	46	225	30.3
Tapiters	11	10	15	12	11	59	8.0
Vestmentmakers		1		2	1	4	0.5
Walkers	20	22	13	9	12	76	10.2
Weavers	35	31	27	17	22	132	17.8
Others	1			1	1	3	0.4
Total	149	167	159	124	143	742	
	1501-10	1511-20	1521-30	1531-34	1501-34		TOTAL
					No.	%	No.
Broudsters			1	1	2	0.6	9
Cambers & Carders							3
Cappers	6	6	10	2	24	7.8	87
Drapers	3	1	1	1	6	1.8	224
Dubbers							13
Hatters	3	2	1		6	1.8	45
Hosiers	3	5	6	1	15	4.5	52
Linenweavers	1	8	5	1	15	4.5	44
Litsters	7	6	5	4	22	6.6	392
Semsters			1	1	2	0.6	14
Shermen	3	2	1		6	1.8	182
Tailors	36	35	26	15	112	33.7	1148
Tapiters	12	21	19	8	60	18.1	297
Vestmentmakers	2	1	4	1	8	2.4	15
Walkers	8	6	3	2	19	5.7	281
Weavers	10	10	9		29	8.7	668
Others	6				6	1.8	26
Total	100	103	92	37	332		3500

TABLE 2:6 (continued)

Footnotes

1. Includes fresers.
2. Includes chaloners and coverletweavers.

### Chapter 3. THE LEATHER CRAFTS

The medieval leather industry has not generally received the attention that its significance to the medieval economy warrants. Although there was an export trade in hides, leather was mainly cured and worked for an internal market of which there is very little evidence.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless leather working was one of the first and most characteristic occupations of medieval towns; a permanent market centre attracted from the start craftsmen such as tanners and shoemakers who could find there ample supplies of raw hides. From the thirteenth century onwards there is an abundance of evidence about leather craftsmen from towns throughout England; the importance of their role in the urban economy at this early stage was sustained throughout the later middle ages and even increased by the early sixteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Admittedly in a large town like York leather workers did not have the status or the more spectacular successes of the craftsmen working in the more luxury trades; but in small towns there is good reason to suppose that some at least held a fairly commanding position.

Leather workers fell initially into two categories, those who worked in tanned or red leather and those who worked in tawed leather, the processes involved in these two types of preparation being radically

1. Gray, 'English foreign trade', p. 4; H.L. Gray 'Tables of enrolled customs and subsidy accounts in English trade in the fifteenth century, p. 323; Kerling, Commercial relations, pp. 130-1.
2. Hist. MSS. Comm 6th report, pp. 76-7; Salzman, English industries of the middle ages, p. 245; V.C.H., Northamptonshire, iii, p. 27; Records of Leicester, ii, p. lxvi.



different. Additionally there were craftsmen such as saddlers and girdlers who did not prepare leather but who used a combination of different materials to make up their products. In order to preserve leather the water has to be driven out of the hide and replaced with another material; the most common method of doing this was by tanning, but it was a process only suitable for cow and ox hides and strenuous efforts had to be made to prevent sheepskins from being treated in the same way.<sup>3</sup> In tanning leather, after the basic processes of scraping hair and leather off the hides had been completed, the hides were soaked in cold woozes, a series of liquors, the first mild, but gradually increasing in strength, made usually from oak bark.<sup>4</sup> The leather should have been left to soak for periods of nine months or upwards depending on the purpose for which it was intended, the longer the process the better being the quality of the leather.<sup>5</sup> There was a temptation always to advance the process either by making the woozes too strong or by applying heat whereby the entire process could be advanced from nine months to a startling six weeks, producing as a result a weakened sub-standard

3. The practice was forbidden by statute, repeated in the York records: 1 Henry VII c.5, Statutes of the Realm ii, p. 503; Y.C.R. ii, p. 182 (1503). Regulations had been made in Coventry against this practice in 1474: C.L.B. ii, pp. 400-1.
4. The following description of tanning and tawing is derived from Singer, History of Technology; Salzman, English industries of the middle ages and W.H. Black, History and antiquities of the worshipful company of leathersellers of the city of London (1871).
5. John Newbye, tanner, in his will of 1529 requested that 'the ledder in my barkhouse be no prayshed at the worste but that my executors kepe my servaunts styll unto it be drete so that thay maye make the moste advauntage thereof': B.I., Prob. Reg. 9, fo. 479.

leather.<sup>6</sup> Finally the leather had to be properly dried.<sup>7</sup> Leather which had simply been tanned was called red leather because of its colour; it was unsuitable for working and needed to be curried, that is thinned, dyed and treated with tallow to make it supple. There were a variety of other treatments which could be applied such as hammering shoe leather to compress it.<sup>8</sup> Once curried, leather was described as black.

Whereas tanning was a wet process, the various types of tawing were dry processes, involving usually the addition of oil or alum to the hide; sheep, goat and calf skins were treated in this way as were deer, horse and dog.<sup>9</sup> Most of the legislation concerning the tawing of skins comes from the late sixteenth century when increasingly subtle processes were being adopted that brought onto the market a huge range of genuine and counterfeit tawed leather.<sup>10</sup> Comparative lack of evidence for the practices of the later middle ages suggests that at that time tawing was relatively simple. The finest leathers of the middle ages were called Spanish leathers because they copied techniques developed initially in the manufacture of high quality cordovan

6. The best near contemporary description of the practice of tanning comes from the statute of 2 & 3 Edward VI c.11, Statutes of the Realm iv, pp. 53-4.
7. 19 Henry VII c.19, Statutes of the Realm ii, p. 664.
8. Various processes used in York are described in Y.M.B. i, p. 65, for example the colouring and fining down of leather.
9. Salzman, English industries, pp. 249-53.
10. Complaints do survive from early 14th century London however that foreigners 'by conspiracy with false workers of the city were selling sheep and other leather scraped on the back in counterfeit of roe-leather': Cal. Plea and Mem. Rolls 1323-64, p. 40 (1327).

leather.<sup>11</sup> Such leathers were expensive and a far simpler process of tawing with alum, which found widespread use in the later middle ages, was adopted for most utilitarian products. The alum was rubbed into the hide, usually with a mixture of salt, giving a white leather, hence the name whit-tawer. After treating with alum the white leather still needed considerable work in stretching and softening and by feeding it with oil or egg yolks. The consumption of eggs by tawers for this purpose could become a menace; in Bristol it was agreed that 'no Whitawer of the towne of Bristowe bye noon Egges within x mile abowte the same towne but for his owne Mete'.<sup>12</sup>

Of all the methods of preserving leather, tanning took the longest time and also required the most extensive premises; a tanner therefore had to make a higher capital investment in his work than most craftsmen. Something of the value of a tanner's stock can be appreciated from the relative frequency with which leather in various states of preparation was bequeathed in wills: in 1405 John Escryck bequeathed 'iii dakers de coreo sowkyd' to be divided between his grandchildren and John Wardale left to his servant in 1395 'v pelles

11. Cordovan leather or cordwain was originally a fine, oil-tawed spanish leather used for footwear, hence cordwainers; however by the late middle ages shoes were generally made of tanned ox or cow hide: Singer, History of technology ii, pp. 150-1. For imports of Spanish cordwain see W. Childs, Anglo-Castilian trade in the later middle ages (Manchester, 1978), pp. 136-8.
12. The Great Red Book of Bristol, ed. E.W. Veale 4 vols. (Bristol Record Society Publications iv, viii, xvi, xviii, 1333-53), i, p. 143.

vaccineas barkyd et vi knoppys cum fuerit vacua'.<sup>13</sup> The scale of the tanning industry combined with the availability of hides meant that tanners and dependent craftsmen such as cordwainers, concentrated in towns and served also to make the tanners, despite their noxious trade, potentially wealthy men. It would seem furthermore that the tanners were able from an early date to exploit their position as middlemen in the supply of materials to the disadvantage of other leather workers dependent on them, most noticeably the cordwainers. Such considerations underlay the hostility that existed between tanners and cordwainers in very many towns throughout the later middle ages and which frequently flared into violence.

Apart from the names of one or two individuals the earliest evidence of the York tanners comes from the freemen's register.<sup>14</sup> The names of at least fifty-one tanners are recorded in the register before 1300, compared to twenty-one cordwainers.<sup>15</sup> This is by no means a complete tally of the tanners in the city, for many years are missing from the early register and furthermore the freedom was at this stage a privilege rather than compulsory. Later evidence suggests that in fact cordwainers considerably outnumbered tanners, between

13. B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 242 v, 1 fo. 90v. In 1521 Robert Newcom of Candlesby, tanner, bequeathed along with his considerable amount of movables 'iiii daker of net hydes' worth £6 13s 4d: Lincoln Wills i, 1271-1526 ed. C.W. Foster (Lincoln Record Society v, 1912), p. 93.

14. E.g. there is a reference to a tanner acting as surety in 1218-19: Rolls of the Justices in Eyre for Yorkshire, 1218-19 (Selden Society lvi, 1937), p. 258.

15. See table 3:3.

1351-1400, 185 cordwainers became free compared with 125 tanners.<sup>16</sup> The same was probably true elsewhere though numerical evidence only survives from the sixteenth century: the 1524 subsidy for Northampton listed fifty cordwainers compared to fifteen tanners and the 1522 military survey in Coventry twenty-eight cordwainers to fifteen tanners.<sup>17</sup> The predominance of tanners in the York freemen's register before 1300 and the fact that they accounted for an impressive 9% of all freemen at this date is witness to the commanding position that they held in the leather industry.<sup>18</sup>

The strength of the tanners depended on their control of the tanning industry from which they were determined to exclude cordwainers. Where early evidence shows the cordwainers to have been fairly prosperous, as in Wallingford for example, the suspicion must be that they were acting as tanners.<sup>19</sup> The cordwainers were determined to defend their stake in the tanning industry. In 1323 the Shrewsbury cordwainers petitioned the king because the bailiffs of the borough were attempting to prevent them from tanning, where they claimed an immemorial right to do so; the Chester cordwainers in 1370 engineered the removal of a ban put on their tanning, though they were obliged to pay for the privilege.<sup>20</sup>

16. The lay poll tax of 1381 gives 44 men in each craft, but as mentioned this tax tends to under-represent the poorer crafts; the cordwainers' ordinances of the 1390's were witnessed by 59 masters 'et autres': 'Lay poll tax, York, 1381', p. 14; Y.M.B. i, pp. 72-3.
17. Hoskins, Provincial England, p. 79.
18. For the wealth of the tanners see below pp. 434-5.
19. Hist. MSS. Comm., 6th report, pp. 576-7.
20. Hist. MSS. Comm., 8th report, p. 402. 'Petition of the cordwainers of the town of Salop in A.D. 1323-4' ed. C.H. Drinkwater, Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society Transactions, 2nd. ser. vi (1894), pp. 285-90.

Attempts to distinguish the two crafts were therefore being made at a local level, in order to prevent poorly tanned leather being used for the manufacture of shoes, some time in advance of national legislation. In 1389 the cordwainers were, on the same grounds, forbidden to tan leather by statute and though they managed to get the prohibition lifted temporarily in 1402, it was reimposed permanently in 1423.<sup>21</sup> The cordwainers had therefore to change tactics and they seem to have concentrated their claims in the fifteenth century on the right to search the quality of tanned leather. This right seems to have been fairly readily granted by city councils as they had no desire to enhance the power of the tanners; so for example the Exeter cordwainers had the right to search 'wete lethere' as well as 'drye botez'.<sup>22</sup> Trouble erupted in York in 1428 between tanners and cordwainers on this issue and as a result a leather seld was established in the common hall where a committee of two tanners, two cordwainers, two girdlers and two curriers were to examine all leather for sale; the decision was apparently so unpopular with the tanners that they resorted to action of sufficient violence to find themselves disenfranchised en masse.<sup>23</sup> The tanners seem to have wielded greater influence than the cordwainers for in 1430 the franchise and the right of search were restored to them; but the issue did not apparently end there for by the 1450's it was the cordwainers who appeared in the chamberlains' accounts as searchers of

21. 13 Richard II st.1 c.12, 4 Henry IV c.35, 2 Henry VI c.7, Statutes of the Realm ii, pp. 65, 142-3, 220.

22. English guilds, ed. L. Toulmin-Smith (E.E.T.S., xl, 1870), p. 332 (1481).

23. Y.M.B. ii, pp. 162-6.

red leather, and in the 1490's, when the cordwainers in their turn were disenfranchised for a number of offences, one of the powers they resented losing most was the right to search red and black leather.<sup>24</sup> The establishment of a communal assay was a device adopted elsewhere in an attempt to overcome the conflicting interests of these two crafts. In London in 1412 a seld was established where leather was searched by cordwainers, girdlers and glovers.<sup>25</sup> A similar scheme was devised in Coventry in 1453 when three men chosen by the sheriff, a girdler, a cordwainer and a tanner were appointed to search all leather.<sup>26</sup>

Although the cordwainers were prevented from tanning, they had effective control over the process of currying. Currying involved, among other processes, treating skins with oil or tallow and so it is not surprising to find curriers working on sheep skins. The saddlers' ordinances of 1470 contain the clause 'no saddiller ... shall sett no seyt upon any saddell of sheepe leddir but yf be curried by the courour handes'.<sup>27</sup> Ordinances of the curriers from the early fifteenth century describe them as working for 'cordwaner, girdeler, cardemaker vel sadeler', but additional clauses made in 1424 indicate that the cordwainers were the most important employers.<sup>28</sup> It was the cordwainers who were then specifically forbidden to practise 'artem curiatoris nec

24. Y.C.R. ii, pp. 57-74; Chamberlains' Rolls, pp. 70, 86, 104, 121, 144.
25. Salzman, English industries, p.248.
26. C.L.B. ii, p. 277. The Worcester tanners in contrast seem to have had the same power as the York tanners and could sell their product direct from the tan house: Dyer, Worcester, pp. 120-1.
27. Y.M.B. i, p. 92.
28. Y.M.B. ii, pp. 169-70; the same applied in Coventry: C.L.B. ii, p. 401 (1474).

necum teneat in domo sua vel aliena aliquem de arte curiatorum', once again well in advance of national legislation.<sup>29</sup> Tanners were forbidden by statute to act as curriers in 1485, cordwainers not until 1503.<sup>30</sup>

Whatever the theoretical independence of the curriers however it is clear that the majority worked as piece workers, on rates defined in very great detail; as was the case with other piece workers, they were dependent on those who provided their materials.<sup>31</sup> Relatively few curriers seem to have taken out the freedom: between 1351-1400 only twenty-seven did so, compared to 132 tanners and 185 cordwainers; there is no evidence that any of them were at all affluent and only one currier's will survives from the period studied.

The cordwainers, makers of all types of shoes and boots, worked generally in tanned leather made from cow or ox hide and <sup>on items</sup> described variously as 'botez, botwez, schoez, pyncouz, galagez'.<sup>32</sup> All medieval footwear was insubstantial and wore out rapidly; the quality of the leather used by the cordwainers was therefore very important.<sup>33</sup> Shoes

29. Y.M.B. ii, p. 170. Frequently the cordwainers absorbed the curriers and in Exeter, Boston, Ripon and Salisbury for example they formed one craft: S. Kramer, English craft guilds, (Columbia, 1927), p. 8.
30. 1 Henry VII c.5, 19 Henry VII c.19, Statutes of the Realm ii, pp. 503, 664.
31. Y.M.B. i, p. 65.
32. Toulmin-Smith, English guilds, p. 332. Cordwainers were also known as sutors and alutarii. Latham, Revised medieval latin wordlist only gives the less common definition of leatherdresser for alutarius, but the York ordinances make it quite clear these men were shoemakers: Y.M.B. i, pp. 187-90; the same is true of London: Black, Company of Leathersellers, pp. 14-17. Cordwainers also made patons, though in York the patoners, bowgemakers and botellers registered their own ordinances in 1471: Y.M.B. ii, pp. 139-42.
33. J.M. Swann 'Shoe patterns to 1600', Transactions of the Museum Assistants Group (1973); a Bristol ordinance required that each master cordwainer pay his servant 18d a week and 8 pairs of shoes a year: Little Red Book ii, p. 43.



and boots could be made of sheep leather although it was less durable than tanned leather. What was absolutely forbidden was to 'sell sheepskin shoes for tanned leather or tanned leather shoes containing any sheepskin!'.<sup>34</sup> This regulation, found in York as early as 1301, appears frequently elsewhere.<sup>35</sup>

The first references to crafts of cordwainers date from the twelfth century. The Oxford cordwainers were paying 15s to the crown 'pro gilda sua' by 1160; and in 1181 there is a record in the pipe roll of a York gild of glovers and cordwainers.<sup>36</sup> A taxation roll of 1227 for Wallingford listed thirty-four cordwainers, second only in number to the mercers; some of these men paid taxes which indicate that they were operating on a fairly large scale, as was the Northampton cordwainer from whose shop thirty-seven pairs of shoes and two pairs of boots were stolen in 1325.<sup>37</sup> Although the evidence suggests that there were from an early date several cordwainers of substance and influence, their status in the late middle ages seems to have varied considerably from place to place and presumably depended on their relationship with other craft guilds. The Oxford cordwainers for instance seem always to have been exclusive and despite University action against them could still in 1405 demand fees of 20s from masters setting up business by apprenticeship or patrimony and 53s 4d from foreigners.<sup>38</sup> A complaint was made in 1499

34. Prestwich, York civic ordinances, p. 15.

35. Riley, Memorials, p. 136 (1375); Little Red Book ii, p. 108 (1408); C.L.B. ii, p. 401 (1474).

36. Pipe roll 7 Henry II (P.R.S. iv, 1885), p. 26, Pipe roll 27 Henry II (P.R.S. xxx, 1909), p. 41.

37. Hist. Mss. Comm., 6th report, p. 576; V.C.H. Northamptonshire iii, p. 27.

38. V.C.H. Oxfordshire, iv, p. 314.

that cordwainers, tailors and other craftsmen in Hull presumptuously bought and sold as merchants.<sup>39</sup> By contrast the Worcester cordwainers were by the sixteenth century amongst the 'most humble of city tradesmen'.<sup>40</sup> In York the cordwainers appear for the most part to have been at a disadvantage in relation to the tanners, a disadvantage that increased in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries when for a period of almost thirty years they were in constant trouble with the council, being entirely disenfranchised in 1490.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless the evidence suggests that during the same period a not insignificant number of individuals in the craft did have well stocked shops and were increasing in prosperity, men such as Rauf Raice who in 1522 bequeathed forty pairs of shoes to a colleague and to 'every one of my apprentices a paryng knife and a cutting knife'.<sup>42</sup> Nor did the number of cordwainers taking up the freedom fall drastically in the late fifteenth century; according to the freemen's register they accounted for 26% of all leather workers in the years 1351-1400 and 33% by 1451-1500, figures which suggest that the demand for their product was well sustained.

Records survive from a number of towns of conflict between the cordwainer masters and the 'journeymen and servants of the seid craft,

39. Kramer, Craft guilds, p. 120.

40. Dyer, Worcester, p. 122.

41. Y.C.R. ii, pp. 57, 90, 93, iii, p. 95; Y.C.L. House books vii, fo. 5, 6. Three cordwainers were disenfranchised in 1527 for refusing the office of muremaster, which may have been imposed on them as a penalty: Y.C.R. iii, p. 108.

42. B.I., Prob. Reg. 9 fo. 240. The inventory survives of William Coltman, cordwainer, who was worth £12 in all and had thirty-two pairs of boots, shoes or slippers in stock at the time of his death; B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1486). For the wealth of cordwainers see below p. 435.

gretly disposed to riot and idelnes'.<sup>43</sup> The sheer size of the industry probably made it inevitable that the cordwainers' servants would band together in fraternities and unite to agitate more effectively for better pay. Ordinances survive from early fifteenth century York which condemned such 'conventicula et congregaciones illicitas et confederaciones prohibitas apud Fratres et alia loca in numero magno'. The council did however in this instance take the part of the servants over pay and raised piece rates despite the opposition of the masters.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless the rates still seem to have been rather lower than those paid in Bristol; the York masters paid 'pro sutera xii parium sotularium yerked ad manum iiii d' whereas in Bristol, for sewing and yarking one dozen shoes, a servant got 6d.<sup>45</sup>

When compared to the amount of local and national legislation governing the tanning industry, the working of oil and alum tawed leather appears to have been comparatively unregulated in the later middle ages. The implication of legislation passed much later in the time of James I was that the preparation of sheeps' leather required less investment than tanning: 'whereas in truth sheepskins are not met to be sealed nor were at any time appointed or limited by any former law to be sealed

43. Records of Norwich ii, p. 104 (1490).

44. Y.M.B. i, pp. 190-7 (n.d. c.1430). London journeymen were regularly in conflict with their masters: Cal. Plea. and Mem. Rolls 1298-1307, pp. 148-9, 1323-64, pp. 231-2; Riley, Memorials, pp. 495-6.

45. The Bristol ordinances are far simpler than the York ones, so extensive comparison is not possible; the Bristol rates were increased in 1408: Little Red Book ii, pp. 42-3, 105.

because the sealing of them is a fruitless charge and tending to the great hurt and loss of many thousand small men'.<sup>46</sup> Though tanners were forbidden to tan sheeps' leather they did do some tawing, for a set of ordinances directed against the malpractices of the butchers was sponsored in the late fourteenth century by the tanners, glovers and parchmentmakers, the craftsmen who 'atthatent touz les peaux laynuz queux les bouchers en yceste citee ount a vendre'.<sup>47</sup> In most towns where there is evidence of a craft of whit-tawers, the craftsmen were associated with other workers in soft leather. In Bristol ordinances were registered in the late fifteenth century for 'the Crafte and Ocupacion of Whittawers Pursers Glovers Poyntmakers Parchementmakers and Cosshyn Makers'; whit-tawers in Coventry and Norwich were joined with glovers and parchmentmakers.<sup>48</sup> In York there was no whit-tawers mystery and it was the glovers and parchmentmakers who dominated the preparation of tawed leather, the glovers being numerically more significant.<sup>49</sup> What seems to have happened in many towns is that one craft became dominant in this branch of the leather industry and made itself responsible for the preparation of the skins as well as the

46. 4 James 1 c.6, Statutes of the Realm iv, part ii, p. 1143.

47. Y.M.B. i, p. 82 (n.d.). The spinners of Norwich complained in turn that the butchers sold 'ther wolleskynnes in gret and grosse sommes to the whit lether tewers, perche makers, glovers and poyntmakers, in suche manere that the seide poore people be compelled bye nede to bye the pore mortes skynnes': Records of Norwich ii, p. 119 (1532).

48. Records of Norwich, ii, p. 183; C.L.B. i, p. 220; Great Red Book of Bristol i, pp. 116-119.

49. Whit-tawers are only mentioned once in the ordinances of the memorandum books, in the patoners' regulations of 1471: Y.M.B. ii, p. 142.

manufacture of the finished article. In London this role was taken by the leathersellers company which gradually absorbed the crafts of purser, glover, pointmaker and pouchmaker during the course of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.<sup>50</sup>

The inventory of John Grene, a glover, gives his stock at the time of his death as a dozen pairs of gloves, eight bags and eighteen purses.<sup>51</sup> Waterproof receptacles such as trunks and bottles had to be made of tanned leather, but the manufacture of soft bags and pouches from sheep and goat skins was generally combined with the making of gloves. During the second half of the fourteenth century twenty-three men appeared in the freemen's Register as pouchmakers, but only two more did so in the following 130 years and it is doubtful if the pouchmakers ever formed a mystery distinct from the glovers. The same was true of the pointmakers, who appear only sporadically in the register of freemen.<sup>52</sup>

The quality of gloves of course varied enormously. Heavy duty gloves were given to building workers as part of the terms of their employment or to agricultural workers for harvesting.<sup>53</sup> At the other extreme, gloves which were fine and richly decorated were frequently

50. Black, Company of leathersellers, pp. 26ff.

51. How limited Grene's stock was can be seen in comparison with that of Thomas Gryssop, chapman, who in 1446 had dozens of pairs of gloves and a whole range of purses: B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1525, 1444); Test. Ebor. iii, p. 52.

52. Points had to be made of flexible and strong leather lest they snap and 'wilde ware' that is deer or goat skins were considered most suitable: Black, Company of leathersellers, p. 32.

53. Fabric Rolls, pp. 11-12, 45; Salzman, Building in England, pp. 80-1; Thorold-Rogers, History of agriculture and prices i, p. 119. The gloves in the stock of Thomas Gryssop ranged in price for 1d. to 1s. 6d. a pair.

given as gifts. The fact that glovers were to some extent working in a luxury industry may account for the fact that they emerge fairly early in medieval records; the York glovers for instance were associated with the cordwainers in a gild as early as 1181.<sup>54</sup> The Wallingford tax returns show that there were as many as seventeen glovers in that town by 1227.<sup>55</sup>

Apart from the gloves manufactured in the city, imported items were also for sale; in 1475 it was ordered that any who sold 'glovez, pursez or keybandes called Ynglissh ware' should contribute to the glovers' pageant, although significantly the merchants were excepted from doing so.<sup>56</sup> Gloves manufactured overseas were also available; they occasionally appear detailed in the customs particulars for Hull, but were probably also imported under the general description of haberdashery.<sup>57</sup> Given this competition, which is likely to have increased towards the end of the fifteenth century, it is the more impressive that the York glovers were one of the few crafts whose numbers increased in absolute terms in the second half of the fifteenth century.

The fact that the gloving industry in other towns, particularly in Oxford, was growing during the same period may reflect a real increase in the market for the finer quality products of the industry during the later middle ages.<sup>58</sup>

54. See above p. 100.

55. Hist. MSS. Comm., 6th report, p. 576; they probably included some tailors.

56. Y.C.R. iii, p. 181; some of the goods of Thomas Gryssop were London ware.

57. E.g. P.R.O., E122/159/11 m.7 (1399), 61/71 m.1d (1453). Legislation against such imports was made in 3 Edward IV c.4, 1 Richard III c.12, Statutes of the Realm ii, pp. 396-7, 495-6.

58. V.C.H., Oxfordshire iv, p. 47.

Table 3:1. FIFTY YEAR TOTALS OF GLOVERS, POINTMAKERS AND POUCHMAKERS  
ADMITTED TO THE FREEDOM 1301-1534

Date	Number	Decadal average	% of all leather workers
1301-50	28	5.5	5.6
1351-1400	74	10.4	14.8
1401-50	48	7.7	9.6
1451-1500	62	13.4	12.4
1501-34	36	14.8	10.6

The skimmers of York, as must have been true of their colleagues in most provincial towns, probably did a great deal of their work in lamb and coneyskins, the furs that were in the price range of the majority of their customers. Groups of skimmers in Coventry and Bristol seem to have derived much of their income from the tawing of lambskins, often Irish in origin, which they sold to the London skimmers.<sup>59</sup> Most of the skins mentioned in the wills of York skimmers are of lamb, such as the 200 'pelles lanata' bequeathed by John Duffield to two of his friends.<sup>60</sup> Only one will mentions a more exotic fur, a 'tymbre de lettys' left by William Leeston in 1445.<sup>61</sup> Ordinances of the skimmers translated and

59. E.W. Veale, The English fur trade in the later middle ages (Oxford, 1966), pp. 153-4.

60. B.I., Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 68v (1394).

61. B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 121v; lettuce was the skin of the snow weasel: Veale, English fur trade, p. 220.

amended in 1431 indicate that at that date 'lamfell and conyngfell' formed the bulk of the skins coming into York.<sup>62</sup> Such items were of low value compared to squirrel or even more exotic imports such as ermine and mink which the York skimmers probably handled for the most part in small quantities. A list of wage rates drawn up in 1500 nevertheless indicates that even at this late date, when the skimmers had experienced a savage decline, they at least entertained the prospect of handling a very wide variety of skins, 'fechys', 'martrons', 'mynkys', 'bevers', 'calaber' and 'armyns' among others.<sup>63</sup>

The purchase of skins could be very expensive; the preparation or tawing of the skins was not, and very little equipment was required.<sup>64</sup> Whereas in London there was a separate craft of grey-tawers employed by the skimmers to prepare the pelts, in York this work was undertaken largely by the skimmers' servants. Sixteen men were admitted to the freedom as tawers; they probably did practise as grey-tawers rather than as whit-tawers and one indeed was described as a 'tewer of skynner stuff'.<sup>65</sup> All but two of these men were made free before 1400 however and the craft can never have had an independent existence in the city. Once the pelts had been tawed they were sewn together into furs, a process which could be incredibly laborious when the tiny squirrel skins were used.<sup>66</sup> The skill of the master skimmer lay in matching the pelts

62. Y.M.B. i, pp. 63-4.

63. Y.C.R. iii, pp. 189-90; fechys were polecat skins, calabre the Calabrian squirrel: Veale, English fur trade, pp. 217, 219.

64. Veale, English fur trade, p. 33.

65. Freemen's Reg., p. 220.

66. Veale, English fur trade, pp. 28-29.



at his disposal to their best advantage.<sup>67</sup>

The history of the York skinnners in the later middle ages is one of steady decline. Such evidence as there is suggests that in the late thirteenth century, and probably earlier, some skinnners were wealthy and probably influential men.<sup>68</sup> They, like others in the victualling and clothing crafts, profited by the presence of Edward I's government in the city; the king himself, though he bought the majority of his furs through London dealers, did purchase £33 18s. 6d. worth of furs from one Stephen Pelliparius of York in 1301-2.<sup>69</sup> It seems probable that at this stage the prosperity of the skinnners depended on the size of their sales of the more expensive furs that were being imported into England in increasing numbers during the thirteenth century, and coming direct to York through Hull.<sup>70</sup> This prosperity they seem to have sustained through much of the fourteenth century, when there was apparently sufficient work to support a large number of master craftsmen. Even as late as the reign of Richard II the customs particulars for Hull detail a variety of furs that were being carried through the port: budge, ermine, 'redewerk', 'rusyn werk', 'bever wombis', 'letus ware', 'otterfell' and 'katfell'; but from 1390 onwards few furs appear in any quantity.<sup>71</sup> During the

67. Veale, English fur trade, pp. 27-28.

68. York skinnners supplied Henry III when he was in York for Christmas: Liberate Rolls 1251-60, pp. 28-9 (1252). For the wealth of the skinnners see below p. 435. The same seems to be true of Northampton: Veale, English fur trade, p. 38.

69. Prestwich, York civic ordinances, p. 16; P.R.O., E101/359/18. By contrast the accounts of Edward III show all his purchases being made in London during the period of his residence in York e.g.: E101/387/13.

70. Veale, English fur trade, p. 71.

71. E.g. P.R.O., E122/59/8 m. 12d, 13, 13d, 15, 16 (1383-4), 59/23 m. 5, 6, 7. 7d (1391-3), 159/11 m. 7 (1398-9).

course of the fourteenth century the trade in furs had in fact become increasingly specialized and directed through London.<sup>72</sup>

The York skimmers by the fifteenth century came therefore to depend almost entirely on Londoners for their supplies of imported furs. Evidence for this growing dependence survives in a few instances; for example, Robert Skipwith, a York skimmer, owed £50 to a London skimmer William Wodehouse in 1376.<sup>73</sup> Skins arriving in London were however likely to be treated by Londoners and could therefore be sold ready for use directly to provincial tailors. There is also evidence that Londoners were selling to private customers in Yorkshire in the fifteenth century; there is a record of a debt case in 1436 in which William Topclyff of York, gentleman, owed £10 to a London skimmer.<sup>74</sup> A further problem with which the fifteenth century skimmers had to contend was a change in fashion away from small squirrel skins towards larger martin and budge skins, which meant a considerable reduction in labour in the making up of furs.<sup>75</sup>

The result of these pressures can be seen in the catastrophic decline of the skimmers' craft in the late fifteenth century. During the early years of the fifteenth century there were still a few prosperous families within the industry, most notably William Barton and his son William who owned extensive property in Walmgate and left wills

72. Veale, English fur trade, p. 71.

73. C.P.R. 1374-77, p. 281; this may be the case referred to in C.C.R. 1385-9, p. 306 (1387); Veale, English fur trade, p. 71 gives instances of debts of English merchants to London skimmers.

74. C.P.R. 1429-36, p. 486; Veale, English fur trade, pp. 55-6.

75. Veale, English fur trade, pp. 134-6.

of impressive length.<sup>76</sup> The inventory of Roger de Burton who died in 1428 shows on what insecure foundations prosperity could lie however; at the time of his death he was theoretically worth £303 7s. 3¼d, with a very impressive stock worth nearly £75; but so many of his transactions were done on credit that his executors found that they were in deficit to £17 14s. 2¼d.<sup>77</sup> After 1450 there is no evidence of any really prosperous skinners; the figures for men taking up the freedom in the craft dropped abruptly, and indeed between 1455 and 1472 ceased almost completely.<sup>78</sup>

Table 3:2. FIFTY YEAR TOTALS OF SKINNERS ADMITTED TO THE FREEDOM, 1301-1534.

Date	Number	Decadal average	% of all leather workers
1301-50	70	14.0	13.8
1351-1400	118	23.6	16.5
1401-50	117	23.4	18.8
1451-1500	29	5.8	6.3
1501-34	13	3.8	5.3

76. B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 408-9, 3 fo. 533v-534 (1438).

77. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1428); £162 worth of outstanding debts were owed to Barton, he himself was in debt to over £95. Barton's stock compared very favourably to those of London skinners: Veale, English fur trade, p. 86.

78. In these years only three men were made free as skinners, all by patrimony.

The drop was so abrupt that it appears almost to be a policy decision to rescue a grossly overmanned industry. It seems unlikely that the change can be accounted for by the growth of a few large workshops employing many servants; even the London skinners were not organized on this basis and there was apparently no trace of furrier-entrepreneurs in late medieval York.<sup>79</sup> As the skinners must have lost most of their business in imported furs, it would seem that the preparation of lamb and coney skins proved inadequate to sustain the industry. As it was the tailors who among the York crafts presented the most serious threat to the skinners, it may be that they were handling more of the business in inexpensive skins and getting the skinners or the glovers to taw them on a commission basis.<sup>80</sup> The developments in York seem to have been characteristic of the provincial skinning industry as a whole; in Oxford and in Lincoln the number of skinners also rapidly declined, almost to vanishing point, in the early sixteenth century.<sup>81</sup>

The two remaining crafts to be discussed in this chapter, the saddlers and the girdlers, have been included among the leather workers by virtue of the fact that their products contained a high proportion of leather. Both crafts in addition used metal and a variety of different

79. Veale, English fur trade, p. 84.

80. The skinners ordinances of 1500 refer to the tawing of skins by glovers: Y.C.R. ii, p. 152.

81. Veale, English fur trade, p. 151; V.C.H., Oxfordshire, iv, p. 46.

types of cloth in their work. The diversity of materials employed by the saddlers in particular seems to have attracted the attention of the authorities, for ordinances concerning the saddlers in York and elsewhere contain an unusual amount of detail about the quality of the materials which made up the saddle.<sup>82</sup> Presumably this was in part recognition of the considerable possibilities of fraud in a manufacturing process dependent on so many different components.

The frame of a saddle, the saddle tree, was usually made of wood, though in York leather saddle trees were permitted if they were strengthened with iron.<sup>83</sup> The frame was then covered with canvas and tanned or tawed leather or, for a particularly fine saddle, with velvet. Stirrup leathers and reins were generally required to be made of tawed calf or sheep skin, though in York ordinances of 1470 permitted henceforth 'stirrop lethyr's of blak barked lethir'.<sup>84</sup> The complexity of the construction of a good saddle may account for the fact that record survives of a guild of saddlers in York as early as 1181; by the early fourteenth century, when military demand was probably at its height, references to saddlers are fairly frequent.<sup>85</sup>

The differing demands of war and commerce both probably contributed towards making the York saddlers a fairly numerous craft; twenty-eight

82. E.g. Y.M.B. i, pp. 92-3; Hist. MSS. Comm., Beverley, pp. 99-100 (1409); J.W. Sherwell, History of the guild of saddlers of the city of London, (privately printed, 1956), p. 17.

83. Y.M.B. i, p. 91.

84. Y.M.B. i, p. 92.

85. Pipe roll 27 Henry II (P.R.S., 1909), p. 41 gives 'de x s. de misericordia sellariorum'; B.I., M2(1)a fo. 26, 33; C.C.R. 1318-23, p. 547 (1322).

men were listed as saddlers in the ordinances enrolled in 1387 and twenty-three in the new regulations of 1398.<sup>86</sup> The craft does not however seem to have been large enough to support the same division of labour as found among the London saddlers. In London there were crafts of fusters, who made the saddle trees, lorimers, who made harness, and painters, who decorated the finished article, all three of which were unwillingly subject to the control of the saddlers.<sup>87</sup> There are fusters recorded in the York freemen's register, but only eight took out the freedom during the period studied. They, and most of the other craftsmen who made component parts of saddles, probably worked under the saddlers if they were not actually the saddlers' servants. The York saddlers' ordinances of c.1387 imply that there was some piece work for one clause reads 'null de le dit artifice overa a penyworth of werk for a peny devant qil soit prove pur able par les serchours'.<sup>88</sup>

In certain respects however the control of the saddlers was limited. Painters in York were associated with stainers and goldbeaters and did not come under the aegis of the saddlers.<sup>89</sup> There was in addition a separate craft of spurriers, and it was they rather than the saddlers who had control of the lorimers. The fact that York supported two crafts of saddlers and spurriers, where in Norwich these crafts were combined in one fraternity, suggests that the York craftsmen found their

86. Y.M.B. i, pp. 88, 91.

87. G. Unwin, Gilds and companies of London (1935), pp. 85-7.

88. Y.M.B. i, p. 90.

89. See below p. 181n.

services in constant and fairly heavy demand.<sup>90</sup>

The work of the girdlers was, if anything, even more diverse than that of the saddlers. Leather girdles must have been common, as both tanners' and curriers' ordinances imply that the girdlers were among their main customers.<sup>91</sup> Girdles were also made of woollen and linen cloth or even, more expensively, silk. They were frequently decorated with latten or silver.<sup>92</sup> Silver decorated girdles occur fairly regularly as special bequests in wills and are also found in the inventories of the more prosperous craftsmen: the inventory of Hugh Grantham, a mason, made in 1410 included a girdle worth 36s. 8d; Richard Wynder, a wealthy pewterer who died in 1505, had three silver decorated girdles worth 13s. 4d., 18s. and 33s. 4d.<sup>93</sup> The sale of decorated girdles was probably one of the most lucrative parts of a girdler's business and so, unsurprisingly, the girdlers' work extended to the manufacture of buckles, ornamental fastenings and knobs, 'daggar chapes, purse knoppes, bulyons, book claspes, dawkes, dog colers' and other 'gere or harnesse of laton, stele or yren', although they apparently always purchased some items such as 'iren buccles that smythes makes'.<sup>94</sup> The one surviving inventory of a medieval girdler in York, that of Robert Tankard, who

90. English guilds, p. 42.

91. See above pp.97-8. The London girdlers were forbidden in 1344 to use any 'worse leather than ox leather': Riley, Memorials, p. 217.

92. Girdlers' regulations show much concern with the quality of metal used; C.P.R. 1327-30, p. 40 gives the rules for the London girdlers in 1327. See below p.365 for the case of a York girdler who used 'menged metal'.

93. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1410, 1505).

94. Y.M.B. 1, pp. 187, 185.

died in 1439, lists as in his shop leather, latton and iron wire, girdles, daggers and knives.<sup>95</sup> It was this connection with the metal crafts that accounts for the girdlers' association with the riveters in a gild whose ordinances, the earliest craft ordinances that survive from medieval York, were made in 1307.<sup>96</sup> In addition the girdlers were in competition for work with the saddlers; ordinances for 1417 read that 'nan sadeller ... perloune na hald with hym ... na servant nor man of the girdelercrafte to wyrk girdels or any other thing that partenes to girdelercrafte', and in 1475, that those who made 'hamydown', that is the collars of draught hourses, should contribute to the girdlers' pageant.<sup>97</sup>

The range of the girdlers' activities may have acted to their advantage in the late thirteenth century; large numbers of them appear in the first years of the register and account for nearly 23% of all leather workers made free before 1300. In the early years of the fourteenth century girdlers appear in the York records in association with mercers and possibly they served a function akin to the haberdashers of the early sixteenth century.<sup>98</sup> Some girdlers maintained this connection in the later middle ages but only one, Robert Rede, who died in 1505, can be shown to have any real degree of affluence, and by the early sixteenth century the craft appears to have become relatively

95. Test. Ebor. iii, p. 96.

96. Y.M.B. i, pp. 180-1.

97. Y.M.B. i, pp. 183, 186.

98. Yorkshire deeds i, p. 186, ii, pp. 205, 219, viii, p. 175; B.I., M2(4) f fo. 3.



insignificant both numerically and in terms of individual fortunes.<sup>99</sup>

The very variety of the girdlers' work may well have proved a disadvantage in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. On the one hand there had developed a large and powerful merchant class which dominated the wholesale trade; on the other hand the girdlers were likely to have lost work to specialized craftsmen, particularly among the metal industries. The council's policy of imposing a gild organization on all manufacture may have restricted the influence of the girdlers over what had been a miscellaneous group of craftsmen.<sup>100</sup> There is evidence that during the late fifteenth century the girdlers were attempting to regain their dominance over the smaller crafts, but they were unable to reverse the trend of their fortunes and certainly by the end of the period it was the haberdashers rather than the girdlers who had come to dominate the trade in small wares.<sup>101</sup>

Certain factors always worked to the advantage of many of the workers in the leather industries. Supplies of raw material were generally cheap and readily accessible. Additionally leather workers had a secure market; their products, though usually unremarkable, were in constant demand: bags, bottles, boxes, aprons and gloves and the endless requirement to renew or repair footwear. Their market may even

99. See table 3:3. P.R.O., C1/351/16, 351/56; see below p.

100. See below p. 310ff.

101. The girdlers attempted in the late fifteenth century to appropriate the work of the pinners: Y.C.R. i, p. 151; see below p. 203.

have increased in the later middle ages, for the relentless fall in the population produced higher living standards and the possibility of acquiring or replacing household goods with greater regularity. War always created a good market for leather goods such as saddles, harness and defensive clothing, but demand was also increased in a less dramatic way by growing commerce and communications.

The possibility of trafficking in raw materials was always a crucial issue in determining the prosperity of craftsmen and the fact that so high a proportion of freemen in the early years of the register, until 1350, were leather workers suggests that they had always been able to take advantage of such possibilities. By contrast the craftsmen of early fourteenth century Newcastle, faced with a 'sinister collusion' amongst the rich burgesses, complained that they had been barred from buying fresh hides to tan and sell.<sup>102</sup> The importance of retaining some control over supplies would appear to have become increasingly vital as the mercantile control over the urban economy tightened in the later fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries;<sup>103</sup> the strength of the tanners who could buy in a local market is evidence of this. The craftsmen who did not have direct access to raw materials, but depended on the agency of others, were not so successful; the cordwainers for example could not prosper as much as the tanners who supplied them. The experience of the skimmers in the late fifteenth

102. Other restrictions were placed on the purchase of sheep skins and wool: C.M. Fraser, 'Medieval trading restrictions in the North East', Archaeologia Aeliana xxxix, 4th ser. (1961), pp. 138-40.

103. See below Chapter 9.

century was devastating, as the domination of London merchants cut them off from supplies of expensive furs.

The change in the pattern of prosperity in the leather industry can be clearly seen in the contrasting fortunes of the tanners and the girdlers in the later middle ages. Both were crafts of some importance in the late thirteenth century, but whereas the tanners controlled a specific commodity and retained their position throughout the period, the interests of the girdlers were diverse and were undermined in the fifteenth century by the competing interests of a wide variety of craftsmen and tradesmen. Nevertheless whereas girdlers had been socially acceptable, the tanners were apparently not; the tanning trade was particularly noxious, but it is hard to say whether it was the smell of their work or of their profits which kept tanners, for the most part, outside the civic elite.

TABLE 3:3. ENTRANTS TO THE FREEDOM OF YORK, DECADAL TOTALS: LEATHER CRAFTS

	-1290	1291-1300	-1300	
			No.	%
Bookbinders				
Botellers				
Bucklermakers				
Sheathers				
Cobblers				
Cordwainers	9	12	21	15.0
Curriers		1	1	0.7
Girdlers	20	12	32	22.9
Glovers	4	6	10	7.1
Parchmentmakers	3		3	2.1
Patoners				
Pointmakers				
Pouchmakers				
Sadlers	2	4	6	4.3
Skinners	10	5	15	10.7
Tanners	37	14	51	36.4
Tawers				
Others		1	1	0.7
Total	85	55	140	

	1301-10	1311-20	1321-30	1331-40	1341-50	1301-50	
						No.	%
Bookbinders				1	1	2	0.4
Botellers				2		2	0.4
Bucklermakers							
Sheathers				3	1	4	0.8
Cobblers							
Cordwainers	20	26	27	40	63	176	34.8
Curriers	2	1		2	4	9	1.8
Girdlers	15	15	9	8	9	56	11.1
Glovers	1	3	4	6	12	26	5.1
Parchmentmakers	2		2	1	1	6	1.2
Patoners							
Pointmakers							
Pouchmakers	1				1	2	0.4
Sadlers	4	3	9	7	10	33	6.5
Skinners	4	8	18	22	18	70	13.8
Tanners	21	12	14	32	35	114	22.5
Tawers	1	1	1	1		4	0.8
Others			1	1		2	0.4
Total	71	69	85	126	155	506	

TABLE 3:3 (continued)

	1351-1360	1361-70	1371-80	1381-90	1391-1400	1351-1400	
						No.	%
Bookbinders		1				1	0.1
Botellers				1		1	0.1
Bucklermakers		1			2	3	0.4
Sheathers	6	5	1	1	1	14	1.9
Cobblers			1			1	0.1
Cordwainers	28	49	33	46	29	185	25.9
Curriers	8	5	6	2	6	27	3.8
Girdlers	22	17	9	1	9	58	8.1
Glovers	7	9	6	15	14	51	7.1
Parchmentmakers	3	4	2	4	4	17	2.4
Patoners		4	3		1	8	1.1
Pointmakers							
Pouchmakers	4	9	8	1	1	23	3.2
Saddlers	13	22	7	4	17	63	8.8
Skinner	15	28	21	28	26	118	16.5
Tanners	32	29	16	24	31	132	18.5
Tawers	2	1	1	4	1	9	1.3
Others	1	1				2	0.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>713</b>	
	1401-10	1411-20	1421-30	1431-40	1441-50	1401-50	
						No.	%
Bookbinders		1	1		1	3	0.5
Botellers	1	1				2	0.3
Bucklermakers		2	3	1		6	1.0
Sheathers		3		1		4	0.6
Cobblers		2	2	2	2	8	1.3
Cordwainers	35	42	37	28	34	176	28.3
Curriers	1	5	8	8	9	31	5.0
Girdlers	4	17	7	8	12	48	7.7
Glovers	4	9	16	8	11	48	7.7
Parchmentmakers	1	2	5	1	1	10	1.6
Patchers		3	1	2	1	7	1.1
Pointmakers							
Pouchmakers							
Sadlers	8	12	9	4	5	38	6.1
Skinner	18	31	25	21	22	117	18.8
Tanners	23	34	24	23	21	125	20.1
Tawers							
Others							
<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>623</b>	

TABLE 3:3 (continued)

	1451-60	1461-70	1471-80	1481-90	1491-1500		1451-1500	
					No.	%	No.	%
Bookbinders					1		1	0.2
Botellers		1					1	0.2
Bucklermakers								
Sheathers	1						1	0.2
Cobblers	2	2	8	3	5		20	4.3
Cordwainers	28	36	36	36	15		151	32.8
Curriers	3	7	2	5			17	3.7
Girdlers	6	8	9	1	4		28	6.1
Glovers	5	18	11	8	15		57	12.4
Parchmentmakers	2	2	2	3	3		12	2.6
Patoners	2	3	1				6	1.3
Pointmakers	1	1	1	1	1		5	1.1
Pouchmakers	1						1	0.2
Sadlers	5	8	6	9	4		32	6.9
Skinners	7	1	5	11	5		29	6.3
Tanners	23	18	13	29	16		99	21.5
Tawers		1		1	1		3	0.6
Others								
Total	86	106	94	107	70		463	
	1501-10	1511-20	1521-30	1531-34	1501-34		TOTAL	
					No.	%	No.	%
Bookbinders		3	1	1	5	2.1	12	0.4
Botellers	1	1		1	3	1.2	9	0.3
Bucklermakers							9	0.3
Sheathers							23	0.9
Cobblers	1	2	1		4	1.6	33	1.2
Cordwainers	31	18	22	9	80	33.0	789	29.4
Curriers	2	3	5	2	12	4.9	97	3.6
Girdlers	4	1	4	1	10	4.1	232	8.6
Glovers	9	10	11	3	33	13.6	225	8.4
Parchmentmakers	1	2	6	3	12	4.9	60	2.2
Patoners							21	0.8
Pointmakers	1	1			2	0.8	7	0.3
Pouchmakers			1		1	0.4	27	1.0
Saddlers	5	3	6	3	17	7.0	189	7.0
Skinners	3	7	3		13	5.3	362	13.5
Tanners	18	18	10	5	51	21.0	572	21.3
Tawers							16	0.6
Others							5	0.2
Total	76	69	70	28	243		2688	

TABLE 3:3 (continued)

Footnotes

1. Includes bowgemakers.

#### Chapter 4. THE VICTUALLING CRAFTS

The prosperity of a medieval town depended, above all else, on a healthy market, through which the citizens could be provided with a constant supply of victuals. In some respects towns were dependent on imports, for example for supplies of wine and salt fish. In general however the food supplies of a town came from its hinterland. By the later middle ages a long-distance trade in grain was established in areas where water transport was accessible; the high cost of moving bulk products overland meant however that most grain was sold into the local market.<sup>1</sup> Supplies of meat were probably drawn from a somewhat wider area, large cities such as York and Coventry acting as an 'entrepot for livestock'.<sup>2</sup>

A town such as York acted as the focus of a series of smaller markets spread throughout the rural hinterland. It was imperative for a large town that its market should remain attractive to dealers within this region. Competition from other urban centres could, in times of scarcity, put an almost intolerable pressure on lines of supply.<sup>3</sup> York was fairly happily situated in a region of varied, and in places rich, agricultural production. The vale of York and the area of Holderness produced wheat, barley was grown on the Wolds and livestock farming was

1. Bolton, Medieval English economy, pp. 172-3, 95; N.S.B. Gras, The evolution of the English cornmarket from the twelfth to the eighteenth centuries (Cambridge, Mass., 1915), pp. 71-3.
2. Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a city, p. 29.
3. As was the case in Coventry in the early sixteenth century: Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a city, p. 58.



important in the West Riding. Additionally, being situated on the Ouse, York was ideally placed as a centre for both short and long-distance trade in victuals.<sup>4</sup>

Medieval legislation on the food trade was designed to ensure a continuous supply of untainted victuals at a fair price. In the circumstances this meant that the major preoccupations of such legislation were to prevent the engrossing of supplies by various interest groups, and to provide an orderly and just market. Complaints against engrossing and price-fixing are a constant theme in the surviving national and local records. All too often it was the city authorities who connived at such malpractices for their own advantage. Complaints made by the 'lesser burgesses' in a number of towns in the troubled years of the late-thirteenth century centred on abuses in the victualling trades, particularly the engrossing of the fish trade by a few rich men in coastal towns.<sup>5</sup> The most notorious example of opposition to the victuallers that occurred in the fourteenth century was that led by John of Northampton in London in the 1370's and 1380's.<sup>6</sup>

The present chapter is concerned with the way that the sale of food and drink was regulated in York. Some account has been given of the sources of supply drawn on by the York victuallers, but a prolonged discussion of this issue has been postponed to a later chapter, which considers York as a market.<sup>7</sup> The argument here therefore concerns the conflicting interests of the crafts and the city council, a consideration

4. For a fuller discussion of these points see below, chapter 9.
5. Reynolds, English medieval towns, p. 133.
6. Thrupp, Merchant class, pp. 75-80.
7. See below chapter 9.

of the extent to which the crafts controlled the supply of food and drink and an attempt to establish the membership of the victualling gilds.

The victualling craftsmen can generally be defined as those who were to some extent concerned with the processing of food as well as its sale. Although the freemen's register does record the names of a few 'chesers' and 'fruiters', men who specialized in the retailing of a specific product, such instances are rare.<sup>8</sup> Even in the corn market the professional middleman, the cornmerchant, does not appear in the York records until the late fifteenth century.<sup>9</sup> There were however two crafts among the victuallers who were not concerned with the processing of food, namely the fishmongers and the vintners; both of these crafts were, perhaps as a consequence, unusually nebulous groups until well into the fifteenth century. The victualling craftsmen will be considered here in two groups: firstly those concerned with the sale of food, i.e. the bakers, butchers, cooks and saucers, fishmongers; secondly those in the drink trade, i.e. the brewers, taverners and vintners. The grocers who handled expensive imported spices and fruits have not been analyzed for they operated as merchants rather than craftsmen.

Legislation, both national and local, controlling the victualling trade was of course abundant. Continual efforts were made to introduce order into the confusing variety of weights and measures in use. The earliest piece of national legislation, one that was to be constantly

8. In London where the food industry was perforce conducted on a large scale, fruiterers and cheesmongers did form separate crafts:

1. Unwin, Gilds and Companies of London, p. 370.

9. See below pp. 377-8.

reiterated, was the clause in Magna Carta which required that there should be a single standard of weights and measures throughout the realm; this was more fully elaborated in the Assize of weights and measures of the late thirteenth century.<sup>10</sup> Later legislation tended to specify the measures for a particular type of foodstuff: corn, fish or wine.<sup>11</sup> Local authorities were expected to enforce these standards rigidly, and each city was to have a set of sealed weights and measures according to the standard of the Exchequer.<sup>12</sup> These were to be checked for accuracy twice a year and against them the measures of all craftsmen in the city were to be tested.

In addition to the general legislation on weights and measures, specific steps were taken to control the standard and price of certain staple goods. The first national assize of bread dates from the reign of Henry II.<sup>13</sup> A fuller statement was given in the Assize of bread and ale, usually dated as 51 Henry III; this was elaborated further in the Judgement of pillory and the Statute of bakers attributed to the same date, which provided the machinery for the enforcement of the assize.<sup>14</sup>

10. 25 Edward I Magna Carta c.25; Assize of weights and measures; Statutes of the realm i, pp. 117, 204-5. The growth of commerce and the elaboration of weights gave rise to the issue of explanatory tables: 'Select tracts and table books relating to English weights and measures' ed. H. Hall and F.J. Nicholas in Camden Miscellany xv (Camden Society 3rd. series xi, 1929).
11. 1 Henry V c. 10, 22 Edward IV c. 2, 1 Richard III c. 13, Statutes of the realm, pp. 174, 470-1, 496-7.
12. Y.M.B. ii, p. 13; Y.C.R. iii, p. 186. In 1335 a royal commission was appointed to test all weights in York because the mayor and bailiffs had not duly exercised their office to do so: C.P.R. 1334-38, p. 213.
13. A.C. Ross, 'The assize of bread', Ec.H.R. 2nd. series ix (1956-7), p. 335.
14. Statutes of the realm i, pp. 199-204; Ross, 'Assize of bread', pp. 335-6. For a discussion of the assize see below p. 130-2.

National legislation accordingly provided the framework within which local ordinances regulating the food industry were made. Registered local ordinances concerning the victuallers are very different to those concerning other industries. Although there are references to the organization of victualling guilds, the extensive surviving ordinances relating to victualling, both from York and elsewhere, were not primarily concerned with the regulation of labour but with the supply of food. The location of markets in the city was strictly regulated. According to a bakers' ordinance of 1479 corn was sold on Pavement.<sup>15</sup> By 1500 there was also a malt market next to St. Martin, Coney Street.<sup>16</sup> However the main food market in the city was Thursday market. Ordinances made in 1389 required that all foreigners bringing victuals to the city were to bring them to Thursday market; they were specifically forbidden either to hawk their wares around the city or to sell them from the hostel where they were staying, thereby avoiding the supervision of the market officials.<sup>17</sup> There was evidently some difficulty in enforcing this regulation because it was repeated in 1500 and also appears in the bakers' ordinances of 1479, the butchers' ordinances of 1528 and the poulterers' ordinances of 1485.<sup>18</sup> By contrast the York butchers were, in 1528, restricted to selling in their own shops 'according to ancient custom in the city and not in Thursday

15. Y.M.B. i, p. 172.

16. Y.C.R. ii, p. 155.

17. Y.M.B. i, pp. 45-6. H. Richardson, Medieval fairs and markets of York (St. Anthony's Hall Publications xx, York 1961) is confusing on the subject of markets for he wrongly describes Pavement as the market for all corn and victuals.

18. Y.C.R. ii, p. 155, Y.M.B. i, p. 171, Y.C.R. iii, p. 188, Y.C.R. i, p. 113.

market!<sup>19</sup>

Foreign craftsmen, particularly butchers and bakers, were encouraged to come and sell in the city markets in order to reduce the power of the city's victuallars. In 1425 as a result of constant complaints that the butchers of York were selling meat 'ad precium nimis excessivum', licence was given to foreign butchers to come to the city to sell cut meat without any hindrance from the butchers; ordinances of 1431 gave to the butchers the right to raise pageant money from the foreign butchers but by 1482 the foreign butchers were once again allowed to sell meat free of all charges.<sup>20</sup> In Coventry in 1421 both foreign butchers and bakers were invited to come and sell in the city 'any day of the weke, and allso to take a house in what streit he will' without any hindrance from the denizen craftsmen.<sup>21</sup> The hostility that could be occasioned by foreign victuallars is quite evident from a Beverley ordinance of 1370 which required the town butchers to stand at one end of the market and the foreign butchers at the other end, with the bakers in between them, and that the two sets of butchers should not be allowed to enter the market at the same time.<sup>22</sup>

A clear intention of the surviving market regulations was to allow the ordinary citizens a chance to buy what they needed in the market before letting the victuallars have access to the goods. In York and

19. Y.C.R. iii, p. 115. By contrast a butcher's ordinance of Leicester states that no butcher was to sell in his house or shop, but only in the common shambles; the principle was the same, to ensure that the sale of goods was properly supervised: Records of Leicester ii, p. 292 (1467).
20. Y.M.B. i, pp. 57-8; Y.C.R. i, p. 53.
21. C.L.B. i, pp. 24, 26.
22. Hist. MSS. Comm., Beverley, p. 71.

Bristol bakers were forbidden to buy corn in the market before mid-day; the York ordinance dates from 1479, and that of Bristol from 1327.<sup>23</sup> There was particular concern over the activities of cooks and other regrators who bought food specially for resale. It was recognized, perhaps grudgingly, that such men and women offered a genuine service, but a suspicious eye was kept on their behaviour. In 1485 it was ordered that 'noo caters nor huksters nor inholders goo to bie noo vitaille but in the common market'.<sup>24</sup> Their marketing hours were supposed to be restricted, although a fifteenth-century ordinance implies that these were not adhered to: 'and that cukes and regratours kepe thayr tyme of byyng als thayr constitucions and governaunce of thys citee wyll apon payn that falles thar for. Thay knawe it wele ynogh: That ys to say that na cuke, be hym self na nane other, by na flesh, fysh na nother maner of vitaille fra evynsang ryng at Seint Michel kyrk at Osebryghend on to the morne that prime stryke at the mynster, bot on to the valu of xviii d. q<sup>a</sup> for dyners of travelyng men'.<sup>25</sup> The same ordinances are frequently found elsewhere. In Bristol cooks and other regrators of 'puchons, small Bryddes, grete Bryddes other wildefoule Capons Hennys gees Conynges or any other such vitaille' were in 1451 forbidden to buy before 10 a.m.<sup>26</sup> The same rule applied in Norwich where in 1373 cooks and regrators were forbidden to buy before the mass

23. Y.M.B. i, p. 172; Little Red Book ii, p. 221; Great Red Book of Bristol i, p. 140. In Worcester bakers could not buy corn in the market until 11 a.m. in summer and mid-day in winter: English Gilds, p. 381 (1467).
24. Y.C.R. i, p. 113.
25. Y.M.B. i, p. 224. Regulations of 1389 banned the town victuallers from purchasing anything in the market before 10 a.m.: Y.M.B. i, p. 46.
26. Great Red Book of Bristol i, pp. 134-5.

bell.<sup>27</sup> In 1279 Leicester regrators were granted permission to buy calves, pigs and sheep live but only to sell them again cooked.<sup>28</sup>

The regrators were middle men who served a useful function if closely controlled. The forestaller however was unacceptable. Forstalling was the practice of going out of town to buy up in advance supplies coming to the market. It was banned by statute and forstallers were described in the Statute of Bakers as 'an open oppresor of poor people' a sentiment echoed in the York ordinances of 1301 where stiff penalties were imposed for forestalling victuals.<sup>29</sup>

As bread was the staple food in medieval society, it was inevitably subject to national legislation from a very early date. The basic principle of the Assize of bread from the late twelfth century onwards was to establish a fixed relationship between the price and the weight of a loaf. The price of a loaf was to remain standard at a farthing, halfpenny or penny depending on the quality, and the weight was to vary according to the literal weight of a penny so that for example when a quarter of wheat sold for 18d. the 'wastel bread of a farthing white and wel baked shall weigh iv li x s. viii d.' but when a quarter of wheat cost 7s. the same loaf weighed xix s. and at the worst should wheat cost 20s. a quarter, the loaf only weighed ii s. ix d. three farthings.<sup>30</sup> Different price-weight ratios were established for

27. Records of Norwich ii, p. 82.

28. Records of Leicester i, pp. 180-1.

29. Statute of Bakers, Statutes of the realm i, p. 203; Prestwich, York civic ordinances,

30. Ross, 'Assize of bread', p. 334.

pp. 13-14

different qualities of bread. White bread called wastel, simnel, cocket or main bread in the York ordinances was the finest and most expensive; main or Sunday bread along with wine and other delicacies, was customarily presented by the York council to the dignitaries whom they wished to impress or influence.<sup>31</sup> Bastard wastel and simnel, mentioned in a York assize of 1412 were less expensive and therefore presumably coarser, as was 'panis integer', the commonest form of bread, made of whole wheat.<sup>32</sup> An even cheaper loaf could be made with the lowest grade of flour.<sup>33</sup> Ordinances made in 1301 for the regulation of the baking industry required that 'each baker is to have his own sign for marking his bread and a bolting cloth as is proper for wastel, simnel, demesne and cocket bread'.<sup>34</sup>

In York the mayor and bailiffs or sheriffs had the responsibility for fixing and enforcing the assize of bread. It is not possible to know how often this was done in York, though detailed records survive for other provincial towns; in Southampton for example the assize was altered six times between October 1482 and September 1483.<sup>35</sup> The assize was meant to be checked at regular intervals to see that bread was conforming to standards; this should have happened four times a year at least, preferably more often.<sup>36</sup> The chamberlains' accounts which survive for the fifteenth century show these controls in operation

31. Chamberlains' rolls, pp. 15, 33, 34, 63.

32. Y.M.B. i, p. 167; Ross, 'Assize of bread', p. 333.

33. Assize of bread and ale, Statutes of the realm i, p. 199.

34. The bolting cloth was for sifting the flour.

35. Ross, 'Assize of bread', p. 332n. The Leicester records give the price of wheat taken for the assize from October 1352 - September 1353: Records of Leicester ii, p. 89.

36. Ross, 'Assize of bread', p. 334.



and the fairly substantial fines that were exacted for failure to bake to the assize. In 1433-4 amercements on bakers ranged from 16d. to 26s. 8d.; in 1475-6 eleven men are listed as having baked substandard bread or for other contraventions of the ordinances of their craft.<sup>37</sup>

The assize of bread has, with reference to the London bakers, been described as 'regularized lynch law'.<sup>38</sup> It is doubtful if the York bakers were quite so disadvantaged as this would imply in the later middle ages, but they were undoubtedly subject to a far greater degree of effective control than that exercised over most other craftsmen. The bakers were however in a position to seriously threaten supplies if they chose, as was the case of the Coventry bakers who in 1484 'sodenly departed oute of the seid Cite unto Bakynnton, levying the seid Cite destitute of bred'.<sup>39</sup> Not surprisingly therefore they were liable to be heavily penalised for failing to bake; in 1485 the York bakers 'for so moche as the Bakers of the Citie now of late had noo brede baked within ther housez to be sold to the Comoners of this Citie, to the grete hurt of the same, the said bakers shall pay in name of a fyne to the Chambre v marks'.<sup>40</sup> In 1357 the Leicester bakers were warned that if any flour was found in their houses when the town was without bread, they would forfeit it, and again in 1467 they were threatened with imprisonment if the town lacked bread.<sup>41</sup>

37. Chamberlains' rolls, pp. 10-11, 144-5.

38. Williams, Medieval London, p. 172. S. Thrupp, Short history of worshipful company of bakers (1933), p. 54 considered that the assize laws were an advantage to the bakers and that whilst they were in force the bakers' company enjoyed a virtual monopoly.

39. C.L.B. ii, p. 519.

40. Y.C.R. i, p. 124.

41. Records of Leicester ii, pp. xxxix, 107.

It seems clear that the professional bakers in York made a large proportion of the city's bread. There were obviously alternative sources, though how much of the market was satisfied by these cannot be known. There were 'diverse ande mykell bredes baket in the countrie ande to this cite broght' ... though according to an ordinance of 1479 'the which bredes often tyme ben chawset, unhelefull and evill seissend and also not of weght according to the assise thereof'.<sup>42</sup> The offloading of sub-standard bread through hucksters was consequently forbidden, and all country bread was ordered to be sold in the market. There must also have been a considerable amount of private baking for purely domestic consumption.<sup>43</sup> Between the professional bakers and those making bread only for their immediate family must have been a number of people who baked a small quantity of loaves for sale; the wife of Thomas Milne, a saddler, was fined for selling bread contrary to the assize in 1499.<sup>44</sup> Another uncertainty is that the ownership of the bakehouses in York cannot be ascertained. Evidence from London at the beginning of the fourteenth century shows that most bakehouses there were leased to bakers rather than owned by them, many by the grain wholesalers.<sup>45</sup> Unfortunately for York there is no indication of how many common ovens there were or the extent to which the bakers owned

42. Y.M.B. i, pp. 170-1.

43. Inventories of craftsmen show it was not uncommon for a householder to have a separate 'bowting house' for example those of John Stubbs, barber (1451), John Tennand, founder (1516): Test. Ebor. v, pp. 79-80. BI, D/C Original wills and inventories.

44. Chamberlains' rolls, p. 197.

45. Williams, Medieval London, p. 162.

their own premises.<sup>46</sup>

It would appear that, in contrast to many of the manufacturing crafts, the professional bakers of York had been accustomed to take out the freedom in some numbers in the late thirteenth century and early fourteenth century.

TABLE 4:1: "FIFTY YEAR TOTALS" FOR ADMISSIONS TO THE FREEDOM AS BAKERS TO 1534

Date	Number	Decadal average	% of victuallers
-1300	38		40.0
1301-50	77	15.4	17.5
1351-1400	101	20.2	22.4
1401-50	133	26.6	22.7
1451-1500	109	21.8	20.6
1501-34	57	16.8	17.8
Total	515	20.4	21.3

Fortunately there is a means of checking the accuracy of the freemen's register for the victualling crafts in the early fourteenth century.

In 1301 ordinances were drawn up to prevent price fixing; it was found these ordinances were frequently ignored, so in 1304 proceedings were

46. Many probably did rent their bakehouses, as did Robert de Sutton, baker, who leased a bakehouse and house off Coppergate from John Gra in the 1330's: Y.C.L., YC/AT G70:16 (endowment deed of the Gra chantry, 1338).

taken in the Exchequer against the offenders and a list of those who broke the victualling ordinances was recorded.<sup>47</sup> Of twenty-four bakers of white bread whose names were listed, sixteen appear in the freemen's register, though only nine of these men were described in the register as bakers.<sup>48</sup> By contrast, of the bakers of black bread only four out of twelve appear in the register.<sup>49</sup> The implication of these figures would seem to be that the white bread bakers of the late thirteenth century and early fourteenth century included a high proportion of fairly substantial and independent craftsmen, some of whom were probably occupied in commerce.<sup>50</sup> The bakers of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries do not seem to have been similarly distinguished; the depression of their status may well be associated with the growing mercantile dominance of the city.

The first surviving ordinances of the bakers date from the late fourteenth century and tend to confirm the view that the bakers had been a fairly exclusive craft; the entry fee was very high, being 40s. for foreigners and 4 marks for aliens.<sup>51</sup> However another clause of the same

47. Prestwich, York civic ordinances, pp. 18-28.

48. Prestwich, York civic ordinances, p. 22.

49. Despite the distinction made in 1304, there never seem to have been separate crafts of black and white bread makers in York. Even in London, where there were specific regulations to keep the black and white bread makers distinct, there is no reason to believe that these were adhered to, and the crafts amalgamated in 1486: Thrupp, Company of bakers, p. 121.

50. For the changing implications of the freedom of the city see below p.302-5; for the traffic in grain see below p.377-80. The failure of the York authorities to enforce the assize of bread and ale adequately in the 1330's may imply that they were closely concerned with these trades themselves: C.P.R. 1334-8, p. 213. This may also be true of the Lincoln officials accused of the same offence in 1331: Hill, Medieval Lincoln, p. 246.

51. Y.M.B. i, p. 168.

ordinances implies that in some respects the bakers' powers had been circumscribed, for their right to search the bread brought by foreigners to the city had been challenged.<sup>52</sup> The fifteenth century saw further restrictions, the ban on bakers purchasing corn in the market before 10 a.m. and the strict enforcement of the assize. The York bakers did not however have to submit themselves, as did the Coventry bakers, to the imposition of a mayoral nominee as the keeper of the craft.<sup>53</sup>

The case of William Barker, dating from 1494 shows well the operation of a number of ordinances which controlled the work of the bakers and the procedures taken in order to execute judgement, in this case against a very spirited defendant. Barker had bought corn in the market, contrary to the ordinances of the craft of bakers, and

'that wher he had bought twenty quarter of whete  
of an estraunger he wold not mete the said whete  
with the Kyngs standerd bot in dispit cast it from  
hym and broke it. Item that he rebukyd the  
enquest of the wardayn court for that they had  
presented a defaute of hym in the said court.  
Item that he put to saile maynebred and levagn  
bred whiche was chaffed and myldewed and unholosome  
for manys body. Item that he disobeyed my lord  
Maier and wold not come unto hym when diverse tymes  
he sent for hym no wold not spere his wyndowe when  
he was comaunded by John Sponer, one of the Maier

52. Y.M.B. i, p. 169.

53. C.L.B. iii, p. 669.

sergiaunts, but rebuked the said sergiant. Item  
 that when he came tofore my lord Maier he rebuked  
 my lord Maier and the Chamberleyns saying unto the  
 Maier - Man, the next yere I shalbe your neghbour;  
 and to one of the Chamberleyns - Come without the  
 dore and I shall prove apou ye you said falsly of  
 me, with myche other obprobriouse language'.<sup>54</sup>

An additional limitation of the bakers of the later middle ages was the ruling preventing them from working as millers. John Custance was a particularly successful baker who acquired the lease of one of the common mills of the city in 1487 'soo that he set into the same a suffisaunt and ane able milner that can well and truly serve the kings people at all such seasons as they shall have recowse for to the same from grynding of any maner of graynes'.<sup>55</sup> A general ruling forbidding any baker from hiring a mill was passed in Beverley in 1366.<sup>56</sup> The principle guiding such a rule was that the craftsmen could thereby be more effectively prevented from cheating the customer. The same principle was applied to the baking of horse bread for inns.<sup>57</sup> Hence 'null hosteler de la citee face ascun payne de homme ou de chival deinz son hostell pur vendre, forspris ceux quelx sount commune pestours de la citee'.<sup>58</sup> Eventually even the proviso about the common bakers was

54. Y.C.R. ii, p. 106.

55. Y.C.L., House books vi fo. 101. For the location of the mills around York see V.C.H., City of York, pp. 506-9.

56. Hist. MSS. Comm., Beverley, p. 85.

57. The main ingredient of horse bread was beans, the price of beans regulating the price of bread: Y.M.B. i, p. 43; Y.C.R. i, p. 65.

58. Y.M.B. i, p. 169.

regarded as giving licence to fraudulent practice. In 1477 bakers who kept hostelries were forbidden to bake horsebread and in 1503 all bakers were forbidden to keep inns.<sup>59</sup> In return bakers were given full right of search over hostelries. Regulations with similar intent exist for Worcester in 1467, Beverley in 1458, and Bristol in 1451-2; at Coventry in 1513 it was agreed that 'the bakers kepe no hostryes accordyng to the olde rule of the Citee, nor no Inholder bake horsbrede within them'.<sup>60</sup>

The medieval butchers were potentially rich and powerful men.<sup>61</sup> They had easy access to livestock and themselves operated as graziers whenever possible.<sup>62</sup> Their products were in constant demand, not only meat, but also the hides, tallow and horn which they supplied to the tanners, curriers, candlemakers, cooks and horners. It is unsurprising therefore to find that the butchers came under close official control. The York records contain extensive entries relating to the butchers which for the most part were concerned to limit their powers, to prevent them from establishing too firm a hold on the market, thereby artificially inflating the price of their products. Something has already been said about the power granted to foreigners to sell meat in the city.<sup>63</sup> Attempts were also apparently made to open the trade in meat to non-butchers in York although the men involved were likely to

59. Y.C.R. i, p. 21; ibid., p. 182.

60. English guilds, p. 406; Hist. MSS. Comm., Beverley, p. 87; Great Red Book of Bristol i, p. 144; C.L.B. iii, p. 638.

61. For the wealth of the butchers see below p. 434.

62. There were numerous livestock dealers in the West Riding who probably handled much of the stock reared in the Pennines; for the trade in livestock in general see below pp. 376-7, 380-81.

63. See above p. 128.

be ostracized by the rest of the craft. Hugh Wolley, a haberdasher, was granted permission by the mayor and council in 1522 to work as a butcher without paying 'upset' fees.<sup>64</sup> One month later he was presented by the butchers' searchers to the mayor for selling 'a fowle swyne, the whiche was not holsome for mans body'.<sup>65</sup>

The staple of the butchers' trade was apparently beef. This was considered so important that in Coventry in 1533 it was ordained that 'if eny of the seid bochers and vittailours sell, or kill to sell eny Mottons, veilles or porkes and have no beif to sell ... that then the seid Motton, veill and porke, and every of theme shal-be forfeited'.<sup>66</sup> Though the butchers probably controlled most of the trade in beef and mutton, there must have been a considerable number of smaller animals, such as pigs, rabbits and hens, kept and slaughtered privately. It seems to have been general practice among citizens, butchers and non-butchers alike, to keep pigs in the city. In 1301, 1371 and 1398 legislation was passed to keep pigs off the street; by 1498 they were banned from the city altogether.<sup>67</sup> It is likely that other victuallers kept and killed their own stocks. In Norwich in 1373 a formal complaint was lodged against the cooks who were feeding calves, lambs and other animals in their own houses to the hurt of the butchers.<sup>68</sup> A late piece of evidence from Coventry, dating from 1525, accepts that anyone

64. Y.C.L., House books x fo. 37. (His name was spelt Howlley in this entry.)
65. Y.C.R. iii, p. 83.
66. C.L.B. iii, p. 715.
67. Prestwich, York civic ordinances, p. 16; Y.M.B. i, pp. 18, 64; Y.C.R. iii, p. 188. See also the compliant against pig-styes: C.C.R. 1296-1302, p. 218.
68. Records of Norwich ii, p. 81.



might slaughter livestock and merely specifies that 'if any person of this Citie beyng no bocher do kylle eny beiffes, Mottons, veilles, porkettes or lambes within this Citie he shall not retayll eny of the seid vitall by less porcion than the half or the quarter'.<sup>69</sup>

The problem of the butchers' offal was in York as elsewhere a perennial one. The slaughterhouses were apparently near the Shambles and various places were appointed for the disposal of refuse. Such regulations seem to have been disregarded and the Friars Minor, situated by Ouse Bridge, suffered particularly from the reckless disposal of offal into that part of the river from which they drew their water supplies.<sup>70</sup>

Many butchers owned livestock, much of it probably purchased for fattening before sale; over a third of the extant wills of butchers contain bequests of livestock or show the testator to have been in possession of grazing land. In 1445 John Pereson bequeathed ten oxen, four cows, three horses and three foals; Robert Brewer, who died in 1441, bequeathed 'xviii shephoges existent' apud Stokton super moram, 'iiii whystrykes' and 'iiii oxtrikes'.<sup>71</sup> John Brockett owned two closes in Thorparch at the time of his death in 1450 and Richard Robynson owed tithes in Nun Monkton, Kirk Hammerton and Hatfield, whilst also bequeathing money to the churches of Nether Poppilton, Over

69. C.L.B. iii, p. 689.

70. C.C.R. 1369-74, p. 438; Y.M.B. i, pp. 15, 17-18. For legislation concerning the London butchers see E.L. Sabine, 'Butchering in medieval London', *Speculum* viii (1933), pp. 335-53. Bristol ordinances of 1451-2 required that animals should only be slaughtered in the appointed places: *Great Red Book of Bristol* i, pp. 143-4.

71. B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 109-109v, 2 fo. 18v-19. Pereson's will is transcribed in Appendix A.

Popplinton and Acomb when he died in 1497.<sup>72</sup> Records of the administration of Galtres forest shows that from the early fourteenth century and probably earlier York butchers were being amerced for trespassing with their animals; William de Carleton, butcher of York was fined in 1318-19 for having thirteen pigs in the forest.<sup>73</sup> In 1328-9 Richard de Strensall, another York butcher, was granted herbage for 200 sheep within Galtres forest.<sup>74</sup>

By the end of the fifteenth century the butchers apparently owned so much livestock that they were tending to monopolize grazing land near the city to the detriment of the citizens, and also possibly creating a situation where it was easier for them to restrict supplies to their own advantage. This at least seems to be the reason for the series of enactments by the city council, strenuously opposed by the butchers, to prevent them from holding any grazing land within six miles of the city. The six mile limit was apparently first imposed in 1480, though temporarily relaxed in 1481, but subsequently reimposed, though reduced to four miles in 1524.<sup>75</sup> The butchers wished to have the ban permanently lifted 'as other cities and boroghes doith in other conties; and so they to be ordred in takyng to ferme grese fermeholds nygh to cities and burghs'.<sup>76</sup> Their petitions went unheeded save for the concession that 'it shalbe lefull to ychone to hold a close price x s.

72. B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 212v-213, 5 fo. 510-510v.

73. P.R.O. E101/130/6 (Forest of Galtres attachments roll 10-17

73 Edward II). I am most grateful to Jean Birrell for giving me this and the following references.

74. P.R.O. E101/130/10.

75. Y.C.R. iii, pp. 45, 67; Y.C.L., House books ii fo. 15.

76. Y.C.R. iii, p. 48.

by yere or under for ther hakney hors'.<sup>77</sup>

Other steps were taken to prevent the butchers from employing restrictive practices. In 1428 they were ordered to open their shops at certain hours on Sundays.<sup>78</sup> Five butchers were committed to prison in 1480 for unspecified obstinacy and disobedience.<sup>79</sup> In 1495 'for that they had not flesche on the synod day next after pasche and other diverse tyme this yere past to serve the Kynges people and diverse other offenses by theym comyt this yere shal pay unto the Chamberleyns v li. to [be] employed to the comen well'.<sup>80</sup> Again on this occasion, after refusing to pay the fine, certain butchers were sent to prison and there remained for two months, only being let out in order to cope with the Christmas demand. In Coventry it was specifically stated in 1421 and again in 1523 that butchers were to be allowed to kill as much meat as they liked and 'that no cave nor ordenaunce be made among the bochers to the contrary'.<sup>81</sup>

Regulations were designed to ensure not only that meat was constantly available but also that there should be a regular supply of animal by-products. A Leicester ordinance required that 'every bocher of the cuntray that bryng flesshe to the market [shall] bryng the skynnes and talowe of the same flesshe with hem in payne of forfetyng thereof': a similar ordinance was recorded in Bristol in 1451-2.<sup>82</sup>

77. Y.C.R. iii, p. 67. For butchers as graziers see below pp. 380-1.

78. Y.M.B. ii, p. 183.

79. Y.C.L., House books ii fo. 13.

80. Y.C.R. ii, p. 121.

81. C.L.B. i, p. 26; iii, p. 683.

82. Records of Leicester ii, pp. 288-9. Great Red Book of Bristol i, p. 144.

The butchers sold sheep skins to the glovers, parchmentmakers and other workers in the white leather trade. Cow and ox hides they usually sold to the tanners.<sup>83</sup> Some butchers 'for their singuler private lucre and advauntages set up tannyng houses' a practice legislated against in 1530-1 not only because they were liable to produce substandard leather but also because they 'bye stolen oxen kyne steres calves and shepe and the same do kyll and sell in their bochers shoppes, conveyenge the hides skynnes and felles of such stolne cattall unto their tanne houses', thus hiding their crime.<sup>84</sup>

As well as purchasing hides from the butchers, the leather craftsmen also obtained from them their tallow, which was used for currying and making supple the leather. The tallow was also in demand for the making of cheap Paris candles, the manufacture of which was divided among a number of groups of craftsmen including the butchers.<sup>85</sup> In York it would appear that the word chandler was reserved to describe those who were primarily concerned with the manufacture of fine wax candles. The main manufacturers of tallow candles in the city in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries were the saucemakers. They did not claim a monopoly of manufacture, but it had been customary

83. The will of John Bakehus, butcher (d. 1521) contains a bequest of 'iiii doss' calf skyns': B.I., Prob. Reg. 9 fo. 200.

84. 22 Henry VIII c. 6, Statutes of the realm iii, p. 323.

85. The price of tallow candles was nearly 2s. a dozen pounds in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; between 1401-1503 they averaged 1s. 3½d. a dozen pounds. The price was dependent on the price of mutton fat, the fall in price therefore indicating a considerable increase in the supply of meat: Thorold-Rogers, History of agriculture and prices i, p. 367. By contrast wax candles in the fifteenth century cost 6s. 3d. the dozen pounds. For the manufacture of wax candles see below pp. 270-1.

for the saucemakers and all makers of Paris candles living outside the Shambles, that is all those who were not butchers, to contribute together to the Corpus Christi pageant. The saucemakers registered a protest in 1417 because 'pelliparii et alii artifices huius civitatis Ebor', per se et uxores suas in magna multitudine, qui non sunt salsarii faciunt et vendere presumunt candelas Parisienses in domibus et fenestris suis, sed requisti recusant esse contributorii ad sustentacionem pagine supradicte'.<sup>86</sup> In Coventry a separate craft of tallow-chandlers was created in 1515, but before this date the making of tallow candles had been open to anyone.<sup>87</sup> There was also a brief period in the 1520's when certain butchers managed to obtain a monopoly for themselves: 'Jas. Hobson, Ric. Niclyn, Bochers, with other have taken upon theme to be bounde to the Maisters of the Citie and serve and fynde all the Cite sufficient Candle of the price of peny and farthyng the ponde and xiii li to the dosyne for the space of vii yeirs next ensuyng'.<sup>88</sup>

Documentary evidence of the York butchers goes back to Domesday Book where the count of Mortain is described as having two stalls in the Shambles.<sup>89</sup> Part of the strength of the York butchers may lie in the fact that from an early date they were congregated in one place, a feature which the craft retained through to the sixteenth century.<sup>90</sup>

86. Y.M.B. i, pp. 155-6.

87. C.L.B. ii, p. 547, iii, p. 643.

88. C.L.B. iii, p. 685.

89. 'Domesday Book for Yorkshire', ed. R.H. Skaife. Y.A.J. xiii (1895), p. 322. This was not necessarily the same as the late medieval (and present) shambles.

90. See below p. 456.

They were also distinguished from early on by having to pay a tax called shamel toll, a charge of a penny a week on each butcher with a shop. The resistance of the butchers to this levy resulted in a prolonged case in the Exchequer court in 1381, during the course of which it was revealed that the butchers had paid this tax since at least the time of Edward I.<sup>91</sup> The origins of a craft organization among the butchers remain obscure, although by 1282 they were taking corporate responsibility for the custody of prisoners.<sup>92</sup>

The exact numerical strength of the butchers cannot be known. In 1304 forty-nine butchers were prosecuted for breaking the food regulations. Of these forty-nine, only twenty-one appear in the freemen's register, though it seems probable that some of the remaining twenty-eight were foreigners.<sup>93</sup> Certainly butchers were accustomed to take out the freedom in considerable numbers in the years before 1350.

There are two particularly noticeable points about Table 4:2 (overleaf). Firstly the increase in the years 1351-1400 is minimal, compared to that experienced by most other crafts. Secondly the number of butchers taking out the freedom continued to rise significantly in the years 1401-50, again contrary to the trend in many manufacturing crafts. The comparison between the figures for 1301-50 and 1351-1400

91. Y.M.B. 1, pp. 120-33.

92. Cal. Fine Rolls 1272-1307, p. 161. In London a butchers' gild was formed by 1180: Unwin, 'Gilds and companies of London', p. 48.

93. Prestwich, York civic ordinances, p. 24.

TABLE 4:2: FIFTY YEAR TOTALS OF ADMISSIONS TO THE FREEDOM AS BUTCHERS  
1301-1534.

Date	number	decadal average	% of all victuallers
-1300	20		21.1
1301-50	104	20.8	23.6
1351-1400	116	23.2	25.8
1401-50	146	29.2	25.0
1451-1500	95	19.0	17.9
1501-34	62	18.2	19.3
Total	523	22.0	22.3

confirms that it had long been customary for butchers to be freemen; the slight increase in numbers in the years 1351-1400 can be accounted for by the opportunities created by a high mortality rate. The same cannot be said so confidently for the period 1401-50 where the figures for entry to the freedom fell amongst all groups of craftsmen save for the victuallers and builders. The greater prosperity of the majority of the working population and the greater availability of meat would account for the growth among the numbers of the butchers in the early fifteenth century. However as will be discussed below, the figures also seem to argue against a fall in the population of the city until the mid-fifteenth century.<sup>94</sup>

94. See below pp. 173-4.

The butchers and bakers, although subject to considerable outside competition, were nonetheless the best defined and probably the most coherently organized of the victualling crafts. The cooks on the other hand, although they had long practised their craft in York were always a rather nebulous group. The prosecutions of 1304 for example listed thirty-five cooks as having defective goods for sale.<sup>95</sup> Of these thirty-five, only four can be traced in the freemen's register as cooks and two more are found as bakers. The cooks had no registered ordinances until the fifteenth century, and even after this date the mystery must have represented only a small proportion of those who worked in the business.<sup>96</sup> These ordinances, dated 1425, do demonstrate the limited control the cooks had over their craft. It was quite impossible to prevent all and sundry cooking for the public if they wished, so that the ordinances merely specify that 'uxores aliquorum alterius artificis neque pinsant, bulliant neque assent in shoppis publicis ad vendendum per retalliam nisi sint habiles ut occupent, pro honore civitatis et hominum artis predicte'.<sup>97</sup> The cooks were however to have henceforth a monopoly over certain categories of business: 'nullus forinsecus admittatur infra civitatem istam, nec toleretur parare prandia in generalibus festis vel nuptiis, sepulturis, nec in congregacionibus gildarum vel fraternitatum nisi sit admissus et juratus ad libertatem huius civitatis, et sustineat expensas et onera

95. Prestwich, York civic ordinances, p. 23.

96. Y.M.B. ii, p. 160.

97. Y.M.B. ii, p. 160. The extent of the cooks work must have varied from place to place. In Beverley in 1485 'pye bakers, pasty-bakers, flaune-bakers and chese cake makers' were each to pay 6d. to the cooks craft, the oatmeal makers were to pay 4d and the 'dyner makers' 2d.: Hist. MSS. Comm., Beverley, p. 103.



arti cocorum pertinencia'.

Inevitably the interests of the cooks overlapped with those of a number of other crafts. It had apparently been the custom for them to sell freshwater fish in York. Even when the quantity of fish they were allowed to buy in the market was restricted, the cooks still devised means of engrossing supplies, so that from 1425 the sale of all fresh fish by cooks was banned and they were allowed only to sell cooked fish.<sup>98</sup> The close connection between the cooks and the fishmongers existed elsewhere. In 1451 the Bristol cooks were ordered to buy fish solely for cooking and were forbidden to resell it raw; the Leicester fishmongers were, in 1489, granted search of all the victuals of the cooks.<sup>99</sup>

The cooks seem also to have dealt extensively in poultry and in York obtained the right of search of foreign poultry and rabbits from the butchers in 1529.<sup>100</sup> Again this is paralleled in Leicester where the cooks were instructed not 'to bye ne groce uppe no denteythes nor vitaille or the town be served, that is to say wode coke, cone, partrik, plover ... and that no cook nor other man nor woman bye nor selle no goos raw ne roste darrer than 4d.'<sup>101</sup> The Coventry ordinances instruct the cooks to cast 'no maner of fylth under hur bordys, ne in the hye stret, ne suffur hit ther to lye, that is to wit, fethurs here ne entrayls of pygges, ne of na other bestes', implying that cooks were doing some

98. Y.M.B. i, pp. 222-3, ii, p. 161.

99. Great Red Book of Bristol i, p. 134; Records of Leicester ii, p. 321.

100. Y.C.R. iii, p. 119.

101. Records of Leicester ii, p. 289.

slaughtering themselves.<sup>102</sup>

York was unusual in having, in addition to the cooks, a craft of saucemakers, apparently distinguished as a separate skill since the end of the thirteenth century and possibly earlier, for before 1300 two men at least took out the freedom as saucers. The 1301 ordinances associate the saucemakers with the taverners and winesellers as guilty of keeping putrid wine and vinegar;<sup>103</sup> sauces were frequently made on a basis of vinegar or verjuice with the addition of mustard, pepper, spices and garlic for flavour.<sup>104</sup> At some point during the course of the fourteenth century the saucemakers formed themselves into a separate mystery, possibly on the strength of the candle making business in which they had such a large share: in 1417 they had their ordinances registered.<sup>105</sup> These show that the making of sauces could no more be monopolised by them than could the making of candles, but additional regulations the following year did ensure that for anyone 'qui non sunt de salsariis vendant sinapium vel alia salsamenta, ordinatum est quod tales solvant ad sustentacionem pagine'.<sup>106</sup>

The saucemakers' pageant would appear to have only had a brief life in the years before 1420. In 1422 they were united with a series of other minor crafts for the Corpus Christi production.<sup>107</sup> The

102. C.L.B. i, p. 26.

103. Prestwich, York civic ordinances, p. 12.

104. Dialogues in French and English by William Caxton, ed. H. Bradley (E.E.T.S., E.S. lxxix, 1900), p. 42; Two fifteenth century cookery books, ed. T. Austin (E.E.T.S. xci, 1888), pp. 77, 108-10.

105. Y.M.B. i, pp. 155-6.

106. Y.M.B. i, p. 156.

107. Toulmin-Smith, York plays, pp. xxiv-xxv; Y.M.B. i, pp. 171-2.

saucemakers were always a small craft in which only forty-four men took out the freedom in the entire period up to 1450. After this date the term saucemaker only appears two times in the register. The work of the saucers constantly overlapped with that of other crafts; it seems probable therefore that by the late fifteenth century the saucers as a mystery had been absorbed into another craft.

There were two types of fishmonger in York, those dealing with fresh water fish who sold their wares at Ouse Bridge and the salt water fishmongers who operated from Foss Bridge.<sup>108</sup> The distinction went back to at least the beginning of the fourteenth century when both fresh and salt water fishmongers were charged to sell their goods only in specified places; the preamble to later ordinances drawn up in 1418 also implies that the fishers of Ousegate and the fishers of Fossegate still formed, to a certain extent, separate entities.<sup>109</sup> Both the evidence from wills and from the lay poll tax of 1381 shows that fishmongers lived almost exclusively in the parishes of St. Michael Spurriergate, St. Denis Walmgate and St. Crux, the former being the home of the fresh fishmongers and the latter two of the salt fishmongers.<sup>110</sup>

108. The use of the two different terms fisher and fishmonger appears to have no significance and bears no relation to whether or not the men in question owned boats, caught fish or merely sold fish.

109. Prestwich, York civic ordinance, p. 13; Y.M.B. i, pp. 197-8.

110. Fishmongers' residence by parish:

	surviving wills	lay poll tax, 1381
St. Michael, Spurriergate	19	14
St. Denis, Walmgate	12	10
St. Crux	12	2
St. Michael le Belfrey	1	

On the whole the freshwater fishermen seem to have been better off; it is only in their wills for example that evidence of boat ownership can be found. John Rodes, resident in the parish of St. Michael Spur<sup>f</sup>iergate, owned at the time of his death in 1457, a small boat called 'le showte' and a cogship.<sup>111</sup> Robert Walton of the same parish bequeathed to his son in 1485 'omnia retia mea existens in domo mea et totum netyarne cum parva navicula' and to Henry Watson 'totam partam omnium signorum navicularum retium et trunkes excepta nova navicula'.<sup>112</sup>

Much freshwater fish was caught through the system of fishgarths, the cause of much litigation, but an apparently ineradicable feature of the Ouse and its tributaries.<sup>113</sup> The fishgarths were timber and wicker structures erected across the river and though they were effective in catching fish, they were equally effective as a hazard to shipping. Most fishgarths by the late fifteenth century and probably earlier were owned by ecclesiastical corporations who rented out many of them to fishers and to other interested parties; the main culprit in erecting fishgarths in the Ouse was St. Mary's Abbey, Surviving records show the city council in an unending battle to clear the river, a battle which on occasion reached 'exceptional intensity'.<sup>114</sup> An account of the city's expenses in litigation against St. Mary's Abbey over fishgarths ran to over £130 in 1445-6.<sup>115</sup> Lesser sums were spent in subsequent years but eternal vigilance was necessary and in the

111. B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 357A.

112. B.I., Prob. Reg. 5 fo. 274v.

113. B.F. Duckham, The Yorkshire Ouse (Newton Abbot, 1967), pp. 34-8.

114. Chamberlains' rolls, p. 37.

115. Chamberlains' rolls, pp. 37-48.

late fifteenth century the city sought the assistance of the Duke of Gloucester in this matter.<sup>116</sup>

The trade in salt water fish could be very profitable, as the spectacular success of the London fishmongers amply demonstrates.<sup>117</sup>

In provincial towns it seems probable that fishmongers were effectively barred from the import business which was handled by the merchants.

The commons of Yarmouth complained in 1376 that the masters of the town were buying up all the herring and preventing free trade.<sup>118</sup> It is

clear that in York the merchants controlled the trade in herring in the later middle ages. Of a total of 212 men importing herring in the

years 1393 and 1398, 104 are also found as exporters of cloth and wool and these included the mercers Thomas Gare, Henry Wyman, Robert Savage,

Thomas and Robert Holme.<sup>119</sup> By contrast William Cater was the only

fish importer in the Hull customs particulars for these years who can definitely be shown to have been a fishmonger by trade.<sup>120</sup>

It was to the merchants therefore that the profits of the fish trade went and from whom the salt fishmongers in general must have had

116. Chamberlains' rolls, pp. 112, 115, 127, 163-4; York records: extracts from the municipal records of the city of York, ed. R. Davies (1843), pp. 58-62.

117. Williams, Medieval London, p. 165.

118. Rot. Parl. ii, 1326-77, p. 353. National legislation to regulate the sale of herring and other salt-water fish was passed in the mid-14th century to avoid such abuses: 31 Edward III st. 2, 3, 35 Edward III, Statutes of the realm i, pp. 353-6, 369-70.

119. P.R.O., E122/159/11, E122/59/8, E122/59/21, E122/59/23, E122/59/15.

120. B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 253. He was resident in the parish of St. Denis, Walmgate. Similarly the names of only two fishmongers appear as importers in accounts of the 1450's to the 1470's: P.R.O., E122/61/71, E122/62/1, E122/62/3, E122/62/4, E122/62/7, E122/62/17.

to buy in order to sell retail in the city. It was agreed supposedly 'de voluntate et consensu omnium piscenariorum Ebor' pontis Fosse ordinatum est quod nullus artem suam exercens conducat equos apud costas maris ad portandos pisces venales ad civitatem nisi ille vel servus suus suo nomine fuerit apud mare cum equis et calathis suis', but this ruling can have acted only to the advantage of those who were themselves importing large quantities of fish.<sup>121</sup> This makes the achievement of William Muston, a fishmonger, more exceptional; he lived in the parish of St. Denis Walmgate and though <sup>when</sup> he was made free he gave no trade, when he died he described himself as a fishmonger.<sup>122</sup> His will is evidence of his wealth and the size of his dealings can be judged from a Selby Abbey account roll; in 1416-17 he sold to the Abbey nearly 40,000 herrings, together with saltfish and stockfish.<sup>123</sup>

Although a distinction was drawn between fresh and salt water fishmongers, it was rendered less precise by the fact that the sale of fish was undertaken by a great many people who were not fishmongers. Ordinances made probably in the late fourteenth century to bring the craft under greater control contain the clause: 'na man na woman occupie or dele wyth the crafte of fysshmangers, but thay alleonly that deles wyth na nother crafte - that ys to say nouthur cardemakers, tallours, cordewaners, sadelers ne none other manere of crafty man of what condicion so ever he be - bot if he comme and commone wyth the

121. Y.M.B. i, p. 224.

122. B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 605v-606v.

123. 'A Selby Kitcherner's roll of the early fifteenth century', ed. G.S. Haslop, Y.A.J. xlvi (1976), pp. 119-133.

sersours of the fysshmanger craft that are or sall be for the tyme, so that he may be knawen for honest bathe to ye citee and to the crafte'.<sup>124</sup> Despite the imposition of an entry fine on anyone selling fish in the future it was still regarded as a profitable sideline by men of other crafts. For example William Wynter, one of the wealthiest founders in York, bought, with Nicholas Postelthwaite a fishmonger, a licence to sell fresh salmon on Foss Bridge in 1476.<sup>125</sup> In 1454 Robert Gaunthorp, a cordwainer, was fined not for selling fish but for doing so 'in domo suo et non in loco deputato'.<sup>126</sup> Similarly, William Robinson, a walker, was fined in 1486 because the fish he sold were bad and in 1499 William Clyff, glazier, paid a fine of 2s. 'pro uno cade alb' allec' insalubriter invento inter allecia'.<sup>127</sup>

In addition to the competition from other craftsmen in the city, the York fishmongers had to contend with sales by foreigners. The strangers of 'Scardeburg, Whitteby or Hartlipole' came with 'saltfysse and herynge white or red'; foreigners with fresh fish to sell moored their boats 'in aqua Ouse subtus stathem que est opposito venelle de Thruslane'.<sup>128</sup> Because so many people were involved in the marketing of fish it was a trade particularly susceptible to the activities of regrators, both in York and in other towns throughout the country. In Bristol any merchant buying fish for his own use and subsequently

124. Y.M.B. i, p. 221.

125. Y.C.L., House books i, fo. 15v.

126. Chamberlains' rolls, p. 86.

127. Chamberlains' rolls, pp. 177, 197.

128. Y.M.B. i, pp. 222, 198 (n.d., 1418). By the mid 15th century North Sea fishing had moved south from Scarborough and was based at Hull: P. Heath, 'North Sea fishing in the fifteenth century: the Scarborough fleet', Northern History iii (1968), pp. 65-6.

reselling it was to be fined 6d. a fish, and a Leicester ordinance of 1407 required all fishers to sell their fish with their own hands.<sup>129</sup> Coventry ordinances of 1421 required that 'no man be so hardy to by ne reseve in-to hur housez, panyes with fyshe by way of regratry upon the payne of xx s. and lesyng all the fysche'.<sup>130</sup> The cooks of York as already mentioned had been accustomed to sell fish and were adept at evading market regulations.<sup>131</sup> Innkeepers were also guilty of stock-piling: 'als mykill that fysshe and other vitail ar ofte tymes conceled in hostres and other places in this citee, thurgh whilk concelement mykyl yvell chafer an on able ys keped and solde thurgh the yere at outrage value'.<sup>132</sup>

Inevitably therefore the figures given in the freemen's register are once again likely to be misleading if taken at face value. Just how loosely organized the trade was at the beginning of the thirteenth century can be seen from the list of fishmongers prosecuted for their failure to sell to standard. Fifty fishers were named in 1304, only four of whom appear in the freemen's register as fishmongers; another two appear as salters and nine with no trade at all.<sup>133</sup> Some of those not found in the register were men of importance including Robert le Meek, subsequently mayor and John King, later one of the chamberlains. It is not therefore very surprising to find only seven fishmongers

129. Little Red Book ii, p. 22; Records of Leicester ii, p. 289.

130. C.L.B. i, p. 25.

131. See above p. 148.

132. Y.M.B. i, p. 222.

133. Prestwich, York civic ordinances, pp. 24-5. A number of the fishmongers were members of Andrew de Bolingbroke's privileged gild: G.O. Sayles, 'The dissolution of a gild at York in 1306', E.H.R. (v (1940), p. 92. For the importance of the gild see below pp. 311-2.



recorded in the freemen's register before 1300 and it is probable that the rise in the number of fishmongers taking out the freedom bears little relation to the amount of fish sold, but rather describes the increasing specialization of the craft of fishmongers.

TABLE 4:3: FIFTY YEAR TOTALS OF ADMISSIONS TO THE FREEDOM AS FISHMONGERS TO 1534

Date	number	decadal average	% of all victuallers
-1300	7		7.4
1301-50	84	16.8	19.1
1351-1400	79	15.8	17.6
1401-50	108	21.6	18.4
1451-1500	140	28.0	26.4
1501-34	80	23.5	25.0
Total	498	20.9	20.6

The fishmongers were something of an anomaly among the crafts for their work was not distinguished by specialized processes, as the widespread handling of fish by everyone from walkers to glaziers demonstrates. Undoubtedly there was a unity of interest among those whose primary or sole interest was the sale of fish, which was strengthened by the concentration of fishmongers around the two bridges. Nevertheless it seems fair to argue that the definition of the fishmongers as a craft was significantly strengthened because the council exploited

this unity of interest in order to use the mystery of fishmongers as a vehicle for the supervision of standards. The fishmongers' ordinances show an overwhelming interest in the place and manner of selling fish and a concern to prevent regrating. From the point of view of the council, if all casual sellers of fish were under the supervision of the fishmongers' craft, the industry could be more easily controlled. The increasing number of fishers appearing in the freemen's register is therefore probably a reflection of this greater desire for definition within the craft.

It is probably true that the freemen's register accounts for an even smaller proportion of the total number of people involved in the supply of drink than it does for those in the food crafts. The staple beverage, ale, could be and was made by almost anyone both for private consumption and commercially, and the 1301 ordinances specifically state that they are not intended 'to prevent men of the city from brewing their own ale'.<sup>134</sup> Medieval ale was brewed without hops; the name beer only seems to have become common with the introduction of hopped brews in the sixteenth century.<sup>135</sup> Until then hopped beer was disapproved of: in 1471 the Norwich brewers were forbidden to 'brewe nowther with hoppes nor gawle, nor noon othir thyng which may be founde unholson for mannes body upon peyne of grevous punysshment'.<sup>136</sup> The

134. Prestwich, York civic ordinances, p. 11.

135. O.E.D.

136. Records of Norwich ii, p. 100.

same ban is found in Coventry in 1522 on pain of 20s. fine.<sup>137</sup>

The standard of ale brewed was fixed according to national assize, laid down in the Assize of bread and ale and the Judgement of pillory, both dating from the mid-thirteenth century: this legislation was echoed in local ordinances throughout the later middle ages.<sup>138</sup>

Ale was made from malted grain, wheat, oats or most commonly barley and the principle behind the assize was that the cost of a gallon of ale should be tied to the price of grain.<sup>139</sup> Details of the sliding scale do not appear in the York records, although occasionally the price of a gallon of ale was set down. In 1301 for example two standards of ale were specified, the best retailing at 1d. a gallon and the lower quality at ½d., and 'if the price of grain goes up and down the assize is to be set accordingly'.<sup>140</sup> Regulations dating from the late fifteenth century required brewers to sell their best ale at 1½d. a gallon.<sup>141</sup> A fixed scale was recorded in Coventry in 1474 whereby the brewer charged ½d. a gallon, should malt cost 2s. a quarter, 1d. a gallon if it should cost 4s. and so forth.<sup>142</sup> Prices of ale also varied in and out of town and increases were permitted for ale sold in taverns.<sup>143</sup>

All ale was to be sold from sealed official measures; in Bristol the brewers were specifically required to have a level place by their

137. C.L.B. iii, p. 683.

138. See above p. 126.

139. Assize of bread and ale, Judgement of pillory, Statutes of the realm i, pp. 200, 202.

140. Prestwich, York civic ordinances, p. 11.

141. Y.C.R. ii, p. 121, iii, pp. 69, 109 (1495, 1519, 1527).

142. C.L.B. ii, pp. 397-8.

143. Assize of bread and ale, Statutes of the realm i, p. 200; C.L.B. ii, p. 399.

doors so that quantities could be honestly measured.<sup>144</sup> Prosecutions for selling contrary to the assize were made in the wardmote courts in York. The few surviving volumes of the detailed chamberlains' account books give lists of all brewers amerced for brewing against the assize.<sup>145</sup> These lists are arranged by parish and grouped under the names of the six ward sergeants. The number of prosecutions was high and it was presumably persistent evasion that led the city council in 1519 to order that henceforth two aletasters were to be sworn for every parish and that brewers were to send for the ale tasters 'at the tyme of tunnyng' of all ale.<sup>146</sup>

In contrast to London where the brewers had formed a fraternity by the end of the thirteenth century, the brewers of provincial towns do not seem to have constituted craft guilds in the later middle ages.<sup>147</sup> In part this may have been a result of the enforcement of the assize. More probably the sheer number and variety of people who were brewers militated against the formation of a brewers' craft. In Faversham the record of a tallage in 1327 names ten bakers, twenty-seven butchers and about eighty-four brewers or alewives, most of them the wives of men still living.<sup>148</sup> The widespread employment of women as brewers is also

144. Judgement of pillory, Statute of bakers, Statutes of the realm i, pp. 201, 203; Y.M.B. i, p. 15, ii, pp. 10, 13, 90, 260; Great Red Book of Bristol i, p. 139. See also Records of Leicester ii, p. 288.
145. Y.C.L., Cl fo. 93-99, CCl a (i) fo. 35-37, 38-41, 42-47 (1446-53).
146. Y.C.R. iii, p. 69. In Coventry the mayor was responsible for the appointment of two ale-tasters in every ward in 1439: C.L.B. i, p. 191.
147. Williams, Medieval London, p. 265. The London brewers attempted to mitigate the effects of the assize by judicious sweeteners to the mayor and corporation: Unwin, Gilds and companies of London, pp. 233-235.
148. Hist. MSS. Comm., 6th report, p. 505.

evident in Norwich ordinances of 1468 which were concerned with the supply of yeast.<sup>149</sup> The same was true in York. The list of brewers prosecuted in 1304 for breaking the assize contains the names of twenty women out of a total of seventy.<sup>150</sup>

Amongst the men who worked as brewers, very few were made free in the craft and most of them probably made beer on a part-time basis. Of the fifty men presented in 1304, only nine appear in the freemen's register, two of whom were mercers and another perhaps a girdler; none were described in the register as brewers. Wills survive from the later middle ages for only six men who described themselves therein as brewers; two of these took out the freedom as brewers, one as a chapman, one as an ironmonger and two with no trade designated.

The most telling evidence however comes from the list of people amerced for breaking the assize found in the chamberlains' account books. In 1450-1 a total of 221 people were amerced.<sup>151</sup> Identifying these people positively is often impossible but the crafts of 110 of them can be established; only seven of these 110 were made free as brewers. The rest belonged to a great variety of crafts, including the glaziers John Chambre and William Sherlay and the pewterer William Riche in the parish of St. Helen Stonegate. In the parish of St. Peter le Willows the four men amerced were Robert Garton, a weaver, William Paton, an ironmonger, Thomas Botten, a mason and Hugh Glover described as a tipler but not in the freemen's register. One of the largest groups of craftsmen

149. Records of Norwich ii, pp. 98-9.

150. Prestwich, York civic ordinances, pp. 25-6.

151. Y.C.L., Ccla (i) fo. 35-7.

represented were the bakers, twelve of whom can be positively identified. While ale is being fermented the yeast content multiplies severalfold, no doubt the reason for its alternative name of 'goddisgode'. The association of brewers and bakers was therefore always likely to be close; in Norwich for example the supply of yeast had long been established by 'an olde custome betwix the comon brewers and bakers of this citie'.<sup>152</sup> Some sixteen men and women amongst those amerced were described as tiplers, that is alehouse-keepers; of these sixteen, ten cannot be traced in the freemen's register while among the others John Jacob was made free as a chapman and John Precious as a sawer.<sup>153</sup> Brewing was manifestly a very profitable sideline for a great many people and not only in York. In Coventry by 1544 'the said brewers and tiplers be now increased and multiplied to suche a great nomber that a great parte of thynhabitaunts of this Cite be now become brewers and tiplers of ale and have forsaken ther occupacions and Crafts'.<sup>154</sup>

Evidence from inventories further demonstrates that large scale brewing as well as the making of ale for domestic consumption was going on in the houses of many craftsmen. There are many references to 'mask fats' and to wort or gyll vats.<sup>155</sup> John Stubbes, a barber who died in 1451 had in his 'coquina cum brasina' a brew lead and a mask vat and a separate gylehouse containing the wortledes; the brewing equipment of Thomas Overdo, a baker was even more extensive.<sup>156</sup>

152. Records of Norwich ii, p. 99.

153. Freemen's Reg., pp. 138, 147.

154. C.L.B. iii, p. 771.

155. The mask fat was for mashing the malted barley; the wort or gyle fat, for fermenting the wort after malting.

156. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1451, 1444).

No idea can therefore be gained of the number of people involved in commercial brewing in the city. The ameracements of 1450-1 contain 221 names but it would perhaps be unduly pessimistic about the standards of brewing to assume that this included the vast majority of brewers. The rate of fines does perhaps provide the only measure for the amount of brewing done in the city. It is unlikely that the quality of ale improved dramatically in the fifteenth century, or that the financially embarrassed council should have shown any less vigilance in the collection of fines. Accordingly a fall in the total number of brewers fines from £12 3s. in 1453-4 to £3. 5s. 11d. in 1486 and then to £2 5s. in 1499 may well imply that there was a considerable drop in the quantity of ale brewed commercially, presumably because of the falling population.<sup>157</sup>

Like ale, wine sold in conformity with a national assize, the first reference to which comes in the Judgement of pillory and the Assize of bakers. Supplementary legislation was, perhaps inevitably, needed 'because there be more taverners in the realm than were wont to be, selling as well corrupt wines as wholesome, and have sold the gallon at such price as they themselves would, because there was no punishment ordained for them, as hath been for them that hath sold bread and ale'.<sup>158</sup> The assize of wine varied in different parts of the country because of the increased costs of transport to more distant areas.<sup>159</sup> In York the

157. Chamberlains' rolls, pp. 70, 176, 196.

158. 4 Edward III c.12, Statutes of the realm i, p. 264.

159. M.K. James, Studies in the medieval wine trade, ed. E.M. Veale (Oxford, 1971), p. 8.

price at which one gallon of wine could be sold was based on the price of wine per tun in Hull, the price being taken from the maximum for the best Gascon wine.<sup>160</sup> Breaches of the assize were to be judged before the city courts.<sup>161</sup>

The terminology of the wineselling business is confusing; references occur in the records to vintners, taverners, wyndrawers, hostellers and innkeepers and the meaning of these different terms altered with time. A summary of the admissions of winesellers in the freemen's register makes this clear. (Table 4:4, overleaf). The figures are in fact more instructive in explaining the etymology of the craft terms than in giving a quantitative guide to the wine selling business. Moreover the distinction between the different groups was probably more a social than a business one, arising rather from the formation of fraternities than from craft specialization as such. In this connection it is significant that the first recorded ordinances for any of these crafts occur in the late fifteenth century, the hostellers in 1477 and the vintners in 1482.<sup>162</sup>

The major reason for this lack of definition among the wine sellers was probably that the bulk of the wine trade was handled by merchants; accordingly the use of the term vintner to describe a specialist in the wine trade was very rarely found before the end of the fourteenth century in York. Until the fourteenth century the

160. Y.M.B. i, p. 172; Y.C.R. i, p. 2. See also Y.C.L., CCl fo. 2, CCl a (ii) fo. 4, 16.

161. 4 Edward III c.12, Statutes of the realm i, p. 264.

162. Y.C.R. i, p. 21; Y.M.B. ii, pp. 275-7.



TABLE 4:4: FIFTY YEAR TOTALS OF ADMISSIONS TO THE FREEDOM IN THE WINE TRADE TO 1534.

Craft	-1300	1301-1350	1351-1400	1401-1450	1451-1500	1501-34
Hostellers	-	-	2	7	12	-
Innholders	-	-	-	-	5	24
Taverners	8	70	25	2	-	-
Vintners	-	-	7	34	18	-
Wyndrawers	-	3	-	-	-	-
Total	8	73	34	43	35	30

import of wines was largely handled by alien merchants.<sup>163</sup> Such evidence as there is shows however that much of the internal traffic in wine was undertaken by York merchants in the thirteenth century: Hugh Selby and Adam Flur obtained licences to carry wine freely in the 1220's and 1230's.<sup>164</sup> The same men in their capacity as civic officials were concerned with the supply of wine to the king and the disposal of his surplus stock.<sup>165</sup> Among those from whom Edward I purchased wine when he was in York were two men who had been chamberlains, Copino Fleming and John de Bromholme; he also bought wine from another of the Fleming family, Walter Fleming.<sup>166</sup>

During the first half of the fourteenth century Englishmen came to dominate the import trade in wine in place of aliens.<sup>167</sup> York however, unlike London, never developed a specific body of vintners and it remained the case throughout the fourteenth century that merchants dominated the trade; very seldom did they refer to themselves as vintners.<sup>168</sup> In 1364 licences to trade were granted by letters patent to six men described therein as vintners of York: three of these were mercers, one had been made free as a taverner, one possibly as a litster and one with no trade given.<sup>169</sup> The same impression is gained from the customs accounts of the reign of Richard II. Of 385 men who are found as wine importers in five separate sets of customs particulars

163. James, Medieval wine trade, pp. 80-3.

164. C.P.R. 1225-32, pp. 12, 32, 348; V.C.H., City of York, pp. 42, 45-6.

165. C.C.R. 1237-42, p. 338; 1254-56, p. 128.

166. P.R.O., E101/366/11.

167. James, Medieval wine trade, pp. 93-4.

168. Williams, Medieval London, pp. 120-6; James, Medieval wine trade, pp. 161-2.

169. C.P.R. 1364-7, pp. 16-17.

for Hull, 145 were also involved in the wool and cloth trades. The occupation of sixty-one of these shippers can be established; forty-six of them were mercers and another eighteen described themselves as 'ships' masters.<sup>170</sup> The term vintner was only applied to six of the sixty-one in the accounts themselves; of these six, three who later made wills also describing themselves as vintners had taken out the freedom as mercers or mariners.<sup>171</sup> Conversely the 'vintners' did not restrict themselves to importing wine; Roger de Crome and Robert Talkan for example were both involved in the cloth trade.

Only the rich could afford to bulk buy their wine from importers.<sup>172</sup> The sale of wine to the general public was initially through the taverners. Once again the prosecutions of 1304 in York are helpful in establishing the status of the taverners. Twenty-six men were prosecuted for breaking the assize, many of whom were likely to be large-scale dealers as well as sellers of wine.<sup>173</sup> They included a number of ex-chamberlains such as Gaceus Flour and William de Bruneby; two of the taverners, John de Askham and Robert le Meek were later mayors of York.<sup>174</sup> Altogether they formed a rich and influential group and were apparently significantly superior in social terms to the hostellers who were separately listed.

170. P.R.O., E122/159/11, E122/59/8, E122/59/21, E122/59/23, E122/59/15.

171. Robert de Merson and John Petyclerk were free as mercers in 1366 and 1399, John Spalding as a mariner in 1376: Freemen's Reg., pp. 63, 102, 74; B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo.56v, 2 fo.494-494v, 1 fo.67-67v. For the importance of Hull as a distributive centre for wine see James, Medieval wine trade, pp. 180-1.

172. James, Medieval wine trade, pp. 176-7.

173. Prestwich, York civic ordinances, p. 23.

174. Winesellers fined in Leicester in 1286 include a mixture of affluent men such as cloth industrialists, a spicer, a goldsmith and a saddler: V.C.H., Leicestershire, iv, p. 45.

There is very little later evidence for the activities of the taverners. In 1364 licence was given to Robert de Fangfoss, described as a vintner, but made free as a taverner, to import wine.<sup>175</sup> Two men described as taverners appear in the customs particulars of the reign of Richard II; six taverners are listed in the returns of the 1381 poll tax, one of whom was made free as a mercer.<sup>176</sup> An ordinance of 1371 implies that they were still the main sellers of wine within the city though faced by competition from mavericks: 'si nulle vyneter ou autre marchande des vyns, que de la fraunchise soit, vende vynes as autres pur mesner hors de la fraunchise (come al abbe nostre Dame, ou al cemitere de Seint Peter, ou a Seint Leonard, ou al chastiel, ou a nulle de les lieux avaunditz) pur vendre a retaille encontre lassise en plus haut pris que les taveners vendent deinz la dite cites'.<sup>177</sup>

After 1412 taverners disappear completely from the register of freemen. To judge from the sudden efflorescence of vintners in the register from this date it would appear that this was largely a change in terminology. The correlation of taverners with vintners is also suggested by evidence from the Corpus Christi plays. The pageant of the marriage at Cana is attributed to the first list of plays which survives, dated 1415; but in the second list, dating from c. 1420 the same play is ascribed to the taveners.<sup>178</sup>

The development of a vintners' craft was apparently slow and seems

175. See above p. 165.

176. 'Lay poll tax York, 1381', p. 14.

177. Y.M.B. i, p. 13.

178. Toulmin-Smith, York plays, p. xxii.

to have grown out of the interest of a group of men who specialized in the wine trade, but who had been made free as mercers or as general trades. Of twenty-one men who left wills describing themselves as vintners, only seven appear in the freemen's register with the same craft ascriptions. Of the other fourteen, one was made free as a grocer, one as a hostiller, one as a mariner, two as chapmen and four as mercers; five either do not appear or have no trade ascription. On the whole these twenty-one were a moderately wealthy group of men.<sup>179</sup> Some can be traced in the customs accounts, for example William Dyghton and William Skinner who both imported wine in 1453.<sup>180</sup> However it is uncertain how many of those describing themselves as taverners or mercers in the fourteenth century can be equated with the vintners of the fifteenth century or, even after the term vintner became more common in the fifteenth century, how many winedealers were still entered in the freemen's register under other occupations.

Ordinances for the vintners' craft were registered in 1482.<sup>181</sup> In contrast to previous regulations concerning the sale of wine, these conform to ordinances usually found for other crafts, with rules for the setting up of masters and the calling of meetings. It seems probable that these ordinances were registered in response to growing difficulties experienced in the wine trade. The wine trade conducted through Hull was almost entirely with Gascony. Despite the attrition of the Hundred Years War, wine imports had in general been well

179. See below table 10:3.

180. P.R.O. E122/61/71 m.1.

181. Y.M.B. ii, pp. 275-7.

sustained at Hull until the 1450's; thereafter, with the loss of Bordeaux, imports fell rapidly.<sup>182</sup> The activities of the London merchants who already had retail links in the north, were extended.<sup>183</sup> The ordinances of the vintners were designed to protect both mercers and vintners against profiteering by strangers; it was ruled that it was unlawful for a stranger to sell 'eny wyne, that is to say reid claret, white or rynnesh' before becoming enfranchised.<sup>184</sup> Despite such legislation the vintners' craft was likely to have been consistently undermined not only by external competition, but also that of other crafts within the city. As a vintners' petition of 1492 demonstrates, their most dangerous rivals in the city were the mercers; they asked that 'men of other craftes that selles swete wyne and other wyne for thair wyne be retail within the franchise of this Cite whilk swete wyne are pertenant to us als a parcelle of oure craft' suld ... be contributory to us in bryngyng furthe of oure pagent in Corpus Christi play lyke als merchantz makes us to pay to tham when we mell wyth Pruys, Flanders and other plaes of whilk swete wyne we have yit no answer or remedy'.<sup>185</sup>

The hostellers and the innholders differed from the taverners in that they provided lodgings and were the purveyors of food as well as drink. The terms hosteller and innholder were apparently synonymous;

182. James, Medieval wine trade, pp. 93-4, 107-16.

183. James, Medieval wine trade, pp. 163-4.

184. Y.M.B. ii, p. 275.

185. Y.C.R. ii, pp. 85-6.

hosteller was the earlier term and though both seem to have been current by 1400, the word innholder was not generally adopted in York until the late fifteenth century.<sup>186</sup> Both terms were used in an ordinance of 1477 regulating the search of lodging houses: 'and at all the said hostellers and every of thayme at holdez innes or osterie without syne have thare synes up be the fest of the Nativitie of our Lord next'.<sup>187</sup> Until 1481 the word hosteller was used in the freemen's register and was then dropped completely for the term innholder which had not hitherto been used at all.

No hosteller appears in the freemen's register at all before 1396, but they undoubtedly existed in considerable numbers. Apart from the regular traffic which resulted from the York markets and fairs, major events such as religious festivals or the arrival of the king brought strangers to the city in their hundreds. The ordinances made in 1301 fix the rates to be charged by hostellers and imply that there had been a boom in the business, not surprisingly with the arrival of the government in the city.<sup>188</sup> The list of hostellers prosecuted in 1304 is in striking contrast to that of the taverners. Only three of the hostellers appear in the freemen's register and none were civic officials. Eleven of the total of forty-five were women, one of whom, Alice Maners, was apparently running a hostel in someone else's house, that of William Fader.

186. O.E.D.

187. Y.C.R. i, p. 21.

188. Prestwich, York civic ordinances, p. 16.

The same problem exists with hostellers as with taverners and vintners, in that when they do start appearing in official records it is likely to be under another trade. The lay poll tax returns for example list thirteen hostellers; the three who can be traced in the freemen's register were all made free as mercers.<sup>189</sup> It seems likely that hostellers frequently practised a trade as well as offering lodgings and the increasing number of innholders in the register in the sixteenth century may partly arise from the fact that men were now also registering this aspect of this business. Between 1504 and 1507 for example three men were made free as 'innholder and haberdasher'. None of the four innholders who made wills in the early sixteenth century were however made free as innholders: William Pennyngton was made free in 1507 as a haberdasher and Richard Turnour as a smith and haberdasher in 1504, Gilbert Walron in 1511 as a mercer and John Ellis in 1475 as a chandler.<sup>190</sup>

Of these four, only details of Ellis' inn survive. It was called the Three Kings and was situated on Micklegate. An impression of a prosperous inn can probably be obtained from the inventory of the house of John Stubbs, a barber who died in 1451.<sup>191</sup> This house was so large and contained so many beds that it was probably used as a hostelry: there were ten rooms as well as the kitchen-cum-brewery, gylehouse and bakery, stable, granary, two other store houses and the shop; he

189. Richard de Esyngwald, William de Dalton, William de Danby: 'Lay poll tax York, 1381', pp. 45, 58, 55; Freemen's Reg., pp. 67, 79, 66.

190. B.I., Prob. Reg. 11 fo. 156v, 104v, 9 fo. 192v, 8 fo. 63v-64.

191. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1451).



possessed thirteen 'beds' or feather beds, thirteen board beds and another ten mattresses with bolsters.<sup>192</sup> The names of a few other inns in York survive, such as the Bull in Coney Street where all aliens coming to the city were obliged to stay.<sup>193</sup> The apparent size of some inns together with the increasing number of men who chose to describe themselves as innholders when they took up the freedom, both point to a considerable increase in status among the innholders by the early sixteenth century.

There were obviously considerable possibilities for corruption by hostillers who combined the offering of lodgings with another trade. A statute of 1409-10 forbade anyone who held a common hostelry from being a customs officer or controller, although this was difficult if not impossible to enforce.<sup>194</sup> National legislation was also passed to prevent hostellers from engrossing all food supplies.<sup>195</sup> Hostellers were specifically forbidden to bake horse bread, this right being restricted by both national and local legislation to the bakers, and in York in 1477 it was further specified that 'no baxter that kepys osterie bak no horsebreid'.<sup>196</sup> Eventually in 1503 bakers in York were forbidden to keep hostels altogether and the bakers given the right to search hostels to ensure that the bread sold conformed to the assize.<sup>197</sup>

192. 'Bed' usually comprised feather mattress, sheets, coverlet and blanket, see for example the will of Matilda Alnewyk, d. 1376, wife of a goldsmith: Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 62.

193. Y.M.B. ii, p. 203 (1459).

194. 11 Henry IV c. 2; 20 Henry VI c. 5 declares that many officials were still holding hostels: Statutes of the realm ii, pp. 162, 319.

195. 27 Edward III st. 1 c. 3, Statutes of the realm i, p. 330.

196. 13 Richard II st. 1 c. 8, Statutes of the realm ii, p. 63; Y.M.B. i, p. 168; Y.C.R. i, p. 21.

197. Y.C.R. ii, p. 182; see above pp. 137-8.

Any estimate of the availability of accommodation for visitors in York in the later middle ages is impossible. Presumably however it was at least as high, if not higher than the figures afforded by a survey made in 1537, when the population and the commerce of the city had shrunk very considerably. At that date it was said that there were beds for 1,035 people and stabling for 1,711 horses.<sup>198</sup> This remarkable total provides an indication of the importance York retained as a regional centre despite the headlong decline experienced by sections of the economy.

In general it may be said that, once again, the number of men recorded in the freemen's register can prove very misleading in assessing the strength of a craft. Amongst the victuallers this is particularly true of the brewers and vintners, but also applies to the fishmongers and the cooks. Only with the butchers and the bakers can the figures be taken to approximate to the real intake of professional victuallers. It had apparently been customary from the early fourteenth century for both butchers and bakers to take out the freedom in very considerable numbers. This makes the rise in the number of freemen in these two crafts in the years 1401 to 1450 particularly significant. Between 1351 and 1400, 100 bakers and 116 butchers took out the freedom; between 1401 and 1450 these figures rose to 133 bakers and 146 butchers. These increases can partly be accounted for by increased standards of living, but they also suggest that it would be very unwise to

198. Palliser, Tudor York, pp. 166, 171.

postulate a fall in the population of the city before the mid-fifteenth century.

The potential power of the victuallers is quite evident from the amount of legislation and energy expended to keep them under control. As well as legislation directed towards the regulation of specific crafts, attempts were made, rather vainly, to prevent office holders from profiting from the victualling trade. A statute of 1318-19 required that any officer of a city or borough responsible for the assize of wine and food should, so long as he was in office, refrain from trading in these commodities.<sup>199</sup> It is doubtful if such legislation was very effective. Evidence from Oxford shows that a number of brewers rose to the position of bailiff and in Northampton bakers and fishers appeared fairly frequently in the same office.<sup>200</sup> By the sixteenth century urban poverty forced the crown to recognize that frequently victuallers were the only men available to hold office.<sup>201</sup> In most towns they were therefore permitted to do so but York, Coventry and London were specifically excluded from this relaxation of the law.

The stringent enforcement of the victualling regulations in York in the later middle ages seems to have kept the majority of craftsmen in a subordinate position. They were generally excluded from high office, a discrimination which was particularly obvious in the case of

199. Statute of York, 12 Edward II c. 6; 6 Richard II st. 1 c. 9 forbade victuallers from holding judicial office if any other suitable man were available, Statutes of the realm i, p. 178, ii, p. 28.

200. V.C.H. Oxfordshire iv, p. 48; V.C.H., Northamptonshire iii, p. 28.

201. 3 Henry VIII c. 8, Statutes of the realm iii, p. 30.

the butchers who were often fairly wealthy.<sup>202</sup> Such discrimination may not have been so rigidly applied in the early fourteenth century. The sheer number of bakers and butchers who appear in the freemen's register at this date implies that these craftsmen had some standing, possibly as a result of the part that they played in the wholesale trade in corn and livestock.<sup>203</sup> In other sections of the victualling industry as well, the distinction between craftsman and merchant was not as clear as in the early fourteenth century as it was subsequently to become, the membership of the fishmongers' craft being the most obvious example of this. The mercantile interest could not however entirely exclude the victualling craftsmen from the profitable marketing of raw materials in the later middle ages. It was their stake in this market which gave certain victuallers, and the butchers in particular, their advantage in the early sixteenth century when the mercantile control over the economy had diminished.<sup>204</sup>

202. For office holding among York victuallers see below pp. 344-8.

203. See below p. 374ff.

204. See below pp. 434-5.

TABLE 4.5. ENTRANTS TO THE FREEDOM OF YORK, DECADAL TOTALS: VICTUALLING CRAFTS

	-1290	1291-1300			-1300	
			No.	%		
Bakers	20	18	38	40.0		
Butchers	10	10	20	21.1		
Cooks	5	5	10	10.5		
Fishers	1	6	7	7.4		
Millers	1	1	2	2.1		
Pulters	2	1	3	3.2		
Salters		5	5	5.3		
Saucers		2	2	2.1		
Brewers						
Innholders						
Maltsters						
Taverners	5	3	8	8.4		
Vintners						
Wyndraghers						
Others						
Total	44	51	95			
	1301-10	1311-20	1321-30	1331-40	1341-50	1301-50
						No. %
Bakers	7	25	20	10	15	77 17.5
Butchers	15	18	24	27	20	104 23.6
Cooks	5	12	14	10	11	52 11.8
Fishers	13	21	13	20	17	84 19.1
Millers	1	2		2	1	6 1.4
Pulters	4		3	4	1	12 2.7
Salters	7	2	1			10 2.3
Saucers	1	2	2	4	2	11 2.5
Brewers		1	1	1		3 0.7
Innholders						
Maltsters			1	1	1	3 0.7
Taverners	8	12	19	12	19	70 15.9
Vintners						
Wyndraghers				3		3 0.7
Others		2		3		5 1.1
Total	61	97	98	97	67	440

TABLE 4:5 (continued)

	1351-60	1361-70	1371-80	1381-91	1391-1400	1351-1400	
						No.	%
Bakers	20	23	13	18	27	101	22.4
Butchers	30	18	21	28	19	116	25.8
Cooks	10	14	14	8	14	60	0.2
Fishers	9	15	12	15	28	79	17.6
Millers	1	6	2	9	12	30	6.7
Pulters	1	1				2	0.4
Salters							
Saucers	6	2	5	1	3	17	3.8
Brewers	2	2	1	2	1	8	1.8
Innholders					2	2	0.5
Maltsters	2					2	0.5
Taverners	4	10	5	1	5	25	5.6
Vintners		1		2	4	7	1.2
Wyndraghers							
Others				1		1	0.2
Total	85	92	73	85	115	450	
	1401-10	1411-20	1421-30	1431-40	1441-50	1401-50	
						No.	%
Bakers	19	29	32	32	21	133	22.7
Butchers	24	32	20	36	34	146	25.0
Cooks	5	17	11	6	19	58	9.9
Fishers	8	31	30	18	21	108	18.4
Millers	4	11	6	8	9	38	6.5
Pulters	1	2	4	1	3	11	1.9
Salters							
Saucers	2	2	4	4	3	15	2.5
Brewers	1	5	8	5	13	32	5.5
Innholders		3		1	3	7	1.2
Maltsters		1				1	0.2
Taverners	1	1				2	0.3
Vintners	5	13	5	4	8	35	6.0
Wyndraghers							
Others					1	1	0.2
Total	70	147	120	115	135	587	

TABLE 4:5 (continued)

	1451-60	1461-70	1471-80	1481-90	1491-1500	1451-1500	
						No.	%
Bakers	29	29	13	25	13	109	20.6
Butchers	19	22	24	16	14	95	17.9
Cooks	7	10	10	10	8	45	8.5
Fishers	24	32	29	30	25	140	26.4
Millers	15	16	18	10	16	75	9.0
Pulters		2		1		3	0.6
Salters					1	1	0.2
Saucers	1					1	0.2
Brewers	6	5	6	3	3	23	4.3
Innholders	3	3	5	2	4	17	3.2
Maltsters	1					1	0.2
Taverners							
Vintners	3	5	4	5	1	18	3.4
Wyndraghters							
Others		1		1		2	0.4
Total	108	125	109	103	85	530	
	1501-10	1511-20	1521-30	1531-4	1501-34		TOTAL
					No.	%	No.
Bakers	10	18	24	5	57	17.8	515
Butchers	17	21	15	9	62	19.3	543
Cooks	8	6	6	3	23	7.2	248
Fishers	13	36	24	7	80	25.0	498
Millers	9	19	8	10	46	14.3	197
Pulters							31
Salters							16
Saucers	1				1	0.3	47
Brewers	1	4	1	2	8	2.5	74
Innholders	9	4	9	2	24	7.8	50
Maltsters							7
Taverners							105
Vintners	1	3	2		6	1.9	66
Wyndraghters							3
Others			6	8	14	4.4	23
Total	69	111	95	45	321		2423

## Chapter 5. THE METAL CRAFTS

During the later middle ages the metal crafts in York accounted for a steady 9-10% of the freemen of the city, a deceptive regularity which conceals some very considerable changes in production and organization during the period studied. Moreover, despite the fact that only a comparatively small proportion of men were employed in metal working, these crafts include some of the most successful craftsmen in the late medieval city and also supported a wider variety of craft organizations than is found among the larger groups of textile, leather or victualling industries.<sup>1</sup> Ordinances survive for thirteen separate mysteries among the metal workers compared to eight among the leather workers and ten among the textile workers. The number of distinct metal working crafts was unusually high in York; in Coventry five companies were responsible for most of the metal crafts; and in Norwich in 1449 small mysteries were told to unite with larger ones for purposes of regulation.<sup>2</sup> The organization of the York metal industries was to some extent a reflection of council policy, but as the Norwich regulation implies, the nature of metal working itself usually led to the formation of distinct specialized groups.

Medieval metallurgy was in a large part a rural industry. Ores were smelted at or near the mines where they were extracted and then

1. The metal workers' mysteries were: goldsmiths; painters, stainers and goldbeters; potters; founders; pewterers; marshalls and smiths; cutlers; armourers; spurriers and lorimers; wiredrawers; pinners; cardmakers.
2. Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a city, p. 101; Records of Norwich ii, p. 280.



broken up into workable units for sale; iron for example was split into blooms of around 20 lbs.<sup>3</sup> As each craftsman purchased the material he required either direct, or more commonly through a merchant, no one group of craftsmen was in a position to dominate supply as were for example the tanners or the butchers in the leather and victualling trades respectively.<sup>4</sup> More important however in producing a division of labour was the relative sophistication of the tools required by the metal workers, and amongst the surviving inventories of craftsmen those of the metal craftsmen stand out for their lengthy enumeration of equipment in shop and workhouse. Three basic techniques were employed by craftsmen who worked in metal: non-ferrous metals were cast; iron and steel were worked with hammer and anvil; thirdly ferrous and non-ferrous metals were drawn into wire. The processes involved in each of these three methods of production were sufficiently distinct for the threefold division to serve as a basis for a discussion of the metal industry. The craftsmen who cast non-ferrous metals were the potters, founders and pewterers; smiths, cutlers and armourers were the main crafts working in iron and steel; the third group, by far the smallest in York, comprised pinners, wiredrawers and cardmakers. Only one major craft does not conform to this pattern, the goldsmiths, who were distinguished by the value of the materials in which they worked, gold, silver and jewels, and not by the processes they used, for their work employed all three techniques.

3. H.R. Schubert, History of the British Iron and Steel industry (1957), p. 133; J. Hatcher, English tin production and trade before 1550 (Oxford, 1973), pp. 19, 153; J.U. Nef, 'Mining and metallurgy in medieval civilization' in Cambridge Economic History ii, pp. 460-1.

4. For the trade in metals and the role of the ironmongers see below p. 367. For the attempt of the Coventry wiredrawers to form a monopoly see below p. 202.

It was crucial to the stability of the currency that the standard of gold and silver employed by goldsmiths should conform to assize and not to drop below the fineness of the coinage.<sup>5</sup> The assize of precious metals, laid down by statute in 1300 and putting responsibility for enforcement on the London goldsmiths, was effectively implemented from 1327;<sup>6</sup> henceforth provincial goldsmiths were to keep to the same standard as London and in 1330 Richard de Grymesby and Roger de Monketon, goldsmiths of York, were appointed by the London goldsmiths to see that these ordinances were kept in the northern counties.<sup>7</sup> Gold and silverware put to sale was to be stamped with the mark or pounce of the city and, from 1363, with the goldsmith's own personal mark and the surviving goldsmiths' ordinances from York are concerned solely with ensuring that gold and silver sold in the city was properly stamped.<sup>8</sup>

Goldsmiths' work was very varied and included gold-wire drawing, gilding and plating as well as casting and beating metal.<sup>9</sup> The inventory of John Colan, made in 1490, may well be representative of a moderately

5. For the York mint see V.C.H. City of York, pp. 29-30, 67; the mint came under close central control during the thirteenth century and only operated intermittently in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The Archbishop had a mint which issued pennies in the fifteenth century. For the relation of the London goldsmiths and the mint see T.F. Reddaway, Early history of the goldsmiths company, 1327-1509, (1975), pp. xix-xxv.
6. Reddaway, Goldsmiths Company, pp. xxv, 1-2.
7. C.P.R. 1330-34, p. 4.
8. Y.M.B. i, pp. 74-5.
9. Veale, 'Craftsmen and the economy of London', p. 147; Cal. Plea & Mem. Rolls 1458-82, p. 112 lists the tools of the 'craft of werkyng of wyre called goldwyre-drawyng'. There was in York a separate craft of goldbeaters associated with the painters and stainers and with ordinances dating probably from the late fourteenth century: Y.M.B. i, pp. 164-6.

successful goldsmith and contains items as various as silver spoons and mazer bands, book gold, jewels, 'i les hest cultell de les greyn serpentyn', and 'i arcum argentum cum catapult' made of gold.<sup>10</sup> Pure gold was too expensive for the vast majority of purchasers and most of a goldsmith's work was done in silver or gilt. In 1478-9 the city council for example paid Thomas Welles 6s 8d 'pro novo deauratione clavam armigerum maioris'; Alice Petty in the early sixteenth century deposited a piece of silver, six silver spoons and £4 with Robert Huchynson, a York goldsmith, to make a standing cup.<sup>11</sup> More important than such secular contracts must have been the enormous amount of work emanating from the Minster and its clergy: Archbishop Wickwane for example commissioned work from Walter the Goldsmith of York in the 1280's and Archbishop Greenfield from Adam de Munkton, goldsmith of York in 1313.<sup>12</sup> The fabric rolls of the fifteenth century make fairly frequent reference to repairs: in 1479 for example John Gorras was paid 'pro emendacione capitis Sancti Willelmi ymaginis Sanctae Appoloniae thuribulorum, textorum et fiolarum'.<sup>13</sup>

Henry Melton, a silversmith of York, did work for Archbishop Melton, and was also recorded as borrowing £100 from the archbishop on

10. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1490); Test Ebor. iv. pp. 58-9.
11. Chamberlains' rolls, p. 165; Welles was free in 1460 and died in 1500: Freemen's Reg. p. 180; B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 322-322v. Alice Petty's commission ended as a legal case: P.R.O. Cl/555/13; Huchynson was free in 1479 and died in 1506: Freemen's Reg. p. 201; B.I., Prob. Reg. 6 fo. 190-190v.
12. Register of William Wickwane (Surtees Society cxiv, 1907), pp. 322, 324; Register of William Greenfield v (Surtees Society cliii, 1938), p. 21.
13. Fabric rolls, p. 84, see also pp. 86, 89; Gorras was free in 1465: Freemen's Reg. p. 185.

one occasion.<sup>14</sup> The Minster clergy were probably the most important source of loans in late medieval York and the goldsmiths who worked for the Minster were likely to have exploited this source of capital in building up what were often very substantial fortunes.<sup>15</sup> Not infrequently goldsmiths rose into the civic élite; five were made mayor between 1401-1534, Richard Wartre holding the office twice.<sup>16</sup> Another mayor was William Snawshill whose grandson acquired the status of landed gentleman.<sup>17</sup> Fortunes could however prove precarious and Thomas Gray who had been both mayor and M.P. of the city was obliged by poverty to resign his aldermannic gown.<sup>18</sup> Moreover a great many goldsmiths must have been content with a very modest living, working on silver that was owned by their clients, as in the case of Alice Petty's cup. The goods of John Colan for example amounted to a fairly modest total of £15 17s 2d, over £9 of which was accounted for by the contents of his workshop.<sup>19</sup> Evidence from Worcester in the sixteenth century suggests that in that city too some goldsmiths were far from wealthy.<sup>20</sup>

The status and size of the goldsmiths' craft in any city varied presumably with the state of the market. In York the goldsmiths seem

14. L.H. Butler, 'Archbishop Melton, his neighbours and his kinsmen 1317-40', Journal of Ecclesiastical History ii (1951), p. 66; the two Meltons were not relatives.
15. R.B. Dobson, 'The decline and expulsion of the medieval Jews of York', Jewish Historical Society of England Transactions xxxvi, (1979), p. 41.
16. Wartre held office in 1436 and 1451; Chamberlains' rolls, p. 210; his will made in 1465 includes bequests of well over £500: B.I., Prob. Reg. 4 fo. 115v-116v.
17. Mayor 1468: Chamberlains' rolls, p. 211; his grandson Seth was made free per patres in 1488 as a gentleman and married into a landed family: Freemen's Reg. p. 213; Skaife, Civic officials.
18. Dobson, 'Urban decline', p. 20.
19. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1490).
20. Dyer, Worcester, p. 127.

to have been remarkably successful for most of the period studied, probably on the strength of commissions from ecclesiastics. Between 1300 and 1500 they accounted for 13% of all metal workers, the only metal craft which was more numerous being that of the smiths. The number of goldsmiths taking out the freedom fell somewhat after 1450 but only began to decline seriously after 1500.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore throughout the period studied and well into the sixteenth century York consistently attracted foreign goldsmiths; men like Wermbold Harlem at the beginning of the fifteenth century and John Hayster in the 1490's.<sup>22</sup>

Of all the craftsmen in a medieval city, those who worked in cast metal had the most complicated and often the most expensive equipment. Fortunately two inventories of the goods of early sixteenth-century founders survive from York and the wills of founders, potters and pewterers are also liberally sprinkled with references to casting equipment and moulds.<sup>23</sup> In addition to his shop, each master craftsman was in charge of a workhouse where the metal was cast, which contained the furnace, 'charke collys' and 'eyrth muldes' like those which have been recently excavated in a late medieval foundry in the Bedern, York.<sup>24</sup>

21. Business revived during the course of the sixteenth century, again probably due to ecclesiastical demand; Palliser, Tudor York, p. 165.
22. Harlem obtained letters of denization in 1403: C.P.R. 1401-5, p. 204; Hayster was described as an alien living in council property: Y.C.R. iii, p. 20; Bartlett, 'Some aspects of the economy of York', pp. 241-2.
23. The inventory of William Thwaite is transcribed in Appendix A, that of John Tennand is given in part in Test. Ebor. v, pp. 79-80.
24. Most of the moulds excavated in the Bedern site appear to have been for the manufacture of bells though the casting debris that has been found contains no bell metal; D.M. Ransom, 'An analysis of medieval moulds and casting debris from the Bedern, York' (Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Bradford, 1977), p. 4.

Earth moulds were made from templates, the 'patterns' that appear regularly in wills and inventories: John Broune bequeathed 'vi bell fete patoones' to one of his apprentices in 1492; Tennand and Thwaite both had 'fleure patrones', and 'ladyll and skomer patrons' as well as the apparently standard 'vii s ware patrons'.<sup>25</sup>

Whilst most of the copper alloys were cast in earth moulds, which were broken and disposed of after each casting, pewterers used permanent moulds made of metal.<sup>26</sup> Thomas Pereson who died in 1493 bequeathed to his craft 'unam formulam enneam pro pelve viz a brasen molde for a basen' for it was common practice for such moulds to be hired out by the craft to its members.<sup>27</sup> Because metal moulds were valuable they were frequently referred to in pewterers' wills: William Riche who died in 1465 bequeathed 'brasse moldes, duobus chargeor moldes, de un' holl' basyn molde, de un' holl' dissh molde, de i parvo dissh molde, de un' parv' salser molde'.<sup>28</sup> The inventory of Oliver Overdo, a baker who died in 1444, shows he possessed a 'chargeor mold de ere pond. viii doz.' valued at 16s, which presumably he had been given and considered worth keeping; he also owned 'i rote cum axe ferr' cum iii hukes ferr' pro i pewterer'.<sup>29</sup> As Overdo's inventory implies, metal casters needed a

25. B.I., Prob. Reg. 5 fo. 425v; Test. Ebor. v, p. 79-80; Appendix A, for a description of bronze casting see H.B. Walters, Church bells of England (1912), pp. 33-47.
26. The inventory of William Thwaite founder however contains a item described simply as 'the molde' worth 15s which must have been a metal mould, Appendix A.
27. B.I., Prob. Reg. 5 fo. 439. For a list of the moulds held for hire by the London pewterers see C. Welch, History of the worshipful company of pewterers (1902), pp. 14-15.
28. B.I., Prob. Reg. 4 fo. 248v.
29. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1444).

whole series of finishing tools, lathes, files, clamps and hammers; William Wynter, a founder, included in his will a bequest to William Richardson of 'the lathe that he tornys in' together with a whole string of hammers and burnishers.<sup>30</sup>

The casting of metal vessels could require a considerable amount of labour, so that master craftsmen working in this industry were likely to have had fairly large workshops. The ordinances of the London braziers imply that most of the workforce was unskilled, but there is seldom any indication of how many men one master employed; the largest workshop in medieval London was apparently that of a pewterer who employed eighteen men, but it is doubtful if any York craftsmen operated on this scale.<sup>31</sup> Of the York founders Robert Tothe had three apprentices as did John Broune; John Syther had one apprentice and at least three servants and John Worsell two apprentices and a servant.<sup>32</sup> It also appears to have been common for a free man to continue to work in the foundry of his master: John Burndale for example left the tools of his craft to John Worsell 'of my household' in 1460; Worsell however had been free since 1441.<sup>33</sup> However despite the comparatively large size of some workshops, English manufacture could not begin to compare in scale with the bronze and brass foundries on the continent where one entrepreneur might be employing more than a hundred men.<sup>34</sup>

30. B.I., Prob. Reg. 5 fo. 443 (1494).

31. Veale, 'Craftsmen and the economy of London', p. 149.

32. B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 112v-113, 4 fo. 425-425v; 3 fo. 97; Y.M.L., D/C. Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 260; Tothe's will is transcribed in appendix A. All these servants were employed notwithstanding an ordinance of the founders of 1390 which required each master should only have one apprentice: Y.M.B. i, pp. 105-6.

33. Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 295; Freemen's Reg., p. 157.

34. D.D. Brouwers, 'Les marchands-batteurs de Dinant a la fin du xv siecle', Bull. Commission Royale d'Histoire lxxviii (1909), p. 128.

The alloys cast in medieval foundries went by different names, depending on their composition. Copper alloys were variously described as bell-metal, bronze, brass and latten, their appearance depending on the proportion of zinc, tin and lead that had been added.<sup>35</sup> Different metals were of course suitable for different purposes; latten, for example, being akin to brass was used for items of display or decoration such as candlesticks, spurs and stirrups and also for memorial brasses. Many domestic utensils were made of brass or bronze, the demand for such items being widespread. Even the poorest peasant households in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries could expect to have a metal cooking pot,<sup>36</sup> but a more affluent townsman would have a kitchen well equipped with brass pots and pans, a pestle and mortar, brass ewers and basins and hanging bowls.<sup>37</sup> Brass was also used for religious vessels and William Thwaite, a founder, had in stock when he died in 1512, sensors, 'sacryng bells' and a 'haly water fatt'.<sup>38</sup> Probably the most celebrated products of the medieval foundries were church bells. The work of a number of famous provincial bell-founders have been traced, notably the

35. For the chemical composition of copper alloys see R.F. Tylecote, Metallurgy in archaeology (1962), pp. 56-8; Walters, Church Bells, p. 33. Bell metal contained about 25% tin to 75% copper; bronze had 70-80% copper and 20-30% lead and tin; and latten roughly 65% copper, 25% zinc and 10% lead and tin.
36. As early as 1301 some 44% of the taxable population of Colchester was listed as owning one or more metal cooking pots: H.E.J. le Patourel, 'Documentary evidence and the medieval pottery industry', Medieval archaeology xii (1968), p. 101; J. Hatcher English tin production and trade before 1550 (Oxford, 1973), p. 35.
37. See for example the inventories of Thomas Caton, weaver, John Colan, goldsmith, Thomas Gryssop, chapman, B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1413, 1490, 1446), Test. Ebor. iv, pp. 56-60; iii, pp. 101-105.
38. Appendix A.



craftsmen of Gloucester, Leicester and Norwich; in the north of England only Nottingham could rival the output of York.<sup>39</sup>

The most common term for a master craftsman working in bronze or brass was potter or brazier, the two words being interchangeable.<sup>40</sup> Potters were generally employed in making the entire range of brazen vessels and utensils, but naturally specialists in various branches of the craft emerged, calling themselves for example, latoners or bell-makers. The amount of specialization that existed and the way these craftsmen grouped themselves into fraternities or mysteries depended very largely on the extent and reputation of the local industry. In London in the later middle ages the brass and bronze casters were mainly divided between two mysteries: the potters or braziers who were the more prestigious craft and who included the bell-founders, and the founders who concentrated on the manufacture of pots and pans and other domestic vessels.<sup>41</sup> In York until the late fourteenth century it would appear that nearly all bronze casters were described as potters; not until after 1360 do founders appear in the freemen's register and their organization into a regulated craft would seem to be a creation of the late fourteenth century.<sup>42</sup> Bellmakers appear only sporadically in the

39. Walters, Church bells, pp. 199-205.

40. Potters mentioned in town records were undoubtedly metal workers; earth potters were men of very lowly status, only a few freemen of York were described specifically as earth potters; Freemen's Reg. pp. 139, 156, 177, 178.

41. G. Parsloe, Warden's accounts of the founders company (1964), p. xlv; Walters, Church Bells, pp. 178, 182-5.

42. Both potters and founders recorded ordinances in the late fourteenth century and early fifteenth century; Y.M.B. i, pp. 150-1, 93-4, 105-6.

Register, described sometimes as 'bellmaker and potter'<sup>43</sup> and likewise there were only a limited number of latoners.

During the fourteenth century the potters of York pursued a lucrative and honourable profession, their reputation most probably lying in the quality of the great bells that they made. The most eminent among these men was Richard Tunnock, mayor of York and M.P., whose craft is immortalized in the bell-founders' window that he donated to York Minster; it was Tunnock's wish that his son should be apprenticed in his own craft of potter.<sup>44</sup> Men like Robert Tothe, who lived at the end of the fourteenth century, were in the same tradition if not quite the same class as Tunnock:<sup>45</sup> Potters in other provincial towns were equally respected; John de Stafford, bell-founder and potter was mayor of Leicester and the city's M.P. in the late fourteenth century; Richard Mellom and his son Robert, bell-founders, were mayors of Nottingham in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.<sup>46</sup>

Unlike their colleagues further south, the potters of York seem to have suffered something of an eclipse in the fifteenth century. Although the Dean and Chapter of the Minster continued to employ York potters as bellmakers, on at least two occasions they called in outsiders to help with the casting of particularly important bells, John de Stafford

43. E.g. Richard Blakey in 1502 and John Eshby in 1506; Freemen's Reg., pp. 226, 229.
44. V.C.H. Yorkshire ii, p. 449. A copy of his will survives: Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 8. For a description of the window see A History of York Minster ed. G.E. Aylmer and Cant (Oxford, 1977), pp. 350-2. The apprenticeship of Tunnock's son is referred to in B.I., M2(1)a fo. 44.
45. Appendix A; for the wealth of the fourteenth century potters see below p. 433.
46. Walters, Church bells, pp. 202-3.

himself in 1371 and Thomas Innocent of Leicester in 1466.<sup>47</sup> Moreover of the eleven potters' wills that survive, ten date from before 1455 and only one, dated 1518, in the period following. This cannot be entirely accidental and suggests at least that fewer potters had sufficient goods to make it worth writing a will in the late fifteenth century, despite the fact that York must have remained the centre for bell casting in the north.

The decline experienced by the potters was probably connected with the rise of the founders, although the number of founders taking out the freedom from the 1380's onwards did not wholly compensate for the fall in the number of potters. There is almost no evidence to show whether the founders were taking over the heavy casting of the potters or whether, which is more likely, in common with their London colleagues, they concentrated on lighter domestic vessels and objects made of laton.<sup>48</sup> The founders of the late fifteenth century seem to have been fairly successful and the passage of one foundry through the hands of four generations of apprentices can be traced in the probate records.<sup>49</sup> The growth of a founders' mystery in York may represent an increasing

47. The York potter John Hoton cast bells for the Minster; Fabric Rolls, pp. 75, 80-1 (1471, 1473); G. Benson, 'York bellfounders' Yorkshire Philosophical Society Annual Report (1898), pp. 5-6. For medieval bells in Yorkshire see V.C.H. Yorkshire ii, p. 451.

48. Latoners disappear from the Register almost completely after 1350, see table 5:1. The list of bell-founders given in V.C.H. Yorkshire ii, pp. 450-1 is misleading for it includes men such as Tennand and Thwaite who were made free as founders and who are unlikely to have been primarily bellmakers, if they made bells at all.

49. The foundry was passed from John Burndale to John Worsell and then to William Wynter; Wynter's two apprentices William Richardson and Alan Lobley took out the freedom on his death: Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 260-260v, 295v; B.I., Prob. Reg. 5 fo. 443; Freemen's Reg., p. 218 (1494).

demand for brazen domestic goods, but the home industry faced stiff competition in this market from imports, the 'batterie' produced in enormous quantities in Namur, Liege and especially Dinant.<sup>50</sup> The customs accounts of Richard II show a certain amount of brazen were being imported through Hull along with raw copper, but a major increase in traffic seems to have occurred during the fifteenth century: the ships docking at Hull during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries regularly carried cargoes of frying pans, kettles, cauldrons and unspecified 'batterie'.<sup>51</sup> Even larger quantities of goods were imported into London, much of which must have been destined for distribution in the provinces.<sup>52</sup>

The work of the third group of metal casters, the pewterers, overlapped to a certain extent with that of the potters and founders in the fifteenth century. Domestic goods such as salt cellars, basins, ewers and pots were made from pewter; the main use of pewter however was for tableware, chargeors, bowls and plates, a 'garnish' of pewter consisting of twelve dishes, twelve plates and twelve small platters.<sup>53</sup> Pewter is an alloy of tin with either copper or lead. Fine pewter, a tin and copper alloy, was the more valuable and used for the best quality

50. Hatcher, English tin production, pp. 104-7.

51. E.g. P.R.O. E122/59/8 m.15,33d (1383); 159/11 m.1,7d (1398); 67/17 m.3v,4 (1471); 60/3 fo.7, 7v, 8, 28, 28v (1511).

52. Hatcher, English tin production, p. 36; Cal. Plea & Mem. Rolls 1413-37, pp. 94, 89-90 give lists of the 'batterie' carried by individual merchants of Dinant who were attached for debt. For the trade of the London merchants in the north see below pp. 397-8.

53. The jury book of the London pewterers gives in 1438 a table of weights of pewter vessels: Welch, Company of pewterers, pp. 11-13, 51; J. Hatcher and C. Barker, History of British pewter (1974), pp. 59-60.

flatware; 'lay pewter' an alloy of tin and lead was less attractive but more malleable and suitable therefore for holloware, that is bowls and pots.<sup>54</sup> England was throughout the middle ages the sole producer of tin in Europe, but despite this monopoly no substantial pewter industry developed in this country until the mid fourteenth century, pewter before 1300 being used almost exclusively for church plate.<sup>55</sup> The enormous growth of pewter production in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries depended on a similarly massive increase in the production of tin, without a commensurate rise in prices.<sup>56</sup> Pewter vessels could therefore be produced relatively cheaply: the inventory of John Carter made in 1485 lists new pewter at 3d a pound compared to brass at 2d a pound; silver by contrast cost some 3s 2d an ounce.<sup>57</sup> Pewter tableware accordingly offered an attractive alternative to wooden or earthen ware and at prices which made it infinitely more accessible than silver; in consequence it rapidly came to be adopted throughout the social hierarchy from the nobility to the richer peasant households, its wide dissemination most probably encouraged by the changes in the economy that took place after the Black Death, which resulted in a far larger market among small consumers.

Pewterers appeared in many provincial towns during the course of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. They did not always

54. Hatcher, English tin production, pp. 27-8.

55. Hatcher and Barker, History of British pewter, pp. 36, 24-29.

56. Hatcher and Barker, History of British pewter, pp. 40-1.

57. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1485); the silver in John Colan's workshop was valued at 3s 2d or 3s 4d an ounce: Test. Ebor, iv, p. 59.

constitute a separate craft; in Coventry they were allied, as the dominant partner, with the bronze founders and a regulation of 1494 against the use of base metal concluded that 'brasse, peauter and laten .... shal-be sufficient and able, well fyned and medled be due proporcion nor they that sell nor utter eny theire seid wares to eny Chapmen other then such as have be prentyse at peauterers crafte'.<sup>58</sup>

In York the pewterers of the fifteenth century formed a large, independent and very successful craft. The first pewterer apparently arrived in York in 1349.<sup>59</sup> An important entrant to the craft may have been John Carter who arrived from London in 1374, possibly bringing the most up to date patterns and techniques; the York pewterers certainly looked to London for an example and in 1416 adopted the ordinances of the London pewterers as their own.<sup>60</sup> The numbers of men taking up the freedom in the craft grew very rapidly in the fifteenth century; twenty-six did so in the years 1401-50, accounting for 5.7% of all metal workers, forty-five took up the freedom between 1451-1500, 13.2% of all metal workers.<sup>61</sup> Pewterers like William Riche and Richard Wynder made substantial fortunes from their business; only the first membrane of Wynder's inventory made in 1505 survives, but it records over £30 worth of plate and jewels.<sup>62</sup> Possibly the most successful

58. C.L.B. ii, p. 554; in sixteenth century Worcester there was a pewterer doubling as a bell-founder: Dyer, Worcester, p. 127.

59. Freemen's Reg., p. 41.

60. Freemen's Reg., p. 71; Y.M.B. i, pp. 211-3.

61. See table 5:1; the rapid growth rate was not entirely maintained in the early years of the sixteenth century.

62. B.I., Prob. Reg. 4 fo.248-248v, D/C Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 46-46v; D/C Original wills and inventories (1505).

of fifteenth century pewterers was Thomas Snawdon who became mayor in 1432.<sup>63</sup> It seems likely that York production dominated pewter manufacture in the north of England, for it had a national reputation, enshrined in statute law; indeed the spectacular growth of pewter manufacture in York and in other provincial centres may, unusually, have proved detrimental to the London industry which showed signs of slackening in the later fifteenth century.<sup>64</sup> It was on the basis of this reputation that the pewterers of the late fifteenth century enjoyed the status which had belonged to the potters in the early fourteenth.

The largest group of metal workers in any medieval town were the smiths, a very diverse group of craftsmen defined in Beverley as any craftsman 'working on an iron stethy'.<sup>65</sup> In Bristol smiths were grouped with cutlers and locksmiths; similarly in Norwich, though it was recognized that there were numerous small mysteries, each was to be united to 'his like craft for example to smythes crafte thies mysterys, bladesmythes, loksmeythes and lorymers'.<sup>66</sup> In York, probably because of the amount of metal working being done, many of these smaller groups, for example the cutlers and the lorimers, formed separate crafts

63. Chamberlains' rolls, p. 210; Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 245v-246.

64. 19 Henry VII c.6, Statutes of the Realm ii, p. 651; Palliser, Tudor York, p. 165; however pewter is only occasionally mentioned in the customs particulars for Hull e.g. P.R.O. E122/62/7 m.5 (1466), 60/3 fo.18 (1511). Bolton, Medieval English economy, pp. 276-7.

65. Smiths were among the twelve largest crafts in Coventry and Leicester in the early sixteenth century: Hoskins, Provincial England, p. 79. Hist. MSS. Comm., Beverley, p. 96 (1400).

66. Great Red Book of Bristol, p. 125 (1450); Records of Norwich ii, p. 280.

and the description 'smith' probably held a more limited definition. The terms marshall and smith had, by the fifteenth century, come to be virtually interchangeable; marshalls had originally been concerned with farriery, including the shoeing of horses, but the making of simple iron work such as horse-shoes and nails was bound to be undertaken by any urban craftsman with a hammer and anvil.<sup>67</sup> As a result 'lang stryfe and debats was moeved and hadde betwix the marschals and smyths', each claiming the other was stealing the craft's legitimate work, 'and thus thay war many dayes and yerys in variance ... that many yerys mairs and the chambre was hugely vexed wyth tham'.<sup>68</sup> The council obliged the craft to accept an uneasy union, though it was found necessary to reissue their ordinances in 1443.<sup>69</sup>

The work of the marshalls and smiths embraced the manufacture of an enormous variety of goods, domestic, industrial and agricultural. Frequently smiths were employed on building operations on a scale which necessitated the building of a special smiths' lodge, as was the case in 1295 when the city of York undertook the construction of a galley for the king.<sup>70</sup> Another set of building accounts, the fabric rolls of York Minster, give a good impression of the variety of work which a smith might undertake. Adam Hudson for example was paid at various dates for

67. The ordinances of the marshalls made in 1410 were concerned with healing and shoeing horses: Y.M.B. ii, pp. 176-8; the smiths' ordinances concerned iron implements and locks: Y.M.B. i, pp. 108-9 (n.d.).

68. Y.M.B. ii, p. 179.

69. Y.M.B. ii, pp. 180-2.

70. P.R.O. E101/5/8 m.2.



two large iron bars for a door, 'i les clapir, empt. pro nova campana', 'pro factura iiii malloreum ferri magnorum', 'pro factura duorum flabellorum de ligno et factura les tyres de novo campanarum'; other work varied from the routine sharpening of masons' tools to the precision work of clock-making.<sup>71</sup> Probably the most skilled amongst the smiths specialized as locksmiths: James Toller when he died in 1530 left his craft tools to his two apprentices, one of whom took out the freedom in 1531 as a smith and the other in the same year as a locksmith; John Wyntringham, free as a smith in 1409 described himself in his will, made in 1457, as a locksmith.<sup>72</sup> There was however no separate mystery of locksmiths till the sixteenth century and when their ordinances were finally registered in the 1570's they were copied directly from those of the smiths of the early fifteenth century.<sup>73</sup>

Much of a smith's work was probably done on a piece rate basis. John Lylling in 1428 was putting out work, in this case employing smiths to manufacture sub-standard osmunds from iron he had supplied.<sup>74</sup> The enormous orders of nails required for building work may also have been made on a putting out basis and supplied by entrepreneurs: on one occasion John Pese, a girdler, 'et sociis suis' for example sold over

71. Hudson was made free in 1449; Freemen's Reg., p. 168; Fabric rolls, pp. 69, 73, 75 (1457, 1470, 1471). Clocks are referred to in Fabric rolls, pp. 96, 103 (1516, 1528).
72. Toller's apprentices were John Lytster and Richard Fawell: B.I., Prob. Reg. 9 fo. 473v; Freemen's Reg., p. 251. Wyntringham: Freemen's Reg., p. 113; Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 286v.
73. Y.C.R. vii, pp. 54-5, compared to Y.M.B. i, pp. 108-9.
74. English Miscellany (Surtees Society, lxxxv, 1888), pp. 1-3.

100,000 nails to the Minster.<sup>75</sup> Such a huge order could not have been completed by city craftsmen alone and indeed the ordinances of the ironmongers imply that a great deal of ironware, and nails in particular, was being brought into the city from the country.<sup>76</sup>

The smiths, in the late fifteenth century, were involved in a protracted and acrimonious quarrel with the cutlers and bladesmiths over the making of edged tools. Competition in this field between cutlers and smiths was likely to have been long standing, but became acute in the 1480's. The smiths claimed that 'marshalls, smythes and bladesmythes hath been all way a hole crafte and contributarie to all charges to gidder ... except bladesmithes that makes cutler ware and no mor and so these bladesmiths and cutlers doo serche, that is to say bastards, dagars and grose ware'.<sup>77</sup> The smiths contended that they therefore had a right to search all 'axes and egetoile' which presumably included the output of specialists such as shearsmiths and scythesmiths; this was eventually denied them but they were allowed to make such items without contributing to the 'cutlers' and bladesmiths' craft.<sup>78</sup> It would clearly be unwise to try to be too precise about which crafts made particular types of edged tools and blades. The cutlers by the fifteenth century seem to have been trafficking mainly in small goods though this had not necessarily always been the case. The evidence does suggest however that neither cutlers and bladesmiths nor the smiths

75. Y.M.L., E3.22b m.1. (1457).

76. Y.M.B. i, pp. 201-2.

77. Y.C.R. ii, p. 36 (1488); the first record of this particular quarrel dates from 1482; Y.M.B. ii, pp. 247-8; further conflict occurred in 1493: Y.C.R. ii, pp. 103-4.

78. Y.M.B. ii, pp. 248-9.

made full sized swords, which were rather the product of the armourers.<sup>79</sup>

The cutlers seem to have been at the peak of their prosperity in the early fourteenth century<sup>80</sup> when, apart from serving an extensive market for knives for domestic and industrial purposes, they undoubtedly profited from the wars against Scotland, so that between 1301-1350, sixty-two cutlers took out the freedom, some 25% of all metal workers.<sup>81</sup> Their authority was probably further enhanced by the control that they had over subsidiary industries, particularly the sheathers.<sup>82</sup> The sheathers made an attempt to form themselves into a separate craft in the early fifteenth century and registered their own ordinances in the Memorandum Book, but the attempt was abortive;<sup>83</sup> no sheathers took out the freedom after 1450 and the cutlers' ordinances of 1445 treat cutlers, bladesmiths and sheathers as one craft.<sup>84</sup>

In contrast to every other craft save the armourers, the cutlers were never again in the middle ages as numerous as in the years before 1350. Demand for their products cannot have fallen as drastically as the fall in number of cutlers suggests, so the craft must have been particularly susceptible to competition in the booming economy of late fourteenth and early fifteenth century York. The inventory of Robert

79. See below p. 199.

80. As they also were in Leicester, Records of Leicester, ii, p. lxvi.

81. See table 5:1.

82. The London cutlers controlled the operations of the bladesmiths and the sheathers; the cutlers themselves made the knife handles and assembled the product; Cal. Plea & Mem. Rolls 1364-81, p. 13, f.n.1.

83. Y.M.B. i, p. 29.

84. Y.M.B. i, p. 136-7; cutlers were referred to in 1500 as important purchasers of leather: Y.C.R. ii, p. 147.

Tankard, a girdler, dating from 1439, begins with an extensive collection of knives and daggers, implying some competition was coming from this quarter.<sup>85</sup> The ordinances of the cutlers made in 1480 suggest that a great deal of foreign stuff was being hawked about the city.<sup>86</sup> It was in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries that the cutlery industry of Hallamshire began to develop; possibly therefore from this date goods from south Yorkshire were beginning to dominate the York market and further depress the prospects of the local cutlers.<sup>87</sup>

As mentioned, one branch of the blade-making industry, the manufacture of swords, seems to have been reserved to the armourers.<sup>88</sup> The names of certain York armourers such as Godeschalculus Wyrksword betray their specialization, and the Chamberlains' rolls show that when the mayor's swords needed refurbishing in 1475 the task was entrusted to an armourer, William Spence.<sup>89</sup> When new scabbards were to be made for the civic swords, they too were commissioned from an armourer in 1472, and the armourers' ordinances of the fifteenth century in fact conclude with a clause of swords and scabbards: no-one was to make 'skabberds but of good stuf' or 'dight no swerdes but warkmanlyke'.<sup>90</sup>

Body armour was of two types: it could either be of mail, made from flattened and rivetted wire, or plate armour, beaten into shape,

85. Test. Ebor. iii, pp. 96-7; the girdlers however were also in difficulties by the end of the fifteenth century, see above pp. 115-6.

86. Y.M.B. i, p. 135.

87. R.E. Leader, History of the company of cutlers of Hallamshire (Sheffield, 1905), pp. 4-5.

88. In early sixteenth century London bladesmiths in fact were associated with armourers not cutlers: C. Welch, History of the cutlers' company of London (1916), p. 24.

89. Chamberlains' rolls, p. 156.

90. Chamberlains' rolls, pp. 130, 165; on the second occasion the scabbard was passed to Harman Goldsmith for gilding. Y.C.R. iii, p. 179.

giving the armourers their alternate name of furburs. Both skills were practised by York armourers: Adam Hethe, who died in 1403, left to his son John 'omnia instrumenta mea artificio meo de fourbourcraft pertinencia' and to Agnes his daughter 'omnia instrumenta artificio meo de maylewerk pertinencia', but the elaboration of plate armour during the course of the fourteenth century meant that mail became very much less important.<sup>91</sup> Full plate armour in the fourteenth and fifteenth century could be very elaborate but the protective clothing of the majority of foot soldiers and archers was comparatively simple, consisting of a defensive jacket and a helmet.<sup>92</sup> The demand for the simpler kit was of course far greater and was likely to have been the staple work of most York armourers. In 1244 Henry III ordered the mayor of York to purchase 'xv loricas et totidem haubergellos ad opus militum'.<sup>93</sup> The Scottish wars brought increased demands; in 1314 and 1334 the city of York was ordered to send crossbowmen to the north complete with defensive jackets and bascinets and in 1316 the sheriff of York was ordered to buy all the iron bascinets with visors that were for sale in the city.<sup>94</sup> Not surprisingly the figures for armourers taking out the freedom between 1301-1350 were higher than they were ever to be subsequently.

91. B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo.102v; J. Mann and A.R. Dufty, Outline of arms and armour in England (1969), pp. 13-15.

92. The stock items of plate armour are given in inventories of London armourers, Cal. Plea. & Mem. Rolls 1437-57, pp. 19, 146-7; Mann and Dufty, Arms and armour, p. 26. Defensive jackets included hauberks of mail and haketons of leather; both were made by armourers: Riley, Memorials, p. 145.

93. C.C.R. 1242-47, p. 216.

94. C.C.R. 1313-18, p. 201; P.R.O. E101/14/33 which gives the price of haketons at 8s 4d - 9s 6d and bascinets as 4s 2d - 4s 4d in 1334; C.C.R. 1313-18, p. 295.

Undoubtedly there was some fine armour being made in the city, for York attracted in the fourteenth century a number of immigrants in the craft. Arnald de Almayne, free in 1327 was one of these immigrants, as were Ingilbright de Alman, Godeskalk Scudik de Almann and Matthew de Colonia whose names reflect the strength of the armoury industry of the German towns at this time.<sup>95</sup> The continued fall in the number of armourers taking out the freedom in the fifteenth century and the lack of evidence for even moderately wealthy men among the armourers from 1400 onwards suggest however that fine work had ceased to be an important part of the armourers' business by this date and that the more elaborate plate armour was coming to be purchased either from London or from overseas.

Copper and iron wire were made by drawing metal through plates punctured with holes of decreasing fineness.<sup>96</sup> The process of drawing iron was, because of the hardness of the metal, more protracted and cumbersome than drawing copper and this together with the demand for different thicknesses of iron wire seems in Coventry at least, to have given rise to two distinct branches of the craft, the brakemen who drew coarse wire and the cardwiredrawers making fine wire.<sup>97</sup> A fair variety of types of wire were required by medieval craftsmen. Copper wire was

95. Freemen's Reg. pp. 24, 26, 44, 47; Cambridge Economic History ii, p. 129.

96. H.R. Schubert, 'The wiredrawers of Bristol 1312-1797', Iron and Steel Institute Journal clix (1948), pp. 16-22.

97. C.L.B. i, pp. 180-3; the precise function of brakemen, girdlemen and middlemen mentioned in these rules is not clear.

used for making pins; the girdler Robert Tankard, who died in 1439, had in stock 'iii lb de laton wyre' and 'iii lb de yren wyre'; armourers used lengths of flattened wire for the manufacture of chain mail.<sup>98</sup> Ordinances on wire-drawing in York and Coventry both refer to the manufacture of fish-hooks from wire.<sup>99</sup> One of the most important uses of iron wire was for the manufacture of wool cards, so much so that the wiredrawers and cardmakers formed one craft in Bristol, and this section of the market was of course heavily dependent on the woollen industry.<sup>100</sup>

Because wiredrawers were suppliers to a number of industries, they seem in certain circumstances to have been able to exploit their position to considerable advantage. Within the Coventry industry an entrepreneurial system had developed as a result of collusion between the leading smiths and the wiredrawers who were apparently organizing the industry on a putting out basis and even setting up small factories; legislation in 1435 attempted to break the control of the big operators by creating a clear distinction between smiths and brakemen on the one hand and the cardwiredrawers on the other.<sup>101</sup> The Coventry wiredrawing industry was formidably large for fifty-four names were appended to these new regulations.

Compared to the Coventry industry, the York wiredrawers were very insignificant; between 1301-1534 only thirty-seven took out the freedom

98. D.A. Brinklow, 'An examination of copper alloy metalworking in medieval York', (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Bradford, 1975), p. 15; Test. Ebor. iii, p. 97; Mann and Dufty, Arms and armour, p. 5.

99. Y.M.B. ii, p. 297 (1479); C.L.B. i, p. 181.

100. Great Red Book of Bristol iii, pp. 84-88 (1469).

101. C.L.B. i, pp. 181-3.

in all, nearly half of them doing so in the years 1351-1400, and in 1482 wiredrawers were officially united with the pinners.<sup>102</sup> The wiredrawers have left very little trace in the records and the only one whose will survives was Garrard Younger, who died in 1506; he had been made free as 'wyredrawer als pynner'.<sup>103</sup> The pinners had always been numerically the stronger craft in York and surviving wills of pinners show that a number of them were associated with influential citizens. Ellen Couper, a pinner's widow, and William Croft appointed mercers as executors of their wills and William Stockton was a close friend of Thomas Easingwold, who was later to become mayor of York.<sup>104</sup> Possibly a few pinners may have established a controlling interest in the wire and pin industries. However pinners, like wiredrawers, encountered difficulties in the late fifteenth century and only five were made free in the years 1451-1500. The pinners seem to have faced some competition from the girdlers,<sup>105</sup> but a more serious threat was likely to have been from wire and pin imports from other centres of manufacture.

Outside competition was demonstrably a threat to the cardmakers who were one of the major purchasers of wire. An ordinance of the cardmakers in the early fifteenth century forbade anyone from bringing 'fra Coventre to York any cardelefes to sel tham among thase that are made in the citee of York'.<sup>106</sup> Pressure on the cardmakers was increased in the

102. Y.M.B. ii, p. 297.

103. B.I., Prob. Reg. 6 fo. 219v-220 (1490), Freemen's Reg., p. 215.

104. B.I., Prob. Reg. 4 fo. 135 (1469), 4 fo. 156 (1470), Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 141v-142 (1406).

105. Y.C.R. i, p. 151.

106. Y.M.B. i, p. 81.



late fifteenth century as the cloth industry contracted and as other craftsmen in the textile industry appropriated their work: in 1454 Robert Horsman, tailor, was fined 'pro eo quod uxor eius occupabit in arte de lez cardemakers per se et servientes suos'.<sup>107</sup>

Despite the small size of the English metal industries compared with those of the continent, the surviving evidence accordingly suggests that there was a considerable amount of regional specialization in the later middle ages. Coventry supported an unusually high number of wire drawers in the fifteenth century, a few centres such as Leicester and Nottingham were renowned for bellmaking, while the late fifteenth century saw the development of the cutlery trade of Hallamshire. Compared to other provincial towns, the wide range of specialized manufactures produced in York was impressive. However York metal goods were sold almost entirely into a regional market, that of the north of England, as is demonstrated by the way that market forces altered the significance of different branches of manufacture. Firstly there was the ecclesiastical market which supported the luxury trades such as the goldsmiths, goldbeaters and painters and the skilled smiths such as the clockmakers, and which continued to do so even when the economy of the city was in headlong decline. Secondly there was the demand from the army, which was of the greatest importance in the early fourteenth century and thirdly the domestic market, which was growing during the course of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

107. Chamberlains' rolls, p. 86.

Changes in regional demand within the military and domestic markets in particular meant that the metal industry in York was by 1500 profoundly different to that of the early fourteenth century. The most obvious change was in the armoury and cutlery trades: between 1301-50 the armourers accounted for 12.2% of all metal workers and the cutlers 24.5%; by 1451-1500 the proportions were 4.1% and 7.6% respectively. The biggest contrast to the armourers came from the craftsmen who worked as casters and founders of non-ferrous metals; these men accounted for 27% of all metal workers in 1451-1500 whereas in 1301-50 they had accounted for 11.5%. The pre-eminence of the potters had by this time passed entirely to the pewterers and the enormous growth of the pewter industry would seem to emphasise that in metal manufacture as in the textile trades, York's industry was by 1500 dominated by consumer demand.

TABLE 5:1. ENTRANTS TO THE FREEDOM OF YORK, DECADAL TOTALS: METAL CRAFTS

	-1290	1291-1300	-1300	
			No.	
Armourers			3	11.5
Furbers	1	2	3	
Bellmakers				
Founders			3	11.5
Latoners				
Potters	1	2	3	
Bladesmiths			1	3.8
Cutlers		1	1	
Cardmakers				
Goldsmiths	2	1	3	11.5
Ironmongers		1	1	3.8
Moneyers				
Painters				
Stainers				
Pewterers				
Pinners		3	3	11.5
Smiths	3	2	5	23.0
Locksmiths	1		1	
Spurriers		1	1	23.0
Lorimers	5		5	
Tinkers				
Wiredrawers				
Others				
Total	13	13	26	

TABLE 5:1 (continued)

	1301-10	1311-20	1321-30	1321-40	1341-50	1301-50	
						No.	
Armourers		1	5	6	3	15)	31 12.2
Furbers	5	3	4	2	2	16)	
Bellmakers							
Founders							34 13.5
Latoners	2	2	1	2	1	8)	
Potters	4	5	2	6	9	26)	
Bladesmiths							62 24.5
Cutlers	3	15	10	19	15	62)	
Cardmakers							
Goldsmiths	3	3	3	6	8		23 9.1
Ironmongers	2	4		5	2		13 5.1
Moneyers							
Painters		2		2	7	11)	11 4.3
Stainers							
Pewterers					2		2 0.8
Pinners		3	1	3	1		8 3.2
Smiths	6	11	4	11	13	45)	46 18.2
Locksmiths				1		1)	
Spurriers		1	1	2	1	5)	18 7.1
Lorimers	5	3	2	1	2	13)	
Tinkers				1			1 0.4
Wiredrawers	1			1	1		3 1.2
Others				1			1 0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>68</b>		<b>253</b>

TABLE 5:1 (continued)

	1351-60	1361-70	1371-80	1381-90	1391-1400	1351-1400	
						No.	%
Armourers	1	1		5	6	13)	29 6.1
Furbers	8	2	3	2	1	16)	
Bellmakers	1					1)	
Founders		2	2	5	5	14)	59 12.4
Latoners		2				2)	
Potters	6	4	11	12	6	42)	
Bladesmiths		2	3		3	8)	41 8.6
Cutlers	8	11	9	2	3	33)	
Cardmakers	1	5	3	4	7		20 4.2
Goldsmiths	5	12	12	12	20		61 12.8
Ironmongers	2	1	2	1	1		7 1.5
Moneyers	1	2		1			4 0.8
Painters	1	6	1	4	1	13)	13 2.7
Stainers							
Pewterers			2	1	3		6 1.3
Pinners	6	7	7	7	5		32 6.7
Smiths	27	21	14	28	28	118)	125 26.3
Locksmiths		1	3	1	2	7)	
Spurriers	3	4	10	9	9	35)	46 9.7
Lorimers	2	3	3	1	2	11)	
Tinkers					1		1 0.2
Wiredrawers	3	3	4	1	6		17 3.6
Others	3	6	1	2	1		13 2.7
Total	78	98	90	98	110		474

TABLE 5:1 (continued)

	1401-10	1411-20	1421-30	1431-40	1441-50	1401-50	
						No.	
Armourers	4	5	5	7	5	26)	27 5.9
Furbers	1					1)	
Bellmakers				2		2)	
Founders	2	4	2	3	5	16)	40 8.6
Latoners					1	1)	
Potters	4	4	8	3	2	21)	
Bladesmiths	2	4	3	1	1	11)	41 7.3
Cutlers	4	11	7	3	5	30)	
Cardmakers	3	5	4	6	8		26 5.7
Goldsmiths	6	20	8	13	18		65 14.1
Ironmongers	1	2			2		5 1.1
Moneyers	1		1		1		3 0.7
Painters	2	5	1	1	1	10)	29 6.3
Stainers	2	5	4	2	6	19)	
Pewterers	1	4	6	5	10		26 5.7
Pinners	9	9	7	4	5		34 7.4
Smiths	18	18	18	21	24	99)	110 23.9
Locksmiths	2		1	4	4	11)	
Spurriers	4	8	4	3	5	24)	32 7.0
Lorimers	2		2	3	1	8)	
Tinkers	2	2	1	2			7 1.5
Wiredrawers		1		3	1		5 1.1
Others		5	1		4		10 2.2
Total	70	112	83	86	109		460

TABLE 5:1 (continued)

	1451-60	1461-70	1471-80	1481-90	1491-1500	1451-1500	
						No.	%
Armourers	2	3	5	4		14)	14 4.1
Furbers						}	
Bellmakers		1	1	1		3)	
Founders	2	6	4	4	6	22)	39 11.5
Latoners		1		1		2)	
Potters	2	4	2	1	3	12)	
Bladesmiths	1	5	2	2	1	11)	26 7.6
Cutlers	4	4	4	2	1	15)	
Cardmakers	7	1	3	2	1		14 4.1
Goldsmiths	7	11	7	8	9		42 12.4
Ironmongers		1					1 0.3
Moneyers				1	4		5 1.5
Painters	3	2	2	4	6	17)	24 7.1
Stainers	4	2	1			7)	
Pewterers	4	9	10	8	14		45 13.2
Pinners	1		2	2	2		7 2.1
Smiths	12	16	18	13	14	73)	81 23.8
Locksmiths		3	3	2		8)	
Spurriers	1	2	10	2	4	19)	22 6.5
Lorimers		1		2		3)	
Tinkers	3			2	1		6 1.8
Wiredrawers	3		2	2	1		8 2.4
Others	2	1	2	1			6 1.8
Total	58	73	78	64	67		340

TABLE 5:1 (continued)

	1501-10	1511-20	1521-30	1531-34	1501-34		TOTAL		
					No.	%	No.	%	
Armourers	3	5	4	2	14)	14	82)	118	6.8
Furbers					}		36)		
Bellmakers		1			1)		7)		
Founders	3	6	2		11)	29	63)	204	11.7
Latoners					}		13)		
Potters	5	3	7	2	17)		121)		
Bladesmiths	2		4	2	8)	13	38)	184	10.5
Cutlers	2		2	1	5)		146)		
Cardmakers	2	1	1			4		64	3.7
Goldsmiths	5	6	4	2		17		211	12.1
Ironmongers		2				2		29	1.7
Moneyers	3	1				4		16	0.9
Painters	5	5	4		14)	14	65)	91	5.2
Stainers					}		26)		
Pewterers	4	6	6	1		17		96	5.5
Pinners	1	3	1	1		6		90	5.2
Smiths	15	15	10	2	42)	52	382)	420	24.1
Locksmiths	1	3	4	2	10)		38)		
Spurriers	3	5	2		10)	10	94)	134	7.7
Lorimers					}		40)		
Tinkers		1				1		16	0.9
Wiredrawers	3			1		4		37	2.1
Others								30	1.7
Total	57	63	51	16		187		1740	



## Chapter 6. THE BUILDING CRAFTS

There is a considerable body of evidence for the study of the building industry in medieval York, not only of tangible evidence from the buildings themselves but also a great deal of documentation: ordinances, contracts and accounts. Much use has already been made of these original sources and the medieval buildings of York have been, and are still being, extensively surveyed in terms of their architecture and techniques of construction, the most important work in this respect having been done by the York office of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, who have so far published four volumes of their surveys.<sup>1</sup> Something must of course be said in this chapter of the buildings which still stand and the documentary evidence both for their construction and for the construction of other medieval buildings, and particular reference must be made to the problems posed by the type of evidence that has survived. However as both the buildings themselves and building techniques have been so thoroughly investigated, the bulk of this chapter adopts a more limited approach and concentrates on the type of work and the opportunities open to different craftsmen and the relationships between the crafts which comprised the workforce. In

1. R.C.H.M., City of York, 4 vols. (1962-75). Other important recent work on architecture and building in York is contained in G.E. Aylmer and R. Cant, York Minster (Oxford, 1977). L. Salzman, Building in England down to 1540 (Oxford, 1967) and D. Knoop and G.P. Jones, The medieval mason (Manchester, 1933) are the classic works on the building industry in the middle ages. J. Harvey, English Medieval Architects (1954) and Medieval Craftsmen (1975) also draw heavily on York material.

an industry which depended so heavily on semi-skilled and unskilled labour the attempt to organize this workforce within a system of craft guilds was unlikely to be very successful. Not surprisingly little evidence survives for the mysteries within the building trade, but the craftsmen concerned do fall into certain identifiable groups: masons; carpenters and associated crafts; plasterers and tilers; glaziers; plumbers; pavers and labourers; these groups have been used as a basis for the discussion which follows.

Visually the most spectacular evidence of medieval craftsmanship in York is the Minster. Building operations were carried on at the Minster almost continuously throughout the later middle ages. In 1291 work was begun on replacing the Norman nave and when this was finally completed in the late 1360's the decision had already been taken to rebuild the choir. Probably because of lack of funds, work on the choir was somewhat spasmodic, being prolonged into the first decade of the fifteenth century. With the completion of the choir, attention was turned to the construction of three new towers, two at the west end as well as the central lantern tower; again work proceeded at a halting pace and was concluded only in 1473. The surviving records show that the prosecution of this immense work involved employing very considerable numbers of York craftsmen in addition to the staff of builders maintained wholly by the Minster. The main body of accounts which describe this construction are the cathedral fabric rolls: unfortunately these are incomplete, beginning in c. 1360, with only a third of the rolls for the

fifteenth century surviving.<sup>2</sup> These accounts are supplemented by other Dean and Chapter archives, notably the chapter act books, as well as by entries in the archiepiscopal registers.<sup>3</sup>

Extensive building work was also undertaken on York's parish churches; at least seven were entirely or partly rebuilt between 1420-1500 and an eighth, St. Michael le Belfrey, rebuilt in the early sixteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Although accounts survive for the rebuilding of this latter church, there is unfortunately almost no other documentary evidence for work undertaken on parish churches. However it seems that if the money were available, top class craftsmen were employed on such operations; Richard Russell, a prominent merchant, bequeathed a considerable sum in 1445 to complete the bell tower of the undistinguished church of St. John Hungate, specifying that the masonry be supervised by John Cotom and the carpentry by John Bolron, two of the most experienced building craftsmen in York at the time.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the construction of churches, ecclesiastical corporations, as major land and property owners, were involved in the building and upkeep of houses and shops and the maintenance of pavements. Most of the evidence of this type of work derives from the

2. Y.M.L., E3.1-3.40 (c.1360-1530). The fabric rolls have been edited by J. Raine, Fabric Rolls of York Minster (Surtees Society xxxv, 1859) hereafter cited as 'Fabric Rolls' and also by J. Browne, Fabric Rolls and Documents of York Minster (York, rev. ed. 1863); both editions are selective and tend to omit names of craftsmen, so are of limited use for this study.
3. Fabric Rolls, pp. 161-184.
4. V.C.H., City of York, p. 107.
5. B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 439. John Bolron was the official city carpenter; Chamberlains' Rolls, pp. 14, 21, 23; John Cotom had been a full time mason in the Minster; Y.M.L., E3.8 m.2 (1419).

records of the Vicars Choral who owned large numbers of tenements throughout the city, especially in the Stonegate and Petergate areas. In addition to the repairs recorded in the Vicars Choral chamberlains' and rent rolls, a few accounts survive for the erection of new buildings by the Vicars dating from the late 14th and early 15th centuries.<sup>6</sup> These records provide a welcome corrective to the undue prominence that is perhaps given to masonry by the higher survival rate of medieval stone buildings. The same is true of the records of the city corporation. Though the most dramatic and obvious visual evidence of the city's building work must always be the city walls, the civic accounts show an equally great preoccupation in the fifteenth century with the building, repair and modernization of the numerous tenements in the city's possession. By 1315 the city walls were complete save for the Old Baile and the Walmgate area.<sup>7</sup> In 1345 a contract was made for building a section of walls from the Foss to Fishergate Bar and it is assumed that the rest of the Walmgate area was walled by the end of the fourteenth century.<sup>8</sup> During the fourteenth century additional work was done on all the bars with the barbicans probably being added at this date.<sup>9</sup> Work on the walls in the fifteenth century was largely concerned therefore with renovation and modifications, with a few further additions.<sup>10</sup>

6. Y.M.L., Vq 1-10 (Repairers' rolls 1383-1530); Vicars Choral Box x (Building accounts).
7. R.C.H.M., Defences, p. 13.
8. R.C.H.M., Defences, pp. 14-15.
9. R.C.H.M., Defences, pp. 95, 116, 125, 142.
10. R.C.H.M., Defences, pp. 18-20. Detailed evidence for this work can be found in the city records e.g.: Chamberlains' Rolls, pp. 96-98, 112-3, 130-1, 153-4. Only two murage rolls for the city have survived, detailing income from tolls and expenditure on the walls: Y.C.L., C59.1 (1442-3), C59.2 (1445-6).

The most informative city accounts which survive for the fifteenth century are those of the chamberlains and <sup>of</sup> the bridgemasters of Ouse and Foss bridges.<sup>11</sup> The responsibility for the upkeep of the extensive properties from which the city derived a considerable proportion of its income lay with the official to whom the rents from the buildings had been assigned. These accounts, particularly those of the bridgemasters of Ouse bridge afford a great deal of information on the repairs and the new building undertaken in the years 1440-1520 and the craftsmen employed by them. The two, often defective, chamberlains' account books record, in addition, the first stages in the building of the Guildhall in the years 1447-50, with week by week expenses for materials, transport and labour.<sup>12</sup>

Given the wealth of evidence for the study of the building industry when compared to the paucity of material for other crafts, it is unwise to carp. However this brief survey of the sources does bring out clearly certain limitations which can be misleading when making an attempt to assess the size and organization of the industry in York. First the great majority of this recorded work was undertaken by corporate bodies; consequently although a limited amount of contract work was specified in the accounts, most of it was performed on a daily wage.<sup>13</sup>

11. The accounts that have been used are to be found in: Chamberlains' Rolls; Y.C.L., C82.10-C87.1 (Custodians of Ouse bridge, 1440-1522); C80.5-C80.16 (Custodians of Foss bridge, 1445-1489).
12. Y.C.L., CC1 fos. 79-89, CC1a)fos. 4-10, 68, 72-3.
13. The same limitations apply to surveys of building elsewhere, e.g. that of Stratford based on accounts of the gild of the Holy Cross: T.H. Lloyd, Some aspects of the building industry in medieval Stratford upon Avon (Dugdale Society Occasional Papers xiv, 1961).

A large number of building contracts throughout England do survive from the period c.1300-1530, covering a wide variety of building projects, including many contracts for the construction of domestic buildings.<sup>14</sup> It seems likely that a significant proportion of private building was done in York on this basis as it was elsewhere, though virtually no records of such arrangements survive.<sup>15</sup> The imbalance in the type of material which survives in York makes it difficult to establish the proportion of independent master craftsmen to journeymen labourers in York, though it does seem to be the case that the building industry was in striking contrast to the majority of other crafts in the extent to which labour was employed by the day.

Secondly it seems probable that an unknown amount of itinerant labour was employed, although a large town like York must have been able to support a greater workforce and be less dependent on peripatetic craftsmen than a small town such as Stratford.<sup>15</sup> No evidence survives to suggest that work on large building schemes was prosecuted with sufficient speed in late medieval York to warrant the calling in of extensive labour from elsewhere, however it is clear that the Minster was employing a certain number of outside experts and that a proportion of its workmen were itinerant. Finally the survival of so many ecclesiastical buildings and the records of the Minster fabric also tend to distort the picture of the medieval building trade in York by giving undue emphasis to masonry, so that attention is drawn away from

14. Salzman, Building in England, pp. 413-584, 595-602.

15. Lloyd, Building industry in medieval Stratford, p. 10.

the mass of carpenters, tilers, plasterers and labourers who undertook what must have been the bulk of the building work within the city.

In their working life the masons were probably at the furthest remove from the experience of most medieval craftsmen, for amongst the masons the itinerant nature of their employment was very pronounced.<sup>16</sup> This style of life was inevitable as much of the building done in stone was large scale: castles, churches, large houses, frequently built in areas where there were few or no skilled labourers to draw on. Even when there were resident masons for important works, particularly those which it was hoped would be completed quickly, additional labour was drawn in from outside, impressment by the crown being the most striking example of this.<sup>17</sup> This study is concerned with the problem of what opportunities there were for permanent employment for masons in York, how much work was taken on by itinerant craftsmen and the way that the craft was organized in the city.

Various terms were used to describe masons according to the degree of skill they possessed, the most skilled cutters being the freemasons.<sup>18</sup> The York documents do not make many distinctions between the types of masons employed, most of them simply being referred to as 'cementarius'.

16. The paths of the masons can be traced sometimes through their marks: R.H.C. Davis, 'Catalogue of masons' marks as an aid to architectural history', Journal of the British Archaeological Association, 3rd. ser. xvii (1954), pp. 43-76.
17. Knoop and Jones, Medieval mason, pp. 90-4.
18. Freemason derives from the freestone, as opposed to rubble, in which the cutters worked: Knoop and Jones, Medieval mason, p. 82.

It was apparently usual practice in the Minster to distinguish two masons as setters and to give them an additional payment for their work, varying from 3s 4d to 13s 4d. Elsewhere the setter was ranked below the freemason as his job of placing the stones was presumably considered less exacting than that of the cutter. However in York the setters seem to have been freemasons and the elevated position in which they worked, particularly when 'in campanile' perhaps warranted this extra payment. There are also references to 'entaylers' or carvers of stone: in 1485 William Busshell 'entayler' received 48s for making 140 crocketts at 16d for 20 and 32 'gargills' at 12d a 'gargill'.<sup>19</sup> William Edmonson described himself as a 'carvour of stone' when he took out the freedom in 1511, but a considerable amount of decorative carving in the Minster and elsewhere was done by the masons, of whose craft stone carving was but an extension.<sup>20</sup> Associated with stonecarving was the sculpture of monuments and effigies in marble, sometimes practised as a separate craft but also undertaken by freemasons: William Hyndeley was employed as a mason by the Minster first as a warden of the lodge and, from 1473, as master; he also worked independently with a mason called John White on making a marble tomb in the Minster.<sup>21</sup> In addition to working as a mason and a marbler, Hyndeley carried on a side line as a manufacturer of monumental brasses and in his will left 'instrumenta mea pertinen' ad lez gravyng in plaite Willelmo Gilmyn

19. Y.M.L., E3.30 m.2 (1485).

20. Freemen's Reg., p. 234.

21. York Minster, ed. Aylmer and Cant, p. 191; Hyndeley subsequently fell out with White over a debt of £40: B.I., Cause papers G 17, see below p. 227.



clerico meo parochiali'.<sup>22</sup>

As already mentioned the single most important building operation undertaken in stone in the late medieval period was the rebuilding of the nave, choir and towers of the Minster. Because of the extensive survival of records relating to the building, and the architectural importance of the Minster itself, the Minster masons have already been the subject of much discussion so that the intention here is to see them primarily in relation to the city.<sup>23</sup> As with other large building operations the Minster had its own masons' yard with a lodge or workshop; that at York was intended for the accommodation of twenty masons initially but was rebuilt in 1412 to house twelve.<sup>24</sup> It was used as a workshop and a rest hall and also housed a wide selection of masons' tools belonging to the establishment, implying that here at least masons were not expected to supply all their own equipment.<sup>25</sup>

Overall responsibility for the work of the masons' yard was given to a master mason, with occasionally a warden as second in command, from whom the rest of the masons, many of them also technically qualified as masters, took their orders. The position of master mason was one of very considerable importance as it is accepted that the

22. B.I., D/C Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 49v (1505).

23. York Minster, ed. Aylmer and Cant; Knoop and Jones, Medieval mason; Harvey, Medieval craftsmen; Salzman, Building in England.

24. Knoop and Jones, Medieval mason, p. 57; Fabric Rolls, pp. 181-2, 198-200.

25. An inventory was attached to the fabric roll of 1399: Fabric Rolls, pp. 17-19. Knoop and Jones, Medieval mason, pp. 62-9 concludes that masons probably owned their more expensive tools.

chief building craftsman on a site was generally the architect.<sup>26</sup>

A great deal is known of the organisation of the masons' yard in York Minster from two sets of ordinances, dating from 1352 and 1370 which specify hours, holidays and pay. Inevitably however the work did not always go according to rule and in 1345 there was a major inquiry into the lax behaviour of the masons which was imperilling the state of the fabric.<sup>27</sup> In order to tighten discipline the master mason's powers were strengthened; he was given sole right to appoint and remove masons as well as enforcing wage rates. John Brompton master mason of the yard in St. Leonard's Hospital was apparently faced with the same problem of insubordination from the marbler John Neuton who refused, over a long period of time to recognise Brompton's authority.<sup>28</sup> The problem must have been a perennial one, for in every large yard a great many master craftsmen were hired to work as wage labourers under one master mason. It was very likely jealousy of this nature which resulted in physical violence towards William Colchester when he was sent by Henry IV from Westminster Abbey, where he had been working, to rebuild the fallen belfrey in York in 1407.<sup>29</sup> Colchester was recalled to London, returning to York only in 1415; shortly after this date, perhaps from tact, he took out the freedom of the city.<sup>30</sup>

26. York Minster, ed. Aylmer and Cant, pp. 188-92 lists the York master masons.

27. Fabric Rolls, pp. 161-4, 171-3; Salzman, Building in England, pp. 54-6.

28. B.I., cause papers F 80. Both parties were bound in £10 to keep the peace and Neuton was obliged to pay a 20s indemnity for unspecified damages inflicted on Brompton.

29. Harvey, English medieval architects, p. 71.

30. Freemen's reg., p. 125.

Colchester's predecessor as master mason of the Minster, Hugh de Hedon, and all his successors in the 15th and early 16th centuries, with the exception perhaps of Robert Spillesby, were freemen of the city. Of a total of 216 masons whose names have been extracted from the fabric rolls however, only forty eight appear in the freemen's register. The bulk of the work force must have comprised itinerant masons attracted by the huge building operations, moving on when money ran short. The numbers employed varied considerably. In the early fifteenth century, up to the 1420's the Minster was maintaining a permanent establishment of between eighteen and twenty-three masons, those that is who were employed for over forty weeks of the year; additional short term labour was also employed, in some years up to ten men. Thereafter the number of men employed for forty or more weeks dropped substantially and after 1450 never amounted to more than six, till the rebuilding of St. Michael le Belfrey in the 1520's. Meanwhile the number of masons employed for short periods of time increased. Once the masons had moved on from the Minster their subsequent careers are usually impossible to trace but one, John White, Hyndeley's erstwhile colleague subsequently worked as a mason in Bridlington and another, John Bell, who had also worked in the Minster with Hyndeley and White in 1473 was in 1488 employed for life as 'special mason to the Prior and Chapter of Durham'.<sup>31</sup>

Among the minority of masons who did take out the freedom the reasons for doing so must have varied. Master masons were involved

31. B.I., Cause papers G 17 (1505); Y.M.L., E3.26 m. 2; Knoop and Jones, Medieval mason, p. 167; Harvey, English medieval architects, p. 29.

by the city officials as searchers of the masons' craft to arbitrate in disputes over boundaries and over building quality:<sup>32</sup> William Hyndeley was appointed searcher in 1474, John Sutton in 1475 and John Thorp in 1419.<sup>33</sup> At least fourteen masons took out the freedom some years after starting work in the Minster. John Barton, John Bultefloure, John Darell, John Knyghtelay and William Nykson all first appear as masons employed by the Minster in 1416; these five men subsequently became free in the years 1427, 1432, 1422, 1425 and 1418 respectively.<sup>34</sup> It would appear that these men and others like them had, after working for some time in the Minster, established themselves and their reputations as craftsmen in the city and had sufficient vested interests there to want to become citizens. How far the Minster acted as a training ground is harder to assess. Valuable experience would have been gained there, but there is not much evidence of apprenticeship schemes. Some seventeen names of apprentices are recorded in the fabric rolls; of these seventeen, ten boys do not subsequently appear as craftsmen on full pay and so must be assumed to have moved on either attached to a master mason or having become fully qualified themselves. Christopher Horner was William Hyndeley's apprentice until 1482; later he took over Hyndeley's job as master

32. E.g. Y.M.B. ii, p. 219; English Miscellany, ed. J. Raine (Surtees Society lxxxv, 1888), pp. 11-21. Masons, with carpenters, had the same responsibilities elsewhere: Canterbury, Hist. MSS. Comm. 9th report, p. 169; Norwich, Records of Norwich ii, p. 29.

33. Y.M.B. ii, pp. 80, 250-1; Y.M.L., E3.6 m. 2 (1416), E3.26 m. 2 (1473).

34. Y.M.L. E3.7 m. 3 (1416); Freemen's Reg., pp. 139, 145, 131, 136, 126.

and in 1516 was employing his own apprentice.<sup>35</sup> Christopher Rayner and William Pawson were both apprentices in the Minster who subsequently took out the freedom.<sup>36</sup> Other apprentices continued to work for the Minster after they were qualified without becoming free.

The question of the regularity with which a mason could expect to be employed is ultimately unanswerable. For those who did not bother with the freedom, but who appear for successive years in the fabric rolls employed only for a few weeks, work must have been available from other ecclesiastical corporations. St. Leonard's Hospital definitely had a masons' yard; it is likely that there was also work at St. Mary's Abbey though the major rebuilding schemes there were over by the end of the 13th century.<sup>37</sup> The possession of the freedom was presumably an advantage to a mason who wanted to secure responsible work within the city, though it must be admitted that even the city council did not seem to balk at employing unfree masons. William Stabiller and Christopher Holbek, both Minster masons, worked for the city in repairing the Kidcote, but neither appear in the freemen's register.<sup>38</sup> The city council employed masons regularly

35. York Minster, ed. Aylmer and Cant, p. 191; Y.M.L., E3.36 m.2 (1516).

36. Rayner was apprentice in 1498 and on full pay from 1505-19: Y.M.L., E3.31-3.37; Freemen's Reg., p. 225. Pawson was apprentice in 1473 and on full pay 1479 and 1485: Y.M.L., E3.26, E3.28, E3.30; Freemen's Reg., p. 195.

37. R. Marcouse, Figure sculpture in St. Mary's Abbey, York, (York, 1951), p.1. Of the 13th century masons who had worked on the north transept of the Minster, some went to the Chapter House, others to St. Leonards and a third group to Skelton church which was appropriated to the Treasurer; I am most grateful to Dr. Eric Gee for this information from masons' marks collated by him.

38. Y.M.L., E3.22b.m. 1 (1457), E3.23 m. 1 (1458), E3.26 m. 2 (1473); Chamberlains' Rolls, pp. 128-9. The Kidcote was the municipal prison.

and there is plenty of evidence of masons moving between work on the Minster and work on various city properties such as the walls, the Guildhall and the staithe. Robert Davyson worked for the Minster in 1470-1; in 1477-8 he was appointed as surveyor of the city walls and in the same year was responsible for repairs on the city crane.<sup>39</sup> William Mader was employed by the chamberlain to work on the Kidcote and on Ouse Bridge in 1468 and later is found working for the Minster.<sup>40</sup>

In 1446 the city council together with the St. Christopher gild began the building of the guildhall. The work was under the supervision of Robert Couper, who had been appointed master mason to the city with a fee of 40s a year and a gown.<sup>41</sup> Couper had been preceded as master mason by John Ampilford and his successor was Robert Davyson.<sup>42</sup> In addition to the standard mason's daily wage Davyson was to receive a gown and a house in Walmgate, rent free. The same privileges were granted to Thomas Briggs appointed common mason of the city for life in 1484-5.<sup>43</sup> All reference to masons in the surviving civic accounts show them without exception and including the masters, to have been employed as wage labourers; there is no surviving contract work for masonry for the fifteenth century. The situation which prevailed in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries may have been different.

39. Y.M.B. ii, p. 249; Y.M.L., E3.24 m.1, E3.25 m.1; Chamberlains' Rolls, pp. 161-2.
40. Chamberlains' Rolls, pp. 128-9; Y.M.L., E3.26 m.2 (1473), E3.28 m.1 (1479).
41. Y.C.L., CCl fos. 79, 82v, 83, 87, CCl(a)fos. 6v, 7, 7v, 8; Chamberlains' Rolls, p. 81.
42. Harvey, English medieval architects, pp. 75, 82.
43. Y.C.R. i, p. 112.

One of the few records which are extant referring to the actual building of the city walls before the 15th century is a contract drawn up in 1345 between the city council and Thomas Staunton for the construction of twenty perches of stone wall between Fishergate Bar and the Foss.<sup>44</sup>

Perhaps a considerable proportion of the city walls were likewise built on contract. If so the change experienced in the later middle ages to the employment of wage labour may be a result of the fact that new building gave way to repair work; it was probably due in equal measure to the fact that by the fifteenth century the city council had elaborated a thorough administrative and fiscal system and was in a position to act as a direct employer. The appointment of civic master masons and carpenters is in itself evidence of this.

Contract work among masons is very rarely found in York and, more generally, it has been concluded that very few masons were in a position to act as independent contractors.<sup>45</sup> The York evidence does nothing to contradict this point of view. Two cases of private housing being built on contract survive from York and in both the upshot was not a happy one for the masons. Thomas Dene, a York mason, claimed that he had a contract to build a house for Robert Barry in Colliergate, an agreement which Barry stoutly denied; this denial was upheld by the searchers of masons and carpenters who looked into the issue.<sup>46</sup> In 1505

44. See above p. 215.

45. Knoop and Jones, Medieval mason, pp. 100-3.

46. Y.M.B. ii, p. 80 (1421); Dene was made free in 1415, and worked in the Minster in the same year: Freemen's Reg., p. 122; Y.M.L., E3.7 m. 3.

William Hyndeley brought a case against his old colleague John White concerning the building of a house for Richard Pigot, gentleman.<sup>47</sup>

White having contracted to build this house, persuaded Hyndeley, two other masons and a weaver to stand surety that the house would be properly built; apparently White built the house so badly that Pigot had called in the securities pledged by White's guarantors.<sup>48</sup>

The wills of twenty-one York masons survive. Of these eighteen can be traced in the freemen's register. This high proportion is not unduly surprising for the craftsmen in question presumably represent those masons who, perhaps after considerable wanderings, had finally settled and established themselves in York. Robert Patrington in his will made in 1430 left bequests to the fabric of St. Paul's in London, St. Mary, Lincoln, and St. John, Beverley; possibly these were all churches he had worked on.<sup>49</sup> John Porter may well have been master mason of Lincoln when he was called to advise on the building of York Minster in 1450; he still owned a house in Lincoln at the time of his death, and he left money to the fabric of Lincoln cathedral.<sup>50</sup> Robert Couper the master mason of the city in 1445 was probably the same Robert Couper who in 1431 had been called to advise on the construction

47. B.I., Cause papers G 17.

48. The guarantors were: John Sutton, free as a mason in 1472, who worked in the Minster 1473-1505 and was searcher of the masons in 1475: Freemen's Reg., p. 191; Y.M.L., E3.26-3.33; Y.M.B. ii, p. 250; John Bell, for whom see above p. 222; John Robynson, weaver.

49. B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 669 (1430).

50. B.I., Prob. Reg. 4 fo. 109 (1465); Harvey, English medieval architects, p. 210.



of Selby Abbey.<sup>51</sup>

There was evidently a fairly substantial core of masons who lived and worked on a more or less permanent basis in the city. Unfortunately there is very little evidence of any craft organization among them. Indeed because of the predominantly itinerant nature of the trade, information about the masons' guilds everywhere tends to be late in date and somewhat inadequate.<sup>52</sup> In London the first recorded masons' ordinances date from 1356; from Lincoln there is an earlier reference to a gild of masons founded in 1313.<sup>53</sup> In Coventry the masons formed a fellowship with the painters, sadlers and cardmakers. Perhaps not surprisingly, in 1444 this disparate group 'were like to depart and break their fellowship'.<sup>54</sup> New regulations were made which stated that 'every master of the said four crafts shall have due correction of his own craft, of all the privy points that belong to his craft, without meddling or intermetting of any other crafts'. No ordinances survive for a masons' gild in York, but there was certainly a fraternity responsible for a Corpus Christi play and the involvement of masons as searchers of boundaries and of building standards implies some form of mystery.<sup>55</sup> It seems reasonable to suggest that although the masons' lodge in the Minster provided sufficient organization for much of the transient labour, many masons belonged to some form of masons' gild in the city.

51. W.W. Morrell, History and antiquities of Selby (Selby, 1867), p. 100.

52. Knoop and Jones, Medieval mason, pp. 159-60.

53. Knoop and Jones, Medieval mason, p. 151.

54. C.L.B. i, p. 205.

55. There was a great deal of difficulty over which play the masons were to perform: Toulmin-Smith, York plays, pp. xxi, xxvii.

The majority of the building craftsmen in late medieval York worked in wood. Most secular building in medieval towns was of wood, timber framed houses, built on a foundation of stone with infills of lathe and plaster.<sup>56</sup> Carpenters were involved at every stage of building operations from the construction of house frames to the splitting of lathes and making of tile pins. They also made furniture and fittings and non-domestic items such as carts, wheels and ships. Some degree of specialization inevitably developed and craftsmen took out the freedom described variously as carpenter, sawyer, joiner, cartwright, shipwright or carver during the course of the later middle ages, but it seems probable that such distinctions were usually blurred in practice.<sup>57</sup>

One distinction however which seems to have been maintained within the carpenters' craft from the point at which the records begin was that between sawers and carpenters proper. Sawers as their name implies reduced the felled trees to manageable proportions as planks and timbers. The sawing of large balks was done over a sawpit in which one sawyer stood; the other stood over him and the wood was worked with a two handed saw.<sup>58</sup> Hence in building accounts reference is almost invariably made to a sawer and 'sociis suis'. There is no evidence for a separate craft of sawers in the city ordinances till 1489, but the sawers from at least the beginning of the fifteenth

56. C. Platt, English medieval town (1976), pp. 59-67; Salzman, Building in England, pp. 195-222; Lloyd, Building industry in medieval Stratford, p. 7.

57. Carpenter and wright were synonymous.

58. Salzman, Building in England, p. 343.

century had been responsible for a pageant distinct from that of the carpenters.<sup>59</sup> The officials who compiled the freemen's register seem always to have made a distinction between sawers and carpenters and whenever sawing is specified in surviving accounts if the men employed can be traced in the register it is virtually always as sawers.

Sawers were generally paid piece rates. The 1489 ordinances tried to fix these at 2s a rood, but it had been customary to pay more and the ruling was perhaps ineffective. Rates paid by the city council varied but in the mid 15th century they were paying 2s 8d a rood; the Vicars Choral, fifty years earlier, paid up to 3s 4d.<sup>60</sup> If much work was required the sawers were employed on a weekly basis; this arrangement is sometimes found in the fabric rolls.<sup>61</sup> It is evident though that sawers, paid by the piece or by the hour were unlikely to accumulate much capital and it is not surprising that although 102 men took out the freedom as sawers between 1351-1534 only one sawer's will survives for the whole period.<sup>62</sup> As sawers customarily worked in pairs and probably only one of the two needed to be free, there must have been a large, unknown number of sawers who were little more than labourers.

The type of work open to carpenters proper was far more varied and offered more scope and prospects of advancement than that to which the sawers were limited, for a master carpenter had the chance of

59. Y.C.L., House Books 2 fo. 199; Toulmin-Smith, York plays, pp. xxii, xxvi.
60. Y.C.L., House Books 2 fo. 199; Chamberlains' Rolls, p. 97; Y.M.L., V.C. Box x (1395, 1407). The Minster normally paid 2s 6d a rood: Y.M.L., E3.27 m. 2d, E3.28 m. 1.
61. E.g. Peter Esterby, sawer, employed for 3 weeks and 3½ days with his servant in 1516 for 20s 10d: Y.M.L., E3.36 m. 2.
62. Robert Rokeby: Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 171 (1414).

working on commission as well as for a daily wage. Of the domestic building in the city, it would seem likely that many private houses were built by contract with a master carpenter. Generally such contracts presumed that the master would provide all the manpower for a certain specified lump sum; how much of the materials he would himself provide depended on individual circumstances. Sometimes a whole series of contracts were made, with the masons who built the foundations, cellars and lower courses, with the carpenters who erected the main structure and with tilers who would put on the roof.<sup>63</sup> In such a case the carpenter's responsibility was limited. Alternatively a house might be being rebuilt in part from the timber from an old, dismantled house. In 1454-5 the custodians of Ouse Bridge contracted with Thomas Burgh, carpenter, for the building of a tenement in Hamerton Lane, paying him 'pro deposicione et edificacione eiusdem ex convencione' a total of 21s 8d.<sup>64</sup> If a carpenter contracted to find all the building materials as well as labour he must clearly have been a man of some substance to whom both capital and credit were readily available. Such a man was Robert Fitzgiles who made a celebrated contract in 1335 with the parishoners of St. Martin Coney Street to build a row of houses next to the church, the proportions of the houses being detailed in this case to a remarkable degree.<sup>65</sup> He was to receive 62 marks and a robe as payment for the work. Fitzgiles in turn sub-contracted with

63. Harvey, Medieval craftsmen, p. 35.

64. Y.C.L., C83.5 m. 3d.

65. Salzman, Building in England, pp. 430-2.

William Harpham to provide the tiling for this building and in 1335 Harpham registered a bond with the Dean and Chapter for finding 'Halletyle ad totum tenementum de novo edificatum iuxta ecclesiam S. Martin in Conengstrete ... et illa tegula cariabitur suis sumptibus ad locum illum et faciet per suos fieri usque ad le interfays per totum tenementum'.<sup>66</sup> A similar contract, though less full, had survived when the same Robert Fitzgiles agreed with the Vicars Choral in the previous year 'ad constructionem cuiusdem edificii in Aldwerk continentis quinque domos rentales sumptibus suis in omnibus consummandis et perficiendis et hoc infra quindena beati Petri Advincula!'.<sup>67</sup>

It appears however that a large corporation like the city council or the Vicars Choral, when desiring to erect a new building would often act as the contractors themselves, paying weekly or daily wages with a bonus to the master in charge. This would seem to be the case with all but one of the new houses built by the Vicars Choral for which records survive between 1362 and 1407. It was also true of a certain new house built in Thursday market by the custodians of Ouse Bridge in 1459-60, where five carpenters were employed at the rate of 6d a day initially and later at 5d, with additionally two sawers.<sup>68</sup> The tilers and their servants were likewise paid by the day.

Most of the records of carpenters' work which survive from York do

66. Y.M.L., M2(4) f fo. 11.

67. Y.M.L., M2(4) f fo. 8.

68. Y.C.L. C83.8 m. 4d. The change in rate probably indicates the transfer from winter to summer rates, see below p. 261.

not concern the construction of new buildings but the renovation and repair of old ones undertaken by the civil and ecclesiastical authorities on their extensive properties. Sometimes contracts were made for these repairs or extensions. Thomas Denton worked for a daily wage for the Minster, for the city council and for the Corpus Christi gild; but for this last he also built a kitchen for a lump sum.<sup>69</sup> Likewise John Danyell normally worked for the council at rates of 5d and 6d a day but in 1459 he was paid 8s 6d in toto for building two penteces on a certain wall.<sup>70</sup> These examples tend to be the exception and virtually all the work in the surviving accounts was done on the basis of wage labour. Much of the work was run of the mill and not specified in detail. John Danyell for example worked on his own and with another carpenter Richard Wrawby for the custodians of Ouse Bridge in the 1440's: Danyell did 72½ days work in 1440-1 and 171 days in 1442-3; Wrawby worked for 50½ days in 1440-1 and 167½ days in 1442-3.<sup>71</sup> Their jobs included repairing houses in Coneystreet involving the insertion of a new door, repairs to a manger and stable, working for twelve days under Foss Bridge and making 'shamylwyndows' at the same bridge and making repairs to St. Williams' Chapel. One of the largest jobs was the repair of a house in Hertergate that occupied both men for forty-six days. In other years work was done in enclosing gardens, building boundary walls, flooring the house of the herringmen, mending the doors and walls

69. Y.M.L., E3.26 m. 2 (1473); Y.C.L. C83.10 m. 4d (1464-5), C99.6 m.1 (1478-9).

70. Y.C.L., C82.10 m. 5d (1440-1), C82.11 m. 4d, 5d (1442-3), C83.1 m. 4d (1445-6), C83.8 m. 5d (1459-60).

71. Y.C.L., C82.10 m. 4d, 5d (1440-1), C82.11 m. 4d, 5d (1442-3).

of the pageant house, replacing wooden gutters that had decayed and constant repairs to doors and windows.<sup>72</sup> Additionally carpenters contended with tilers for the exclusive right to erect louvres on the roofs of houses.<sup>73</sup>

Much of the work available to the carpenters through the Minster authorities was very similar to that of the city council. The Dean and Chapter, the Vicars Choral and individual canons were very extensive owners of property.<sup>74</sup> Work was also available on the fabric of the Minster itself. There was no large, semi-permanent body of carpenters attached to the Minster as there was of masons. Numbers varied but before the 1450's only three or four were employed for more than forty weeks in the year and after that date all were paid for under forty weeks work done. The Dean and Chapter usually employed a master carpenter whose wages were supplemented by a yearly salary. In 1415 this was John Askham who had been a freeman of the city since 1387.<sup>75</sup> In 1435 William Cotyngham took the post; he had become free in 1417 and on his retirement in 1471 John Foster succeeded, having taken out the freedom in 1459.<sup>76</sup> None of these men were employed full time by the Minster before their appointment as master. In fact the majority of carpenters who worked for the Minster were free of the city and further, this majority was even greater among those who were employed

72. Y.C.L., C83.8 m. 3d, 4d, 5d (1459-60), C87.1 m. 4, 4d (1464-5), C83.10 m. 4d (1521-2).

73. Y.M.B. ii, pp. 173-4 (1425) when it was decided that the carpenters should make louvres but both crafts might erect them.

74. Y.M.L., Vq 1-10 (Vicars Choral Repairers' Rolls).

75. Y.M.L., E3.7 m. 3, Freemen's Reg., p. 85; he died in 1436: B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 479.

76. Cotyngham: Y.M.L., E3.14-3.19 (1435-47); Freemen's Reg., p. 125; Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 285v-286. Foster: Y.M.L., E3. 22b-3.26 (1457-73); Freemen's Reg., p. 178.

for more than half the year. Short-term employment, that is casual labour was given to those who were not free, possibly itinerant labour, or drawn from the pool of journeymen in the city.

Table 6:1. EMPLOYMENT OF CARPENTERS BY THE MINSTER, 1360-1530<sup>77</sup>

	1-13 weeks	14-26 weeks	27-39 weeks	40-52 weeks
Freemen	17	12	7	21
Not free	25	14	2	3
Total	42	26	9	24

Two problems concerning the employment of carpenters in York must remain unsolved, firstly the proportion of work that was done on contract rather than by wage labour and secondly the proportion of carpenters who were masters and freemen. It has been argued that it was the most important carpentry that was performed on contract.<sup>78</sup> Without necessarily contradicting this statement it could also be argued that the smaller the employer the more likely it was that the work would be done by contract and that private building of the sort found in a city, that is shops, houses and garden walls, together with repairs, would be undertaken on this basis. Inevitably few such arrangements survive and the records emphasize the wage labour taken on by civil and ecclesiastical

77. Taken from the fabric rolls and including all the names of men described as carpenter which are legible, but excluding all joiners, sawers and carvers.

78. E. Gee, 'Oxford carpenters', Oxoniensia xvii-xviii (1952-3), p. 115.



corporations.

Contract work could involve considerable outlay in timber by the contracting carpenter. For most of the middle ages the preferred timber was oak.<sup>79</sup> Sources of supply are not easy to establish but some of the more successful carpenters did on occasion act as agents; William Wynkburn, a shipwright, sold thirteen trees to the Dean and Chapter in 1416.<sup>80</sup> However oak was becoming increasingly expensive by the fifteenth century and more use was being made of imported timber as a substitute, timber mostly from the Baltic and handled by merchants, on whom therefore York craftsmen came to be dependent for more and more of their supplies.<sup>81</sup> Surviving evidence from wills suggests that few carpenters in the later middle ages had the resources to support a large timber yard or to act as a dealer in wood; very few carpenters left wills at all and only three of these contained cash bequests of over £5.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore no carpenter ever became mayor or chamberlain of the city in the fifteenth century and only four achieved the financially less exacting post of bridgemaster.<sup>83</sup> It would seem therefore that whatever their type of employment, carpenters were engaged at terms unfavourable to themselves. It may not be entirely fortuitous that important building contracts survive only from fourteenth century York and that in fact Richard Fitzgiles achieved a position and degree of success not open to the carpenters of the late

79. Salzman, Building in England, pp. 240-3.

80. Y.M.L., E3.7 m. 4; Freemen's Reg., p. 99.

81. Salzman, Building in England, pp. 245-8; see below pp. 356-7.

82. See below table 10:3.

83. See below p. 345.

fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Equally difficult to assess is the number of master carpenters in relation to journeymen. When carpenters are named in accounts they are frequently described as working with their servants. It would appear that the structure of employment within the craft of carpenters was intended to follow that in other crafts. The carpenters' ordinances of 1482 imply that each master could have employed one or more servants and would train apprentices; the intention seems to have been to control the labour force by requiring a master, unless he were going to employ a man for under fourteen days, to take his servant on for at least a year.<sup>84</sup> The wills of carpenters do show that many were employing servants and apprentices at the time of their death, servants who moreover benefitted sufficiently from the experience and the bequests gained from their masters to set up as master craftsmen themselves. But given the fact that so much employment was on a wage basis, the working and financial relationships between masters and servants must frequently have diverged considerably from the ideal expressed in the craft ordinances. There must have been a considerable body of unattached labour and indeed the rules drawn up for the fraternity imply precisely this: 'that thar shalbe every yer a brodir ~~to~~osyn and assigned of the said fraternite, to whom every brodir that is owt of wark shall make knowlege that he is owt of wark, so that he that wold have a warkman may have knowlege of him that is owt of wark'.<sup>85</sup>

84. Y.M.B. ii, p. 281; the same is implied in ordinances of 1510, although it seems to be recognised that a servant may change masters on payment of 2s.

85. Y.M.B. ii, p. 280.

Rather later evidence of the same conditions of employment comes from Coventry, and although dated 1553, they probably apply equally well to the late medieval period: 'that all Carpenters, Massons tylers, dawbers and allso all kynd of laborers within thys Cytye Lackynge worke shall assemble themselves at fyve of the clocke in the mornynge in the somer tyme with ther tooles in ther handes at the Broide-yate accordinge as in tymes paste they have donne to thentente such as lacke workemen may fynd them ther, and that non of them be found idell at whome or in any ale house'.<sup>86</sup> Presumably these out of work carpenters included some masters as well as the 'yongman, that is not cunyng in wark of the said occupation, cum to thys cite to learn the said occupacion bettyr'.<sup>87</sup> The privilege of rank claimed by a master carpenter would primarily be therefore the right to receive higher wages. As with other crafts, masters presumably also wished to refuse to non-masters the authority to take on any job without the supervision of a master. However the number of jobbing carpenters available must frequently have made nonsense of this principle, particularly where small domestic tasks were concerned.

In London it has been reckoned that most members of the craft were journeymen and that the number of master craftsmen was very small.<sup>88</sup> In contrast, in York the master carpenters seem to have kept greater control over the craft, probably with the backing of the city

86. C.L.B. iii, p. 807.

87. Y.M.B. ii, p. 281.

88. B.W.E. Alford and T.C. Barker, History of the Carpenters' Company (1968), p. 16.

council. The vast majority of named carpenters who appear in the surviving secular records, and those who worked for long periods in the Minster, were freemen of the city. The surviving ordinances of the York carpenters, made in 1482, are long and detailed, contrasting with the paucity of evidence from elsewhere, and vest in the carpenters authority over associated woodworking trades such as joiners, sawers, carvers and cartwrights.<sup>89</sup> Unusually they contain clauses relating to the craft fraternity which suggests that the council were particularly concerned to reinforce the power of the fraternity and of the masters as a means of controlling a large and loosely organized industry.<sup>90</sup>

The ordinances of the carpenters imply that there were a series of specialized crafts, each apparently maintaining their own searchers, which came under the aegis of the carpenters at the end of the fifteenth century; fines and other charges on these crafts were directed to swell the carpenters' coffers. The degree to which these specialist groups distinguished themselves from the carpenters varied over time and probably according to the personalities involved. The joiners and carvers are a case in point.<sup>91</sup> Joiners made furniture and fittings; occasionally they appear in building accounts, for example John Grene who in 1419 was paid by the custodian of the Minster fabric 'pro

89. Y.M.B. ii, pp. 277-83.

90. The carpenters had a fraternity of the resurrection in the Carmelite friary: Y.C.R. iii, p. 186. Some form of carpenters' fraternity was of very long standing for a grant of a rent of 6s. to the carpenters of York survives dating from the late 13th century: Y.M.B. iii, pp. 84-5.

91. Joiners' ordinances detailing their work are given in Y.M.B. i, pp. 148-50 (c.1412). Salzman, Building in England, p. 259; Harvey, Medieval craftsmen, p. 155.

joynacione tabularum pro libraria et planacione et gropyng de waynscott'.<sup>92</sup> The work of the carvers was rather more varied, so much so that, although in York they were associated with other woodworkers, in Coventry in 1528 it was ruled that 'the carvers of this Cite frome-hens-furthe that have not be prenteses nor Maisters of the seid Carpenters Craft shal-be associat with the Craft of Peynters and not with the Carpenters'.<sup>93</sup> Again evidence of carvers' work in York comes from the fabric rolls of the Minster, the most celebrated craftsman being Thomas Drawsword. His recorded work for the Minster was fairly ordinary, the mending of a pyx and the painting of a cloth for the shrine of St. William; but he subsequently was to submit an estimate for image work in Henry VII's chapel at Westminster and to build a roodscreen for Newark parish church.<sup>94</sup>

The joiners enrolled their ordinances in 1412 and joiners appear to have taken out the freedom regularly until 1450; from 1451 until 1534 however only five more joiners appear in the register and the craft seems to have lost much of its independence. Nevertheless in 1546 an order was made 'that the carpenters shall bryng before my lord Mayour ther ordynall to thentent that an order may be takyn betwixt them and the carvers and joyners so that the carvers and joynours may have an ordynall for ther said occupacon'.<sup>95</sup> The dominant members of

92. Fabric Rolls, p. 39.

93. C.L.B. iii, p. 695.

94. Harvey, English medieval architects, p. 88; Fabric Rolls, pp. 91, 92 (1499); B.I., Prob. Reg. 9 fo. 448.

95. Y.C.R. iv, p. 139. Two craftsmen took out the freedom in 1492 as 'carver als. junour': Freemen's Reg. p. 216.

this partnership were quite clearly the carvers, who were taking up the freedom in considerable numbers in the early sixteenth century and it was probably due to the strength of their allies the carvers and more particularly to the reputation of Thomas Drawsword, twice mayor of York, that the joiners were, quite unjustifiably, included as one of the 'major crafts' in the new constitution of the city made in 1517.<sup>96</sup>

A further group of craftsmen, theoretically subordinate to the carpenters were the cartwrights. Despite the fact that they had no ordinances registered with the council they clearly constituted a distinct craft by the end of the fifteenth century when they were in dispute with the carpenters over the paying of pageant money; by 1506 both cartwrights and carpenters were bound in £10 not to work in any branch of each others craft.<sup>97</sup> Yet very few men appear to have taken out the freedom as cartwrights, so that in 1506 they were either represented by a few very vociferous men or by craftsmen who had become free as carpenters and decided to specialize. Only one will survive from a York cartwright of this period, that of Thomas Hesilwood who died in 1490, having taken out the freedom as a cartwright in 1445.<sup>98</sup> At least two of his former apprentices had become free by that date, Robert Carlisle as a carpenter and William Bishop as a wheelwright; a third, John Scisson, to whom Hesilwood left his tools, became free as a cartwright in 1491.<sup>99</sup>

96. Skaife, Civic officials; Palliser, Tudor York, pp. 46, 140, 175; see below p.

97. Y.C.L., House Books ix, fo. 37.

98. Freemen's Reg., p. 163; B.I., Prob. Reg. 5 fo. 385v.

99. Freemen's Reg., pp. 206, 210, 216.

The shipwrights were a group of craftsmen even more elusive than the cartwrights. They had no ordinances and were not even referred to in the comprehensive carpenters' ordinances of 1482. Record occasionally survives of work on large ships, as for example in accounts for a galley built for the king in 1295.<sup>100</sup> Under the engaging heading 'stipendia schipwrithorum' between twenty and thirty men were listed for a period of ten weeks, the number then falling over the following eleven weeks till the ship was taken down river to Swinflete. The senior craftsmen who had worked on the galley in York went with her to Swinflete, and two of them on again to Ravenscar where the ship's company was boarded.<sup>101</sup>

The majority of the work available however was probably on small boats, fishing vessels like those presumably made by William Newcombe, fishmonger and shipwright.<sup>102</sup> A certain area near the castle mills seems to have been by custom a centre for shipbuilding in the mid 14th century. That at least was the impression given by the plaintiffs in a dispute which went to the arbitration of the king in 1358 when the mayor and bailiffs were accused of colluding with the commonalty in claiming this area to be common land.<sup>103</sup> The three shipbuilders named were Nicholas Taverner, William de Crull, who was free as a mariner in 1350, and Roger de Whiteley, also free as a mariner in 1350; these three were presumably the owners who were employing shipwrights.<sup>104</sup> The

100. P.R.O. E101/5/8.

101. P.R.O. E101/5/8 m. 12, 13.

102. Freemen's Reg., p. 192.

103. C.P.R. 1358-61, pp. 154-5.

104. Freemen's Reg., pp. 44, 42; for the prevalence of mariners among shipowners see C.V. Scammel, 'Shipowning in England' T.R.H.S., 5th ser. xii (1962), pp. 105-22 and 'English merchant shipping at the end of the middle ages', Ec. H.R. xiii (1961), pp. 327-341.

shipwrights themselves cannot be traced at this date but it would seem likely that most of them were carpenters. Only three shipwrights took out the freedom before 1360 and only ten more had done so by the end of the century. When letters patent were sent to the mayor and baliffs in 1355 ordering the repair of two ships the instructions required the employment of eight carpenters and other workmen.<sup>105</sup> The infrequency with which shipwrights appear in the records as a whole seems to imply that they were neither moderately prosperous nor in any way influential. What is somewhat surprising therefore is to find that they were responsible for producing on their own the pageant of the building of the ark for the Corpus Christi play.<sup>106</sup> This suggests that the shipwrights formed a group among the carpenters sufficiently coherent and self-conscious to act in unison. Their situation seems to have been typical of this whole cluster of specialized builders who at various times and with various degrees of success, distinguished themselves as particular interest groups within the huge carpenters' craft.

The plasterers and tilers are best considered together for although they claimed at one stage to be two distinct crafts, the two skills were in practice thoroughly intertwined. Much domestic building in the early middle ages was of the simple 'wattle and daub' type, the wattling being upright stakes, the spaces between which were filled with an interweaving of lathes, small branches or similar material. This

105. C.P.R. 1354-58, p. 244.

106. Toulmin-Smith, York plays, p. xx.



was covered on one or both sides with daub, a mixture of earth, clay, mortar or plaster bound with straw or hair.<sup>107</sup> With the widespread introduction of timber-framed buildings these techniques continued to be used to infill the spaces between the timbers. The surface of the walls so constructed was then plastered to give a smooth finish. Extant accounts show that a variety of terms were used to describe different techniques adopted: daubing implied the use of mud and straw for infill, pargetting or rough casting the use of mortar or coarse plaster. Essentially therefore plastering proper referred to the finishing of the surface with fine plaster, or plaster of Paris. It is doubtful how far the York records can be relied on to recognise this distinction, for there are references to 'factura murorum vocat' plasteryng' which are somewhat ambiguous.<sup>108</sup> However there are also occasional references to daubing or dubbing walls and in every case the men concerned were described as, or made free as, labourers and were paid at the labourers' usual wage of 3d a day in winter and 4d in summer. John Pereson, a labourer much employed by the council, was working in 1464-5 on daubing and on burning and beating plaster; William Walker free as a labourer in 1432 appears as a dauber in the bridgemasters' accounts in 1440 and in 1464-5 William Tyneley another labourer was employed on daubing walls.<sup>109</sup> It seems clear that the actual status and scope of the work of the plasterers would vary

107. Salzman, Building in England, pp. 187-194.

108. E.g. Y.C.L., C83.10 m. 4d (1464-5).

109. Y.C.L., C82.10 m. 5d (1440-1), C83.10 m. 3d, 4d (1464-5); Freemen's Reg., p. 145.

considerably according to locality. The royal Statute of Labourers, generalizing in 1351, classed plasterers with other workers of mud walls, requiring them to be paid at a lower rate than that specified for masons and carpenters.<sup>110</sup> However when plasterers are named in the York accounts they are almost invariably paid the wages made to master masons and carpenters, that is 6d in summer, 5d in winter. This would imply that the York master plasterers were not being paid for the rougher work of daubing. The ordinances of the plasterers which survive are not much help in elucidating the issue; but they do demonstrate that the work done by plasterers and tilers was to a large extent identical, which does make it more likely that the plasterers were wall finishers rather than wall builders.<sup>111</sup>

The number of plasterers taking out the freedom reached its height in the years 1390-1440 after which point it dropped again dramatically. It would seem that in the period of York's economic expansion a separate group of craftsmen specializing in the plastering and finishing of buildings did constitute themselves into a gild and tried rather vainly to establish a distinction between themselves and the tilers. Of the nine master plasterers who presented the ordinances of the gild in the 1390's, four had recently been made free as plasterers, but the oldest master, Walter Sparowe had taken out the freedom as a tiler, though in his will he also described himself as a plasterer.<sup>112</sup> This

110. 25 Edward III Stat. 2, Statutes of the Realm i, pp. 31-3.

111. Y.M.B. i, pp. 59-60, 115-6, ii, pp. 125-8.

112. Y.M.B. i, p. 115; Freemen's Reg., p. 74; B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 610v-611. In the early 15th century tilers and plasterers were responsible for two different pageants in the Corpus Christi play: Toulmin-Smith, York plays, pp. xix, xxi.

new gild apparently failed to retain its independence in the second half of the 15th century and in 1475 ordinances were drawn up referring to the craft of plasterers and tilers as one.<sup>113</sup> The big increase in plasterers taking out the freedom in the years 1400-1450 is therefore testimony to the strength of the building trade at this period and probably also reflects the continuing buoyancy of York's economy. Major building projects are notoriously misleading as economic indicators, but the steady growth of a craft specializing in one aspect of domestic building and repair can probably be assumed to reflect a continuing prosperity in the city. This would seem to be confirmed by the appointment of a man who was in effect a master plasterer of the city. In 1434 the mayor and council rented a house to John Kyrkham plasterer; he was given for life the two adjoining tenements in which to keep plaster and lime, on condition that he supplied the council and the custodians of Ouse Bridge with plaster when they required at a fixed rate. John in return was to have 'annuatim de nobis, maiore et communitate predictis, togam eiusdem secte, cum sementario et carpentario nostris ... et regardum pecunie sicut maior et camerarii dicte civitatis ... secundum discretiones suas fieri viderint faciendum'.<sup>114</sup>

Tilers began to take out the freedom from the mid-fourteenth century, at about twice the rate of plasterers. Their first ordinances date from 1413 so little can be said of their relative status earlier. They were obviously an important element in the building trade and in London had formed a gild by the 13th century but as with other building

113. Y.M.B. iii, pp. 183-4.

114. Y.M.B. ii, pp. 137-9.

workers they were probably severely limited by conditions of employment.<sup>115</sup>  
Part of the problem lies in the uncertainty as to the extent that tiles and bricks were used not only for roofing but for the construction of other elements of a building such as walls, chimneys and floors.

There is very little information about the manufacture of tiles near York. The names of a number of tilemakers and suppliers survive, but of thirty-two which occur in the accounts used for this study only seven also appear in the freemen's register and of these only three are described as tilemakers. Occasionally a man who appears as a tiler is recorded as selling tiles but this is rare.<sup>116</sup> For the most part tilemakers must have been small capitalists with rural holdings such as William North of York, yeoman and tilemaker, who died in 1502.<sup>117</sup>

Unfortunately even the location of tileworks near York is uncertain.

The Vicars Choral had a tilehouse outside the walls which once had been the property of a William le Tyuler.<sup>118</sup> There was a tilehouse in Clifton from which the Corpus Christi gild obtained tiles in 1449; they also bought tiles in Walmgate.<sup>119</sup> Other purchasers had to go further afield; in 1339 Andrew Bossal bought tiles for his house from Cawood and the city also obtained tiles from there in 1454.<sup>120</sup>

Both bricks and tiles were referred to as tiles, the word brick not becoming current before the fifteenth century, 'walltile' being the

115. G.A. Williams, Medieval London (1963), pp. 17, 265.

116. E.g. John Sharp who sold 2,400 thaktile to the custodians of Ouse Bridge in 1442-3; Y.C.L., C82.11 m. 4d; B.I. Prob. Reg. 2 fo.154v.

117. Yorkshire deeds ii, p. 217.

118. Harvey, Medieval craftsmen, p. 141; Y.M.L., V.C. box x (Vicars Choral tileworks' accounts).

119. Y.C.L., C99.3 m.1.

120. B.I., M2(4)f fo.34; Chamberlains' Rolls, p. 100.

alternative used.<sup>121</sup> Before the second quarter of the fourteenth century most walltile had to be imported from Flanders so it may be assumed that their use in York did not become widespread till the 15th century. Probably the continued rise in the number of tilers taking out the freedom in York, sustained even in a period of economic decline, was due to an increasing use of walltile and particularly to the use of brick in preference to stone as a building material. The Red Tower was added to York's defences in the late 15th century in brick rather than stone. It was probably the erection of this tower which gave so much grievance to the masons in the 1490's, so much so that while 'certain tylers wirking by the Maires commaundment apou the Kyngs werk apou Settirday at nyght last, diverse childer of wekidnesse maliciouslie brak and withdrewe certan toles of thares which ded was thoght to be doon by the masons for dispute'.<sup>122</sup> The crime was exacerbated by the murder of John Patrik a tiler, for which offence the master mason of the Minster, William Hyndeley and his assistant Christopher Horner were imprisoned.<sup>123</sup> In the late 15th century the Abbot's house of St. Mary's Abbey, now the King's Manor, was refashioned and extended in brick, work undertaken by the tiler Richard Cheryholme.<sup>124</sup> Other information about brick building is scanty but the brick infilling of framed houses seems to have become common in fifteenth-century York if the small amount of surviving work remaining from the period can be taken as

121. Salzman, Building in England, pp. 140-1.

122. R.C.H.M., Defences, p. 139; Y.C.R. ii, pp. 60-1.

123. Y.C.R. ii, p. 77; Chamberlains' Rolls, p. 153 (1475-6) gives another instance of a tiler working on the walls.

124. R.C.H.M., North East of the Ouse, p. 30; Freemen's Reg., p. 204.

typical.<sup>125</sup>

The majority of tiles manufactured and used in York must however have been designed for roofing. Houses continued to be thatched in straw and reeds until the end of the period and in Norwich a craft of reeders retained a separate identity in the 15th century.<sup>126</sup> The practice of straw thatching was forbidden in London at least as early as 1212, but it is questionable whether this could be fully enforced and similar restrictions do not appear in provincial towns till considerably later.<sup>127</sup> The inevitable experience of disastrous fires must have been a major inducement, in York as elsewhere, for the introduction of slate or tile roofs. Roofing tiles, generally called thaktile, as a result became increasingly popular during the 13th and 14th centuries as an alternative to straw thatch. In York in 1335 William de Harpham supplied the mercer Richard de Huntingdon with 6,500 for his house and outbuildings; four years later, as already mentioned, he provided the tiles for a row of houses built by Robert Fitzgiles in Coney Street.<sup>128</sup> The account rolls which survive from the fifteenth century show tilers constantly employed in roofing houses and shops.

In addition to the construction of brick walls and the laying of tiled roofs, tilers undertook a wide variety of other tasks, most notably the making of chimneys. The number of louvres bought by the

125. Harvey, Medieval craftsmen, p. 145.

126. Records of Norwich ii, p. 230; tiled roofs did not become compulsory in Norwich till 1509; Harvey, Medieval craftsmen, p. 153.

127. Harvey, Medieval craftsmen, p. 140.

128. B.I., M2(1)a fo. 38, M2(4)f fo. 11, see above pp. 231-2.

city for its repairs and the heated debate conducted between carpenters and tilers over the erection of the same is sufficient witness to the continued existence of open hearths. However surviving accounts show that houses were being improved and modernized in the 15th century by the introduction of the more sophisticated 'tuellis vulgariter vocatis chymnes' made from stone, tile or plaster.<sup>129</sup> What the surviving accounts also show is that tilers undertook a great deal of work that was described as plastering and that in fact the terms 'tiler' and 'plasterer' were completely interchangeable despite the existence till the mid 15th century of two separate crafts. In 1445 Ralph Somer was working for the custodians of Ouse Bridge; in the account for this year he was described as both plasterer and tiler on different occasions though he had in fact taken out the freedom as a plasterer in 1425. His work included making at least three chimneys, a hearth, working a 'plastre kilne' and plastering and roofing the house of Thomas Beleby.<sup>130</sup> John Kirkham, who contracted with the city to supply them with plaster, was employed by the Minster as tiler and plasterer.<sup>131</sup> But overall the work of tiling and plastering was dominated by men who described themselves as tilers. Of forty-six men from these accounts who can be traced in the freemen's register, thirty-one described themselves as tilers, eleven as plasterers and three as both, the dominance of the

129. Salzman, Building in England, p. 98. Worcester ordinances of 1467 state that 'no chymnes of tymber ne thacched houses be suffred wtyn the cite, but that the owner de hem away and make them chymneys of stone': Toulmin-Smith, English guilds, p. 386.

130. Y.C.L., C83.1 m. 3d, 4d (1445-6); Freemen's Reg., p. 136.

131. Y.M.L., E3.10 m.5 (1422), E3.11 m.4 (1423), E3.12 m.6 (1432).

tilers' becoming more obvious in the late 15th century.

York is famous both for the quality and the quantity of its surviving medieval stained glass, most of which was probably painted in the workshops of local craftsmen. Within these workshops the glaziers made up the windows from glass of various colours cut into shape and painted according to cartoons and then leaded into panes.<sup>132</sup> The glaziers did not blow their own glass however but purchased it, white glass possibly coming from glass foundries in the Yorkshire forests,<sup>132a</sup> coloured glass which was twice the price, being imported from overseas.<sup>133</sup> The more opulent and expensive the window therefore, the higher the proportion of coloured glass employed. During the middle ages the glaziers' work was almost entirely done for churches. Domestic glazing had been introduced to England in the mid fourteenth century and there are occasional references to house glass in the fifteenth century York: the wardens of Ouse bridge paid for the repair of a glass window in the tenement of John Skipwith in 1442-3, but such instances are a rarity before the sixteenth century.<sup>134</sup> In contrast the glazing of churches

132. A York glaziers workshop has been excavated near Stonegate: D. O'Connor 'Debris from a medieval glazier's workshop', Interim iii part 1 (1975), pp. 11-17. For the techniques of glass painting see Theophilus, De diversis artibus, trans. C.R. Dodwell, (1961), pp. 47-58; J. Lafond, La vitrail (Paris, 1966), pp. 31-55.

133. A description of medieval glass making is given in G.H. Kenyon, The glass industry of the weald, (Leicester, 1967). Salzman, Building in England, pp. 182-5. For the purchase of coloured glass by the Minster see for example: Y.M.L., E3.22b m.2 (1457), E3.25 m.2 (1471). Details of imports are given in the Hull customs particulars e.g.: P.R.O., E122/159/11 m.4, 7v, 8; E122/62/9 m.1, 4; E122/62/17 m.4.

134. Y.C.L., C82.11 m. 4d; see also English Miscellany, p. 16.

132a There were glass foundries at Hutton le Hole & Rose Dale in the late sixteenth century: ex inf. Eric S. Wood.



was common by the mid twelfth century, though in an important cathedral such as York glass was adopted very much earlier.<sup>135</sup> The quality of glass painting in the Minster was generally of a very high standard, though its provenance is difficult to trace before the fourteenth century. It would appear that at times the Minster was in the van of glass painting developments; the west window adopted the most up to date Parisian style and design and the east window has been described as 'a major monument not only of English, but also of European glass painting at the time.'<sup>136</sup>

The proliferation of parish churches in York afforded ample opportunities for the York glaziers to work on a range of schemes on a somewhat less ambitious scale than those in the Minster, and an unusually high proportion of this work has survived.<sup>137</sup> Donations for the erection of a window, or part of a window, would appear to have been a popular form of piety; one of the finest extant examples is the east window of All Saints, North Street given by Nicholas Blackburn junior mayor of York and a wealthy mercer.<sup>138</sup> Such a bequest was beyond the resources of most craftsmen who would rather contribute to the cost of a window; Marion Marton a cordwainer's widow gave 40s. for a glass window to St. Olav's church.<sup>139</sup> Occasionally bequests were made to important secular buildings as with the legacy of ten shillings by

135. York Minster, ed. Aylmer and Cant, pp. 318-25.

136. York Minster, ed. Aylmer and Cant, pp. 358-367.

137. F. Benson, The ancient painted glass windows in the Minster and the churches of the city of York (York, 1915).

138. E. Gee, 'The painted glass of All Saints, North Street, York', Archaeologia cii (1969), p. 151.

139. B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 27.

William Croft, a litster, in 1466 for 'un pale unius fenestre votree in Gilda aula civitatis Ebor'.<sup>140</sup> The St. Mary's Abbey glass is of course all gone, but there too work was available for York glaziers. John Petty left to the work of St. Mary's Abbey 'ten shaffe Renyshe glase' in 1508.<sup>141</sup> He also bequeathed 13s. 4d. to Furnes Abbey 'besechyng thame of clere absolucion be cause I have wroght mych wark thare!'. York glaziers seem to have been in considerable demand. Firm proof of work undertaken is rare though Robert Preston is known to have painted four figures for a window for Durham Priory.<sup>142</sup> However stylistic similarities show that the influence of the York glaziers spread throughout the north of England.<sup>143</sup>

The master glazier headed his own workshop, the size varying with the fame and the resources of the glazier concerned and possibly also with the sort of work he had on hand. Evidence survives for the personnel in the workshop of John Chambre junior, free in 1415.<sup>144</sup> It consisted of Richard his son, free by patrimony as a glazier in 1449, William English, Robert Hudson, Thomas Coverham and John Witton.<sup>145</sup> William English took out the freedom in 1451 on the death of his master; he subsequently became one of the most important glaziers in York and his own son Thomas went into the same trade.<sup>146</sup> Robert Hudson became

140. B.I., Prob. Reg. 4 fo. 70v.

141. B.I., D/C Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 77.

142. Salzman, Building in England, p. 181.

143. York Minster, ed. Aylmer and Cant, pp. 363-4.

144. His elder brother John was free in 1401: Freemen's Reg., pp. 104, 122.

145. Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 266 (1450).

146. Freemen's Reg., pp. 197, 203; Y.C.L., C80.10 m. 1d (1459-60), C83.10 m.4 (1464-5).

free in 1454 and subsequently worked for the Minster.<sup>147</sup> Thomas Coverham was the son of a glazier, John Coverham and was made free by patrimony in 1449, though he apparently stayed on in Chambre's household; both John and Thomas Coverham worked for the Minster.<sup>148</sup> John Witton unhappily predeceased his master by a few months and made him an executor of his will.<sup>149</sup> John Chambre had a sister called Gillote who was married into another family of glaziers, the Pettys, for whom a similar web of connections can be built up, connections which demonstrate in the most graphic way how the style and characteristic details of one workshop could be rapidly disseminated through a wide area.<sup>150</sup>

The majority of glaziers who appear in the surviving records were freemen of York. There was a glaziers' workshop attached to the Minster and it would seem that those who worked there exclusively had no need to be free of the city.<sup>151</sup> The painting of the east window for example was the work of the glazier John Thornton, an expert brought in from Coventry. His contract was drawn up in 1405 and the work apparently completed by 1408. Thornton himself was to design the window and to 'paynt the same where need required' but to complete the vast window in the very short time of three years he must have had a huge workshop under his command, one that was presumably partly disbanded when the window was complete.<sup>152</sup> Thornton took out the freedom in

147. Freemen's Reg., p. 174; Y.M.L., E3.25 m. 2 (1471).

148. Freemen's Reg., p. 169; Y.M.L., E3.9 m. 1 (1420), E3.25 m. 2 (1471).

149. Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 266v.

150. Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 266; York Minster, ed. Aylmer and Cant, p. 332.

151. Of 31 glaziers whose names appear in the fabric rolls from 1418-1530, 12 cannot be traced in the freemen's register.

152. York Minster, ed. Aylmer and Cant, p. 364.

1410, retaining in his own workshop no doubt such men as he required to complete the subsequent commissions that came his way.<sup>153</sup> At least three other master glaziers took out the freedom some years after they are first recorded in the fabric rolls; possibly they, as some masons had done, had taken the opportunity of their years of employment in the Minster to establish themselves as reputable craftsmen in the city.<sup>154</sup> To work in the city the freedom was clearly necessary, for in 1487 the authorities exposed William Greenburg who 'haith occupied within the Cite as a fraunchest man in his craft of glasier, not being fraunchest'; they obliged him therefore to take out the freedom and pay an additional 20s fine.<sup>155</sup>

Thornton's work was done on contract. Two other contracts for the glazing of the west windows also survive, for the great west window with the elusive Master Robert and for the west windows of the nave aisles by Thomas de Bouesdon.<sup>156</sup> Contract work was probably more readily available to the glass painters than it was to other craftsmen in the building trade; the nature of the craft and indeed the status of the glaziers in York would seem to imply this. A considerable amount of work for large institutions was nonetheless paid on a daily basis, though there is a strong possibility that these payments refer to

153. Freemen's Reg., p. 115.

154. John Coverham: Y.M.L., E3.9 m. 1 (1419); Freemen's Reg., p. 137 (1426). Robert Petty: E3.26 m. 3 (1473), E3.27 m. 2d (1475), E3.28 m. 2 (1479); Freemen's Reg., p. 203 (1482). Thomas Shirwynd: E3.25 m. 2 (1471), E3.26 m. 3 (1473), Freemen's Reg., p. 194 (1474).

155. Y.C.R. ii, p. 3.

156. T.W. French, 'The west windows of York Minster', Y.A.J. xlvii (1975), pp. 81-5.

the work done on plain glass rather than the manufacture of stained glass windows. Matthew Petty was paid 56s 8d 'pro vitriacione novae capellae apud Topclyffe infra cimiterium ibidem ex convencione' by the Dean and Chapter in 1457, but when working in the Minster itself he was usually paid by the week.<sup>157</sup> Other large glazing schemes show that the employment of glaziers by the day was common practice and in St. Stephens Chapel even the six designers of the coloured glass windows were paid in this way.<sup>158</sup> Contract work probably became increasingly important in the sixteenth century as domestic glazing expanded and, with the religious changes of the mid sixteenth century, commissions for the glazing of houses must have become the staple work of most glaziers.

The use of lead in the middle ages, worked by plumbers, was restricted for the most part to roofing and the making of gutters, including the construction of conduits.<sup>159</sup> As a roofing material, lead was considerably more durable than tiling but also far more expensive and its use tended to be restricted to churches and major secular

157. Y.M.L., E3.19 m. 4 (1447), E3.21 m. 2 (c.1454), E3.24 m. 2 (1470), E3.25 m. 2 (1471). John Burgh, glazier, was paid for a month in 1399 and again in 1415: Y.M.L., E3.3 m. 2, E3.7 m. 3. Two undated rolls of c.1402 and 1404 show him to have been in receipt of a yearly fee, possibly therefore he was employed at this time to set up the workshop used by Thornton: Y.M.L., E3.5 m. 1, E3.6 m. 3.

158. Salzman, Building in England, p. 182.

159. Salzman, Building in England, p. 271. There is a very detailed contract for the building of a conduit in Great Red Book of Bristol i, pp. 114-9.

buildings such as the council chamber in York.<sup>160</sup> Lead was readily accessible in York as it was mined in the Pennines and marketed at Ripon, Boroughbridge and Richmond and this availability probably lowered the price somewhat as the cost of carriage was considerably reduced.<sup>161</sup> The trade in lead however remained haphazard till the late fifteenth century, and no attempt was made to organize it until the merchants of York began to try and establish a monopoly in lead to compensate for the losses they were experiencing in the wool trade; occasional references suggest that some of the wealthier plumbers took an active part in this trade during the fifteenth century.<sup>162</sup>

Fifty-six plumbers took out the freedom from 1351-1534 at a fairly even rate. The multiplicity of churches in York, together with the requirements for guttering probably meant that their services were regularly if not extensively called on. The Minster had its own plumbers, but only employed one full time plumber who was to be assisted by his own servants where required and presumably also, if necessary, by labourers attached to the Minster.<sup>163</sup> Additional professional assistance seems to have been employed by the Dean and Chapter in the 1470's for example when the rebuilding of the Minster

160. Salzman, Building in England, p. 263; Chamberlains' Rolls, p. 130 (1468).

161. In York the price ranged from 6d. to 8d. a stone and £4 to £4 10s. a fother in the fifteenth century; Salzman found an average of about £5 a fother for the fifteenth century.

162. Bartlett, 'Some aspects of the economy of York', pp. 162-6; A. Raistrick and B. Jennings, A history of lead mining in the Pennines (1965), pp. 37-8. See below pp. 365-6 for the trade in lead.

163. In 1367 such a contract was made with 'Johannes Plumer de Blaykestret': Salzman, Building in England, pp. 588-9.

was finally complete and the roof finished.<sup>164</sup> The city council used the services of a series of plumbers, though John Towton seems to have been the one they employed most regularly.<sup>165</sup> Most plumbers seem to have been paid rates equivalent to other master craftsmen, that is 5d or 6d a day, yet the wills of seven plumbers which survive show the testators to have been for the most part fairly wealthy craftsmen. William Payntour died in 1495 leaving over £45 worth of religious bequests and another £20 to his son; Henry Wright who died in 1530 left his two younger daughters £8 each and his eldest £13, and scattered largess amongst his in-laws.<sup>166</sup> All the wills made by plumbers which survive, barring one, were proved after 1458 and it looks as if there may have been a considerable change in the status of some members of the craft in the fifteenth century and especially the years after 1450 as they developed an interest in the lead trade. But the lack of any evidence for a plumbers' gild and the fact that examination of lead gutters was done by the searchers of masons and wrights, with no reference to plumbers suggests that the craft as a whole had never acquired much coherence in the later middle ages.

Associated with the building trade were a number of semi-skilled occupations, some of which, like the pavers, distinguished themselves

164. Y.M.L., E3.25 m. 2 (1471), E3.26 m. 2 (1473), E3.27 m. 2d (1475).

165. Y.C.L., C82.11 m. 4d (1442-3), C83.1 m. 3d (1445-6), C83.8 m. 2d (1459-60): Chamberlains' Rolls, p. 66.

166. B.I., Prob. Reg. 5 fo. 461v-462, 10 fo. 73-73v.

by a particular title. The more experienced pavers seem to have been in a position to secure themselves a regular supply of specialized work. John Bryg for example, free as a paver in 1418, worked for the Minster, mending an unspecified pavement in 1421 and again in 1447 and 1456; for the city he paved in Hosiergate, Nessgate, the market and on Ouse Bridge in 1440 and was employed by the custodians of Ouse Bridge again in 1442 and 1454.<sup>167</sup> But very few men mentioned as pavers in the accounts appear to have been free, or else had taken out the freedom as labourers. For the most part paving must have been done by labourers and the city officials classed them with 'laboratores istius civitatis videlicet kidberers, garthyners, erthewallers, pavers, dykers, groundwallers with erthe'.<sup>168</sup> The ruling in which this definition occurred was one which obliged the labourers to contribute to the pageant of the masons at Corpus Christi. It was recognised that some labourers, being more skilled than others, were likely to be in receipt of better wages. Consequently the earthwallers, pavers and groundwallers were each to pay 4d and other labourers to pay 2d to the masons.

These labourers cannot be presumed to have been organized into a formal craft gild though it is likely that fraternities were formed amongst them. Possibly some of them had thwarted ambitions as did

167. Freemen's Reg., p. 127; Y.M.L., E3.10 m. 5 (1422), E3.19 m. 4 (1447), E3.20 m. 1 (1451), E3.21 m. 2 (1454); Y.C.L., C80.10 m. 1d (1440), C82.11 m. 4d (1442), C83.5 m. 3d (1454).

168. Y.M.B. ii, p. 188 (1477). York began to obtain pavage grants in the early fourteenth century; the progress of work cannot be known but by the fifteenth century the city council seem to have made attempts to keep the streets in front of their tenements paved.



their fellows in Coventry where in 1518 it was ordered that 'the fellowship of rough-masons and dawbers ffromhensforth be no fellowship nor craft of them-self, but only comen labourers as they were afore, and to take such wages as is lymyte them by the statutes theruppon made'.<sup>169</sup> The York labourers were ordered in 1477 to elect two searchers from amongst their members to collect the sum due to the masons pageant and the existence of these officials, if only for the unpleasant task of extracting money, may henceforward have given the labourers some focus as a group, though it cannot have amounted to very much.

Wages for all craftsmen were forced up dramatically by the Black Death; unfortunately wage rates prior to this event in York are hard to come by.<sup>170</sup> In the years after the Black Death, and consistently throughout the fifteenth century top rates for labourers in York were usually 4d. a day in summer and 3d. in winter; some, exceptionally were paid more, whilst it was customary in the Minster for most of the period for them to receive somewhat less, usually 16d. a week. These rates of pay made nonsense of the restrictions laid down in the statute of labourers which attempted to fix master carpenters' and master masons' wages at these levels.<sup>171</sup> Not until the end of the fifteenth century, in 1495, did legislation recognise wage rates that had been

169. C.L.B. iii, p. 653.

170. The shipwrights who built the king's galley in 1295 received for the most part 18d-2s for 7 days work; the master was paid 5s 3d for 7 days and his three chief assistants 3s 6d, 3s and 2s 6d respectively: P.R.O., E101/501/15 m.3.

171. 25 Edward III Stat. 2, 34 Edward III c.9, Statutes of the Realm i, pp. 311-3, 366-7.

paid in practice for the preceeding 150 years.<sup>172</sup> In this statute it was laid down that master builders of whatever craft were to receive 6d. a day in summer and 5d. in winter; master masons who were in charge of operations and having under them six masons were to receive 7d. a day.

Wages paid to master craftsmen during the course of the late fourteenth century and fifteenth centuries of course varied from place to place. In the carpentry trade, London rates have been found to be regularly some one and a half to two times those found in the provinces in the fifteenth century.<sup>173</sup> Rates paid in York throughout the 150 years following the Black Death can be equated closely with those laid down in 1495 and indeed show a remarkable stability over the whole period. Although masons in York had customarily been paid on a sliding scale according to status, both the fabric rolls and the city records show the majority of freemasons to have received 6d. a day; the masons working on repairing the royal castle mills in 1461 also received the same wages.<sup>174</sup> Master carpenters in the Minster, on city and on royal sites were also paid 6d. a day in summer and 5d. in winter in most cases and the same, or slightly lower rates were paid to tilers and plasterers. There were in addition the ex gratia payments to the chief craftsmen, the setters and those who had worked particularly diligently.<sup>175</sup> Food and drink were also provided on

172. 11 Henry VII c.22, Statutes of the Realm ii, pp. 585-7.

173. Alford and Barker, Carpenters' company, p. 33.

174. Thomas Tebbe 'cimentario indicato super contemptum contra statutum laboratorum' in 1453 was probably therefore either very unlucky or very unpopular: Chamberlains' Rolls, p. 71; P.R.O., E101/501/15, is an account of work on the mills.

175. Salzman, Building in England, pp. 78-80.

momentous occasions, such as the raising of a house.<sup>176</sup>

A great deal has been made of builders' wages in the construction of price and wage indices; the validity of such wage indices must however be questionable.<sup>177</sup> Within the building industry wages varied according to region. Equally most wage rates have to be drawn from institutional building accounts and those from royal works in particular are likely to have been distorted either by the speed with which such operations were undertaken or the policy of impressment. If, as seems likely, most domestic building and repair was done by contract, builders' wages can give little indication of the income of master craftsmen amongst carpenters and tilers. Nor can builders' wages be related to the work of craftsmen in other industries where conditions of employment were fundamentally different: the majority of master craftsmen lived off the profits of goods manufactured in their own workshops or else, as in the cloth industry, as piece workers.

It can however be confidently said that building workers were not rich or even moderately well off for the most part. Over the entire period they accounted for only 7.3% of all freemen; the majority of building workers are likely to have been unfree, having the status of journeymen or labourers. Of the freemen only 7% made wills, the content of which shows them to have been poor in comparison to other craftsmen.<sup>178</sup> It seems likely that the prospects for even independent

176. Y.C.L., C83.8 m. 4d (1459-60).

177. E.H. Phelps-Brown and S.V. Hopkins, 'Seven centuries of the prices of consumables compared with builders wage rates', Economica, 2nd. ser. xxiii, (1956).

178. See below table 10:2.

masters were becoming increasingly circumscribed in the fifteenth century as they came to rely on merchants for the supply of raw materials and in particular imported timber.<sup>179</sup> There certainly does not seem to have been a personality in this later period equivalent to Robert Fitzgiles, master carpenter in the 1330's.

Despite the low status of most building craftsmen, the building industry as a whole experienced an expansion in the hundred years to 1450 and especially in the years 1401-50. In assessing this expansion the rebuilding of the Minster and of the parish churches cannot be taken as reliable evidence for the funds of these enterprises were drawn from diverse sources, many unrelated to the city's economic state. More telling evidence comes from the increase in the number of freemen which the industry could support. The number of building craftsmen taking out the freedom increased from 341 in 1351-1400 to 433 in 1401-50. It was not only among the common trades of carpenters, tilers and masons that a higher intake was recorded in 1401-50, but also amongst the specialized trades of joiners, carvers and even pavers. Despite all the reservations expressed over the freemen's register it seems undeniable that the demand for building craftsmen remained high till the mid fifteenth century and that the building trade was expanding. Even if the higher numbers only demonstrate that a greater proportion of building craftsmen were taking out the freedom, this in itself is significant among a group of workmen who depended heavily on wage labour and suggests that they themselves had a stronger sense of their civic status.

179. See below pp. 356-7.

It seems reasonable to suggest that many of the inhabitants of York experienced a rising standard of living during the years 1350-1450 so that the demand for builders to modernize the housing stock is not surprising. The account rolls of the bridgemaster of Ouse Bridge show a heavy expenditure on repairs and building up to the 1460's but thereafter the amount spent began to fall.<sup>180</sup> Both the bridgemasters' rolls and the Vicars Choral accounts show that corporate stocks of housing were decreasing and moreover were falling into bad repair so that rents were being waived.<sup>181</sup> Other evidence also suggests that it was in the 1460's that York's economy began to go downhill rapidly accompanied by a fall in population.<sup>182</sup> In a city of decreasing population, where landlords lacked the capital to repair decrepit buildings, the demand for building craftsmen would have fallen rapidly. The conclusion of work on the Minster and the abandonment by the city of large scale work undertaken in stone further contributed to the contraction in demand. The number of builders taking out the freedom between 1451 and 1500 was only 282 compared to 433 in the previous fifty years, and the craft guilds began to amalgamate, albeit reluctantly. Of these craftsmen only the glaziers experienced continued prosperity as a whole in the

180. The totals arrived at from the bridgemasters' rolls can only be approximate because the records are sometimes in poor condition.

Estimates however are as follows:

Y.C.L., C82.11	(1442-43)	£48 6s. 6d.
C83.5	(1454-5)	£31 2s. 9½d.
C83.8	(1459-60)	£46 2s. 9½d.
C83.10	(1464-5)	£25 5s. 1½d.
C84.2	(1468-9)	£14 8s. 4d.

181. Bartlett, 'Some aspects of the economy of York', pp. 186-7, 195.

182. Dobson, 'Urban decline', pp. 20-1.

years after 1450, most probably because the failure of demand in the city was compensated for by the increased use of domestic glazing throughout the county.

TABLE 6:2 ENTRANTS TO THE FREEDOM OF YORK, DECADAL TOTALS: BUILDING CRAFTS

	-1290	1291-1300					-1300		
							No.		
Carpenters	1						1)		
Cartwrights							1)		
Carvers							1)		
Joiners							1)	3	60
Sawers		1					1)		
Shipwrights							1)		
Turners		1					1)		
Glaziers									
Masons		2						2	40
Pavers									
Plasterers									
Tilers									
Tilemakers									
Plumbers									
Labourers									
Others									
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>						<b>5</b>	

	1301-10	1311-20	1321-30	1331-40	1341-50	1301-1350		
						No.		
Carpenters	1	3	8	4	7	23)		
Cartwrights				2		2)		
Carvers								
Joiners					1	1)	35	51.5
Sawers	1				1	2)		
Shipwrights	1		1		1	3)		
Turners				4		4)		
Glaziers		1	2				3	4.4
Masons	5	2	2	4	7		20	29.4
Pavers								
Plasterers		1		1		2)	6	8.8
Tilers	1			1	2	4)		
Tilemakers								
Plumbers			2	1			3	4.4
Labourers								
Others	1						1	1.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>19</b>		<b>68</b>	

TABLE 6:2 (continued)

	1351-60	1361-70	1371-80	1381-90	1391-1400	1351-1400 No.			
Carpenters	10	21	18	26	34	109	}	206	56.0
Cartwrights	1	3	4	8	2	18			
Carvers			2	1	1	4			
Joiners	1	5	5	3	3	17			
Sawers		3	8	6	8	25			
Shipwrights		2	3		5	10			
Turners	9	5	1	1	7	23			
Glaziers	4	3	4	3	2		16	4.3	
Masons	2	13	13	13	10		51	13.9	
Pavers				2	2		4	1.1	
Plasterers		3	3	3	7	16	}	56	15.2
Tilers	3	6	8	12	11	40			
Tilemakers	2	2		1	1		6	1.6	
Plumbers	4	3		5	2		14	3.8	
Labourers	1		1	2	3		7	1.9	
Others	1			3	4		8	2.2	
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>102</b>		<b>368</b>		
	1401-10	1411-20	1421-30	1431-40	1441-50	1401-1450 No.			
Carpenters	11	34	33	21	16	115	}	220	50.3
Cartwrights	3		2	4	2	11			
Carvers	2	10	4	1	2	19			
Joiners	7	7	3		3	20			
Sawers	5	7	9	8	9	38			
Shipwrights	3	3	4	1	1	12			
Turners	1		1	1	2	5			
Glaziers	7	5	3	3	4		22	5.0	
Masons	7	16	15	8	6		52	11.9	
Pavers		3	2		2		7	1.6	
Plasterers	5	10	6	5	2	28	}	71	16.2
Tilers	6	10	3	14	10	43			
Tilemakers	3	3	2	4	1		13	3.0	
Plumbers	5	4	5		7		21	4.8	
Labourers	1	3	5	4	16		29	6.6	
Others	2						2	0.5	
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>83</b>		<b>437</b>		



TABLE 6:2 (continued)

	1451-60	1461-70	1471-80	1481-90	1491-1500	1451-1500 No.			
Carpenters	13	10	21	11	10	65	}		
Cartwrights		2	2	2	5	11			
Carvers	1	3		4	4	12			
Joiners	1	1				2		137	47.4
Sawers	1	7	5	9	6	28			
Shipwrights	2	1	2	3	5	13			
Turners	1	2	2	1		6			
Glaziers	5	4	4	5	4		22	7.6	
Masons	7	7	5	4			23	8.0	
Pavers	1	3	5	4			13	4.4	
Plasterers	4		1			5	}	45	15.6
Tilers	7	9	9	9	6	40			
Tilemakers		3	2	1	2		8	2.8	
Plumbers	1	4	4	1	3		13	4.5	
Labourers	1	4	3	12	7		27	9.3	
Others				1			1	0.3	
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>52</b>		<b>289</b>		

	1501-10	1511-20	1521-30	1531-34	1501-34 No.			TOTAL No.		
Carpenters	8	10	22	2	42	}		355		
Cartwrights	1	3	1	2	7		49			
Carvers		4	8	3	15		50			
Joiners		2	1		3		81	47.6	43	682 51.0
Sawers	6		2	3	11		105			
Shipwrights							38			
Turners	1		1	1	3		42			
Glaziers	5	6	4	1		16	9.4	79	5.9	
Masons	2	1	4	1		8	4.7	156	11.7	
Pavers								24	1.8	
Plasterers	1	2	4	1	8	}	36	21.2	59	214 16.0
Tilers	10	6	7	5	28		155			
Tilemakers		1		3		4	2.4	31	2.3	
Plumbers	3	1	1	3		8	4.7	59	4.4	
Labourers	3	4	6	3		16	9.4	79	5.9	
Others		1				1	0.6	13	1.0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>28</b>		<b>170</b>		<b>1337</b>		

## Chapter 7. MISCELLANEOUS CRAFTS

There remains to be considered a fairly diverse group of crafts who do not fall naturally into any of the five categories so far considered. Between some of these crafts a close connection can be established, as for example between the bowers, fletchers and stringers. However the selection of crafts has not been made primarily on the basis of these connections, but on the extent of the records that survive. The crafts included cover all those industrial crafts not yet discussed for which ordinances survive. Moreover in the case of each of these crafts the wills of at least five craftsmen survive, giving some personal depth to the general impression afforded by the official records. Of course the use of extant records as a basis for selection inevitably means a bias towards the larger, more coherently organized crafts. However there are good reasons for supposing that the overall picture has not been seriously misrepresented. The sheer number of craft guilds in late medieval York reveals the degree to which industrial life was minutely organized by the end of the period. Records survive for some crafts which were apparently numerically very insignificant and which can be taken as representative of the way that the least privileged craftsmen banded together. It is also possible to get some impression from the York records of when the obscurer crafts became more precisely defined and began to be distinguished from the mass of unfree labourers. The crafts covered in this chapter fall into three groups: the chandlers, barbers and medical practitioners all of whom were closely connected; the bowers, stringers and fletchers; and finally a group of minor

crafts whose organization emerged rather late, the coopers, horners and ropers.

Candles were made of wax or tallow. Tallow candles were almost invariably used for domestic consumption, the more expensive wax candles being reserved for religious purposes. Whereas wax candles were generally made by professional chandlers, tallow candles could readily be made from a rush or a cotton wick dipped in animal fat. The extent to which there was a demand for tallow candles made by professional tallow-chandlers varied from place to place. In Coventry records survive for the creation of a craft of tallow chandlers in the early sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup> The only regulations for candlemaking which survive from Norwich again relate to the tallow-chandlers, but the records of the Norwich pageants dating from 1449 show that there was a separate group of wax-chandlers associated with the barbers.<sup>2</sup> In Durham barbers and wax-chandlers formed a joint mystery in the mid-fifteenth century and shadowy records of guilds of wax-chandlers also survive from Northampton and from Bristol.<sup>3</sup>

The craft of chandlers in York in the later middle ages seems to have been concerned primarily, if not exclusively, with the manufacture of wax candles and other wax items such as seals, the manufacture of

1. See above p. 144.
2. Records of Norwich ii, pp. 162, 230.
3. 'Durham trade guilds', pp. 158-9 (1468); Records of the borough of Northampton, ed. C.A. Markham and J.C. Cox, 2 vols. (1898) ii, p. 286; Great Red Book of Bristol iii, p. 115. In 1450 the lists of drinkings for St. John's night group the Bristol wax-chandlers with the barbers; Great Red Book of Bristol i, p. 126.

tallow candles being largely in the hands of the victualling crafts.<sup>4</sup> The ordinances of the chandlers made in c. 1420 describe them as 'chaundelers de cire' and further regulations dating from 1515 were concerned with the standard of wax used in coloured and plain candles and tapers.<sup>5</sup> The will of Brian Bradley, a chandler who died in 1527, made reference to a 'wax ladle', a 'wax burde' and 'half a doss' wax'; William Caton, a barber-chandler who died in 1513, had 'iii pare molys for wax', 'ii pynys' and a 'wax burd'.<sup>6</sup> In York as elsewhere the association between barbers and wax-chandlers was a close one. From 1441-1534 fourteen men in fact took out the freedom as barber-chandlers and men such as William Caton and John Chesman described themselves as 'chandler and barber' in their wills.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless two distinct mysteries of barbers and chandlers seem to have been maintained. Presumably the continued existence of a separate craft of chandlers was a response to a fairly considerable demand.

The ordinances of the chandlers made in c. 1420 describe the most important items made by the craft: 'torches et tortes et tortes de broche et prykettis et perchours et mortars et tapors'.<sup>8</sup> An enormous demand for candles must have been created by the multiplicity

4. Only one obvious exception this has emerged, John Middleburgh made free by patrimony in 1427 as chandler and saucemaker: Freemen's Reg., p. 140.
5. Y.M.B. i, p. 55.
6. B.I., Prob. Reg. 9 fo. 392; B.I., D/C Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 106. Wax candles could be made by being rolled on a board or by casting.
7. B.I., D/C 2 fo. 106, 78v-79. John Chesman's will, made in 1516 is transcribed in Appendix A.
8. Y.M.B. ii, p. 56. Tortes, perchours and prikets were all types of candle.

of religious institutions in the city: the Minster; the unusually high number of parish churches; the religious orders. Moreover there was likely to be constant demand from fraternities, from parish gilds and from individuals for wax for funerals, memorial masses and anniversaries. The shortest and sparsest wills surviving from medieval York made provision for some wax to be burned, if only half a pound. Richer craftsmen such as the glazier John Petty, who died in 1508, could afford 20 pounds of wax whilst a wealthy merchant such as Robert Holme, who died in 1396, requested that 200 pounds of wax be made into candles and torches for his burial service.<sup>9</sup>

As well as straightforward candles and torches, the chandlers undertook the casting of images described as 'castynwork' and other irregular shapes described as 'holghwerk'. It was customary when the assistance of the saints was invoked to leave a wax image at the altar or shrine where the prayers were offered. If help was sought for an illness the image was frequently cast in the form of the afflicted limb or organ; examples of such images, figures and limbs, have in fact been excavated at Exeter.<sup>10</sup> These wax images were an alternative to the costlier gold and silver offerings that only the rich could afford, and it is likely that the altars of the Minster, and the tomb of St. William in particular, were covered with these gifts, which were

9. B.I., D/C Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 76v; Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 100v.

10. U.M. Radford, 'The wax images found in Exeter cathedral', Antiquaries Journal xxix (1949), pp. 164-8.

periodically cleared away and melted down for candles. The existence of a major shrine in York, that of St. William, making it a pilgrimage centre must therefore have been a further reason for the particular strength of the wax-chandlers in the city.

In addition to supplying the church in York, the York chandlers probably served a number of secular and ecclesiastical lords throughout the county.<sup>11</sup> The Liberate Rolls show that Henry III when in the north was accustomed to buy large quantities of wax in York. In 1244 the bailiffs of the city had over 35 marks remitted from the farm on account of 978 pounds of wax sent to the king's wardrobe at Newcastle; there were further large purchases in 1255.<sup>12</sup> The existence of wax-chandlers in York cannot be surmised for the sale of wax, but it would be surprising if there were not a body of chandlers in the city by this date. The first chandlers do not appear in the freemen's register until the 1340's; prior to this date it seems likely that they combined their work with another trade or craft, probably medicine. The connection with the barbers has already been noticed; chandlers may also have been trading as apothecaries; John Brouneflete, made free as a Chandler in 1389, died describing himself as an apothecary in 1429.<sup>13</sup> Whereas barbers, until the sixteenth century, seem to have been men of unexceptional fortunes, apothecaries could be very wealthy. Brouneflete's success was quite impressive; and there were other chandlers, most

11. The Durham monks bought 2 torches for the high altar of the Priory at York in 1356: Extracts from the account rolls of the abbey of Durham, (Surtees Society xcix, c, ciii, 1898-1900), ii, p. 383.
12. Liberate rolls 1240-45, p. 260; 1251-60, p. 236.
13. Freemen's Reg., p. 86; B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 590.

notably the Knight family who made respectable fortunes.<sup>14</sup>

The association between the chandlers and medical practice probably arose because wax was needed by surgeons for making emollients, unguents and 'emplastrum'. It was used to cover wounds, which having been treated with salves could be bound with an 'entreet maad of ii<sup>3</sup> parties of whight rosyn and oon partie of wex moltun togidere upon strong vynegre'.<sup>15</sup> It seems probable that by adopting the craft of chandler a barber obtained the best opportunities to expand his business, to accrue some wealth and acquire civic status. An increasingly close connection between barbers and wax-chandlers may account in part for the apparent increase in prosperity and standing of the barbers during the early sixteenth century. Confirmation comes from sixteenth century Worcester where it was found that though barbers alone were not very wealthy, barbers who combined their work with chandlers were considerably richer.<sup>16</sup>

The close connection established between barbers and chandlers is one reason for including the barbers, who were in fact a service industry, in a study of York craftsmen. The barbers were the only group of men involved in a purely service industry who took out the

14. The wills of Richard Knight and his son John contain large bequests of cash and silver; B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 112v, 3 fo. 431-432. For the wealth of the chandlers see below pp. 464-5.

15. Lanfrank's Science of Chirurgie ed. R. von Fleischhacker (E.E.T.S. cii, 1894) pp. 132, 331, 353.

16. Dyer, Worcester, p. 44.

freedom of the city regularly and in large numbers: sixty-three men were made free as barbers from 1351-1400 and sixty-nine from 1401-50, though numbers fell somewhat after this date.<sup>17</sup> They had ordinances similar to those of other craft guilds and it seems reasonable to assume that the council encouraged the imposition of gild organization on such a large body of men. The first recorded ordinances of the barbers show that their work included physic, surgery, tooth extraction and straightforward barbering and it is clear from these ordinances that it was the medical rather than the barbering side of their practice that they sought most keenly to protect from competition.<sup>18</sup> Undoubtedly however the barbers did not have a monopoly of medical practice in the city and various other practitioners described variously as physician, surgeon, leech or medicus appear in the records of the city in the later middle ages.

The distinction between different branches of medicine was ill-defined, although two terms in particular, physician and surgeon, were coming to have increasingly specific meanings in the later middle ages. The physician attended to the diagnosis of illness and gave treatment by drugs, mingled with various degrees of faith, astrology and superstition; the surgeon was concerned with external wounds and knife work.<sup>19</sup> The specialization of the terms physician and surgeon arose

17. See table 7:2.

18. Y.M.B. i, pp. 207-10. For the stock of a medieval barber see the inventory of John Stubbs (d. 1451): Test. Ebor. iii, p. 118. The will of John Chesman, barber-chandler, transcribed in Appendix A, details some of the barbers equipment.

19. Dialogues in French and English by William Caxton, ed. H. Bradley (E.E.T.S., E.S. lxxix, 1900), pp. 41-2.



as a result of the re-emergence of academic medicine on the continent in the twelfth century, and in England with the establishment of a medical school at Oxford in the thirteenth. A tendency developed among these university-trained physicians to restrict the term to those who had made a scholastic study of medical texts. Indeed in 1350 the University of Oxford attempted to ensure that 'no physician undertake the cure of the sick in the municipality of Oxford by giving medical treatment unless he has attended lectures on medicine for four years and has been examined by the regent master of the faculty'.<sup>20</sup> This was a vain hope but it represented the late medieval conception of the standing of the physician. The surgeon in England in the later middle ages was a man of very much lower status, usually combining his craft with that of barber, as an expert wielder of razors and knives. Despite the publication of a vernacular 'Science of Chirurgie' in the early fifteenth century, surgeons achieved respectability very slowly.<sup>21</sup> Even in London they remained without formal constitution until the reign of Henry VIII. When they were incorporated in 1540 it was still in conjunction with the barbers in the Company of Barber-Surgeons, although the medical work of the barbers was by the same act restricted to dentistry.<sup>22</sup>

The emergence of specialized medical practice was likely to be considerably delayed in a provincial town, even one as large as York. The various terms applied to medical men in late medieval York have therefore to be treated with some caution. The apothecaries and

20. C.H. Talbot, Medicine in medieval England (London, 1967), p. 71.

21. Lanfrank's Science of Chirurgie.

22. 32 Henry VIII c. 42, Statutes of the Realm iii, pp. 794-6.

treaclers can be disposed of first, for they were druggists rather than medical practitioners. In York 'apothecary' was in fact virtually synonymous with 'spicer' and the apothecaries therefore are more happily categorized with merchants than with craftsmen. Only five men took out the freedom as apothecaries, yet wills survive from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries for ten men who described themselves at their death as apothecaries.<sup>23</sup> Three of these men had become free as apothecaries, four as spicers and one as a mercer. All were rich, some such as Constantine del Dam and Nicholas Useflete, extremely rich.<sup>24</sup> They also held high office, Nicholas Useflete and George Essex becoming mayor.<sup>25</sup> The treaclers were also compounders of medicine but on a more modest scale.<sup>26</sup> In fact the term was only employed for a brief period in the freemen's register, between 1411-30, when six men took out the freedom described as treaclers; the making of herbal medicines was so widely practised that this is not surprising and their presence in the register at all may be the result of the preference of the clerk for the period of this particular 'job description'.

Amongst those men who can properly be described as medical practitioners, the barbers are the only ones who appear regularly in the records. Medical men described as phesicus, medicus and leech only appear sporadically in the freemen's register.

23. The fact that two of these wills are very early, dating from 1324 and 1331 emphasises the wealth of the apothecaries: Y.M.L., D/C Prob.Reg. 1 fo. 4, 10. For the incidence of will making see below p.411

24. B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 4v-5v, 2 fo. 58v-59v.

25. Freemen's Reg., pp. 152, 232.

26. Treacles or theriacs were herbal compounds: M.J. Hughes, Woman healers in medieval life and literature (New York, 1943), pp. 27-9, 47-8.

Table 7:1. FIFTY YEAR TOTALS OF PHYSICIANS, DOCTORS AND LEECHES

ADMITTED TO THE FREEDOM, 1301-1534.

	1301-50	1351-1400	1401-50	1451-1500	1501-34	Total
<u>Phesicus</u>		6	10	3		13
<u>Medicus</u>	2	6	2		2	12
Leech		1	1			2
Total	2	7	13	3	2	27

It is impossible to say from these figures whether the change in terminology from medicus to phesicus was entirely fortuitous, and the entry rate is so erratic that it would appear to provide more proof that doctors did not need to be freemen than to throw much light on the state of professional medicine in York. However the lack of entries for any of these types of practitioner in the fifteenth century, when other professional men were taking out the freedom in increasing numbers, is perhaps indicative of the absence of specialized medical services in York. Given the extraordinarily superstitious and ad hoc nature of medieval medicine it seems probable that the professional doctor represented a very small proportion of medical practice, much of which was little more than quackery and which could be administered by anyone with a ready tongue. The continuing ambiguity in terminology is evident in the history of Nicholas Wodhill, made free in 1435 as a medicus; in 1440 he received a royal pardon for various offences in which he was described as 'alias Nicholas Leche, late of London, alias late of York leche, alias of York surgeon'.<sup>27</sup>

27. Freemen's Reg., p. 149; C.P.R. 1436-41, p. 483.

In so far as the practice of medicine was controlled in medieval York, it was done so by the barbers. Their first recorded ordinances, undated but probably made in early fifteenth century, include the clause that 'omnes alienigene et extranei, quicumque fuerint exercentes phisicam vel artem sirurgie infra civitatem istam, qui mercedem aliquam pro facto suo recipient, sint annuatim contributorii ad sustinendum et manuetendum predictam paginam barbitonsorum lumenque suum'.<sup>28</sup> It may be significant that whilst these early ordinances refer to the barbers' control over those 'exercentes phisicam', the later regulations, dated 1485, refer to only the search of 'evere aliene and straunger commyng to this cite to exercise any poynt of surgerie ... or othre thing belonging to the craft of barbours', and that no stranger or alien might practise surgery without being examined by the searchers of the barbers.<sup>29</sup> Possibly by the late fifteenth century the barbers' profession was becoming more closely defined and limited to the surgical side of medical practice by other interested parties, but nothing can be certain.

There is not much evidence of the actual practice of medicine in York although the memorandum book preserves the record of one case which demonstrates the risks involved in medieval surgery. In 1394 a group of witnesses, neighbours of John de Cartmell came into the council chamber 'testificantes quod quia ipse Johannes nimis languidus fuerat de quadam infirmitate vocata le stane, peciit et requirebat quod

28. Y.M.B. i, p. 208.

29. Y.M.B. i, p. 211.

Johannes Catlewe de Ebot' barbour, curam suam sibi imponere vellet ad afferendam petram; et sive viveret seu moreretur, ipse Johannes Catlewe quietus fore deberet ab omni impeticione, calumpnia, et demanda per ipsum seu dictam Aliciam exorem suam aut quemcumque alium aliquamiter in hac parte facienda'.<sup>30</sup> The barbers of York were on occasion in demand outside the city. In 1431-2 a John Catlowe of York, probably the same man who treated John de Cartmell, was paid 4s. for work done at Selby Abbey.<sup>31</sup> It seems more likely that this was for surgery than for barbering.

The proportion of time spent by any one man on surgery rather than barbering must have varied according to the reputation of the individual. Almost no evidence of actual barbering survives in York although there are occasional references in inventories. Robert Locksmith, a vestmentmaker, when he died in 1531, owed Richard Thickpeny, a barber, 2s. 'for a hoolle yere shavyn'.<sup>32</sup> On analogy with Bristol, barbers were probably confronted by considerably amateur competition. In 1418 the Bristol barbers complained that 'diverses gents nient sachants ne apprises en le dit mistier, come Tailleurs, Wevers, Toubers, Mariners, Smythes, Corvesours et autres usent continuelment de iour en autre pur tondier et rasier diverses gents dedeins ... Bristuyt'.<sup>33</sup> Another unknown element is the number of

30. Y.M.B. ii, p. 17. Possibly Catlowe took this step because in 1392, shortly after he had been made free he had been obliged to pay damages to Emmot Beleby for an injury: Freemen's Reg., p. 88 (1389); Y.M.B. ii, pp. 25-7.
31. W.W. Morrell, The history and antiquities of Selby (Selby, 1867), p. 103.
32. 'Appendix A.
33. Little Red Book ii, p. 136.

women barbers. The ordinances of the barbers assume that women were allowed to work in the craft and merely stipulate that they should not perform surgery or tooth extraction 'nisi fuerint sub regimine alicuius magistr̄ barbitonsorum eiusdem civitatis'.<sup>34</sup>

The crafts of bower, stringmaker and fletcher probably emerged in medieval towns with the adoption of the long bow as standard equipment for infantry in the later middle ages. Long bows were first used by the English during Edward I's Welsh wars and again to great effect against the Scots in the 1290's.<sup>35</sup> Edward I however did not in general supply his army with weapons; infantrymen had to depend on arms supplied in their own localities. Not until the reign of Edward III did the government take on itself the responsibility for supply. Writs were then sent to the sheriffs of specific counties detailing the quantity of weapons to be sent to the Tower, or, as was more common in the north, either straight to the border or to a port for shipment overseas.<sup>36</sup> Demand of course fluctuated with the progress of war, but the requisitioning of supplies continued through most of the fifteenth century. In 1436 the sheriffs of Yorkshire and of York were ordered to provide 100,000 goose wing feathers for arrows and to 'arrest sufficient workers and put them to work on the said arrows'; in 1474 an order was issued for bows, arrows, arrowheads and strings;

34. Y.M.B. 1, p. 209.

35. J.E. Morris, The Welsh wars of Edward I (Oxford, 1901), p. 99; M. Prestwich, War, politics and finance under Edward I (1972), pp. 105-6.

36. H. Hewitt, The organization of war under Edward III (Manchester, 1966), pp. 64-68; C.C.R. 1333-7, p. 53, 1341-43, p. 56; P.R.O. E101/597/38 (1355), E101/598/15 (1368).

in 1475 bowers and fletchers were ordered to make all their stock up into military, rather than hunting, equipment immediately in preparation for the invasion of France.<sup>37</sup>

York was the gathering ground for weapons purchased within Yorkshire. Details of the sheriffs' accounts surviving from the reign of Edward III show his expenses in riding to centres throughout the county to collect equipment: Leeds, Doncaster, Pontefract, Beverley and Hull were all mentioned, arrows, arrowheads and bows being purchased separately.<sup>38</sup> In times of emergency supplies were galloped to the city: John Bower of Beverley was paid 20d. in 1460 for 'riding to York with bows for King H[enry]'.<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately the surviving records give little indication of the size of output either amongst the smaller towns and rural communities or within York which might help establish the most important areas of production.

Of the three crafts concerned with the manufacture of bows and arrows, the bowers, fletchers and stringmakers, the bowers were by far the largest and most significant group. The importance of the industry was such that in 1405 John Pannal of York was specifically designated as maker of the king's bows.<sup>40</sup> A particularly close watch was kept on standards: in 1364 the mayor of York was commissioned to

37. C.P.R. 1429-36, p. 600, 1467-77, p. 462; C.C.R. 1468-76, p. 376-7. York itself sent 100 archers to assist the king and the Duke of Gloucester against the Scots in 1482; their martial spirit was questioned by one who claimed that they had 'made whypys of thar bowstryngs to dryve cariage with': Y.C.R., pp. 42, 59, 67.
38. P.R.O. E101/597/29, E101/598/15.
39. Hist. MSS. Comm., Beverley, p. 166; this they did whilst also supplying clothing for Edward, Duke of York and King of England.
40. C.P.R. 1405-8, p. 24.

summon all the bowers of York and inspect their work because the members of the bowers' craft had complained to the king that 'some knowing little or nothing of the mystery mingle therein and work insufficient bows and sell them at the same price as bows of good work are sold at'.<sup>41</sup> High quality bows were made of imported yew wood. Only yew had the elasticity to make a really good bow, but English yew was considered rather too open in the grain, having grown too quickly; continental yew, especially from the Baltic coast, a dry area where the wood grew more slowly, was considered to be of finer quality. A few particularly successful York bowers became involved in the profitable import trade, most notably John Swerd who in 1373 received a licence to send four of his servants and two grooms to Prussia to fashion bows and to send them back to York periodically.<sup>42</sup> For the most part however the traffic in bowstaves was firmly in the hands of the merchant class and the work of the bowers restricted to the manufacture of bows.<sup>43</sup>

The various processes in the manufacture of bows were detailed in 1420 in the course of a dispute concerning piece rates between the bowers and their servants. The new rates of pay were to be: 'pro chippyng cuiuslibet centene arcuum xvi d; pro thwytyng cuiuslibet centene xx d. et pro dressyng cuiuslibet centene pro opere proprio xx d.; et, si illos centum arcus aptaverit (anglice dresse tham) expensis suis propriis iiiis; et pro bendyng cuiuslibet centene v s. et pro hornyng unius centene vi d., et pro penetracione (anglice boryng) mille

41. C.P.R. 136I-4, pp. 543-4.

42. C.P.R. 1370-4, p. 264.

43. For the trade in bows see below pp. 360-1.



cornuum xv d., et pro purgacione (anglice clenysng uppe) unius centene vi d. et pro afterbendynng cuiuslibet centene xx d. et pro polyssyng et skynnyng cuiuslibet centene xx d.<sup>44</sup> Bows were made from a cross section of heartwood and sapwood; the heartwood being drier formed the belly of the bow, the sapwood was moistish and formed the back of the bow.<sup>45</sup> The sapwood was shaped with an axe and the belly rounded into a curve with a rasp, leaving the bow D-shaped in section. These processes are covered by the first three entries 'chippyng', 'thwytyng' and 'dressyng'. Once this had been done, the bow had to be reduced for bending, that is tapered into a long smooth curve from tip to tip to the point where it might be bent sufficiently for temporary stringing. It appears from the York regulations that it was customary to tip bows with horn, hence the payments for 'horning and for boring holes in the horn to take the string. 'Clenysng uppe' is self explanatory. Once temporarily strung the bow was further reduced, or fined down, until it was perfectly balanced, which is probably what is meant by 'afterbendynng'. Finally the bow was polished and backed with vellum to prevent splitting; it was also oiled to keep out the damp. The tools used by the medieval bower were axes, floites and gravers, the floites being rasps and the gravers a kind of shave.<sup>46</sup>

Figures from the freemen's register are not always a reliable

44. Y.M.B. i, pp. 199-200.

45. The following description is taken from the near contemporary work on archery by Roger Ascham written in 1545: R. Ascham, Toxophilus, ed. E. Arber (1863). A.E. Hodgekin, The archer's craft (1951).

46. Bequests of these tools are found in the wills of bowers: B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 380, 2 fo. 66lv.

indicator for the fortunes of a particular craft. There does however seem to have been a genuine drop in the number of bows in York from the mid-fifteenth century: fifty-nine were made free in 1351-1400, fifty-eight between 1401-50 but only twenty-five from 1451-1500. As already mentioned, royal demand for bows does not appear to have slackened much before the end of the fifteenth century and it was only in the early sixteenth century that the longbow came to be wholly superseded as a weapon.<sup>47</sup> It seems possible therefore that the York industry may have contracted because of difficulty in obtaining supplies of bowstaves.<sup>48</sup> The customs particulars for Hull for the reign of Richard II show enormous quantities of staves being imported, ranging from 2,500 in 1398-9 to nearly 10,000 in 1383-4. The customs particulars for the reign of Edward IV are less full and reliable but suggest that fewer bowstaves were being imported. Admittedly in 1462 Thomas Nelson, a York mercer imported on his own 2,500 staves; but one of the fullest accounts, that of 1366-8 contains references to under 5,000 bowstaves and the accounts for 1465-6 and 1471-2 contain only 1,650 and 520 staves respectively.<sup>49</sup> Merchants were being ordered to bring bowstaves into the country by the 1470's and in 1503 in an attempt to encourage imports the customs duty on bowstaves of over 6½ feet was dropped.<sup>50</sup>

47. Despite attempts to prevent its demise: 3 Henry VIII c.3, 6 Henry VIII c.11, 13, 25 Henry VIII c.17, Statutes of the Realm iii, pp. 25-6, 131-2, 132-3, 457-9; J.E. Oxley, The fletchers and longbowstringmakers of London (1968), pp. 29-30.

48. P.R.O. E122/159/11, E122/59/8; Bartlett, 'Some aspects of the economy of York', p. 116.

49. P.R.O., E122/63/3 m.2, E122/62/9, E122/62/7, E122/62/17.

50. 12 Edward IV c.2, 1 Richard III c.11, 19 Henry VII c.2, Statutes of the Realm i, pp. 432, 494, 649.

In addition the price of bows had risen by the end of the fifteenth century. In 1355 the sheriff of Yorkshire paid from 15d. to 18d. each for bows; by the mid-fifteenth century prices ranged from 1s. 4d. to 2s. 4d.; in 1483 a maximum price of 3s. 4d was imposed in order to prevent bows from becoming unduly costly.<sup>51</sup> Finally the failing finances of the city may further have increased uncertainty in the industry: in 1489 the council bought bows and arrows for the defence of the city against an attack by Sir John Egremont which did not in fact take place 'and so the said bowez and arrowez was unocupied, the said Maiour, Sir Richard Tunstall, and all othre above rehersed, remembring the great det the which the Chaumbre was in determynd and concludet that every bower and fletcher shold tak ther bowez and arrowez agane'.<sup>52</sup>

Bowstrings were made up from a number of threads of hemp or linen laid side by side and twisted together and waxed. They were very easy to make but also likely to be the weakest part of the bow: according to Ascham writing in 1545 'ill strings breakethe many a good bowe, nor no other thinge halfe so many'.<sup>53</sup> Only sixteen stringers appear in the freemen's register for the whole period to 1534, but on the other hand there was a separate stringers' craft with ordinances registered probably in 1422.<sup>54</sup> These regulations cover the appointment of searchers,

51. P.R.O., E101/597/38; Thorold-Rogers, History of agriculture and prices iv, p. 613; 22 Edward IV c.4, Statutes of the Realm ii, p. 473.

52. Y.C.R. ii, p. 52.

53. Ascham, Toxophilus, p. 110.

54. Y.M.B. ii, pp. 122-3.

the scrutiny of stringmaking and arrangements for apprentices, all implying a fairly organised craft and membership far wider than the statistics would suggest. The reason probably lies in the simplicity of stringmaking. The inventory of Thomas Bakar, a stringer who died in 1436, shows that the raw materials and the tools required were few; his stock consisted of string, rope, hemp, and a hammer.<sup>55</sup>

As a result stringmaking was done on a casual and part-time basis by a variety of people. Two men were admitted to the freedom as 'barber and stringmaker' in the sixteenth century; the inventory of John Carter, a tailor, dated 1485 contains the entry 'i balleke, i forme, wt all that longys therto for makyng of bowstrynges'.<sup>56</sup> None of the few men who are recorded as searchers of the stringers were made free in the craft: Thomas Conysholm and William Pannal were named in 1422; Conysholm appears in the freemen's register without a craft ascription, while Pannal was the official maker of the king's bows.<sup>57</sup> In 1484 a chaplain John Edwyn was sworn as searcher of the stringers craft.<sup>58</sup>

Arrows were made of a variety of woods, but the ideal had to be both strong and light. Birch, hardbeam, oak and ash were considered the most satisfactory though the fletchers seem to have had a quarrel with the paten-makers in the fifteenth century over supplies of aspen which both crafts apparently used extensively.<sup>59</sup> The feathers most

55. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1436).

56. John Barker, barber, waxchandler and stringer (1502), Richard Myers, barber and stringer (1517): Freemen's Reg., pp. 226, 239; Test. Ebor. iii, p. 300.

57. Y.M.B. ii, p. 123; Freemen's Reg., pp. 108, 125; see above p. 282.

58. Y.C.L., House Books ii-iv fo. 128.

59. Ascham, Toxophilus, p. 125; 4 Henry V c.3, 4 Edward IV c.9, Statutes of the Realm ii, pp. 196, 416.

suitable for the vanes were goose pinion feathers. In addition to making arrows for longbows, the fletchers made bolts or quarrels for cross bows.<sup>60</sup> The arrowheads were bought from smiths; only two men appear in the freemen's register actually specializing as arrowsmiths. Royal purchases of arrows tend to account for the shafts and heads separately; for example in 1341 the sheriff of Yorkshire bought 340 sheaves of headless arrows in York and another 160 in Leeds, whereas he bought his arrowheads in Rotherham, Aberford and Pontefract as well as in Leeds. This procedure probably only obtained for bulk orders however.<sup>61</sup>

It may have been unusual for the bowers and fletchers to form separate crafts. In Coventry in the sixteenth century they were united, as they seem also to have been in Beverley and Bristol in the fifteenth century.<sup>62</sup> In 1371 the London fletchers had to petition that the trades of bower and fletcher should be separate henceforth.<sup>63</sup> There is no concrete evidence of the extent to which York fletchers felt themselves to be dominated by the bowers. The fletchers did have their own craft ordinances enrolled by the late fourteenth century which implies a form of organization dating from some time earlier.<sup>64</sup> However the number of fletchers who took out the freedom was considerably lower than the number

60. The surviving inventory of James Halle contains 6000 feathers, 10 sheaf of arrows, 12 bolts, 2 shafts and 4 crossbowshafts: B.I., Original wills and inventories (1538). Some equipment is mentioned in the will of Robert Denton a fletcher who died in 1492; this will is transcribed in Appendix A.

61. P.R.O., E101/597/29.

62. Pythian-Adams, Desolation of a city, p. 101; Hist. MSS. Comm, Beverley, pp. 96-99. Great Red Book of Bristol i, pp. 150-4 (1479).

63. Oxley, Fletchers and longbowstringmakers, p. 13.

64. Y.M.B. i, pp. 110-12.

of bowers, eighty-three over the whole period compared to 170 bowers and this would seem to suggest that a certain amount of work was being done on a putting out basis, perhaps organized by the bowers.

Of the three remaining crafts, the coopers, horners and ropers, the coopers formed apparently the oldest and most clearly identifiable craft. Coopers made barrels for storage, mostly for food and drink. For the most part the size of these containers would seem to have been at the discretion of the purchasers and the makers, although standard measures were laid down for wine and ale barrels. In the fifteenth century the size of barrels was fixed for other commodities as well, primarily for the regularization of customs payments, most concern being for the value of imported fish.<sup>65</sup> After their useful life as containers were over, barrels were frequently used for lining the walls of wells, although new barrels were also bought for this purpose.<sup>66</sup>

The making of barrels was a specialized business; however many of the tools used appear to have been similar to standard carpenters equipment: the will of Robert Brade lists a 'burdhaxe', a 'wyrkynghaget' (another type of axe), two 'parsours' (instruments for boring holes) and a thixill (an adze).<sup>67</sup> The 'spigot wymbyll', a gimlet for making vent holes in the barrel was the only specialized tool. Presumably

65. 2 Henry VI c.14, Statutes of the Realm ii, pp. 222-3. The Bristol ordinances of 1439 for the hoopers detail these sizes: Little Red Book ii, pp. 164-5.

66. The accounts of the construction of a barrel well from new barrels in the Bedern is given in Interim iv, no. 3 (1977), pp. 11-17.

67. K. Kirby, The cooper and his trade (1971), pp. 20-41 describes the making of a barrel. B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 43. For carpenters' tools see Salzman, Building in England, pp. 340-7.

therefore it was their skill alone which distinguished coopers from most other woodworkers. In York the coopers seem to have formed a craft distinct from carpenters and other woodworkers from at least the mid-fourteenth century and possibly earlier.<sup>68</sup> The same was true to a certain extent elsewhere although the coopers tended to be associated with other specialized woodworkers in fraternities or for municipal functions. In Coventry for example, although in the mid-fifteenth century the coopers were associated with the carpenters, by the sixteenth century they had become linked with the turners; in Beverley the coopers formed part of a broad association of bowers, fletchers, turners, joiners and patoners.<sup>69</sup>

The horners of late medieval York are a somewhat elusive group of men about whom documentary evidence is thin. In fact much of the information about the horners comes from archaeological evidence for in 1957-8 a horner's premises was excavated, suitably enough in Hornpot Lane off Petergate, which produced the cores from nearly 500 horns, mostly oxen and goats, as well as the pits in which the horns were processed, pits or 'pots' from which the name Hornpot Lane is probably derived.<sup>70</sup>

68. Their ordinances were first recorded in the late fourteenth century: Y.M.B. i, pp. 67-8. An apprenticeship bond survives from 1329 between John le Couper of Jubbergate and son and Henry Norrays, for Henry to serve as apprentice for four years: B.I., M2(1)a fo. 28.
69. Turners in York were more closely associated with carpenters, see above p. 239. C.L.B. ii, p. 306; Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a city, p. 101; Hist. MSS. Comm. Beverley, pp. 96-7. In contrast the coopers of Norwich performed a Corpus Christi pageant with the brewers, inkeepers and millers: Records of Norwich ii, p. 230.
70. L.P. Wenham, 'Hornpot Lane and the horners of York' Annual Report of the Yorkshire Philosophical Society (1964), pp. 25-56.

Horn is the soft outer membrane which grows over the bone core of the horns of sheep, goats and cows. The horn was removed from the core by lengthy soaking of up to two months in the horn pits. Once removed from the pit the horns were boiled until softened sufficiently to be worked. Horn was used for a wide variety of small items; it could be split and flattened into sheets for plates, spoons, lanterns and latterly books, or moulded to make drinking horns, flasks or the tips of bows. Some impression of the tools of the horner can be obtained from the bequest of William Beilby to his son, his servant and his two apprentices which included a drawing stoke (possibly a sharp knife), five saws, two floites or rasps, a hatchet, a thravn torn, which may be a simple pole lathe, and a doubtful set of instruments called 'hokyn tooles'.<sup>71</sup>

As the name Hornpot Lane dates from at least the end of the thirteenth century it must have been customary for horners to work in this area throughout the later middle ages.<sup>72</sup> Of seven horners wills that survive from the later middle ages, five come from the parish of St. Michael le Belfrey in which Hornpot Lane lies, and one more from the adjacent parish of Holy Trinity Kings Court. The area lies next to the Shambles, giving the horners easy access to raw materials. The proximity of the butchers may also account in part for the low number of horners who appear in the freemen's register before the mid-fifteenth century, for much of their work may have been done as an adjunct of the butchers' trade.

71. B.I., Prob. Reg. 8 fo. 77-77v.

72. D.M. Palliser, 'The medieval street names of York', York Historian ii (1978), p. 11.



The horners' ordinances were not recorded till 1500 and even at this date they imply that the horners had not acquired a monopoly of the craft. They required that no-one should do horners work with anyone other than a master horner 'provided always that the maisters of the crafft of horners giff to the men of the same crafft reasonable hyre and salary as they may desire, and elles thei to werke wher they please at theyr libertie'.<sup>73</sup> The closer definition of the horners' craft may have been the result of the growing prosperity of some of their number. Eleven horners had been made free in the hundred years from 1351-1450; another ten took out the freedom from 1451-1500. More significant is the fact that whereas only one horner's will survives from the entire period before 1490, between 1490 and 1534 six horners left wills which survive. The will of William Huby, described elsewhere as 'horne and taylor marchand', shows that this apparently new prosperity was based on commercial ties with butchers and graziers: among Huby's executors were two butchers, Thomas Baly and Simon Bolton, a merchant Leonard Shaw and alderman William Wright.<sup>74</sup>

The horners were a small craft and until the end of the fifteenth century had apparently little formal organization; it is really only the archaeological evidence which gives a sense of substance to a group of craftsmen who otherwise might be regarded as insignificant. Other crafts make an even more shadowy appearance in the records, for example

73. Y.C.R. ii, p. 152.

74. See above p. 138; B.I., Prob. Reg. 11 fo. 9. For Wright see The Register of the Guild of Corpus Christi, ed. R.H. Skaife (Surtees Society lvii, 1871), p. 159n. Richard Hall, horner made bequests of cattle to his daughters: B.I., Prob. Reg. 9 fo. 349.

the ropers and hairsters who were bracketed together as one craft in a petition of 1487 which described their work as the making of 'ropes, kilne hards, teilds, sye'.<sup>75</sup> Ropes of varying degrees of thickness and strength were in demand particularly from the building, shipping and transport industries. Small orders could be supplied by a single operator: 'Richard Deyne roper' supplied slings and ropes for the common crane of the city on two occasions in the late fifteenth century.<sup>76</sup> The requirement for equipping a ship however could be very large indeed; the accounts for the royal galley built in York in 1295 show a total of 368 stone of rope being bought in one week.<sup>77</sup> It would seem in this case that much of the rope was bought through agents; Richard, servant of the Prioress of St. Clement's nunnery, York, supplied 46 stone and one John de Berdesay another 148 stone. It may be the case that rope making, at least for large orders, was done on a piece work basis.

Certainly the ropers make little impression on the records. Very few took out the freedom before the fifteenth century; but the increased number of free ropers in the fifteenth century, together with the registration of their ordinances in 1487, does not necessarily mean that they were becoming more prosperous; it may simply be a reflection of council policy.<sup>78</sup> A few individuals however seem to have achieved a limited degree of success and one, Richard Carter who died in 1458, left a will showing that he was employing at least four servants at the

75. Y.C.R. ii, p. 16. Teilds were the awnings of boats and sye the rope used for caulking: O.E.D.

76. Chamberlains' Rolls, pp. 156, 166 (1475, 1478).

77. A. Lane-Poole, 'A medieval cordage account' Mariners' Mirror xlii (1956), pp. 67-73 transcribes cordage delivery from a royal account of 32-37 Edward III. P.R.O., E101/5/8 m. 11d; see above p. 242.

78. Y.C.R. ii, p. 16.

time of his death.<sup>79</sup>

Between the organized mysteries and the mass of unspecified labourers, there probably lay a whole series of gradations of semi-skilled and part-time workers. Indeed to contrast craftsmen and labourers at all is a mistake as in the years 1400-1534 some seventy men took out the freedom describing themselves as labourers. Many of these probably worked on a part-time basis in a specific trade, especially towards the end of the period when the economy was contracting. As well as those who were part-time or unfree workers within one of the mysteries, there were likely to be other groups of men who never formed mysteries with recorded ordinances, but probably had their own fraternities. The townsmen had after all for most of the middle ages no recorded ordinances, no monopoly of manufacture and until the late fifteenth century, not even an obligation to contribute to the Corpus Christi pageant, an obligation the council was unable to resist imposing wherever feasible; yet there is evidence enough to imply some form of corporate identity among them. The same must have applied to other occupations, as for example the 'erde potters'. The five 'erde potters' who appear in the freemen's register cannot have represented the whole body of those making earthenware in York, but the existence of the rest, and of some form of association among them simply has to be surmised.

The variety of industry in York has already been commented on; such a large city could support specialized craftsmen with occupations as diverse as organmaker and pointmaker, lastmaker and shearsmith.<sup>80</sup>

79. B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 386.

80. See above pp. 20-21.

Despite the range of manufactures, it was a natural inclination among craftsmen to gather in craft fraternities of mutual interest and protection; but by the time that records begin to survive the tendency of the civic authorities to marshall these groups into organized craft guilds had become very pronounced. The formal organization of crafts had by the late fifteenth century embraced even the most insignificant craftsmen such as ropers, horners and fletchers. The artificiality of much of the gild organization that was imposed on the York craftsmen is a point which will be elaborated on in the next chapter. It seems quite clear however that formal lines of demarcation between crafts were marked as much in the breach as in the observance and that the work of competing craftsmen constantly overlapped.

An estimate of the variety of industry in any one town cannot therefore be reliably based on the number of craft guilds it supported. The freemen's register, whilst it remains a source of fundamental importance, has also proved ambiguous and sometimes very misleading in attempts to evaluate the strength and fortunes of particular industries. Firstly there is the problem of changes in 'job descriptions'; to take a small example, treaclers appear in the register almost as a terminological whim on the part of a clerk. Changes in the economy, changes in fashion, gave rise to new crafts and caused old ones to shrink and disappear: potters in the early fourteenth century were making a wider range of goods than they were by the fifteenth century, when they were rivalled by the founders and the pewterers; the armourers and furburs may have been two distinct occupations in the late thirteenth century, whereas by the mid-fourteenth

century, they had become one. The history of the linenweavers demonstrates that the sudden increase of membership in an existing industry could be connected to the promulgation of defining ordinances rather than the rapid expansion of production.

Secondly the freemen's register has to be interpreted in the light of the industrial structure of the city. In industries where piece work was important craftsmen are less likely to appear in the register: stringers, fletchers and carriers are among the smaller crafts to which this applies; crucially it affects the statistics for building and textile workers. Moreover if, as will be argued in the following chapter, the obligation to take up the freedom was being steadily increased in the later middle ages, the comparison between the industrial structure of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries if based on the register is liable to be misleading. Finally, a numerical analysis reveals little of the standing or the power of the city's craftsmen in relation to each other. It is with those issues on which statistics of freemen are either unhelpful or misleading, the problems of the political, economic and social standing of the craftsmen, that the following chapters are concerned.

TABLE 7:2. ENTRANTS TO THE FREEDOM OF YORK, DECADAL TOTALS: MISCELLANEOUS CRAFTS

	-1290	1291-1300		-1300	
				No.	%
Apothecaries					
Treaclers					
Medicus					
Leech					
Physicians					
Barbers		1		1}	20.0
Chandlers				}	
Bowers	1			1	20.0
Fletchers					
Stringers					
Ropers					
Hairsters		1		1	20.0
Coopers	1			1	20.0
Horners					
Others		1		1	20.0
Total	2	3		5	

	1301-10	1311-20	1321-30	1331-40	1341-50	1301-50	
						No.	%
Apothecaries							
Treaclers							
Medicus				1	1	2}	3.3
Leech						}	
Physicians						}	
Barbers	2	2		6	3	13}	31.1
Chandlers				4	2	6}	
Bowers	1	2	2	3	8		26.2
Fletchers			1				1.6
Stringers							
Ropers				1			1.6
Hairsters					2		3.3
Coopers	1	1		3	4		14.8
Horners	1	1	2	2			9.8
Others			1	1	3		8.2
Total	5	6	6	21	23		61

TABLE 7:2 (continued)

	1351-60	1361-70	1371-80	1381-90	1391-1400	1351-1400 No.		
Apothecaries						6	7	2.9
Treaclers								
Medicus	1	1			4			
Leech			1			1		
Physicians						63	73	30.4
Barbers	8	7	13	15	20			
Chandlers	2	2	2	2	2	10		
Bowers	5	18	11	11	14		59	24.6
Fletchers	3	4	7	9	2		25	10.4
Stringers		2	2		2		6	2.5
Ropers				1			1	0.4
Hairsters		1	2	2			5	2.1
Coopers	4	10	5	6	5		30	12.5
Horners	2	2	1				5	2.1
Others	6	9	1	6	7		29	12.1
Total	31	56	45	52	56		240	
	1401-10	1411-20	1421-30	1431-40	1441-50	1401-50 No.		
Apothecaries						6	19	7.2
Treaclers		5	1					
Medicus	1	1						
Leech		1				1		
Physicians		4	1	5		10		
Barbers	14	16	12	15	12	69	84	31.8
Chandlers	3	2	4	5	1	15		
Bowers	11	14	9	16	8		58	22.0
Fletchers	6	7	8	2	4		27	10.2
Stringers			1	2			3	1.1
Ropers	2	2	1	3			8	3.0
Hairsters	2			1			3	1.1
Coopers	7	6	7	4	9		33	12.5
Horners	1	1	1	1			4	1.5
Others	4	6	8	6	1		25	9.5
Total	51	65	53	60	35		264	

TABLE 7:2 (continued)

	1451-60	1461-70	1471-80	1481-90	1491-1500	1451-1500		
						No.		%
Apothecaries			3			3)		
Treaclers								
Medicus							6	3.4
Leech								
Physicians			3			3)		
Barbers	2	10	13	14	6	45)	54	30.2
Chandlers		3	4	2		9)		
Bowers	6	5	5	5	4		25	14.0
Fletchers	2	4	7	2	3		18	10.1
Stringers		2	2	3			7	3.9
Ropers	3	2	2		3		10	5.6
Hairsters	1						1	0.6
Coopers	2	2	7	3	4		18	10.1
Horners	1	1	2	2	4		10	5.6
Others	6	2	13	9			30	16.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>24</b>		<b>179</b>	

	1501-10	1511-20	1521-30	1531-34	1501-34		TOTAL	
					No.	%	No.	%
Apothecaries			2		2)		5)	
Treaclers							6)	
Medicus		1	1		2)	4	12)	38 4.4
Leech							2)	
Physicians							13)	
Barbers	9	15	12	4	40)	54	231)	285 33.1
Chandlers	3	2	7	2	14)		24)	
Bowers	4	6		1		11		170 19.8
Fletchers	1	6	4	1		12		83 9.7
Stringers								16 1.9
Ropers		1	1			2		22 2.6
Hairsters	1	1				2		14 1.6
Coopers	6	2	5			13		104 12.1
Horners		2	2			4		29 3.4
Others		3	4	2		9		99 11.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>10</b>		<b>111</b>		<b>860</b>



## Chapter 8. CRAFTSMEN AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CITY.

By the fifteenth century the craftsmen of York, and indeed of most provincial towns, were subject to a complex and financially exacting series of regulations imposed on them by the civic authorities. The immigrants who poured into York in the later middle ages, even at a time of severe economic decline, were presumably fired by the hope of some degree of business success. They would rapidly have discovered that even a modest achievement had to be bought at a price and that the corollary of civic liberty was usually the imposition of heavy obligations. Evidence exists too scantily before the late thirteenth century for any positive statement to be made about the attitude of the city council towards craftsmen and towards craft guilds; from the 1270's to the end of the period however there were considerable changes which can perhaps be best described as an increasing thoroughness in the way in which the council exploited the franchise and the craft guilds as sources of revenue and agents of administration.

This chapter is concerned with the relationship between the craftsmen and the city authorities. Firstly it considers the status of the individual craftsman and the right he had to exercise his craft through the purchase of the freedom; secondly the formation of craft guilds and the way these were employed as agents of administration; thirdly the part that craftsmen played as officials in the city government.

In York in the later middle ages a man could take out the freedom in one of three ways, by patrimony, by apprenticeship or by

redemption.<sup>1</sup> Evidence for the practical mechanics of admission to the freedom is fairly good for the fifteenth century.<sup>2</sup> There is however no surviving statement in the York records as to the exact privileges of a freeman.<sup>3</sup> The burgess enjoyed a privileged status at law, but he was also subject to civic taxation and civic responsibilities. To a large extent the exemption from tolls and murage which was claimed by citizens may have been seen originally as compensation for these obligations.<sup>4</sup> For the craftsman the crucial issue by the fifteenth century was that in theory only a freeman could set up shop to buy and sell retail as a master. A number of craft ordinances relate to the necessity of purchasing the franchise; the clearest such statement comes in the ordinances of the barbers, 'quod quilibet artificii, statim cum shoppam levaverit vel occupaverit ut magister; primo ante omnia intrabit libertatem'; similar regulations are found in other towns.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand neither in York nor elsewhere does this restriction always seem to have applied. The Beverley ordinances make it clear that only after reaching a certain level of prosperity was it

1. Dobson, 'Admissions to the freedom', pp. 8-9, 19.
2. See below pp. 308-9.
3. Dobson, 'Admissions to the freedom', p. 15.
4. A.E. Hibbert, 'Economic policies of towns' in Cambridge Economic History iii, p. 191.
5. Y.M.B. i, p. 209 (n.d., early fifteenth century). For other examples see: cooks (Y.M.B. ii, p. 160, 1425), armourers (Y.C.R. iii, p. 171, 1475), vintners (Y.M.B. ii, p. 275, 1483). Ordinances relating to the freedom of Canterbury are printed in English Historical Documents iv, 1327-1485, ed. A.R. Myers (1969), p. 569. Bristol skippers were forbidden to set up shop unless as a burgess in 1408: Little Red Book ii, p. 96. Similar regulations are found in Leicester: Records of Leicester i, pp. 63, 106, 267, 275.

incumbent on a master to become free; the saddlers of Beverley in 1441 required a master setting up shop to pay 2s. for the privilege and if he was afterwards able to become a burgess and did not, he was to pay a fee of 4s. per annum.<sup>6</sup> In Norwich the decision to oblige all shopkeepers to be freemen was taken in 1415. In that year it was ordered that in future if foreigners did not want to buy the freedom they might hold shop for a year and a day on payment of a fee, but might have no servants or apprentices, and after two years must either take out the freedom or close their shops.<sup>7</sup>

In York the widening of the franchise and its extension from being a restricted privilege to a general obligation seems to have occurred considerably earlier. The freemen's register begins in 1273. The limitations of the register in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries have been discussed.<sup>8</sup> Entrants to the freedom by patrimony are omitted before 1397. More seriously there was obvious occupational discrimination in the choice of admissions before the mid-fourteenth century. As large numbers of men taking up the freedom before 1350 do not have a craft or trade ascribed to them, conclusions drawn from the register are bound to be uncertain, but apart from merchants, there is an overwhelming preponderance in this early period of two groups of craftsmen, the leather workers and the

6. Hist. MSS. Comm., Beverley, p. 100; The Beverley smiths had a similar ordinance registered in 1430 (p. 96), and the butchers in 1416 (pp. 74-5).

7. The immediate result was a large increase in the number of men taking out the freedom: Records of Norwich i, pp. 105-6, ii, p. xlvi.

8. Dobson, 'Admissions to the freedom'; see above p. 15.

victuallers.<sup>9</sup> The investigation of price fixing conducted at the crown's request in the early fourteenth century gives an opportunity to check the freemen's register against lists of victuallers in York. It is evident from this enquiry that freemen only made up a minority of the total number, and that this proportion varied according to craft.<sup>10</sup> Overall the 1304 investigation makes it clear that the possession of the freedom was not a precondition for retail trade in the case of the victualling crafts, but rather a privilege purchased by the more substantial craftsmen. Given the lack of information about the range of goods available in the city at this date, it cannot be known how far this applied to other crafts. The infrequency with which basic crafts such as smiths or coopers appear in the register before the 1330's implies however that the freedom was by no means necessary for a craftsman setting up business in York in the early fourteenth century. It may be suggested therefore that the intention was to restrict the marketing of certain valuable goods, especially cloth, to freemen. It also seems likely that the most profitable sections of the commodity market, the traffic in wool, leather and victuals, was largely restricted to freemen. The presence in the early years of the register of large numbers of leather workers and victuallers, who found their supplies of raw materials locally,

9. See table 1:1.

10. See above pp. 134-5, 145, 155-6.

tends to confirm this supposition.<sup>11</sup>

There are of course innumerable pitfalls to be skirted in interpreting the statistics of freemen in late medieval York. The big increases in the numbers of men taking out the freedom in the years following the Black Death have been described as 'less an index of population growth than of mortality' and represent a 'queue of aspirants to the freedom' now enabled to step into dead men's shoes; equally continued mortality in the fifteenth century may have determined the level of entry for the rest of the period.<sup>12</sup> There remain however certain imponderables. Was the number of masters in any craft determined by policy, whether that of the council or that of the craft masters themselves, or simply by demand? Was there a deliberate change in policy concerning the franchise in the fourteenth century? The number of men taking out the freedom had been rising steadily in the early fourteenth century and showed a particularly big increase in the 1330's. (See Table 8:1 overleaf.)

The big increase in admissions in the 1330's, together with the acceptance of large numbers of textile workers as freemen from this date onwards, does suggest that the nature of the franchise was changing. In time the freedom came to be extended as an obligation

11. The earliest York ordinances, those of the girdlers of 1307 are little help as they are obscurely expressed; but they seem to suggest that the traffic in raw materials was as important as the sale of finished articles and that the former should be in the hands of freemen: 'also that nan of that crafte, nether within the fraunchise na withoute sell unto no straunger na unto na nother bot if he be of the fraunchese of this cite, any maner of thinges that fallys to thair crafte, oute taken girdels that er fully wrought upp'; Y.M.B. i, p. 181.
12. Dobson, 'Admissions to the freedom', pp. 17-18; Hatcher, Plague, population and the English economy, pp. 17-18, 57-62.

TABLE 8:1: DECADAL TOTALS OF ADMISSIONS TO THE FREEDOM, 1291-1380

Date	Entrants
1291-1300	252
1301-10	399
1311-20	458
1321-30	491
1331-40	657
1341-50	751
1351-60	833
1361-70	1052
1371-80	829

to all craftsmen who wished to work as independent masters, including those whose primary concern was not the sale of goods but of services, men such as barbers and cooks. Whereas the existing masters of the craft may have had some influence in restricting the quota of new members in the years before the 1330's, after this date it would seem that the number was increasingly determined by official policy and by the demand for goods.

The reason for such a change was probably financial. The extension of the franchise undoubtedly provided the city authorities with an increase in revenue and encouraged them to admit as many new

freemen as could feasibly be sustained.<sup>13</sup> Why the change began to be implemented in the early fourteenth century and particularly in the 1330's, has to remain a matter of speculation. The presence of Edward III and his administration in York from May 1333 onwards must have increased demand enormously and added to the prosperity of large numbers of craftsmen.<sup>14</sup> This may have speeded up the change in attitude towards the nature of the freedom, though it is unlikely to have accounted for it. It is tempting to associate the extension of the franchise with the growing power of the merchants, symbolized by the election of a merchant, Henry de Belton, to the mayoralty in 1334, breaking the long tenure of the landed Langton family.<sup>15</sup> If the purpose of a limited franchise had been to give commercial privilege

13. For the <sup>later</sup> significance of this revenue see: Chamberlains' rolls, p. xxix. Total receipts for admissions to the freedom in the fifteenth century are as follows:

1433-4	£52. 5s. 0d.
1442-3	£41. 5s. 6d.
1445-6	£37.18s. 4d.
1453-4	£16. 4s. 4d.
1454-5	£17.12s. 2d.
1462-3	£25.14s. 8d.
1468-9	£22.10s. 0d.
1475-6	£15.14s. 0d.

Chamberlains' rolls, pp. 9, 19, 29, 69, 85, 103, 119, 143.

14. Broome, 'Exchequer migration to York', p. 292. The increase in freemen in 1301-10 may likewise have been the result of Edward I's campaigns in the north.

15. V.C.H., City of York, p. 71. The merchants did not become the usual occupants of the mayoralty until 1364, and between 1352 and 1363 John de Langton held the office continuously. While admitting that the bad plague outbreaks of 1361-2 must have influenced entry rates to the freedom in the 1360's, the exceptional intake of 1364, the highest ever at 219, may also be connected with the change of government. For the plague in York see A. Hamilton Thompson, 'The pestilences of the fourteenth century in the diocese of York', Archaeological Journal lxxi (1914), pp. 102-117.

to an exclusive group, it must have been apparent that there were other equally effective ways of achieving this desired end.

The violent reduction in population brought about by the Black Death must have encouraged the trend towards widening the franchise; the economic balance of the city could only be restored by massive immigration and the rise in the number of freemen in the 1350's probably represents a huge increase in the proportion of men free by redemption. It is doubtful however that such an extension of the franchise would have been achieved if it had proved a threat to the commercial advantage of the civic élite or the growing merchant class. It seems probable that the franchise extended the obligations more than the opportunities of the craftsmen. Indeed the increased franchise can be seen as a measure of the grip that the merchants had on the economic life of the city and the extent to which the craftsman's freedom had been circumscribed.<sup>16</sup> A similar change in the significance of the freedom can be traced in Bristol. In 1366 the fee charged for the franchise was very high at £10; there was a less privileged group called portmen who paid a smaller fee to enjoy freedom of tolls but who were not allowed to 'bi ne Selle in no wyse within the said towne as a burgeys doth'.<sup>17</sup> By 1455 the situation was radically different; by then foreigners coming to Bristol had only to pay 40s and a 4s fee, aliens £5

16. See below Chapter 9.

17. Little Red Book ii, pp. 47-48; Great Red Book of Bristol i, p. 135, ii, p. 26.



and the 4s. fee in order to become freemen.<sup>18</sup> Again it seems unlikely that lower fees brought greater freedom but merely an extension of financial responsibility to the city.

The first evidence for entry rates in York comes from the chamberlains' account books of the mid-fifteenth century.<sup>19</sup> Here new freemen were listed with the amounts of money they paid under the two headings 'Intrantibus libertatem hoc anno' and 'Arreragium de terminis elapsis'. These show that entry rates were paid in installments; there was usually a down payment of 3s. 4d. or 6s. 8d. with a series of subsequent payments up to the sum of 20s.<sup>20</sup> Very few could pay the whole sum in one installment though Thomas Wilkes and Richard Law, both mercers, did so in 1447.<sup>21</sup> After one year most craftsmen had paid 6s. 8d. or 10s. and after two years the majority still owed sums of 3s. 4d, 5s. or 6s. 8d.<sup>22</sup> Attempts were made in the late 15th century to tighten up this arrangement and in 1492 it was ordered that the franchise money of 20s. was to be paid within three or four years.<sup>23</sup>

18. Great Red Book of Bristol ii, p. 49. In 1483 there was a further order that every burgess made free by redemption was to pay a noble to the chamber, 4s. for fees of court and 4d. to the clerk: Great Red Book of Bristol ii, p. 153. The portmen and women by this stage had become simply hucksters of bread and ale: Great Red Book of Bristol ii, p. 50.
19. Y.C.L., CCl (1446-50), CCl a (1448-54, 1480-83).
20. The total cost of taking out the freedom was 20s.: Y.C.R. ii, pp. 3, 82.
21. Y.C.L., CCl fo. 52 (1447-8).
22. Y.C.L., CCl fo. 11-13 (payments 1446-7), fo. 41-7 (arrears 1447-8), fo. 49-53 (payments 1447-8). The 1447-8 arrears have payments from five men made free in 1440, three in 1441, four in 1442, seven in 1443, eighteen in 1444, seventy-seven in 1445 and seventy-four in 1446.
23. Y.C.R. ii, p. 82. In 1500 it was stipulated that the initial payment should be 6s. 8d. and after that at least 3s. 4d paid a year until 20s. was reached: Y.C.R. ii, p. 162.

Apprentices paid at the same rate as foreigners until 1482-3, when their fee was dropped to 6s.<sup>24</sup> The rate for aliens was fixed at 40s. in 1481; in 1502 the fees for foreigners were likewise raised to 40s., presumably as a result of urgent financial necessity.<sup>25</sup> At the same time a charge was imposed on freemen's sons, apparently for the first time, albeit only of 12d. On the whole these rates are comparable with those in other towns in the fifteenth century: the reduction in rate at Bristol had already been noticed; in Beverley the rate was apparently 20s. in 1407; Worcester rates in 1467 were somewhat lower at 13s. 4d. for foreigners and 40d. for apprentices and so were those of Canterbury at 10s; but as has been pointed out the implications of these fees will vary from place to place.<sup>26</sup>

As the preceding chapters have been at considerable pains to point out, although in theory the freedom was obligatory to all master craftsmen, in practice the situation was very different. The different conditions of manufacture made it a requirement of varying importance. In broad terms the master craftsmen who most needed the freedom were those in the leather and metal industries and the makers of specialized items, coopers, bowers and chandlers, who functioned independently and not as a part of a chain of production. Amongst the cloth and clothing industries, the victualling and building

24. Y.C.R. i, p. 89; Dobson, 'Admissions to the freedom', p. 19.

25. Y.C.R. i, p. 38, ii, pp. 173-4.

26. Hist. MSS. Comm., Beverley, p. 158; English guilds, p. 390; Hist MSS. Comm., 9th report, p. 132; Dobson, 'Admissions to the freedom', pp. 16, 20.

industries, although the freedom could be advantageous it was very far from being universally purchased by master craftsmen. In addition the council in York as elsewhere raised income through the payment of 'stallagio diversorum hominum vendentium res et marcondisas suas non existentium de libertate civitatis'.<sup>27</sup> But attempts to evade the restrictions and the licensing system of the council met with severe penalties. In 1468 a fine was taken 'de quodam homine Lincoln' comburente cineros et non est de libertate sed si intrare voluerit allocetur ei in solucione eiusdem iii s. iv d.'.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, William Shirwood a mercer had three counterpanes confiscated because he worked as a freeman without purchasing the franchise.<sup>29</sup>

YORK

else. The council's control of the industry of late medieval York was also exercised through the system of craft guilds. Admittedly most of the surviving information concerning provincial craft guilds comes from official records; to a certain extent therefore the picture of gild organization is distorted.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless it is very clear that the guiding hand in the formulation of craft ordinances was that of the city council. It will be argued that the whole system of craft guilds

27. Chamberlains' rolls, p. 105. A similar system prevailed elsewhere for example in Canterbury: Hist. MSS. Comm., 9th report, pp. 173-4.

28. Chamberlains' rolls, p. 121.

29. Y.C.L., House books 1 fo. 46 (1477); see also above p. 255 for a glazier caught working without being free.

30. The York ordinances contain almost no reference to fraternities and form a striking contrast to many of the regulations for craft guilds recorded in the returns of 1389 and edited in part by

27. Toulmin-Smith in English guilds.

as regulators of industry was deliberately fostered by the council. If the council cannot be credited with the foundation of the guilds, it was at least partly responsible for giving them their characteristic form in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

There is very little evidence for the foundation of craft guilds before the fourteenth century. Uncertainty as to the connection between the gilda mercatoria and the craft guilds increases the problem and a further complication is introduced by the relationship of the gild merchant to the city government, usually a close association which was likely to enhance the status of the more privileged sections of urban society, whilst depressing the prospects for most craftsmen.<sup>31</sup> York had a merchant gild by the early twelfth century, though little else but its existence is known about this organization.<sup>32</sup> By the late thirteenth century, when for the first time detailed knowledge of the administration of the city is possible, the merchant gild seems to have disappeared to be replaced by a system of admission to the freedom. In 1306 an ostensibly religious gild run by Andrew de Bolingbroke and fifty-three others was exposed, in a series of hearings before the royal justices, as an association for the

31. In Leicester the freedom of the borough came to be equated with membership of the merchant gild: Records of Leicester i, p. xxviii. The restriction of the franchise which has been documented in Leicester may well have occurred in other provincial towns: J. Tait, The medieval English borough (Manchester, 1936), pp. 225-34; C. Gross, The gild merchant 2 vols. (Oxford, 1890), i, pp. 61-9; G.H. Martin, 'The English borough in the thirteenth century', T.R.H.S. 5th series xiii (1963), pp. 131-5; Reynolds, English medieval towns, p. 82.
32. V.C.H., City of York, p. 32.

manipulation of local government and local finances.<sup>33</sup> The implication seems to be that the merchant gild no longer existed in York as a vehicle for this kind of control, but how these changes occurred remains mysterious.

The origins of craft gilds in York are equally obscure. By 1163 there was a weavers' gild in York paying a £10 farm for their privileges.<sup>34</sup> The early emergence of this gild, like those of weavers and dyers elsewhere, seems to be contemporaneous with the emergence of merchant gilds in many towns and may have been prompted by the exclusion of textile workers from merchant gilds.<sup>35</sup> Other craft gilds also found as early as the twelfth century were probably not faced with the same discrimination as that levelled against the textile workers. It seems possible that the formal organization of some fraternities into craft gilds may have been prompted by the central government, seeking new sources of taxation. This supposition receives some confirmation from the fact that the twelfth century gilds which are recorded in the pipe rolls comprised many leather workers: saddlers, cordwainers and glovers.<sup>36</sup> As already discussed, the leather workers were likely to be amongst the most prominent craftsmen in early medieval towns. It is probably not entirely accidental that the earliest surviving ordinances of a craft gild in York are also from a

33. G.O. Sayles, 'The dissolution of a gild at York in 1306', E.H.R. lv (1940), pp. 83-98. The five years when the town was taken into the king's hands, 1292-97, may have resulted in considerable changes in the organization of local power groups.

34. E.Y.C. i, p. 263; V.C.H., City of York, p. 44.

35. See above pp. 28-9.

36. See above p. 100.

group of leather workers, the girdlers, dated 1307.<sup>37</sup>

Despite the absence of further information, it seems likely that associations and fraternities existed within most industries from an early date.<sup>38</sup> Such groups cannot be closely categorized or defined. Most were probably centred on a church or an altar and these associations were rendered stronger in many instances by the geographical proximity of the members. Membership of such groups overlapped. The butchers had some form of corporate organization in the late thirteenth century, when they had charge of prisoners; particularly influential butchers were also members of Andrew Bolingbroke's gild.<sup>39</sup> In discussing the early guilds in London, Professor Williams argued 'Whether a mystery would emerge, what form it would take, what position it would hold, depended entirely on the strength of the economic drive and the political reaction'.<sup>40</sup> The same was probably true of provincial cities. In York the rapidly expanding economy of the late fourteenth century probably encouraged a more coherent organization within many crafts. The reaction of the city council was to incorporate such craft organizations within the administrative structure of the city and to ensure that their regulations conformed to and were subject to official policy.

The extension of the system of craft guilds as an administrative device to control the labour force was made explicit in a statute of

37. See above p. 115.

38. Williams, Medieval London, pp. 170-2.

39. See above p. 145. Prestwich, York civic ordinances, p. 24.

40. Williams, Medieval London, p. 172.

1363-4: 'artificers handicraft people, hold them every one to one mystery, which he will chose betwixt this and the said feast of Candlemas; and two of every craft shall be chosen to survey, that none use other craft than the same which he hath chosen'.<sup>41</sup> Between 1380 and c. 1400 a very high proportion of the gilds had their ordinances registered in a memorandum book; the memorandum book itself, begun in 1376, was evidence of a new interest in recording of more thoroughly detailed precedents for municipal government.<sup>42</sup> There was another spate of recording ordinances between 1415 and about 1430 and then nothing until in the years after 1460 when York's economy went into sharp decline and competition increased; thereafter the records show an anxiety among the crafts to define their relative positions.<sup>43</sup> But whereas the ordinances of the late 15th century show the craftsmen taking a much more lively interest in having their ordinances recorded, there is considerable justification for seeing those of the late 14th century as an administrative convenience for the council.

The record of the craft gilds of York that we have today is a

41. 37 Edward III c. 6, Statutes of the realm i, p. 379.
42. For the nature of early municipal records see G.H. Martin, Early court rolls of Ipswich (Leicester, 1954); Martin, 'English boroughs of the thirteenth century'. Gild ordinances of the fourteenth century in York are often undated but those that can be confidently assigned to the years c. 1380-1400 are: cordwainers, curriers, glovers, saddlers, skimmers, tanners, cardmakers, founders, smiths, spurriers, dyers, walkers, tailors, tapiters, weavers, glaziers, plasterers, bakers, butchers, bowers, fletchers, barbers.
43. Many of the ordinances of 1415-30 were elaborations of those set down in the late fourteenth century e.g. bowers, 1395 and 1420: Y.M.B. i, pp. 52, 199; fullers, 1390's and 1424: Y.M.B. i, p. 70, ii, p. 159. Some of the most extensive ordinances of the late fifteenth century concern the tapiters and their relations with the linenweavers and litsters: see above pp. 62-4, 66-7.

reflection of official policy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This is made clear in a statement prefacing the 'ironmongers' ordinances of 1391 'memorandum quod, scrutato vetere registro camere tempore bone memorie Johannis de Shirburn tunc maioris Ebor', inventa fuit quedam ordinacio artificii de irenmanger-craft Ebor' . . . . et quia visum est maiori et probis hominibus ac magistris dicti artificii nunc quod dicta ordinacio utilis est et necessaria, confirmata est'.<sup>44</sup> The girdlers' ordinances of 1467 contain the clause 'Forsein alway that if this ordenance or any parte therof be founde at any tyme here after preiudiciall unto any . . . . of this citee, that than it shalbe leiffull to the maire for the tyme beyng by thavise of hys counsell to amende correcte and refourme it and every parcell therof at his pleiser'.<sup>45</sup> Similar clauses are found in the rules of other crafts in York and elsewhere; In Norwich the regulations were so systematised that one set was issued that was to be applicable to all crafts.<sup>46</sup> The councils of late medieval towns encouraged and even coerced craftsmen to join guilds as the easiest method of controlling them; thus in Beverley it was ordered in 1493 that henceforward 'no man occupy non occupayon, nowther by hymselfe nor by

44. Y.M.B. i, pp. 109-10. John Shirburn was mayor in 1343-5: Skaife, Civic officials.

45. Y.M.B. i, pp. 185-6.

46. E.g. the glaziers: Y.M.B. ii, p. 209 (1464); Records of Norwich ii, pp. 278-96. C.L.B. i, p. 29 contains the clause 'That no man of any Crafte within this Cite mak Cave no other ordynaunce among hem but hit be overseen be the maiour and his cownsell, and if hit be resonable ordynaunce and lawfull hit schal-be affermyd, or else hit shal-be correctyd be the maiour and his peres' (1421). This was repeated on various occasions with fines for disobedience increased from 40s. to £20 in 1515: C.L.B. i, p. 170, ii, p. 418, iii, pp. 641, 645. Great Red Book of Bristol i, pp. 156-7, 159, 162.



no journeyemen nocht within the franchises of Beverley, bott allonely that att he is brother withall, and in clothyng; and attevereman be in clothyng with the crafte that he most getts his lyffynge by'.<sup>47</sup>

Similar regulations were drawn up in Norwich in 1449 'concerning to craftis beyng in the cite at this tyme membres and parcell of craftis and cleped mysteris, forasmuche as ther is not at this day sufficient noubre of persones in the said mysteris to be cleped a crafte, and also because the said mysteris have not here before be had in dewe correccion and rewle before this tyme' so that henceforward every mystery was to be united to a parent craft for example 'to smythes crafte thies mysterys, bladsmys, loksmys and lorymers'.<sup>48</sup> The registration of the ordinances of a variety of small crafts in York apparently for the first time in the late 15th century may be a result of this kind of pressure as much as genuine desire by the crafts to have ordinances for their government.<sup>49</sup>

The surviving craft ordinances for York recorded in the memorandum book and the house books are consequently concerned predominantly with industrial rather than social organization. There is almost nothing about the craft fraternities except when, as in the case of the marshalls and the smiths, the maintenance of a candle or attendance at a saint's day mass had caused trouble.<sup>50</sup> As a result

47. Hist MSS. Comm., Beverley, p. 49.

48. Records of Norwich ii, p. 280.

49. E.g. horners, ropers, see above pp. 290-4.

50. Y.M.B. i, pp. 180-2. See also the special case of the carpenters: see above p. 239.

the surviving ordinances fall generally into three groups. The largest group of ordinances concerns the control over the standards of production and the quality of goods. A second group deals with the conditions of employment and a third with the attempts to protect the manufacturing interests of various crafts against competition.

For both the civic authorities and the crafts one of the most useful functions of the craft gild was to act as a watchdog for standards. As elsewhere, the York gild ordinances made constant reference to the searchers of the craft with whom the responsibility of maintaining standards lay. The searchers were given powers of entry into private premises to examine goods whenever they chose to do so. Disobedience to their orders was heavily fined; fines of 3s. 4d. or 6s. 8d. were common, but penalties rose to 10s. among the cordwainers in 1417 and 20s. among the pewterers in 1416.<sup>51</sup> Strict control was also kept over the searchers themselves; their election was regulated whereas no mention is made in the ordinances of the election of other gild officials. Fines were imposed on searchers who did not present accounts or failed to act impartially.<sup>52</sup> In the case of the cordwainers, whose searchers had proved untrustworthy, it was determined in the 1420's 'quod scrutatores non presentent aliquam forisfacturam super magistrum vel servientem aliquem pro aliqua mala voluntate ante tempus quod terminetur per ceteros .... quatuor vel octo homines sicut eis placebit'.<sup>53</sup> Control of the searchers went

51. Y.M.B. i, pp. 190, 212-3.

52. Y.M.B. i, p. 198, ii, p. 283.

53. Y.M.B. i, p. 195.

further in Coventry where in the gilds of bakers, butchers and fish-mongers 'Maister Meyre ... from hensforth shall have the denominacion and to chose yerely on of the kepers of the ocupacion'.<sup>54</sup> When the searchers did expose faulty work it was to be presented, with the offending craftsman, to the mayor for punishment. In practice this probably only applied to the most serious offences, although in principle the mayor could always reassert his authority - as in 1519 when it was ordered that 'no sersours of the occupacon of cordyners and taillours nor of none other occupacon within this city ... shall have the correccion and punnyshment of the defaults done concernyng all the seid ocupacions'; all henceforth were to be presented to the mayor.<sup>55</sup>

Half of the money paid in fines for faulty work went to the craft, the other half going to the city. The city's receipts were recorded in the chamberlain's account rolls, but these records show that the total amount paid was surprisingly small.<sup>56</sup> Increases in receipts towards the end of the fifteenth century may be the result of greater vigilance on behalf of the council. As they stand, the accounts show an overwhelming preponderance of fines among the victualling and leather crafts. Such fines are sometimes recorded as lump sums. As the chamberlains' account books show, brewers' fines were collected

54. C.L.B. iii, p. 669 (1520); the authority of the searchers of the weavers and walkers was circumscribed by appointing 6 drapers to be masters and overseers of the searchers.
55. Y.C.R. iii, p. 69. In Norwich all defaults were to be presented to the mayor, the fine being fixed by the wardens of the craft or the mayor according to the seriousness of the offence: Records of Norwich ii, pp. 282-3.
56. Chamberlains' rolls, p. xxx.

TABLE 8:2: FINES FOR FAULTY WORK RECORDED IN THE CHAMBERLAINS' ROLLS, ACCOUNTED FOR BY THE CRAFT

57  
AS A WHOLE.

	1445-6	1453-4	1454-5	1462-3	1468-9	1475-6
Brewers		£12. 3s. 0d.	£11. 8s. 1d.	£9. 3s. 10d.	£8. 12s. 11d.	£6. 19s. 4d.
Cordwainers <sup>58</sup>	1s. 1d.	4s.	3s. 5d.	£1. 1s. 10d.	12s. 4d.	14s. 4d.
Saddlers	2s. 8d.	10d.	3s. 4d.			9s. 5d.
Tailors	9s.		10s.	10s.	9s. 10d.	10s.
Bakers					20s.	

57. Chamberlains' rolls, pp. 29, 70-1, 86-7, 103-5, 120-1, 143-4.  
 58. This sum includes the fines for search of tanned leather: see above pp. 97-8.

in the ward courts and only the total were presented in the account rolls. It would seem that the tailors, saddlers and cordwainers also made arrangements to pay all fines in a lump sum through the searchers.

Of fines levied on individual craftsmen, the bakers appear most frequently and in increasing numbers, five in 1433-4, seven in 1462-3, ten in 1468-9 and thirty in 1486-7.<sup>59</sup> Butchers also appear regularly; as do individual cordwainers, skinners, girdlers and glovers. Only after 1475 did the range of crafts amerced increase, and even so the victuallers and leather workers remain the most frequently apprehended offenders. Occasionally drives were made against notorious sections of the community; in 1475 a payment was made 'scrutatoribus artis de cappens in civitate Ebor ex riguardo maioris pro eorum assiduo labore facto in presentacione diversarum forisfacturarum hoc anno factarum in arte illa viii d.'<sup>60</sup>

A final aspect of the searchers responsibility over quality was to examine new entrants to the craft, both aspiring masters and servants, to see if they were fit to practice; the coopers in 1471 'ordayned that yif eny straunger of the same crafte com to this cite and will wirke in the same occupacion, what man so ever he commys to to that entent shall aske leyfe of the serchiours of the same crafte for tyme beyng to set him on warke for a weyke and than his warke to be seyn by the same serchiours yif it be warkmanly don or no; and than his hier to be extented by it for yere or be weyk'.<sup>61</sup> Together such rules for the examination of the quality of men and materials, with

det.

59. Chamberlains' rolls, pp. 10, 104-5, 121, 176-9.

60. Chamberlains' rolls, p. 155.

61. Y.M.B. i, p. 70.

details of the election of searchers and their rights to convene meetings of the craft, make up a very high proportion of all craft regulations.

A second major preoccupation of craft ordinances deals with the conditions of employment, the 'basic framework within which industrial relations operated'.<sup>62</sup> It was in the interests of the craft to prevent unfair competition between masters and to provide a system whereby disputes might be quickly settled. Hours of work were therefore regulated, masters were forbidden to take on the work of another craftsman and they were also prohibited from stealing another's servant.<sup>63</sup> Many craft ordinances contained a clause limiting the number of servants that one master might have, although evidence of the workshops of richer craftsmen shows that such rulings were ignored.<sup>64</sup> The employment of servants and apprentices was to be on a reasonable basis. The apprentice was offered protection by the terms of his indenture, although the extension of the period of apprenticeship to seven years within all crafts was manifestly a device to secure a cheap supply of labour on behalf of the master craftsmen.<sup>65</sup>

Nevertheless, despite the apparent equity inherent in many of the gild regulations concerning the labour force, fundamentally they had a

62. Phythian-Adams; Desolation of a city, pp. 106-8.
63. E.g. Y.M.B. i, p. 114, ii, p. 177; Y.M.B. i, pp. 49, 61, ii, p. 141.
64. See above p. 186.
65. An apprentice's indenture is transcribed in: Y.M.B. i, pp. 54-5.
67. In 1454 Thomas Cundall and William Hogeson, barbers, were fined for taking apprentices without indentures: Chamberlains' rolls, pp. 86-7. For apprenticeship in general see E. Lipson, Economic history of England 11th ed. (1956), pp. 309-24. For York ordinances relating to apprentices see for example: Y.M.B. i, pp. 106, 107, 109.

sterner purpose. There is good reason to see the 1363 statute concerning guilds as part of the labour legislation which was initiated by the 1349 Statute of labourers and elaborated on in the second half of the fourteenth and in the fifteenth centuries.<sup>66</sup> The craft guilds were used for the regulation of master craftsmen who, being self-employed, were not influenced by wage legislation. These masters, it was correctly assumed, would in return control their servants by preventing them from forming conventicles and by keeping wages stable.<sup>67</sup> Indeed the regime instituted by the master cordwainers was so severe that the council were forced to intervene in the 1420's on behalf of the servants and to raise their wage rates in the teeth of opposition from the masters.<sup>68</sup>

There was a profound suspicion of casual labour and constant reference to the necessity of employing servants for a fixed period, usually a year or half a year, even in the building trade which was characterised by a mobile workforce and day labour.<sup>69</sup> Typical of such an outlook are the ordinances of the fletchers probably dating from 1388; 'nul mestre du dite artifice ne lowe nul homme pur lui servier en la dite artifice sinoun seulement un homme, et ceo pur le term dun aun entiere'.<sup>70</sup> The spurriers and lorimers in undated ordinances of

66. 23 Edward III Stat. 1 c.1-4, 25 Edward III St. 1, 34 Edward III c.9, 12 Richard II c.3, 13 Richard II Stat. 1 c.8, 7 Henry IV c. 17, 23 Henry VI c.12, Statutes of the realm i, pp. 307, 311-3, 366-7, ii, pp. 56, 63, 157, 337-9.

67. Ordinances of the cordwainers made in the 1390's contain the clause 'nul mestre de mesme lartefice alowera nul servant pur plus excessive saler qest contenu en la statut nostre seignour le roy pur servantz et laborers en mesme lartifice': Y.M.B. i, p. 73.

68. Y.M.B. i, pp. 190-1, 194; see above p. 102.

69. Y.M.B. ii, p. 281.

70. Y.M.B. i, p. 111.

the late fourteenth century tried to ensure that 'nul homme mestre des ditz mystiers allowe ascun servant pur overer par task mais par certeine covenant ove lui affaire par an ou par semaine.<sup>71</sup> It was however impossible to implement such stultifying conditions in most industries; task work was common and the masters' defence against wage fixing by day labourers was to register in the city records the rates agreed to for piece work.<sup>72</sup>

The natural reaction of servants must frequently have been to attempt to form fraternities of their own in defence of their interests, the best documented of such groups being those of the London companies.<sup>73</sup> The size of the crafts concerned was obviously a decisive factor as to whether or not such a group developed; so too was the degree of economic independence experienced by the craft. In an industry such as fulling, where the masters usually worked on piece rates, the divergence of interest between master and servant was likely to be less acute than in a craft where the master was normally an independent retailer. It is perhaps not surprising that evidence of journeymen fraternities in York comes from two large, independent and relatively prosperous crafts, the tailors and the cordwainers. The tailors' servants were forbidden to make 'congregacionem nec libertatem panni sine voluntate et consensu scrutatorum de la Taillour crafte et consilii eis assignati'.<sup>74</sup> The situation in the shoemaking industry

71. Y.M.B. i, p. 104.

72. E.g. bowers (Y.M.B. i, p. 199); cordwainers (Y.M.B. i, p. 194); carriers (Y.M.B. i, p. 65); skinnners (Y.C.R. ii, p. 151); weavers (Y.M.B. i, p. 244).

73. Unwin, Gilds and companies of London, pp. 225-30.

74. Y.M.B. i, p. 101 (1387).



was much more dramatic; the masters accused the servants 'artis predicte ad procuracionem et motum diversorum alienigenarum et extraneorum servientum in eadem arte qui de novo at predictam civitatem venerunt; et ad eorum mocionem faciunt conventicula et congregaciones illicitas et confederaciones prohibitas apud Fratres et alia loca in numero magno'.<sup>75</sup> Such conventicles were henceforth banned and any representatives that the servants subsequently chose among themselves had to be approved by the masters of the craft.

The quality of manufactured goods and the regulation of labour were two of the three main preoccupations of craft regulations. The third, to which perhaps a disproportionate amount of attention has hitherto been drawn, was with those regulations concerning restrictive practices and the preservation of the monopoly of the craft. The extent to which restrictions were implemented must have varied according to date, but it does seem improbable on the evidence available that any such attempts were ever realized in full. The discussion has however to be limited to the period after 1380 as there is simply not enough evidence on the guilds before this date.

Within the city each guild claimed in theory the right to exclusive manufacture for a particular range of goods or of a particular process. The preceding chapters have shown in detail how the interests of craftsmen in different guilds overlapped. The decline of old crafts such as the cutlers and the girdlers and the emergence of new ones like founders and linen weavers was largely a result of successful poaching

75. Y.M.B. i, p. 191; the length of these ordinances is itself evidence of the bitterness of the dispute.

of work from rival crafts. The distinction maintained between certain guilds, for example potters and founders, plasterers and tilers, or tailors and drapers, seems to have been more social than based on a clear division of manufacturing interests. As economic conditions varied and demand changed, certain crafts came into prominence and others declined, not only within the textile industry but throughout manufacturing and it was largely this which determined the boundaries established between crafts. Only in those crafts which required a high degree of specialized skill was the prospect of maintaining a monopoly of manufacture a possibility, as for example among the glaziers or the goldsmiths; in the case of the latter the sheer cost of materials would also tend to reinforce conscious restrictive practices.

As far as the city council was concerned the main issue seems to have been to ensure that an adequate search of materials was made. The preservation of a monopoly of manufacture to each craft was not of great significance as long as the searchers of each guild had the right to examine all relevant goods, irrespective of who made them. The coopers' ordinances for example read 'it shall be leyffull to the serchiours of the same craft for tyme beyng to make due serche within this cite and suburbes of the same upon all maner of warke of newe wroght within the same cite and suburbes perteynyng to their said crafte such as is to be put to saile within the same cite'.<sup>76</sup> The ordinance of 1519 which declared that 'all fraunchest men beyng free of one occupacon shall from hensfurth be free of all occupacons' implies

76. Y.M.B. i, p. 70.

some recognition of a principle of exclusivity prior to this date.<sup>77</sup>

However it seems likely that the only time the civic authorities were really prepared to try and enforce a demarcation between crafts was when standards of manufacture were at issue; obvious examples of such enforcement were the separation of tanners and cordwainers and of bakers and millers.<sup>78</sup>

As a result it seems that the main intention of gild ordinances was not to try and avoid the inevitable infringement of craft monopolies, but at least to ensure that where a craft claimed the right of manufacture of a particular item, craftsmen from other gilds who made and sold these same goods should make some form of financial compensation. It was agreed for example in 1425 between the walkers and the shermen, that the walkers might freely shear any cloth that they had fulled themselves, but for shearing any other cloth they had to contribute to the shermen's pageant.<sup>79</sup> A similar agreement was made between plasterers and tilers in 1413.<sup>80</sup> Argument about such contributions became increasingly acute among the textile workers in the late fifteenth century as the woollen industry contracted. But the overall impression left by the ordinances is not so much the question of maintaining a monopoly but raising adequate funds to pay for the increasingly onerous burden of the pageants.<sup>81</sup>

77. Y.C.R. iii, p. 68.

78. See above pp. 96-7, 137.

79. Y.M.B. ii, pp. 159-60.

80. Y.M.B. ii, p. 126.

81. E.g. Y.M.B. ii, pp. 243-4; Y.C.R. iii, pp. 47, 65, 112; Toulmin-Smith, York plays, p. xxvii.

As well as being directed towards limiting the competition from fellow craftsmen, the ordinances of the guilds were designed to try and neutralize the competition from foreigners. All foreigners coming to the city to find work were supposed to come under the authority of their respective craft guilds. As every city was heavily dependent on immigrant labour this was one means of controlling a large, unknown workforce. The searchers of each guild were expected to examine newcomers on their capabilities and their honesty; in the circumstances the desire for references and pledges was not unreasonable. However, as the cardmakers' ordinances point out, such regulations were not to deter 'bones hommes et loialx que veignent a la citee a demurer illeozuz pur overer en le dit artifice et estre enfraunchisez en temps avenir'.<sup>82</sup>

In addition to purchasing the freedom, before a master could set up business he had to pay an additional fee called an upset fee; half of this sum went to the craft and half to the city council. It was only the sons of freemen who were exempted from these payments. The size of the fee varied from craft to craft; smaller sums were sometimes required of apprentices and considerably larger ones from aliens. The cheapest craft to enter was that of the smiths for which apprentices paid 18d., foreigners 2s. and aliens 6s. 8d in 1443; among the most expensive were the pewterers and the bakers who required 20s. from foreigners. These fees seem comparable roughly with those charged

82. Y.M.B. i, p. 79.

83. Undated barbers' ordinances detail all the steps to be taken by a master aspiring to set up in business: Y.M.B. i, p. 209.

84. In 1419 the tapiters required £4 to be paid by aliens, and the bakers in undated ordinances required a fee of 4 marks from aliens: Y.M.B. i, pp. 109, 168.

85. Y.M.B. ii, pp. 181-2 (1443), Y.M.B. i, pp. 213, 168 (1416, n.d.).

elsewhere. In Durham in 1468 the barber-surgeons and waxchangers charged 6s. 8d. to foreigners; in Worcester in 1467 the sum was negotiable with the wardens up to a maximum of 13s. 4d.<sup>86</sup> Coventry barbers were required to pay 20s. in 1421, though again this was negotiable; the cappers demanded even more, the rate in 1456 being 26s. 8d. for foreigners and 13s. 4d. for apprentices; in 1518 however it was declared that all foreigners were to pay only 10s. over two years.<sup>87</sup> Upset fees in York could apparently be negotiated with the mayor and council and certain entries in the chamberlains' account rolls suggest that fairly frequently a reduced rate was accepted.<sup>88</sup> The absolute control that mayor and council had over the system was amply demonstrated when in 1515 they abandoned all fees for upset.<sup>89</sup>

As the council was prepared to abandon what was probably a lucrative form of revenue it must have been convinced that the upset fee was acting as a disincentive to immigrants, though there is no indication that they attempted to reduce the cost of the franchise which had been raised in 1502. How lucrative the upset fees had been depends on how thoroughly the system had been enforced; clearly this had differed from craft to craft. Certain sections of the workforce were excluded altogether: the statute of 1363 which required all

86. 'Durham trade guilds' ed. Whiting, pp. 158-9; English guilds, p. 408.

87. C.L.B. i, p. 225, ii, p. 514, iii, p. 655.

88. The ironmongers' ordinances specify that if any prospective master is 'minus sufficiens' in terms of cash then the fee could be reduced by the mayor and council: Y.M.B. i, p. 203. Receipts for upset do occur in the chamberlains' account rolls but they are very small and can only represent payments from a fraction of the new masters e.g.: Chamberlains' rolls, pp. 70-1, 104-5, 144.

89. Y.C.R. iii, p. 46, repeated 1519: Y.C.R. iii, p. 67.

craftsmen to be members of a gild specifically stated that 'women, that is to say brewers, bakers, carders and spinners and workers as well of wool, as of linen cloth, and of silk, brawdsters and breakers of wool, and all other that do use and work all hand works, may freely use and work as they have done before this time without any impeachment, or being restrained by this ordinance'.<sup>90</sup> Presumably those men who found it possible to work without taking out the freedom also managed to avoid paying for upset as masters of the craft. In some crafts even freemen might well avoid the constraints of the gild; this was probably true of the victualling and building crafts.<sup>91</sup> Amongst the builders in particular the status of the workforce must have been much more ambiguous than that found in other crafts and it was probably impossible to oblige masters who intended spending only relatively short periods in the city to pay upset fees.<sup>92</sup>

The city craftsmen were protected in some degree against the competition of foreigners who came to sell in the city markets by the system of tolls levied on non-denizen goods, whether raw materials or manufactured items, brought into the city, and collusion with foreign on the part of wholesalers to avoid these tolls was forbidden.<sup>93</sup> The

90. 37 Edward III c. 6, Statutes of the realm i, p. 379 : Dobson, 'Admissions to the freedom', p. 15. The implications of a number of ordinances is that a woman could practice the craft of her husband after his death as long as she did not marry someone from outside her craft: Y.M.B. ii, p. 166; Y.C.R. iii, p. 188.

91. These two groups of crafts were particularly loosely organized: see above, Chapters 4 and 6.

92. The carpenters' ordinances imply that the only money that could be extracted from a master who chose not to join the fraternity was a contribution to the pageant: Y.M.B. ii, p. 81-2.

93. Y.M.B. i, p. 113 (litsters c. 1387); Y.M.B. i, p. 202 (ironmongers 1419).

searchers of the craft guilds were given authority to check the standard of goods brought in, as for example in the lorimers' ordinances of 1493, and the girdlers' ordinances drawn up in 1307 and repeated in 1417; this was however a privilege which could, and in the case of the victuallers was, withdrawn at the mayor's pleasure.<sup>94</sup> Additionally the crafts were sometimes allowed to raise small sums of money from strangers who traded in the town as a contribution, once again, to the cost of the pageants. In 1475 it was decided that 'who so ever selles openly within this Cite in thaire shoppez any glovez, pursez or keybandes called Ynglissch ware shall paye yerely to the pagende maisters of the saide pagende ande crafte; for a denizen 2d. and a stranger 4d.<sup>95</sup> In 1476 the tanners' searchers were permitted to collect 4d. from every foreign tanner coming to buy and sell, for pageant money.<sup>96</sup> Virtually all such ordinances date from the second half of the fifteenth century and all state that the money was to be for the pageant fund, a fund which must have become particularly strained as a result of economic difficulties.<sup>97</sup>

In no case could a craft effectively extend the monopoly it

94. Y.C.L., House books 7 fō. 93v; Y.M.B. i, pp. 183-4; see above p. 128.

95. Y.C.R. iii, p. 181 (although merchants were excluded from this payment).

96. Y.M.B. ii, p. 167.

97. The two exceptions are the butchers in 1431 and the vintners in 1371, both somewhat untypical crafts and the latter in the 14th century consisting of general merchants: Y.M.B. i, pp. 13, 58. A similar, though earlier ordinance, dated 1413, is found in Beverley where the coopers complained that many country coopers were working almost continuously in the town but not making any contribution to the pageant: Hist. MSS. Comm., Beverley, p. 97.

claimed beyond the city boundaries, which is unsurprising, given the difficulty they experienced in protecting their interests within the franchise. Attempts were made to discourage the spread of certain skills; the bowers for example required in 1395 that 'si aucun servaunt de mesme lartifice ale hors de ceste cite en la pays a overe pur son salary ou lucre de mone a informer gentz de la cuntre nient sachant en larte de bowers, il ne serra autre foitz recu et alier a overer entre gentz de bowercrafte deinz ceste cite mes comme un estraunger'.<sup>98</sup> Only the weavers claimed, by virtue of their charter, to have the right of exclusive manufacture of cloth in Yorkshire, saving the rights of other royal boroughs, but as has been described, this charter was probably always ineffective.<sup>99</sup>

The strength that the craft guilds had to regulate their own affairs or to preserve their interests against outsiders was as great or as little as the city council would allow. Of course the survival of official records rather than those of the craft guilds gives a lopsided impression of the guilds. Craft guilds provided the framework for much of the working and social life of the craftsmen and the daily running of the guild was not dominated by the preoccupations of the civic authorities.<sup>100</sup> Nevertheless the argument here is that the policy of the authorities dictated the form of the guilds. The city council adopted the system of craft organization in the course of the late fourteenth century and incorporated it into the administrative system

98. Y.M.B. i, p. 54.

99. See above pp. 29-30, 47-48.

100. See in particular the carpenters' ordinances which afford almost the only insight into the regulation of a craft fraternity in York: Y.M.B. ii, pp. 277-83.



of the city. A statute of 1436-7 required all gilds to register their ordinances with municipal authorities in order to prevent them from formulating any regulations against the franchise.<sup>101</sup> This was merely a reiteration of accepted practice in York and other major provincial centres.

For the authority which was delegated to them the craft gilds literally paid a high price; it was customary that 'all the forfeites that herafre shall falle and be due shalbe employed that oon half to the chaumbre and that othere half to the craft to the supporting of their pageant and othere chargez'.<sup>102</sup> The portion of the money to be paid to the gild was usually described as for the pageant, for this was the only aspect of the expenditure of the gild in which the council was interested. The Corpus Christi pageant and procession was the most dramatic expression of the civic ceremonial which played such an important part in the corporate life of late medieval towns and cities.<sup>103</sup> The number and splendour of the pageants brought status to the crafts and more particularly they brought prestige and profit to the city.<sup>104</sup> Nevertheless the pageants obviously ate up a very considerable proportion of the income of the craft gilds, and the records of the late fifteenth century in particular, when the economy was in decline, show that many

101. 15 Henry VI c. 6, Statutes of the realm ii, pp. 298-9.

102. Y.M.B. i, p. 63 (skinners' ordinances, n.d.).

103. Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the citizen'; Desolation of a city, p. 112.

104. The actual profit from the lease of stands on the processional route was not very high; the commercial advantage lay in the numbers of people, often influential, who were attracted to the city: Chamberlains' rolls, pp. xxx-xxxi. All the records relating to the York plays have been fully transcribed in The York records, ed. A.F. Johnson and M. Rogerson (Records of Early English Drama, University of Toronto, 1979).

crafts appealed to be relieved of this expensive responsibility. Some adjustments were permitted. The goldsmiths who supported 'onus grave et expensas excessivas pro duabus paginis suis in ludo Corpus Christi portabant', were excused from one of their pageants which was made the responsibility of the masons.<sup>105</sup> A series of small pageants was united in 1422 as a time-saving device.<sup>106</sup> Appeals against the expense of the pageant were however generally met unsympathetically, with fines or entry charges in the craft being raised to meet the cost.<sup>107</sup> Adjustments were endlessly being made to the contributions for the pageant demanded by one craft of another, but these merely led to further argument.<sup>108</sup> The compulsory performance of the pageants at a time when craft revenues must have been dwindling is in fact a vivid demonstration of the way that the industrial life of the medieval town was harnessed to the requirements of the civic authorities.

It is not surprising therefore to find that craftsmen were involved in the government of the city only in a very subordinate role. As adequate documentation only begins in the late 14th century the structure of the government was restricted to members of the franchise which, as has been discussed, was a privilege bought or inherited and

105. Y.M.B. i, p. 124 (n.d., c. 1420).

106. Y.M.B. i, pp. 102-4.

107. E.g. carriers, pinner, ironmongers, drapers, skinner. Y.M.B. i, pp. 66, 201, ii, pp. 167, 297; Y.C.R. iii, pp. 14, 61.

108. E.g. linenweavers and weavers: Y.C.R. iii, pp. 47, 65; girdlers: Y.M.B. i, pp. 183, 186; marshalls and smiths; Y.M.B. ii, p. 179; saucemakers: Y.M.B. i, pp. 155-6; Y.C.R. iii, p. 66.

no longer acquired as it had originally been by right of burgess tenure.<sup>109</sup> The rights of most citizens had been further reduced by virtue of the fact that the council of aldermen, the effective ruling body of the city, had by the late thirteenth century become a closed and self-electing circle, to which access, though not wholly barred to outsiders, was limited.<sup>110</sup> One result of this process of exclusion was that the commonalty or *communitas*, originally a term applied to the entire borough community including the mayor and aldermen, changed in meaning; by the fourteenth century it was coming to be applied to the mass of the citizens as distinguished from the ruling body or probi homines.<sup>111</sup> However very little can be said about how the mass of the citizen body, excluded from effective government, expressed itself or on what issues it did so.

Nor in fact is the composition of the ruling class in the thirteenth century and early fourteenth century in York known in more than outline. It appears that the ruling élite was a tightly knit group whose stability, according to Professor Miller, was based on the investment of wealth in real property.<sup>112</sup> During the early years of the fourteenth century the merchants of York seem to have increased both in wealth and numbers on the strength of the wool trade, which they were wresting from alien hands.<sup>113</sup> In 1334 the election to the mayoralty of Henry de Belton, a mercer, challenged the hold that the

109. Dobson, 'Admissions to the freedom', p. 20; see above p. 311.

110. Tait, Medieval English borough, pp. 284-5; V.C.H., City of York, pp. 34, 46-7.

111. Tait, Medieval English borough, p. 246; Reynolds, English Medieval towns, p. 136.

112. V.C.H., City of York, pp. 46-7.

113. Lloyd, English wool trade, pp. 128-9.

landed Langton family had on the office, although that hold was not broken for good until 1364.<sup>114</sup> The nature of the balance of power between the new merchants and the established élite cannot be known; the manoeuvrings over the possession of office do not appear to have offered any greater prospects for craftsmen to become involved in government.<sup>115</sup> It would seem that, with the exception of the victuallers, very few craftsmen broke into the exclusive governing circles; and as has already been discussed, in the early fourteenth century a sharp distinction had not yet been drawn between the victuallers and the merchants.<sup>116</sup>

Of the fifty-four members of Andrew de Bolingbroke's gild, dissolved in 1306, so far only four have been identified as 'craftsmen': Richard Tunnock the celebrated bell-founder, Robert de Wystowe made free in 1299 as a girdler, William Dunant free as a tailor in 1296 and Ranulf de Settel described as 'le tailor'.<sup>117</sup> Many of the gild however were involved wholly or in part in the victualling trade; members of the gild who were presented for breaking the 1301 ordinances, laid down by the king for the regulation of the retail trade in York, included two bakers of white bread, four taverners, two butchers, four fishmongers, five brewers and one regrator.<sup>118</sup> A complaint was made in

114. V.C.H., City of York, p. 71.

115. There is considerable debate over the nature of urban unrest in the late 13th and early 14th centuries summarized in Reynolds, English medieval towns, pp. 134-9. Much of the argument hangs inevitably on the economic status of the craftsmen; for a discussion of the wealth of the York crafts see below Chapter 10.

116. See above p. 175.

117. Sayles, 'Dissolution of a gild', pp. 92-3.

118. Prestwich, York civic ordinances, pp. 22-8.

York in 1301 by the men of the commonalty against government by a faction which levied unjust tallages and misappropriated funds; the exposure of Andrew de Bolingbroke's gild in 1306 entirely justified such accusations as did similar royal investigations in response to the complaints from citizens of other towns.<sup>119</sup>

The mid years of the fourteenth century saw the merchant class consolidate their hold on the government of York. The same years saw the extension of the franchise, but it is doubtful if this resulted in any corresponding extension in the power of the communitas.<sup>120</sup> It seems probable that the crystallization of the communitas into a council called the forty-eight, or more often the commonalty, was effected concurrently with the extension of the franchise and was undertaken, as had been the formalization of the craft guilds in order to stabilize and control more easily a very fluid community.<sup>121</sup> This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that on one occasion that the names of the forty-eight survive, from 1379, they are thoroughly representative of the crafts of the city.<sup>122</sup> In the same year a scale of fines to be imposed on council members who failed to attend meetings was recorded and in this the forty-eight are referred to as 'les artificers'.<sup>123</sup>

119. C.P.R. 1292-1301, p. 624; C.M. Fraser, 'Medieval trading restrictions in the north east', Archeologia Aeliana xxxix 4th series (1961), pp. 135-50.

120. Bridbury, Economic growth, p. 108 argues to the contrary, but all the evidence points against him.

121. For the structure of government in late medieval York see V.C.H., City of York, pp. 70-75, 77-8.

122. Y.M.B. i, pp. v-ix. 35-6.

123. Y.M.B. i, p. 39 (1380); Y.M.B. ii, p. 199 has another ordinance concerning fines to be levied for absence; only the alderman and the twenty-four are named in this, the assembly of the commonalty was therefore presumably infrequent and unimportant.

There is no indication of how the selection of the forty-eight was made, whether by election or by virtue of their position as gild officers, or whether the commonalty was in fact regularly represented by this body. However, as the status of the searchers increased with the authority delegated to them by the council, it must have seemed logical for them to take on the representative function.<sup>124</sup> The system of representation by gild, rather than by ward, is probably therefore more a reflection of the authority of the council than of the power of the guilds, though without having any evidence of the way the commonalty was represented before the fourteenth century, this must be supposition.<sup>125</sup>

The power enjoyed by the commonalty would appear to have been very limited. Most of the business of government was conducted by the mayor and aldermen with the advice of the council of twenty-four. The commonalty generally seem to have been used to rubber stamp decisions which bore on public events, such as the pageants or the enrollment of statutes or charters, or on issues where their acquiescence was guaranteed, such as the penalization of Scots or the imposition of tolls on foreigners.<sup>126</sup> Matters concerning elections were also debated before the whole commonalty.<sup>127</sup>

124. The searchers themselves were elected for the most part by the gild masters.

125. Williams, Medieval London, p. 37; Thrupp, Merchant class, p. 73 describe experiments made in London for the use of craft guilds as the basis for representation rather than the wards of the 14th century.

126. E.g. Y.M.B. ii, pp. 86, 62-3, 52 (concerning the Scots, the pageants and the cattlemarket in 1419, 1417 and 1416 respectively).

127. Y.M.B. ii, p. 91 (1420).

Elections were not democratic; for most of the later middle ages the new mayor was chosen by the commonalty from two or three aldermen nominated by the outgoing mayor; by the fifteenth century the sheriffs were chosen by mayor, aldermen and the twenty-four, the commonalty merely endorsing the decision; the chamberlains were elected in the same way.<sup>128</sup> These limited powers vested in the commonalty were sometimes exploited by the rival aldermannic factions as in the competition between Simon Quixlay and John Gisburn for the mayoralty in the 1370's, and again in the late fifteenth century when political tension was very high for much of the time.<sup>129</sup> Complaints about this kind of political manipulation become increasingly common in the sixteenth century, partly because of fuller records and partly also because the commonalty was probably genuinely in a stronger position; so for example in 1529 when the reduction of the mayor's salary was demanded, the mayor wrote to the Duke of Richmond that certain aldermen 'stirryth the comminaltie ageynst us daily after suche maner and facon that we cannot be liable to order and rewle the Kings cite.<sup>130</sup>

The influence that the commonalty exercised by the 1530's had been acquired by a long process dating from the 1460's. The sharp economic contraction of the late fifteenth century brought increasing

128. V.C.H., City of York, pp. 71, 72; Y.M.B. ii, pp. 52, 74-5, 255, 259-60, Y.M.B. i, pp. 16-17.

129. V.C.H., City of York, p. 80; C.C.R. 1369-74, pp. 59, 275.  
In 1482 the rivalry between Richard York and Thomas Wrangwish led to riots: Y.C.R. i, pp. 48-52.

130. Y.C.R. iii, pp. 120, 127.

numbers of complaints, petitions and violence from the commonalty, whilst at the same time acute commercial rivalry probably considerably lessened the solidarity of the aldermannic class and their ability to deal with such a challenge. Trouble erupted at election times because one of the main issues was the competence of the city authorities, particularly in regard to expenditure, as is stated clearly in a petition of 1475; 'for alsmuch as we ben all one bodye corporate, we thynke that we be all inlike prevaliged of the commonalte, which has borne none office in the cite. Wherefore we desyer ande besekes your forsaide lordship ande maistershipps, that frome hencefurth that ye elect ne chuse any chambrelaynes, but suche as hafe ben brigmasters afore, and borne thair charge worshipfully; and that ye chuse non odir what degre that ever thay be off, but if thay pay to the reparacion of the common rente at the leste xl s.'<sup>131</sup>

Difficulties became so acute that the council's competence to deal with them became quite inadequate and royal authority was sought; the result was that various experiments were made with the electoral system, none of which succeeded in ending the troubles. The details of these changes are not so significant as the fact that they were made at all; indeed in 1489 the original electoral system for the mayoralty was restored. However as the commonalty became through

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131. Y.M.B. ii, p. 246; see also Y.C.R. ii, pp. 54-5 for a petition made in 1490 for the scrutiny of accounts. For the extent of the city's debt in the late fifteenth century and the dilapidation of its housing stock see Chamberlains' rolls, p. xxvi; V.C.H., City of York, pp. 73, 85.
132. V.C.H., City of York, p. 71; C.P.R. 1461-7, p. 366; 1467-77, p. 416, 1485-94, p. 297.



experience an increasingly articulate body, the council, although they might refuse to agree to popular demands, were constantly forced to take them into consideration. Trouble continued into the sixteenth century. Riots took place in 1504 and again in 1516, these latter being sparked off by the rivalry between two aldermen, Thomas Drawsword and William Neleson.<sup>133</sup> As a result, in 1517 the constitution of the city was revised.<sup>134</sup> A common council was appointed in which thirteen major crafts were represented by two members, chosen from four presented to the aldermen for selection, and fifteen minor crafts by one member chosen in a similar manner from two candidates. Major and minor are somewhat misleading terms as the selection was made not on the basis of numerical strength but on the social status of the crafts and there was some very obvious discrimination; for example, the very large craft of cordwainers was not included though the tiny group of vestment-makers was.<sup>135</sup> The major crafts were predominantly mercantile and the minor crafts only represented the more affluent craftsmen, those most likely to be committed to the maintenance of stability. (See Table 8:3, overleaf.) The poorer crafts thereby lost any say they might hitherto have had in civic affairs as did some of the large and

133. Y.C.R. ii, pp. 191-4, iii, pp. 1-8, 51-3, 55-9.

134. V.C.H., City of York, pp. 137-8.

135. For the cordwainers' relations with the council in the late fifteenth century see above pp. 97-8.

TABLE 8:3. CRAFT REPRESENTATION IN THE 1517 CONSTITUTION.<sup>136</sup>

Major crafts: 2 representatives each    Minor crafts: 1 representative each

merciers	hosiers
drapers	innholders
grocers	vestmentmakers
apothecaries	chandlers
goldsmiths	bowers
dyers	weavers <sup>138</sup>
skinners	walkers
barbers	ironmongers
fishmongers	sadlers
tailors	masons
vintners	bakers
joiners <sup>137</sup>	butchers
glaziers	glovers
	pewterers
	armourers

136. Y.C.L., A 33 (Confirmation of charters 1 Edward IV).

137. The carpenters are not represented and the appearance of the joiners, an insignificant group in comparison, in the list of major crafts must have been in deference to Thomas Drawsword who was a carver; see above p. 240. A glazier became mayor in 1508, an apothecary in 1509 and two goldsmiths in 1487 and 1513; these elections very likely influenced the selection of the crafts included among those with two representatives.

138. Proportionately few weavers were freemen and their representatives on the council therefore were very likely to be reliable and substantial men.

potentially troublesome crafts such as smiths, cordwainers, carpenters and tapiters. However the role of the old forty-eight had always been very ambiguous so that the incorporation of a 'common council' of the crafts into the constitution was an important development in principle, although the function that such a common council would fulfill was bound to vary as circumstances changed. In 1517 it was manifestly an attempt to persuade the more substantial craftsmen to support the civic authorities against the more riotous elements of the commonalty.<sup>139</sup>

If as a whole the commonalty or the craft guilds had little influence, equally as individuals the craftsmen of late medieval York took little part in the government of the city save as minor administrative officials. Between 1364 and 1500 only thirteen men who can properly be described as craftsmen became mayor, five litsters, one tailor, one sherman, one weaver, three goldsmiths, one pewterer, and one skinner.<sup>140</sup> Various other men who did not describe themselves as merchants became mayor, but as vintners, spicers or drapers they were of mercantile rather than craft status. The appearance of craftsmen in the mayoralty increased in incidence after 1500 but was still uncommon and restricted to the more prestigious crafts. (See Table 8:4, overleaf.)

Not until the end of the fifteenth century did craftsmen appear

139. For the council in the 16th century see Palliser, Tudor York, pp. 60-72.

140. Given the affluence and trading operations of many litsters their inclusion as craftsmen may not be entirely justified in this context.

TABLE 8:4. CRAFTSMEN ELECTED AS MAYOR 1401-1534

Craft	1401-1450	1451-1500	1501-34
Tailors	1		3
Litsters	2	3	2
Shermen	1		
Weavers	1		
Goldsmiths <sup>141</sup>	1	3	2
Pewterers	1		
Skinners	1		
Tanners			1
Carvers			1
Glaziers			1
Total	8	6	10

much more regularly in the office of sheriff. (See Table 8:5. overleaf.)

141. Richard Wartre, goldsmith, was elected twice in 1436 and 1451: Chamberlains' rolls, p. 210.

TABLE 8:5. OCCUPATIONS OF SHERIFFS, 1397-1417 AND 1485-1504.<sup>142</sup>

Occupation	1397-1417	1485-1504 <sup>143</sup>
Mercer	23	17
Apothecary	26	1
Grocer		1
Draper		3
Litster	3	
Sherman	1	
Tailor	7	5
Tapiter		1
Walker		1
Weaver		1
Vestmentmaker		1
Baker	20	3
Goldsmith		1
Pewterer		3
Glover	1	
Skinner	1	1
Tanner		3
Glazier		1
Chandler		1
Not known	7	2
Total	40	41

142. Drake, *Eboracum*, pp. 359-364 lists the medieval bailiffs and sheriffs of York.

143. Oliver Middleton died in office in 1504 and another bailiff had to be elected.

The pattern of election to the office of chamberlain was very similar.<sup>144</sup> For most of the period the chamberlains were mainly drawn from the merchant class, but a real change took place after 1487, when the number of chamberlains was increased to six a year in order to alleviate the financial burdens of office. From this date on the office holding class was permanently extended, even after the number of chamberlains had been reduced again, to four in 1499 and then to three in 1500.<sup>145</sup> Craftsmen were regularly elected to bear lesser office, such as that of bridgmaster throughout the period. Four bridge masters were elected each year, two for Ouse Bridge and two for Foss Bridge. The occupation of 169 of these office holders is known; 75% of them were craftsmen.<sup>146</sup>

As craftsmen became more likely to be elected to civic office, so they sought to evade such service and the expense it involved by purchasing exemption, a type of evasion that has been seen as symptomatic of late medieval towns which were experiencing economic contradiction.<sup>147</sup> So, for example, Roger Breez, a saddler, elected chamberlain in 1499, successfully pleaded that he had not the money to bear office and was allowed to resign, though his purchased immunity was not for life.<sup>148</sup> Another saddler Thomas Chapman came before the council in 1496 to show that he 'oft and sore is vexed and greved and for yat he hath maid his othe to fore the said presence

144. For the office of chamberlain see Chamberlains' rolls, pp. xx-xxii, xxxvii-xxxix.

145. See table 8:6.

146. The names of the bridgemasters are given in Y.C.L., D 1 fo. 318-20, 322-29 (freemen's register).

147. Dobson, 'Urban decline', p. 14.

148. Y.C.L., House books 7 fo. 55v.

TABLE 8:6. OCCUPATIONS OF CHAMBERLAINS, 1396-1405 AND 1489-1498.<sup>1</sup>

Occupation	1396-1405		1489-1498	
	3 chamberlains per annum number	%	6 chamberlains per annum number	%
Mercer	18	24	16	21
Draper	3		1	
Spicer	1		1	
Grocer			2	
Vintner	2			
Shipman		80		
Litster	2	textile	3	
Tailor			5	
Tapiter			1	
Walker			1	
Baker			2	
Butcher			1	
Fishmonger	1		2	
Innholder			1	
Goldsmith			1	
Ironmonger			1	
Pewterer		1	29	
Potter	1	6		20
Girdler				1
Tanner	1			1
Glazier				1
Tiler				1
Tilemaker				1
Barber				1
Bower	1			1
Chandler				2
Clerk			1	
Questor			1	
Not known			10	
Total	30		60	

1. Names taken from Freemen's Register

that he is not of power ne able in havour of goodes to bere and occupie the name and place of one of the sheriffs'; he was ordered to pay £10 towards the repair of the walls and give 100 wainscott towards tiling the common hall, for which payment he did manage to obtain a life exemption.<sup>149</sup>

Although by the early sixteenth century craftsmen were beginning to be employed in the higher offices of the city's government, no group could challenge the effective control that was still exercised by the merchant class. In the years c. 1360-1460 this control had been, in respect of both individuals and crafts, virtually absolute and increasingly exacting. The power of the mercers was based largely on the grip that they had on the economic life of the city and it was a power which enabled them to manipulate both the franchise and the craft guilds to their own advantage. In regulating the craft guilds, the government of the city seem to have created, or at least strongly encouraged a demarcation between merchants and craftsmen which may not have been so pronounced before the fourteenth century. This was certainly true in the case of the victuallers and may also apply to the more prominent leather and metal workers.

The increasing definition and organization imposed on them by the city government may ultimately have worked to the advantage of the crafts. The failure of the economy in the late fifteenth century led to the weakening of the merchants both individually and also probably in terms of their corporate solidarity. It was a situation which the

149. Y.C.L., House books 8 fo. 5.



richer craftsmen were potentially able to exploit, and they now operated within the framework of well organized craft associations. The early sixteenth century saw the growing *influence* and affluence of tailors, butchers and tanners who were successfully expanding their commercial connections. As yet however the mercantile *élite* still wielded enough power to exclude certain categories of craftsmen from the government of the city. The victuallers and the leather workers were in particular discriminated against. Butchers do not appear as holders of high office and no representation was afforded to the entire crafts of tanners and cordwainers in the constitution of 1517. Some indication of the changes taking place in the city can however be seen in the inclusion of such groups *à*s barbers and glaziers, alongside the mercers and goldsmiths, amongst the 'major crafts' in the early sixteenth century.

## Chapter 9. CRAFTSMEN AND COMMERCE

York's prosperity as an industrial centre depended on the vitality of its market. The city acted as an entrepôt and distribution centre for a variety of imported goods not readily available elsewhere in the county. It was also the focus of a system of smaller markets throughout the county which existed for the interchange of local produce.<sup>1</sup> The number of markets in Yorkshire, as elsewhere seems to have diminished in the later middle ages, a reduction which followed on from the fall in population brought about by the Black Death and subsequent plagues.<sup>2</sup> By the Tudor period there were fifty-three markets in the county, making it in fact more poorly served than any other county save for Durham and Northumberland.<sup>3</sup> To some extent the Yorkshire markets were specialized by the end of the middle ages, as for example was the case with the cloth markets of the West Riding. The York markets and fairs however remained the outstanding general commercial forum in the county.<sup>4</sup>

Some impression of the range of goods available at the York fairs is recorded in a royal grant of 1502. In this year, in an attempt to revive the flagging economy, two new annual fairs were granted by the

1. The agrarian history of England and Wales 1500-1640 iv, ed. J. Thirsk (Cambridge, 1967), p. 466.
2. Agrarian history iv, p. 467. Beresford, New towns of the middle ages, pp. 286-9, maps the density of markets within the East Riding in the late 13th century.
3. Agrarian history iv, p. 489; Palliser, Tudor York, p. 182.
4. For the regular commodity markets in York see above pp. 127-8.

crowns to supplement the two which had existed since the thirteenth century.<sup>5</sup> The terms of the grant detailed the places at which the various types of stalls were to be gathered. The sites were scattered widely throughout the city: tanners in Peasholme, coopers and turners in Walmgate, grocers and mercers in Petergate, cloth in the Common Hall and adjacent streets, livestock beyond the walls. The fairs were designed to cater for luxury industries such as goldsmiths, jewellers, vestmentmakers as well as the more mundane victuallers, cartwrights and ropers.

Obviously the York fairs, being large and important, attracted custom from a far wider area than that of the normal markets. Estimating the size of the area normally drawn on by the city is probably impossible. Of course it varied for different products; tin for example had to be brought from Cornwall, lead only from the Pennines. Sources of supply will be discussed in more detail during the course of this chapter, but it will also be argued that the extent of York's commercial influence in the north of England was probably largely coterminous with the county boundary, extending however into northern Lincolnshire as well.

For the York citizen trade in this area, and indeed throughout the realm, was conducted free of toll by virtue of a charter granted to the city in the reign of Richard I.<sup>6</sup> This privilege was jealously

5. Y.C.R. ii, pp. 172-6; Palliser, Tudor York, pp. 181-2. The two original fairs were held at Whitsun and on 29th June. There was in addition an archbishops' fair at Lammas. The two new fairs were not a success, although the older ones continued to prosper.

6. V.C.H., City of York, pp. 32-3.

defended for it was in trade rather than in industry that fortunes were founded. The possession of the freedom did not however guarantee a craftsman the access to trade and to the wider market. Indeed the vast majority of the craftsmen were relatively poor and were subjected to a degree of subordination and regulation from which it proved extremely difficult to escape. Most craftsmen were effectively barred from commerce because of the very thorough control which the merchant class had established over the commercial and industrial life of the city in the later middle ages. The present chapter is therefore concerned with the way that this control was exercised and maintained. It reviews firstly the nature of urban industry and the amount of capital investment which it required; secondly the sources of supply of raw materials and the men who handled these supplies; thirdly, the distribution of manufactured goods.

It has been argued that the most characteristic feature of the medieval town, indeed its distinguishing feature, was diversity of occupational structure.<sup>7</sup> The larger the town, the wider the degree of specialization in manufacture which it could support and York as the largest town in the north of England maintained a particularly wide variety of highly specialized craftsmen. In consequence a substantial proportion of the working population was employed wholly on what might be termed secondary rather than primary production; that is to say they did not work the raw materials but finished products that had already been processed in part by other craftsmen. No absolute

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7. E.A. Wrigley, 'Parasite or stimulus: The town in a pre-industrial economy' in Towns in societies, p. 300.

figures can be given because of the failings of the freemen's register as an accurate guide to employment. However those craftsmen employed on secondary processes include all metal workers, as smelting was done in the country.<sup>8</sup> In the leather industry a higher degree of specialization had developed among the workers of cow hides than among those who worked in white leather; these latter still prepared skins as well as manufacturing leather goods, as did also the skinners.<sup>9</sup> Specialization in the cloth industry was highly developed, but weavers cannot be included amongst those involved solely in secondary production as each weavers' household was probably frequently responsible for the preparation of the wool for weaving. In all, in the three major manufacturing groups of leather, metal and textile workers, the proportion of craftsmen employed on secondary production reached over 60% of those who took out the freedom in the years 1351-1400.

Throughout the middle ages a considerable amount of primary production was undertaken in rural areas, no doubt because the cost and difficulties of transport made it more practicable to carry comparatively finished products rather than those containing a high percentage of waste.<sup>10</sup> In many cases of primary production this

8. See below p. 353.

9. See above p. 102ff.

10. The best evidence for the cost of transport comes from the building industry. T.H. Lloyd, Some aspects of the building industry in medieval Stratford on Avon, p. 22 describes the carriage of stone as 55½% of the total cost of the stone and 25% of the total cost of tiles. See also: Salzman, Building in England, pp. 349-54; M. Postan, 'The trade of medieval Europe: the north' in Cambridge economic history ii, pp. 143-54.

involved the extensive use of fuel, a further compelling reason to site industry in the countryside with easy access to large supplies of wood. Such a preference for a rural location can perhaps be best seen in the migration of earth potters to the country, to be sited in clay areas, by the twelfth century.<sup>11</sup> The potters were however exceptional in that the entire industry seems to have been rurally based; for the most part industrial production in the country was concerned merely with the primary processing of raw materials.

The craftsmen most obviously dependent on rural industry were the metal workers. Virtually all metals were initially smelted near the mines where they were extracted and were transported in marketable units to the towns.<sup>12</sup> Many building materials were also brought to the towns in a half finished or even finished state; from the thirteenth century onwards Salzman argues that 'it was becoming more and more the custom to buy stock mouldings from the quarry for the rebuilding and alteration of churches'.<sup>13</sup> Wood was sawn where it was felled; tiles and lime were made where suitable materials could be found, often some way from the city boundaries; glass was blown in forested areas as the process involved the use of huge quantities of charcoal.

11. La Patourel, 'Documentary evidence and the medieval pottery industry', pp. 101-26. Urban demand was so great by the later middle ages that many potteries were established on the edges of towns.
12. See above pp. 179-80. The normal size of an iron bar purchased by a smith was c. 16 lbs.: Schubert, History of the British iron and steel industry, p. 133.
13. Salzman, Building in England, p. 123.

Apart from the victualling trades, the only large scale primary processes undertaken within the towns were the tanning of leather and the preparation of wool for weaving. The raw material of the leather industry for the most part brought itself to town; tanneries were inevitably one of the earliest and most ubiquitous features of urban life for the concentration of population in towns necessitated a large demand for livestock for meat. The tanning of leather, although a lengthy process, could be conducted on a far smaller scale than those primary processes undertaken within the country. The same applies to the preparation of raw wool for weaving, in which the bare minimum of implements, cards and a spinning wheel were involved. Urban industry in England in the medieval period was therefore essentially light industry. Such heavy industry as was undertaken, that requiring extensive investment in equipment, was already concentrated in the country; it was in these latter industries that the major technological innovations were made in the later middle ages, even if the most significant new techniques were not introduced into England until the sixteenth century.<sup>14</sup> The additional removal of the cloth industry to the countryside made the concentration of urban production on secondary rather than primary production even more pronounced.

Because urban industry was light and increasingly devoted to on secondary manufacture, it did not depend on extensive capital investment for its prosperity. Hence most craftsmen worked as independent masters, the biggest investment they made being in their tools; the

14. J.U. Nef, 'Mining and metallurgy in medieval civilization' in Cambridge economic history ii, pp. 458-69; M.B. Donald, Elizabethan copper (1955).

frequency with which tools are referred to in their wills bears this out. Even so the equipment required for most manufacture was far from complex.<sup>15</sup> Nor did the craftsman necessarily own his place of work; in fact the relative lack of reference to properties in the wills of craftsmen would seem to imply that more often than not workshops were leased.<sup>16</sup> In one case where the tools of a foundry were passed through four generations of apprentices no reference was made in any of the wills to the foundry itself; possibly it was leased from the Dean and Chapter, with a new lease going logically to the de facto inheritor of the business.<sup>17</sup>

Investment in urban industry therefore took the form of obtaining a controlling interest in the provision of raw materials and here the craftsman was almost entirely in the hands of the merchants. It was by dominating the mechanics of supply and distribution that the merchant class effected its stranglehold on the economic life of the city during much of the later middle ages. The mercantile monopoly with respect to imported goods can be demonstrated from the customs particulars for Hull. Information about internal trade is far harder to collect; logic, and such surviving evidence that there is, suggest

15. The greatest investment in tools was probably required of the metal workers, particularly those who cast non-ferrous metals: see above pp. 184-5. The weaver had to buy an expensive loom but the tools of the other textile workers were simple. Amongst the leather workers only the tanners needed extensive plant: see above pp. 92-3.
16. See below pp. 427ff.
17. John Burndale free 1401, died 1446: Freemen's Reg., p. 104; Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 260-260v. John Worsell free 1441, died 1460: Freemen's Reg., p. 157; Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 295v. William Wynter free 1461, died 1494: Freemen's Reg., p. 180; B.I., Prob. Reg. 5 fo. 443-443v.



that here the craftsmen had a rather better opportunity for some wholesale trade, but again it seems likely that bulk handling, particularly of valuable commodities such as wool, was done by merchants, largely because they were the only group to command adequate credit facilities.

Much of York's industry was dependent, if only in a small measure, on imported products; even in the leather industry, where the main raw materials, hides and tallow, were locally available, the alum needed by whit-tawers and glovers, the makers of fine leather goods, had to be imported.<sup>18</sup> Although York skinners obtained lamb and coney skins locally, all the more exotic furs came from overseas.<sup>19</sup> The majority of the dyes and mordants used in the woollen cloth industry were imported, and so too were large quantities of flax for the manufacture of linen cloth, a product that became the staple for many weavers after the demise of the woollen cloth industry.<sup>20</sup> The building and shipbuilding industries were heavily dependent on imports from the Baltic, more especially as the price of oak rose rapidly during the later middle ages.<sup>21</sup> Builders also required Baltic pitch and bitumen

18. For the glovers see above pp. 102-5. For overseas trade in general see: Bartlett, 'Some aspects of the economy of York', pp. 100-120; M.M. Postan 'Economic and political relations between England and the Hanse from 1400-1471', in Studies in English trade in the fifteenth century, pp. 139-141; P. Dollinger, The German Hansa (1964), pp. 212-223; Kerling, Commercial relations of Holland and Zeeland with England. In 1429 Lambert Pykard of Boston, cordwainer, was charged with a debt of 60s. owing to Godekin Waderman of the Hansa, merchant, and John Newton of York, glover; the debt incurred may well have been for goods supplied to Pykard, but at all events it shows a York glover in a chain of commercial transactions that involved overseas trading: C.P.R. 1422-29, p. 512.
19. See above pp. 108-9.
20. See above pp. 53-5.
21. Salzman, Building in England, pp. 245-8 for a description of the Baltic woods.

tar and hemp for ropes.<sup>22</sup> Chandlers were dependent on a supply of imported wax from the same area and bowers on yew staves from Prussia.<sup>23</sup> Very large quantities of metal were imported both from the Baltic and from Spain: iron, osmunds, steel and non-ferrous metals.<sup>24</sup> Amongst the victuallers, although most men obtained their supplies locally, the vintners and taverners of course relied heavily on imports.<sup>25</sup>

Overseas trade was almost entirely in the hands of merchants who, having brought the goods to York, generally sold them outright to craftsmen or, in the case of the building industry, to contractors or corporations. Cloth-making seems to have been the only truly entrepreneurial industry in York. This is unsurprising given the relative simplicity of most manufacturing processes at the time; the merchants' money was generally better invested in trade rather than being tied up in materials in the hands of craftsmen. The system, whilst leaving the craftsman theoretically independent, did in fact put him at the mercy of his suppliers. This is demonstrated by a case heard in York in 1428; there was a rumour of false osmunds being made in York and that 'Burn smyth in Bouthum and John Holgate marsshall in the suburb of Walmegate in York suld make yam'.<sup>26</sup> Burn and Holgate said

22. See above p. 293.

23. See above p. 283. For the value of trade in wax as a whole see H.L. Gray, 'English foreign trade from 1446-1482', in Studies in English trade in the fifteenth century, pp. 18, 36.

24. For the value of iron imports see Bartlett, 'Some aspects of the economy of York', pp. 102-4 where it is calculated that the iron seldom accounted for less than 7% of total imports, excluding wine, through Hull.

25. See above pp. 163-6; James, Studies in the medieval wine trade, pp. 190-5.

26. English miscellanies, pp. 1-10. Lilling was clearly operating some form of putting out system: see above p. 196.

that they had cut the iron for one John Lilling, a merchant of York and made yam in shappe of osmundes' for him. Lilling apparently threatened the two smiths with 'bodily harme, for yai bar recorde agayne hym', but his threats proved unavailing; on this occasion the court found against him. For the most part it was in the interests of merchants to ensure that the standard of goods was adequate but it looks as if Lilling was only brought to book after a long record of malpractice. Other evidence was brought against him to show that 'he suld hafe blended plaster or lyme among his alum, and so seld yt furth deceyvabilly to lystters, and in especial to John Kyrkeby and Robert Dowfe lysters of York'; Kirkby testified to this and said that 'if he wrought yt in yat kynd yt suld hafe brynt oute his lede bothom'.

The extent to which merchants dominated the import trade can best be appreciated from the particular accounts of the customs at Hull.<sup>27</sup> The surviving accounts are not complete and the amount of coverage varies considerably over the period studied. The best accounts still extant date from the reigns of Richard II and Henry VIII; a fairly good set of accounts also survives for the reign of Edward IV, a crucial period which witnessed the turning point in York's economy.<sup>28</sup> The customs particulars list in detail the contents of every ship arriving

27. P.R.O., Class E122; indexed in Exchequer K.R. Customs accounts ii (List and Index Society, lx, 1970).

28. The customs accounts used are:

P.R.O. E122/59/5, 3 & 4 Richard II; 59/8, 7 Richard II; 59/15, 13 Richard II; 59/16 14 Richard II; 59/23 15 & 16 Richard II; 159/11, 22 & 23 Richard II; 61/71, 31 & 32 Henry VI; 62/1, I Edward IV; 62/3, 2 & 3 Edward IV; 62/4, 3 Edward IV; 62/5, 4 Edward IV; 62/7, 5 & 6 Edward IV; 62/9, 6 & 7 Edward IV; 62/12, 9 & 10 Edward IV; 62/17, 11 & 12 Edward IV; 60/3, 2 & 3 Henry VIII; 202/4, 9 & 10 Henry VIII.

at or leaving Hull against the name of the shipper; the value of each item or group of items was given with the customs duty charged. These accounts have been used by Dr. Bartlett to show the trading strength of the York merchants in the late fourteenth century and the decline in mercantile enterprise in the late fifteenth century. He has also charted the changing value of the most important commodities shipped through the port, that is wool, cloth, iron and lead, and described the declining significance of Hull in overseas trade in the course of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.<sup>29</sup>

A close examination of the persons named as importers and exporters in these accounts shows clearly that craftsmen were almost wholly excluded from overseas trade. This was true not only of the period of greatest trading prosperity in the late fourteenth century, but also in the early sixteenth century when the contracting economy put the York merchants in a very much weaker position. On the very rare occasions when craftsmen do appear in these records the goods they imported were limited in quantity and usually specific to their own craft. Of the few craftsmen who do appear most were litsters or vintners, as for example Richard Hille, free as a litster in 1451, who imported woad in 1452-3.<sup>30</sup> Two taverners, William Haytfield and Adam de Horton, imported wine in 1383-4; vintners such as Roger de Crome also appear in the same account, but, as already discussed, at this

29. Bartlett, 'The expansion and decline of York'; 'Some aspects of the economy of York', pp. 97-155. See below p.397 for a discussion of the commercial failure of the York merchants.
30. Freemen's Reg., p. 171; P.R.O., E122/61/71 m.1.

stage vintners were usually also mercers.<sup>31</sup> Litsters and vintners were quasi-mercantile crafts but even so their imports were generally restricted to wine, dyes and the occasional barrel of fish.<sup>32</sup> William Brigham, a litster was exceptional in importing, in 1510, ashes, herring, hides, wine and some tapestry.<sup>33</sup> No small scale importer could afford to have a factor abroad and most of these transactions must have been made through the agency of an established firm. So, for example, in 1417 William Wadham, merchant, Adam Heseham, John Heseham, Robert Dunnyng and John Sutton litsters, citizens of York, entered into a bond with Godfrey Rust of Durdraught, merchant, for a loan of £100 to be paid in two instalments over the coming year.<sup>34</sup>

Apart from the litsters and vintners, the names of only ten craftsmen appear as importers in the customs accounts examined.<sup>35</sup> It was probably their dependence on imported yew staves and possibly the desirability of travelling to inspect the source of supply which induced several York bowers to undertake some trading on their own account, although it must be said that the largest handlers of bow staves were the general merchants.<sup>36</sup> John Pannal of York was designated as maker of the king's bows in 1405; with official status or a guaranteed

31. P.R.O., E122/59/8 m. 21, 22d, 23, 24; see above p. 165.

32. E.g. John Barber, free as a litster in 1378 who imported in 1383-4 herrings, wine, alum and madder: Freemen's Reg., p. 75; P.R.O., E122/59/8 m. 9d, 11, 16d, 18d.

33. Freemen's Reg., p. 217 (1493); P.R.O., E122/60/3 m.2.

34. Y.M.B. ii, p. 82.

35. In the accounts of the reign of Richard II these are a bower, a weaver, a tapiter, an armourer and a fishmonger; those in the accounts of the reign of Henry VIII an arasmaker, a bower, a goldsmith and a sadler.

36. E.g. Henry Wyman imported 2,000 bowstaves in 1383-4; he also handled wine wax, cloth and wool: P.R.O., E122/59/8. In 1462-3 Thomas Neleson imported 2,500 bowstaves; he also imported wine and exported cloth and wool: P.R.O., E122/62/3.

official market, a master bower may have been able to find a sponsor for the expensive journey to Prussia.<sup>37</sup> In 1364 Robert Cristendome, bower, was given licence to export £20 in gold and large woollen cloths from Hull 'to make his profit of in the parts of Prussia'.<sup>38</sup> John Swerd, another York bower, was granted permission in 1373 'to send four of his yeomen and two grooms of his craft to Prussia to stay there for four years to fashion bows there and send them to York from time to time'.<sup>39</sup> Swerd had been very active since at least 1365 when he, like Cristendome, was licensed to export £60 worth of woollen cloths to Prussia to make his profit, a profit no doubt to be invested in bow staves.<sup>40</sup> The customs accounts of 1391-3 show William Hillom, free as a bower in 1361, importing iron, osmunds, wainscot and wax; over 150 years later, despite the decline in the bowmaking industry in York there was still a bower active in overseas trade, John Geggés who in the account of 1517-19 imported dyes, herring, salmon and iron.<sup>41</sup>

In addition to goods imported through Hull, York drew a certain amount on imports distributed through London. Although bulk cargoes continued to come through Hull, it seems to be the case that imports both of manufactured goods and raw materials were increasingly directed via London during the late fifteenth century as the Merchant

37. C.P.R. 1405-8, p. 24.

38. C.P.R. 1364-7, p. 35; Freemen's Reg., p. 53.

39. C.P.R. 1370-4, p. 264.

40. C.P.R. 1364-7, p. 92; C.P.R. 1370-4, p. 60.

41. William Hillom: Freemen's Reg., p. 55; P.R.O. E122/59/23 m. 7d. John Geggés: Freemen's Reg., p. 210; P.R.O. E122/202/4 f. 1v, 2v, 4v, 6r, 7v.

Adventurers captured so much of the trade with the Low Countries.<sup>42</sup>

As well as a reduction in the quantity of imports, certain categories of goods, most notably spices, disappear from the customs particulars of Hull completely and imports ran to nothing more exotic than figs and walnuts.<sup>43</sup>

Evidence for the function of London as an entrepôt for imported goods is very scanty. The impression given by surviving records however is that the trade between London and York was overwhelmingly in the hands of merchants and chapmen. Once again the only exception seems to have been the activities of the richer litsters.

Wills of York litsters show some of them to have established close personal contacts with London grocers.<sup>44</sup>

Some contracts also survive, such as that made by Edward Garntner with a Londoner in 1480 for 20 bales of woad.<sup>45</sup>

Expeditions to London were not without hazard: at some time in the late fifteenth century, while he was in Hull, presumably on business, William White, a York litster, had become involved in organizing a horse race between two London drapers. The result of the race was disputed and when William subsequently went to London 'for to bye certyn ware there', he found himself arrested.<sup>46</sup>

42. Carus-Wilson, 'Origin and development of the Merchant Adventurers organization', in Medieval Merchant Venturers; S. Thrupp, 'The grocers of London' in Studies in English trade in the fifteenth century, p. 276; Kerling, Commercial relations of Holland and Zeeland with England, pp. 148-50. For coastal traffic in the 16th century see Palliser, Tudor York, pp. 193-4.
43. Compare P.R.O. E122/58/8 (7 Richard II) with 62/9 (6 & 7 Edward IV) and 60/3 (2 & 3 Henry VIII).
44. E.g. Thomas Gryssyngham and William Crosby made London grocers their executors: B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 133v-134; 4 fo. 70-71.
45. Y.C.L., House books ii fo. 33v.
46. P.R.O., C1/67/49. White appears again in a debt case concerning £26 owed to him by a London merchant: P.R.O. C1/318/54.

Litsters who imported woad or purchased it through London merchants were themselves likely to resell it to provincial dyers: for example, in 1341 John de Dringhouse of York, litster, was owed payment of 30st. of woad by Roger Tincter of Pocklington.<sup>47</sup> As litsters also acted as clothiers however, it is usually impossible to establish whether their transactions were for wool, cloth or dyes, and a consideration of their regional trade is best made in connexion with the marketing of cloth.<sup>48</sup>

Details of the transactions of merchants have to be obtained largely from records of debts in national sources as local recognisances seldom survive.<sup>49</sup> The patent rolls have evidence of York merchants indebted to London merchants, grocers and haberdashers for sums ranging from £6-£60 during the course of the fifteenth century. William Snawdon, merchant stood in debt to £8 to a London grocer in 1439; William Stokton another merchant owed debts of £60 18s 4d to the Londoner Geoffrey Feldyng, a sum unpaid at Stockton's death.<sup>50</sup> Certain letters surviving in the chancery records also throw light on the business transactions of York merchants. Paul Gillot, merchant of York for example purchased haberdashery from Thomas Abraham, leatherseller of London in the late fifteenth century.<sup>51</sup>

Very occasionally a craftsman from one of the more prestigious crafts

47. B.I., M2(4)f fo. 42; this is a register of condemnations from the court of the Dean and Chapter covering the years 1330-1338.
48. See below pp. 384ff.
49. For the use of the Coventry recognizances from the statute merchant rolls see Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a city, pp. 27-8.
50. C.P.R. 1436-41, p. 322; C.P.R. 1461-7, p. 502. Snawdon, made free in 1429, was the son of the successful pewterer Thomas Snawdon, a man who was rich enough to be elected mayor in 1427 and who died in 1438: Freemen's Reg., p. 142; Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 245v-246.
51. P.R.O., C1/382/37.



appears in the records as for example did Thomas Welles, a York goldsmith, who in the late fifteenth century owed £20 to a London merchant.<sup>52</sup> Some of these transactions may however have arisen through trade in domestic rather than imported products, as London acted also as an entrepôt between northern and southern ports.

The bulk of raw materials required for manufacture were however obtained from internal markets; this trade, although likely to have been as valuable as the import trade, is vastly more difficult to chart. Although the commodities traded in can be accurately estimated from the nature of manufactured goods and from tolls and market charges, no quantitative evidence can be presented at all.<sup>53</sup> Equally it is difficult to tell at what stage raw materials were purchased, or how influential a part middlemen played. Some indication can however be made of the ways in which craftsmen obtained their supplies and of the few options open to them in wholesale trade.

London acted as a clearing house not only for imports, but also for the internal trade in certain commodities, most noticeably tin and other non-ferrous metals.<sup>54</sup> It must be presumed that the bulk of the shipment of metals from London to the north was handled by York and other

52. P.R.O., C1/64/250.

53. Fraser, 'The pattern of trading in North East England', pp. 44-66.

54. Hatcher, English tin production and trade, p. 136.

merchants, although the prosperity of men like the Snawdons suggests that pewterers were also able to obtain a foothold in the tin trade. Some information about the way tin was distributed comes once again from the activities of John Lilling. A certain girdler John Fisse was charged in 1428 that he made studs for girdels out of 'menged metaille agayn ye ordenaunce of hys crafte'.<sup>55</sup> He said he had bought the metal from Lilling, who was then accused of 'utteryng and castyng of fals tyn menged with lede and pewer, and sellyng of it deceyvabely for gude tyn to girdelers and to bellemakers and to other persons'. Lilling's reply was that he had bought the metal in good faith in London but, rather suspiciously, did not know the name of the man from whom he bought it. As well as supplying York craftsmen, Lilling apparently acted as a distributor to craftsmen throughout the county for it was said that he had 'salde meykell swylk deceyvable tyn to bellemakers in to ye cuntre and other men whar thurgh ye cite was gretely greved sclaundered and yai harmed'.

Lead was readily accessible in York as it was mined in the Pennines and marketed at Ripon, Boroughbridge and Richmond. The lead trade apparently remained comparatively unregulated until the late fifteenth century and no attempt was made to organize it until the merchants of York began to try and establish a monopoly in lead to compensate for the losses that they had experienced in wool and cloth.<sup>56</sup>

55. English Miscellanies, p. 1. For the girdlers' regulations on metal content see Y.M.B. 1, p. 183 (1417).

56. Raistrick and Jennings, History of lead mining in the Pennines, pp. 37-8. For the importance of the lead trade see Palliser, Tudor York, pp. 186-90.

Purchasers of lead turned to a number of different sources: the Minster for example bought lead from Fountains Abbey and from individual sellers such as Henry Lambert and John West of Lynton in Craven.<sup>57</sup> A few middlemen appear in the records; the city council purchased 105 st. from William Kyam a mercer in 1442-3; Thomas Custance a goldsmith sold 66 st. of lead to the Minster in 1504.<sup>58</sup> Frequently however it was the plumber himself who acted as a supplier, as in the case of William Middleton who sold thirteen stone of lead to the Corpus Christi gild for roofing, as well as casting the same; John Towton regularly sold lead and solder to the city council in the mid-fifteenth century as well as working it for them.<sup>59</sup> The status of the plumbers is however peculiarly uncertain and it would be unwise to consider them as at all typical of craftsmen in the city.<sup>60</sup>

Iron, like lead, was mined in the Pennines, but although York had the advantage of proximity it is doubtful whether these workings provided more than a fraction of the city's needs in the later middle ages.<sup>61</sup> In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Yorkshire iron probably could supply much domestic demand, but the iron industry apparently suffered a severe contraction during the course of the fourteenth century and it seems likely that York became increasingly

57. Y.M.L., E3.5 m.1 (C. 1403), E3.6 m.3 (1403-4), E3.22 m.2 (1457), E3.23 m.2 (1457).

58. Y.M.L., E3.33 m.2 (1505); Y.C.L., C82.11 m.4d (1442-3).

59. Y.C.L., C100.3 m.3 (1500-1), C82.11 m.4d (1443), C83.1 m.3d (1445-6), C83.8 m.2d (1459-60).

60. See above p. 258.

61. Schubert, British iron and steel industry, pp. 96-7, 100; more important fields equally accessible to Yorkshire were those of Cumberland (p. 105).

dependent on imports.<sup>62</sup> Where purchases of iron are recorded in surviving accounts it is often impossible to tell if it is of local or foreign provenance. It is only infrequently that the names of merchants supplying iron to the Minster are recorded; many of these are familiar from the customs accounts: Nicholas Holgate, John Gylliot, John Lilling, John Kent and his indefatigable wife Marion, who carried on his business after his death.<sup>63</sup> A decreasing number of ironmongers are recorded in the freemen's register during the course of the period studied. Most of the ironmongers who left wills were wealthy men, equal in status to mercers; it seems reasonable to assume that much of the internal iron trade passed through their hands.<sup>64</sup>

Table 9:1: FIFTY YEAR TOTALS OF IRONMONGERS ADMITTED TO THE FREEDOM TO 1534

Date	Number
To 1300	1
1301-50	13
1351-1400	7
1401-50	5
1451-1500	1
1500-34	2

62. The one exception to the overall contraction was the production of steel, but even so, large quantities of steel were imported: Schubert, British iron and steel industry, pp. 112-5, 118.

63. P.R.O., E122/62/3, 62/9, 62/17 where they are found as general merchants. Y.M.L., E3.19 m.3 (1447), E3.25 m.2 (1471), E3.29 m.2 (1482).

64. Lambertus Tymeson described in his will as a hardwareman was made free as a mercer in 1467: Freemen's Reg., p. 186; Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 370v-371. John Lepyngton, who died in 1332, made a lengthy will with bequests of over £50 in cash: Y.M.L. D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 11-11v.

The internal trade in metals, although important, was in terms of volume and of value far outstripped by that in the three other staple commodities of the medieval town, wool, leather and food. As is well known, the evidence of the customs accounts which demonstrate the great importance of the export of raw wool in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, tends to distract attention from the highly important but very obscure problem of the supply of wool to the domestic market.<sup>65</sup> As already discussed, there was a cloth industry in York in the thirteenth century, although it would appear to have gone into decline by 1300.<sup>66</sup> The apparent poverty of the weavers by this date suggests that their freedom was very circumscribed and that they were probably obliged to buy much of their wool through middlemen. The identity of these middle men can only be guessed at. Until the early fourteenth century the wool market in Yorkshire was probably dominated by aliens purchasing for export.<sup>67</sup> By contrast the purchase of wool for local consumption may well have been conducted on a small scale basis, not only by merchants but also by men from a variety of other occupations.

The early fourteenth century saw the rapid emergence of a group of denizen wool merchants as a major force in the international wool trade; initially Beverley merchants predominated in this group, those of York running second numerically.<sup>68</sup> Some of these merchants, like John

65. Carus-Wilson and Coleman, England's export trade; Lloyd, English wool trade, pp. 80, 123.

66. See above pp. 28-9.

67. Lloyd, English wool trade, pp. 65, 128.

68. Lloyd, English wool trade, pp. 128-9.

Goldbeter and his confederates had by the 1330's become extremely wealthy.<sup>69</sup> The merchants may well have concentrated their efforts on the export market, but some at least were already supplying the cloth industry. In 1338, Walter de Kelsterne, a merchant of York, bought ten sacks of Lincolnshire wool and conveyed them to York to make cloth, as is believed'.<sup>70</sup>

The 1330's were years of particular importance in the revival of the York cloth industry.<sup>71</sup> Kelsterne's transaction suggests that the investment of mercantile capital in the industry may well have contributed significantly to this revival. Nevertheless in the first half of the fourteenth century the York weavers may still have been extensively supplied by small dealers including some craftsmen.<sup>72</sup> A few contracts survive from the 1320's which afford some examples. In 1320 Adam de Fymmer, a potter, was owed 3 stone of wool by Ralph Malherby of Holm Archiepiscopi; Richard de Blaktuft, a carpenter was owed three stone of wool by the rector of Handesworth.<sup>73</sup> An important element in the internal trade at this time seems to have been the handling of wool by clerks like for example William Pedefer, one of the Minster clergy who registered contracts for the purchase of wool in 1331.<sup>74</sup>

69. E.B. Fryde, Some business transactions of York merchants, Borthwick Institute, Borthwick Papers xxix, 1966.

70. Inq. Misc. 1307-49, p. 399.

71. See above pp. 30-32.

72. Lloyd, English wool trade, p. 128 argues that there were still a number of small exporters at this date.

73. B.I., M2(1)a fo. 54v, 58v; this is a register of condemnations similar to M2(4)f, covering the years 1315-1333.

74. B.I., M2(1)a fo. 39v, 40.

As the importance of the urban textile industry grew in the later fourteenth century, it seems reasonable to suggest that it was increasingly in the interests of the merchant class to supply the York weavers with wool. Evidence of the growing dominance of York mercers in the internal wool trade comes from the records of the justices itinerant in Yorkshire in the years 1361-4.<sup>75</sup> Information had been collected over the previous nine years concerning wool merchants who bought short from a wide variety of estates and markets in the North and East Ridings.<sup>76</sup> A very few of these were small scale purchases such as that made by the chaloner Philip de Escrick, who bought one sack from Richard Curtays of Pocklington.<sup>77</sup> Most of the transactions were undertaken by men who can be identified as leading York merchants, men like Roger de Hovingham, William Gra., Roger de Morton and John de Gisburn.<sup>78</sup> These men, as the customs accounts demonstrate, were involved in the export trade, but none dealt exclusively in wool, all were general merchants and it would seem likely that the diversity of their interests included the supply of wool to the York cloth industry.<sup>79</sup>

75. Yorkshire sessions of the peace 1361-4, ed. B.H. Putnam (Y.A.S.R.S. c. 1939).

76. Yorkshire sessions of the peace 1361-4, p. 85.

77. Yorkshire sessions of the peace 1361-4, p. 14. Escrick was made free as a chaloner in 1350: Freemen's Reg., p. 42.

78. These four merchants were all subsequently mayors of York in 1366, 1367, 1373 and 1371, 1372 and 1380 respectively: Freemen's Reg., pp. 62, 63, 67-70, 76.

79. 27 York merchants are recorded as exporting wool in the Hull customs particulars for the reign of Richard II; all of these dealt extensively in other commodities. For a description of the activities of one of the largest merchants see J.N. Bartlett, 'Robert Holme, citizen and merchant of York', Journal of the Bradford Textile Society (1952-3). The customs accounts for the reign of Edward IV show that of the 15 York men who exported wool, two thirds were still acting as general merchants.

The organization of the wool trade in Yorkshire for much of the later middle ages seems in fact to have been rather less complex than that found in the Cotswolds according to Eileen Power's classic description.<sup>80</sup> Richard Russell, a stapler and mayor of York, left in his will dated 1435, for distribution at the discretion of his executors among 'yconomos de Yorke wolde de quibus emi lanam ... xx li. Et simili modo inter yconomos de Lyndeshay xx li'; he was probably typical of York wool merchants in that he dealt directly with growers.<sup>81</sup> As the importance of small scale peasant production increased, there would inevitably have been more scope for the activities of the local wool brogger.<sup>82</sup> It would seem likely however that the York merchants maintained a closer connexion with the wool producers than did their southern counterparts largely because of the proximity of the wool growing areas to the export port of Hull; certainly there seems to be no evidence of Yorkshire middlemen of the substance and prestige of those of the Cotswolds.

Nevertheless there clearly was a place for the small middleman, the wool brogger. Regulations were passed in York in 1428 concerning

80. E. Power, 'The wool trade in the fifteenth century', in Studies in English trade in the fifteenth century, p. 52.

81. B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 439v-440. Robert Holme in his will left money to 'poor fathers of families especially those from whom I have bought wool': B.I., Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 100v.

82. T.H. Lloyd, The movement of wool prices in medieval England (Economic History Review, supplement no. 6, Cambridge 1973), pp. 27-8. Some evidence is available about the nature of farming in Yorkshire: see below pp.374-7. The best evidence for the change to livestock from arable farming comes from the West Midlands: C.C. Dyer, Warwickshire farming, 1349-c. 1520. Preparations for agricultural revolution (Dugdale Society Occasional Papers xxvii, 1981), forthcoming.



the conduct of these men to ensure that 'omnes venientes cum lana venali facient warantem universis emptoribus lanarum, quod lane sue venales erunt concordantes et eiusdem secte cum vellere superiori, et eque bene infra sicut extra in pannis in quibus lane involvuntur'.<sup>83</sup> The supposition was that most of these men were foreigners; they were only to sell wool in Thursday market and 'non vadat cum lana sua venali de domo ad domum'. The role of these middlemen was obviously crucial; how much of the internal wool trade they actually captured from the York merchants will be discussed in relation to the decline in the cloth industry. The appearance of woolmen in the freemen's register from 1413 onwards may suggest that by the mid-fifteenth century the supply of raw wool to the town had ceased to be concentrated in the hands of general merchants.<sup>84</sup>

The supply of raw material to leather workers in York was probably on a more haphazard basis than the supply of wool and gave more opportunity to small dealers in the fifteenth century.<sup>85</sup> The concentration of population in the town meant in turn a concentration of livestock. Inevitably the butchers found themselves in a commanding position in the supply not only of meat, but also of a whole series of animal by-products. The horners for example were probably dependent

83. Y.M.B. ii, p. 175. Regulations made in 1460 show that it was apparently the custom of certain York dealers, particularly the litsters, to slip out of the town and buy from these broggers before they reached the city so that they could bring in the wool without toll: Y.M.B. ii, pp. 204-6.

84. 5 woolmen were made free between 1381 and 1412, 16 between 1413 and 1430. The status of the woolman is as yet somewhat unclear as is the relationship between rural and urban woolmen.

85. This probably did not apply to the supply of lambskins which was associated with the wool market.

on the butchers for most of their raw materials, and so too were the tallow candle makers.<sup>86</sup> With respect to the leather industry butchers not only supplied hides, but also the tallow used for currying leather; the debt of £19 15s. owed by Henry de Hesill, a tanner, to John Cawod, a butcher, seems likely to have been incurred over the supply of these raw materials.<sup>87</sup> That the butchers took advantage of their position can be seen from a petition made by Coventry leatherworkers in 1494 which requested that butchers should not be allowed to sell wholesale to regrators, but to make all hides available on market days; the reiteration of this petition in 1497 suggests that such action had been ineffective.<sup>88</sup> There was also constant complaint on the part of the Coventry leather workers that butchers were selling more hides than they should to country tanners.

In addition to hides brought in on the hoof, skins in various stages of curing, fresh, salted or tanned were brought to the city.<sup>89</sup> The very high demand for these commodities is reflected in a Leicester ordinance of 1467 which required that 'every bocher of the cuntray that bryng flesshe to the market shall bryng the skynnes and talowe of the same flesshe with hem in payne of forfeyng thereof'.<sup>90</sup> It was

86. See above pp.291-2. In 1464 a complaint was made by the London horners that 'aliens have bought the great and chief stuff of English horn unwrought of tanners and butchers and carried the same overseas': 4 Edward IV c.8, Statutes of the realm ii, p. 415.
87. Y.M.B. i, p. 23 (1477). The Cawods were a rich butchering family, especially William de Cawod who died in 1390: B.I., Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 19v.
88. C.L.B. ii, p. 557, iii, p. 585.
89. Y.C.R. iii, pp. 32-3 gives the murage for the city; Y.C.R. ii, pp. 58-9 gives the regulations for the sale of leather.
90. Records of Leicester ii, pp. 288-9.

apparently not only the tanners who bought raw hides: in 1330 there is a record of a debt of 22s<sup>for hides</sup> supplied to a tanner by Robert de Ebor of Staynegate,<sup>91</sup> cordwainer. Like the glover John Newton already referred to, Robert was apparently making money acting as a middleman.<sup>92</sup> Almost no record survives of the purchase of bark for tanning. However the murage records of the city shows that bark was regularly brought into York for sale in the markets.<sup>93</sup> Few craftsmen could have afforded to negotiate directly with rural suppliers, as did Richard North who bought 'ccc quarters bark for the sum of xv li.' from William Shaw of Ledes, the money being payable in installments as the bark was delivered.<sup>94</sup>

The food market was probably the largest and certainly the most open of all the commodity markets in the city. As already discussed, York functioned not only as a local market for the sale of agricultural produce of its immediate environs; it was also the highest in a hierarchy of markets existing throughout Yorkshire.<sup>95</sup> Because York was such a large city, the area of its agricultural hinterland was necessarily extensive. However the boundaries of this hinterland and the way that the network of markets within it operated can as yet only be conjectured. There is some documentation indicating from whence York drew its food supplies, but not enough is yet known about regional specialization of agriculture to fill in the gaps in this information.

91. B.I., M2(1)a fo. 32. For the relationship between the different branches of the leather trade see above Ch. 3. B.I., M2(1)a fo. 36 records a debt incurred in 1331 from a cordwainer to a tanner for leather.

92. See above p. 356n.

93. Y.C.R. ii, p. 32; 'ylk cartfull of barke' was charged ½d.

94. North made a down payment of 6s. 8d. but found his supplier 'utterly refusyth ony such bargyn to be made: P.R.O., C1/342/52.

95. See above p. 349.

with any great confidence.<sup>96</sup>

The varied terrain of the county of Yorkshire supported almost every kind of agricultural production and there appears to have been a good deal of specialization for the market. By the mid-fourteenth century the farming of the Yorkshire Wolds was concentrated on the production of barley and sheep.<sup>97</sup> The purchase of wool from this area has already been referred to and it is reasonable to assume that a considerable proportion of York's barley came from the Wolds as well.<sup>98</sup> The royal purveyors purchased oats in the East Riding in 1304, from the canons of Howden and Beverley and from villages in the 'Merskland', the low-lying marshes near the Ouse and Humber.<sup>99</sup> The most important grain crop of the East Riding was however wheat which was grown in the lowlands bordering the Humber and particularly in Holderness along the coast.<sup>100</sup> Letters of protection were regularly granted to men bringing wheat from the East Riding to York.<sup>101</sup> Occasionally the detailed accounts of the official purveyors survive; in 1298 and 1304 for example they bought wheat in villages around Beverley and Scarborough and in Holderness.<sup>102</sup> The same was true of purchases made for Henry IV in 1399-1400.<sup>103</sup>

96. The best survey of Yorkshire agriculture is to be found in Agrarian history of England and Wales iv, pp. 28-38.

97. B. Waites, 'Aspects of thirteenth and fourteenth century arable farming on the Yorkshire wolds', Y.A.J. lli (1967), pp. 136-42.

98. The purveyance account of 1304 details the purchase of malt in and around Beverley: P.R.O., E101/12/8.

99. P.R.O., E101/12/8; Agrarian history of England and Wales iv, p. 35.

100. Agrarian history of England and Wales iv, p. 35.

101. C.P.R. 1313-17, pp. 365, 561, 1317-21 p. 28.

102. P.R.O., E101/6/38, E101/12/8.

103. P.R.O., E101/42/33.

In general the lowlands around York itself do not seem to have been so important as a wheat growing area, the principal breadcorn being rye.<sup>104</sup> Nevertheless in 1338 the royal purveyors were buying wheat in villages west and south west of York, in places such as Ledston, Fairburn and Castleford near Leeds and Spofforth, Poppleton and Askham, which lie West of York towards Wetherby.<sup>105</sup> It would seem that for the most part the demand for grain could be met within the county. Extraordinary requirements, such as those made by the army, could however send the purveyors based in York as far afield as Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire.<sup>106</sup> In 1316, a year of dearth, and again in 1321 they went as far as Norfolk.<sup>107</sup>

The western part of Yorkshire is almost entirely upland, unsuitable for arable, although the small farmer had perforce to keep some land under crops.<sup>108</sup> Farms were usually small and given over largely to the raising of livestock.<sup>109</sup> The importance of sheep farming in this area is well known; cattle farming, particularly in the upper dales was also very extensive, the Archbishop of York for example having nine

104. Agrarian history of England and Wales iv, p. 33.

105. P.R.O., E101/21/5.

106. C.P.R. 1313-17, pp. 383, 560, 1330-34, p. 414.

107. C.P.R. 1313-17, p. 540; 1317-21, p. 597. In the last resort York was well situated in import grain from the Baltic: Postan, 'Economic relations between England and the Hanse', p. 140.

108. The pre-1350 agriculture of south Yorkshire has been described by D. Postles, 'The rural economy of south Yorkshire', Northern History xv (1979), pp. 1-23. He shows the area to be of very low profitability, with peasant farms almost entirely dependent on oats for cereals.

109. Agrarian history of England and Wales iv, pp. 29-30; R.B. Smith, Land and politics in the England of Henry VIII: the West Riding of Yorkshire 1530-46, (Oxford, 1970), pp. 12-20.

'vaccariae' in Nidderdale in 1532.<sup>110</sup> Hence it is not surprising to find the poll tax returns of the West Riding in 1379 peppered with references to 'marchant de beestes'.<sup>111</sup>

Very little is known of the chain of transactions from the farmer, through the smaller markets, to the markets and fairs of York.<sup>112</sup> The 'marchant de beestes' clearly acted as a middleman in the West Riding. The East Riding poll tax of 1381 shows a surprisingly high number of men described as mercer or chapmen in the hundred of Howden, though most of these were assessed at only 6d.<sup>113</sup> These merchants were probably making a living largely from the commodity market; this is certainly implied in the trade description of Henry Fakar, brewer, butcher, merchant, from Estryngton who paid at the rate of 13s. 4d.<sup>114</sup> These local dealers either brought their goods to York or negotiated directly with tradesmen or merchants in the city. Not until the end of the fifteenth century do dealers in specific commodities appear in the York freemen's register; corn merchants for example only begin to take out the freedom

110. Smith, Land and politics, p. 20.

111. 'Lay poll tax West Riding, 1379', Yorkshire Archaeological and Topographical Journal v, pp. 3, 7, 9, 20 23; most of these entries occur in villages around Rotherham, Doncaster, Wakefield and Pontefract, places that lay on the border between lowland and upland; one such merchant however was resident in the high dales at Kettlewell.

112. Very occasionally there is evidence for the movement of livestock. In 1328-9 for example 'Herbage at the fairs of York' was granted in Galtres forest at a rate of 12d. for 120 sheep for one night: P.R.O., E101/130/10. I am very grateful to Jean Birrell for this reference.

113. 'A poll tax of the East Riding', ed. J.C. Cox, Transactions of the East Riding Antiquarian Society xv (1908), pp. 25-70.

114. 'A poll tax of the East Riding', p. 51.

regularly after 1474.<sup>115</sup> The impression obtained from those contracts for the supply of foodstuffs which survive is that many of the transactions with local dealers for grain were made by merchants; the latter certainly were the only group who could generally afford to buy in bulk. The men who were granted royal licences for purveyance or supply for the army in the early fourteenth century were usually merchants, like for example Robert de Gra, William and John de Quixley and Alan de Acastre. Only occasionally do craftsmen appear as war time purveyors; two girdlers and a tailor for example do so in the early fourteenth century. Such instances are fewer in the fifteenth century and serve to emphasise the privileged position of the craftsmen who obtained them, men like John Durant who in 1427 was ordered to provide wheat from the county of York for the household of the Chancellor, Kempe, Archbishop of York.<sup>116</sup>

Debts registered in the court of the Dean and Chapter in the early fourteenth century also provide evidence of the dealing of York merchants in the corn market.<sup>117</sup> What these records show in addition

115. Cornmerchants admitted to the freedom:

1474-80	5	1511-20	2
1481-90	4	1521-30	9
1491-1500	4	1531-34	3
1501-10	2		

The specialized cornmonger is found more frequently in London, first appearing there in the thirteenth century. Cornmongers presumably did exist throughout England in the later middle ages but Gras found that in most instances they were rural rather than urban based: Gras, The evolution of the English corn market in the sixteenth century. For the York cornmarket in the sixteenth century see Palliser, Tudor York, pp. 190-1.

116. C.P.R. 1292-1301, p. 605, 1313-17, p. 540, 1317-21, pp. 219, 597; V.C.H., City of York, p. 100; C.P.R. 1422-29, p. 424.
117. B.I., M2(1)a fo. 24v, 45.

moreover is the considerable amount of local traffic in grain undertaken by York craftsmen. Frequently they took the opportunity to market tithes on behalf of the titular rectors of rural parishes. Robert de Tyverton, a litster, together with one Thomas Abel purchased the hay and corn tithes of Fulford from St. Mary's Abbey, for which they owed 20 marks.<sup>118</sup> Thomas Belle, a sadler was owed 20 quarters of barley by the Rector of Crathorn; William de Berwyk, a cutler, and Thomas de Thorlethorpe 'barker in North Street' were also involved in the purchase of grain.<sup>119</sup> The most ambitious of such transactions recorded was that made by a syndicate with the prebendary of Ricall; 'Johannes del Grene de Ebor.', Johannes filius Ade le Couper de eadem, Adam de Popelton de Ebor' faber, Johannes de Calton de Ebor' Tinctor et Thomas de Schirburn de Ebor' carnifex' bound themselves to the prebendary 'in quater viginti libri bonorum et legal' sterlingorum pro decima garbarum et [ ]', to be paid at the following Christmas in York.<sup>120</sup>

The few inventories that survive from the fifteenth century again show the more prosperous craftsmen dealing in grain. The mason Hugh Grantham left an estate worth £149 1s 10d in 1410. Amongst his debts at the time of his death were money owed 'cuidam operario portanti ordeum iiiid.' and a payment 'pro firma unius camere in qua ordeum jacebat apud Pokelyngton, xvid'.<sup>121</sup> Sums of money owing to him included

118. B.I., M2(1)a fo. 36v (1331); Tyveryngton was made free in 1312: Freemen's Reg., p. 14.
119. B.I., M2(1)a fo. 35v (1331), M2(4)f fo. 1, 16 (1333, 1336); Belle was made free in 1310, Berwyk in 1324: Freemen's Reg., pp. 13, 22.
120. B.I., M2(1)a fo. 44v (1333); Grene was a baker: Freemen's Reg., p. 21.
121. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories; additionally he was owed £58 13s. 5d. Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1, fo. 154v.



'xxxii s. de Emma Esyngwald pro avena empta ... xx s. debitis de Agnete, uxore Johannis (Waghen de Ebor. Cutteler) pro ordeo empto' and also 'ix li de John Welburn baker de Ebor' possibly also for grain.<sup>122</sup> Amongst the huge list of debts run up by the vestmentmaker Robert Loksmith was one of £4 to 'Eliz. Walkar dowghter and executrix to James Walkar, fletcher of Yorke for whete, rye, barlye and hay which dide growe of a farmholde lyenge in Medylthorpe'.<sup>123</sup> Craftsmen who held lands in their home villages presumably could expect to profit by selling the surplus produce either in local markets or directly to the city.<sup>124</sup>

Those craftsmen, probably the vast majority, who had no property in the country still had the opportunity of grazing livestock on the common fields of the city.<sup>125</sup> Defence of these rights in the common land against attempts to restrict them led to serious rioting in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century.<sup>126</sup> However throughout the later middle ages the overstocking of pasture and the attempted monopolization of grazing land by the butchers presented an insidious but equally dangerous threat to the rest of the urban community. Eventually, as already described, the butchers were forbidden to hold grazing land within a six mile radius of the city, a restriction which still did not prevent them from building up comfortable incomes, well

122. In all he was owed £6 11s for corn supplied plus the £9 from John Welburn.

123. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1531).

124. For craftsmen with land in the country see below pp. 430-1.

125. V.C.H., City of York, pp. 498-500; Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a city, pp. 134-5.

126. V.C.H., City of York, pp. 82-3.

beyond the expectations of most craftsmen.<sup>127</sup> Very little is known of the traffic in livestock but it seems likely that the butchers purchased animals from the country dealers to fatten on their pastures close to the city. Some dealt on a large enough scale to undertake official commissions. In 1399 a writ of aid was granted to John Cawod of York 'to buy fat beasts and all other things pertaining to the office of buyer of the household'.<sup>128</sup> The accumulation of land by butchers was probably a feature of every large town in the late fifteenth century and early sixteenth century; for example one Benedict Lee had acquired pastures on the outskirts of Coventry by the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>129</sup> It was the bitter complaint of the York butchers that their freedom was hampered by legislation over landholding that did not apply in places such as Coventry and other major provincial towns.

Virtually everyone who had a small amount of spare capital seems to have trafficked in fish and the attempt of the York fishmongers in the late fifteenth century to create a monopoly against all comers has already been described.<sup>130</sup> Fish was one of the cheapest and most accessible commodities available to the small trader as deals could be made in very limited quantities requiring the minimum outlay. The account given of the fish trade in York does make it clear however that for the vast majority of craftsmen there was no opportunity to expand

127. For the wealth of the butchers see below p. 434.

128. C.P.R. 1399-1401, p. 20.

129. C.C. Dyer, 'A small landowner in the fifteenth century', Midland History i (1972), p. 7.

130. See above pp. 153-4.

their operations into the very valuable market in salt water fish.

During the course of the fourteenth century new techniques were developed for the preservation of herring which paved the way for increased trade and profitability.<sup>131</sup> Amongst the English fishermen the fleets of Scarborough, and latterly Hull and East Anglia, benefitted from the larger markets which could be reached.<sup>132</sup> The York fishmongers were however expressly forbidden to ride to the coastal ports to buy their supplies of salt water fish.<sup>133</sup> In part such a ruling was designed to prevent forstalling. It probably also worked in favour of the merchants who handled much of the salt fish trade. In 1416 two merchants, Nicholas Blackburn and John Lofthouse, were themselves given permission to set sail on a deep sea fishing voyage.<sup>134</sup> In addition to salt-water fish caught in English ships, vast quantities of herring were imported from the Scandinavian countries. Much of the trade was handled by aliens but the customs particulars for Hull reveal the large stake that the York merchants had invested in salt-fish. In contrast York fishmongers virtually never appear in the customs accounts.<sup>135</sup>

The problem of gaining sufficient capital or credit with which to begin commercial transactions was an insuperable one to most craftsmen and the area in which they could most expect to obtain a small foothold, that of the victualling trades, was the one most closely hedged around

131. P. Heath, 'North sea fishing in the fifteenth century: the Scarborough fleet', Northern History iii (1968), p. 61.

132. Heath, 'North sea fishing', pp. 57, 65-6.

133. Y.M.B. i, p. 224.

134. C.P.R. 1416-22, p. 52.

135. See above p. 152.

with regulations. Very little is known about the sources of available credit in medieval York, although it seems very probable that the Minster clergy provided a large number of loans.<sup>136</sup> The register of Dean and Chapter condemnations records for example the transactions of a tailor, Alan Segod, over the years 1315-1333; he borrowed money variously from Peter de Dene, Canon of York; Adam de Appilby, one of the Vicars Choral; and William Pedefer, the wool-dealing clerk already referred to.<sup>136</sup> He also registered a bond of 40s. with 'custodibus luminis sancti Johannis Baptiste ... quod recepit ab eisdem ad mercandura et similiter consensit et fatetur se habere de profito et emolumento dictorum xl s., viii s. argenti'.<sup>137</sup> The nature of this transaction remains obscure and there is no other record of anything like it; indeed it seems improbable that either religious or craft guilds in fourteenth or fifteenth century York were in a position to lend out money for speculative ventures. The problem for the craftsman was that he could seldom afford to pay in advance for goods; as the surviving inventories show, most men had a very limited amount of cash in hand. Inevitably therefore the lion's share of the market in raw materials went to the chapmen and the mercers who could negotiate favourable terms.

136. For Peter de Dene's career see J. Le Neve, Fasti ecclesiae Anglicanae, 1300-1541; vi Northern Province (1963), pp. 52, 54; B.I., M2(1)a fo. 3, 24v (1331).

137. B.I., Ms(1)a fo. 4v (1315).

Most of the goods manufactured in late medieval York were destined for the home market. Cloth was the only product made specifically for export, and the cloth industry was the only industry run on an entrepreneurial basis. Consequently the marketing of cloth is best considered separately from that of other products. The main problem in studying the urban cloth industry is that although the entrepreneurial nature of the industry has been established, it is never actually possible to trace the operations of a single entrepreneur from the purchase of wool to the sale of finished products.<sup>138</sup> It has already been suggested that it was the merchants who supplied much of the wool to the looms of York weavers and that indeed they had encouraged the revival of the industry in the 1330's.<sup>139</sup> Apart from chance references however, the first substantial evidence for mercantile involvement in cloth manufacture comes from the 1394-5 aulnage and from the customs accounts, documents which are concerned only with the last stage of the manufacturing process, the marketing of the cloth. The 1394-5 aulnage, as has been discussed, shows that the bulk of the cloth in York was handled for sale by mercers and drapers, and that craftsmen and weavers in particular had a very limited interest.<sup>140</sup>

A considerable amount of this cloth was intended for export, although what proportion cannot be estimated. Cloth exports from Hull undoubtedly boomed during the late fourteenth century, expanding to 17,715 cloths in the five years 1390-4; this growth was not sustained

138. See above p. 35.

139. See above pp. 368-70.

140. See above pp. 36-7.

in the fifteenth century, though exports remained for the most part good and reached 18,108 in the five years 1425-29.<sup>141</sup> The customs accounts can only afford a general impression of the volume of trade handled by York merchants for even when merchants can be identified from the customs particulars it is not possible to know whose cloth they were exporting. However some connection can be established between those who aulnaged cloth and those who exported it: of sixty-six mercers who are found in the 1394-5 aulnage account, thirty also appear in the customs accounts exporting cloth. Very occasionally craftsmen from the cloth and clothing industries appear as exporters of small quantities of cloth; Adam de Helperby a weaver exported twenty cloths in 1383 and eight and a quarter in 1398; William Collom, another weaver, exported eleven cloths in 1392.<sup>142</sup> Although only one bower, William Hillom appears as an exporter in the accounts examined for Richard II, other evidence has shown the richest amongst them to be active in overseas trade. It is therefore not altogether surprising to find four bowers aulnaging cloth in 1394-5; William Hillom himself aulnaged five cloths, John Pannal one, William de Lee ten and a half and Robert de Gaynford twenty-two and a half.

The involvement of mercers in the domestic cloth market has to be assumed as it can rarely be proved. Drapers and litsters who can be shown to have an interest in cloth manufacture, but who do not appear in the customs accounts must also be assumed to be selling mainly on the

141. See table 9:2.

142. P.R.O. E101/345/16.

Table 9:2. CLOTH EXPORTS FROM HULL; FIVE YEARLY TOTALS<sup>1</sup>

Date <sup>2</sup>	Number of Cloths
1351-5	255
1356-60	1,908
1361-65	3,468
1366-70	7,598
1371-75 <sup>3</sup>	3,074
1376-80	4,889
1381-85	19,070
1386-90	16,041
1391-95	17,715
1396-1400	17,417
1401-05	12,859
1406-10	7,571
1411-15	11,033
1416-20	11,599
1421-25	12,608
1426-30	18,108
1431-35	13,905
1436-40	15,202
1441-45	14,441
1446-50	15,521
1451-55	11,580
1456-60	8,348
1461-65	6,428
1466-70	3,559
1471-75	4,153
1476-80	13,278
1481-85	10,715
1486-90	4,195
1491-95	6,721
1496-1500	9,631
1501-05	15,977
1506-10	8,631

1. Based on Carus-Wilson and Coleman, England's export trade.
2. The account for each year runs from Michaelmas to Michaelmas; the date given is the terminal date of the accounting year.
3. The customs were farmed in 1373-4 and 1374-5.

domestic market. The drapers who aulnaged cloth in 1394-5 usually handled large amounts; John de Braithwaite accounted for as much as 134 cloths, Richard Redhude for 83. None of those drapers who are recorded as having thirty or more cloths in the aulnage account appear in the customs particulars however, an omission that cannot be entirely accidental.<sup>143</sup> The nine litsters who appear in the aulnage generally accounted for small quantities of cloth, though possibly this particular account underestimates their share in the market.<sup>144</sup>

During the late fifteenth century the broadcloth industry in York collapsed. Although rural competition must have been building up over some time, the late 1450's and 1460's seem to have marked an important turning point during which the industry in York began to run down very rapidly indeed.<sup>145</sup> The decline in York's cloth making industry raises two issues, firstly why the industry itself failed in the city and secondly why, as the textile industry continued to flourish within Yorkshire, the York merchants were still unable to profit from the export of country-made cloth.

Though the failure of the weaving industry was observed with concern by the city government, the causes of its decline were quite beyond the control of the York mercers, but lay rather in the irresistible growth of the rural industry. Rural industry had always

143. For debts of men in the country to York drapers, possibly for the supply of York cloth: C.C.R. 1429-35, p. 354, C.P.R. 1436-41, p. 217, 1446-52, p. 13.

144. See above p. 61. There is a record of a specific sale made by Thomas de Kereby, litster, who supplied Robert de Beverley, butcher, with £11 lls. worth of woollen cloth: Y.M.B. i, p. 245.

145. See above pp. 48-50.



presented a challenge to urban cloth making, although the advantages it had over urban industry are not always easy to fathom. As already argued, the subordination of the York weavers makes it unlikely that they could dictate the terms of employment within the city. Such sketchy evidence as exists also suggests that the piece rates for an ell of woollen cloth in York were extremely low.<sup>146</sup> Equally controversial is the effect which the fulling mill produced in cutting costs.<sup>147</sup> The fact that a great deal of the rural weaving industry was conducted on a part time basis, the weavers supporting themselves and their families off the land, probably gave the rural industry a flexibility that the urban industry did not have. Nevertheless this advantage had presumably always existed and does not explain why in the late fifteenth century the balance should have tipped decisively in favour of the West Riding weavers as opposed to those of York.

Other problems also remain unsolved. Why for instance should the migration of the weaving industry from the towns into the country vary so much in time in different parts of the country? Moreover in Yorkshire, although it was clearly the West Riding industry which proved the severest threat to York, documentary evidence has shown that much of the wool handled by York merchants was from the Wolds and from Lindsey. How much of this finer East Riding and Lincolnshire wool was still handled by York merchants in the late fifteenth century, whether

146. See above p. 43.

147. See above p. 81.

for export or for home manufacture remains unclear.<sup>148</sup>

The answers to these problems must remain speculative as not enough is yet known either of the origins of rural industry or of the structure of the internal wool trade in Yorkshire. However one of the most crucial issues would seem to be a change in the pattern of distribution of raw materials and manufactured goods. A pre-requisite of the development of an entrepreneurial system was the accumulation of capital. In the relatively remote and poor areas of the West Riding, such investment was unlikely to be provided by the merchants of York, so that the exploitation of its commercial potential had to await the emergence of local entrepreneurs. It seems possible that the main impetus for the accumulation of capital among local men came from the profound changes experienced in rural society after the Black Death. The extension of pastoral farming, particularly among small holders was one of the most noticeable changes in agricultural practice in the later middle ages. A second fundamental change may have been the accumulation of holdings among small tenant farmers, frequently from among the wealthier peasantry.<sup>149</sup> The accumulation of resources may have enabled some of these men to establish themselves as woolchapters and to begin operations as clothiers. By 1379 there were already quite a number of farmers in the upper dales distinguished as franklins, for example those in the villages north of Skipton such as Calton,

148. All that can be known for certain is that there was a very serious fall in the total wool exports from Hull in the late fifteenth century: Bartlett, 'Some aspects of the economy of York', pp. 132-4, 'Expansion and decline of York', p. 29.

149. The full extent of the accumulation of holdings by the mid-sixteenth century is described in Smith, Land and politics, pp. 73-6, 97-8.

Giggleswick and Gargrave.<sup>150</sup> The poll tax returns of the West Riding also provide evidence of wool dealers. In Wakefield, Robert Wolchapman, merchant, paid the tax at a rate of 40d.; there was an 'emptor lanarum' resident in the remote village of Arnecliffe, high in the dales near the Lancashire border.<sup>151</sup> The returns also refer to a large number of 'drapurs', usually men who functioned on a small scale and who seldom paid more than 12d. in tax; they were located not only in larger market towns such as Ripon and Wakefield but also in smaller villages such as Denton and Embsay near Skipton.<sup>152</sup>

The clothiers of the West Riding never operated on a scale equivalent to those further south, but it seems likely that as a whole their influence grew significantly during the course of the fifteenth century. They were it seems in a position to take advantage of the increasing supply of wool, wool which moreover was held at depressed prices for most of the fifteenth century.<sup>153</sup> The fundamental change that had occurred was that rural industry was no longer dependent on urban merchants, but that a distribution system had developed within the county.

One of the greatest strengths of the West Riding industry was the nature of its product, a cheap coarse cloth for which there was an

150. 'Lay poll tax West Riding, 1379', Yorkshire Archaeological and Topographical Journal vii, pp. 154, 162, 165.
151. 'Lay poll tax West Riding, 1379', Yorkshire Archaeological and Topographical Journal vi, p. 150, vii, p. 153. They paid 40d. and 4s. 4d. in tax respectively.
152. 'Lay poll tax West Riding, 1379', Yorkshire Archaeological and Topographical Journal vi, pp. 150, 325, vii, pp. 20, 166.
153. Lloyd, The movement of wool prices in medieval England, pp. 25-6.

expanding English market in the fifteenth century.<sup>154</sup> The putting out system lent itself well to the mass production of this type of cloth. Equally, distribution into the market could be most satisfactorily handled by West Riding clothiers from local centres such as Leeds and Halifax, eliminating the York merchants completely. The distribution of these cheap cloths outside the West Riding seems to have been handled increasingly by London merchants and as they came to take more cloth direct, so too they began to take over the supply of dyes and mordants.<sup>155</sup> The increasing centralization of the most lucrative foreign trade in London is another issue altogether, but it clearly had important repercussions for internal trade by directing a disproportionate amount of goods into the hands of Londoners to the detriment of provincial merchants.<sup>156</sup> York as a result was coming more and more to be bypassed in the cloth trade.

The impressive strength of the York tailors' gild and its merger, or more probably, absorption of the drapers in the sixteenth century is probably indicative of the extent to which merchants and drapers were being cut out of the cloth market in York itself as well.<sup>157</sup> Reference has already been made to the tailor John Carter who died in 1485 with a shop full of West Riding and southern cloth.<sup>158</sup> His inventory shows

154. The same was true of the Exeter cloth industry: Carus-Wilson, The expansion of Exeter at the close of the Middle Ages, p. 8.

155. Heaton, Yorkshire woollen and worsted industries, p. 146; Bartlett, 'Some aspects of the economy of York', p. 182.

156. Carus-Wilson, 'Merchant Adventurers organization', pp. 175-6. For the triumph of the Hansa after 1475 see Postan 'Economic and political relations between England and the Hanse', pp. 97, 137; this fierce competition must have exacerbated the crisis already developing in York.

157. See above pp. 77-8.

158. See above pp. 49-50.

that he owed 20s. to a York draper, William Chimnay, presumably for cloth; however he owed twice as much direct to a certain 'Bothe' of Halifax.<sup>159</sup> One of the corollaries of a lively rural cloth market must have been to break to some extent the hold that the mercers and drapers had over the supply of cloth to York craftsmen.

Most of the manufacturing and victualling industries in York were not however organized on an entrepreneurial basis. The master craftsman in these industries bought his raw materials, manufactured his goods and sold them for what profit he could.<sup>160</sup> This profit was likely to be limited for two reasons; firstly there was a tight check kept on the price of certain commodities particularly in the victualling business; secondly the market into which the craftsman could sell directly was usually restricted to the city of York and its immediate environs. The cutlers' ordinances of 1483 contain the rule that 'every cutler of thys cite shall frome hens forward pay and answer for hys chapman foren every yere, to the sustentacion of the pagiant of the said occupacion; that is to say, for every chapman accordyng to hys delyng'.<sup>161</sup> This statement implies that some cutlers had servants acting as distributors of their goods to a wider market than that provided by the city. No other craft has such a regulation and it would seem unlikely that many craftsmen could afford to employ a travelling salesman; for the most

159. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1485).

160. A few crafts always tended to be subordinate to others and thus found a substantial part of their employment to be on a piece work basis, such as for example the carriers in relation to tanners and cordwainers. The preceding chapters have shown that these connections were constantly changing.

161. Y.M.B. i, p. 135.

part craftsmen sold almost exclusively from their shops, even hawking in the city being strictly forbidden.<sup>162</sup> Other regulations apparently restricted the movements of those craftsmen who did travel into the country when they had the time available in order to sell their goods. The cordwainers' ordinances of 1417 contain the ruling 'nullus dicti artificii, per se nec per aliquem de suis, presumat exire civitatem ad ecclesias parochiales ad vendendum ibidem vel ad earum ostia vel cimiteria sotulares vel alias res artificio suo pertinentes'.<sup>163</sup> In 1401 the spurriers and lorimers were forbidden to 'travaile ove nul overaigne appurtenant a lour mystier pur vendre as foires et merchez plus procheinz que xl leukes de la dite citee Deverwyk, forsquez tantsoulement a les foirs de Dernyngton'.<sup>164</sup> Similar restrictions were imposed on the girdlers in 1417: 'na man of the gyrdelercraft passe oute of this cite unto na market bot alanely unto cried opyn faires, to sell any girdeles by retaile or holesale, within the space of xxxii mile'.<sup>165</sup>

Undoubtedly the more successful craftsmen were able to travel some distance to sell their goods; surviving inventories indicate that it was not uncommon for such men to own horses, presumably

162. E.g. cardmakers, cutlers and parchmentmakers: Y.M.B. i, pp. 81, 135; ii, p. 128.

163. Y.M.B. i, p. 188; as this regulation complies with other restraints on Sunday trading it probably had the consent of the majority of master craftsmen in the interests of restricting unfair competition.

164. Y.M.B. i, p. 104; Dernyngton is most probably Darlington.

165. Y.M.B. i, p. 183.

packhorses.<sup>166</sup> Nevertheless on the whole it seems fair to assume that city craftsmen did nearly all their selling within the city. Obviously the more highly skilled the craft, the more likely a craftsman was to find his particular services demanded. The reputation of certain bellfounders was widespread as was that of the most skilled glaziers and masons.<sup>167</sup> Goldsmiths and armourers were more likely than most craftsmen to maintain personal contacts with customers outside the city: in 1319 Robert son of Thomas de Pontefract of Wyvelsthorpe acknowledged a debt of 66s. 8d to Richard Stut, armourer of York, possibly for made to measure armour.<sup>168</sup> For the most part however, craftsmen who sought to sell directly into a wider market than that provided by the city must have depended on chance in catching the custom of visitors, either individuals or officials from religious and other bodies. Occasionally records of their more mundanē business transactions do survive. In 1397-8 for example the Selby Abbey accounts record the payment of 24s. to a cordwainer John de Brighton 'pro botis et aliis necessariis'.<sup>169</sup>

In contrast it seems probable that most of the goods sold outside the city itself were distributed by merchants and chapmen. It must be admitted that the mechanics of this distributive system cannot be known.

166. E.g. Robert Fawcett, pewterer (d. 1460), John Grene, glover (d. 1525), Thomas Lytster, hosier (d. 1528), John Stubbs, barber (d. 1451), John Tennand, founder (d. 1516), Robert Tankard, girdler (d. 1439): B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories.
167. V.C.H., Yorkshire ii, p. 450; see above pp. 221-2, 227, 253.
168. C.C.R. 1318-23, p. 207.
169. 'An account roll of Selby Abbey 1397-8', Y.A.J. xv (1900), p. 415. Selby Abbey used a York barber as well: see above p. 280.

The difference between merchant and chapman is unclear but probably defines the scale of their operations.<sup>170</sup> The surviving inventory of Thomas Gryssop, a chapman, shows his stock to have been impressively varied: his shop contained cutting cloth, caps and hats, leather goods, canvas, knives, paper, spices, boxes and coffer. He also owned over £36 worth of wool.<sup>171</sup> Gryssop was clearly no itinerant peddler; possibly the distinction between his status and that of a merchant was that he largely sold retail whereas a merchant also sold wholesale.

Much of the business of York merchants and tradesmen must have been with their counterparts in small towns and it was these latter who would in turn carry the distribution of goods into the remotest villages.<sup>172</sup> Evidence of the transactions of these small town dealers is elusive; one such contract may be represented by a debt of eleven marks owed to John Marton, citizen and cordwainer of York by Adam de Wyntryngam of Hedon in Holderness, chapman or merchant.<sup>173</sup> Usually the record of such debts concerns transactions between merchants of York and chapmen or merchants from other parts of the county. In many cases the debt may have been incurred over the supply of such raw materials as dyes or steel, but there is usually no means of telling. Such evidence as there is does however reflect the thorough

170. In the years 1300-1534 the freemen's register contains the names of 276 chapmen as opposed to 1683 merchants.

171. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories; Test. Ebor. iii, pp. 101-4.

172. For the operation of local markets in the sixteenth century see Palliser, Tudor York, pp. 182-3.

173. C.P.R. 1436-41, p. 321. John Marton was a fairly wealthy man who dealt in cloth as well as shoes and who was charged in 1430 with evading the aulnage; he died in 1444 and left a lengthy will: Bartlett, 'Some aspects of the economy of York', p. 80; B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 93.



hold that the merchants had over the regional market for much of the period.<sup>174</sup>

Most of the surviving debts were incurred by dealers from towns in Yorkshire, though there are occasional reference to Carlisle, Newcastle, Nottingham and Coventry.<sup>175</sup> It is probable that York was exercising a market function mainly for the county of Yorkshire and it seems relevant in this connexion that the evidence cited by Dr. Bartlett suggests that the vast majority of immigrants to York were also drawn from within the county.<sup>176</sup> The extent of the market in any particular product must have been constantly changing in accordance with a variety of factors such as the degree of specialization involved in manufacture; for example most metal ware was likely to have had a wider regional distribution than leather goods. Other variables were the fortunes of particular industries, most obviously the cloth industry and the growth of demand within rural society for 'consumer durables'. In connexion with this third point there is evidence that local manufacture was either failing to meet demand, or was being seriously undercut by foreign goods. By the early sixteenth century the customs particulars for Hull are full of references to imports of manufactured goods, particularly copperware, described as 'batre'.<sup>177</sup> The native merchant John Halton for example

174. C.P.R. 1405-8, p. 128, 1408-13, p. 438, 1446-52, p. 198.

175. C.P.R. 1405-8, p. 128, 1416-22, p. 94, 1422-9, p. 245, 1436-41, p. 457, 1452-61, p. 241.

176. Bartlett, 'Some aspects of the economy of York', pp. 210-2 shows that of those men whose previous place of residence was enrolled in the freemen's register, between 1351-1400 76% were from Yorkshire and between 1401-1500 73%. For an analysis of 16th century immigrants see Palliser, Tudor York, pp. 128-9.

177. Bartlett, 'Some aspects of the economy of York', pp. 127-30; V.C.H., East Riding i, pp. 65-7; Hatcher, English tin production and trade, p. 107; see above p. 191.

imported in 1511, 5 cwt. of fryingpans as well as 1½ cwt. earthen ware pots and 1000 trenchours.<sup>178</sup> More varied cargoes were carried by alien merchants; the James of Dieppe arrived early in 1518 with a cargo ranging from pots, shovels and sherman-shears, through glass and lanterns to images and 'payentyd books', two dozen of them worth 6s 8d.<sup>179</sup>

As overseas trade came to be concentrated in London, so too did the distribution of imported manufactured goods. The direct dealings of the West Riding clothiers with London have already been referred to. Londoners also seem to have invaded the York markets: the glovers' ordinances of 1475 require that anyone selling 'any glovez, pursez or keybandes called Ynglissh ware shall paye yerely to the pagende maisters of the saide pagende ande crafte ... alle the brother and susters of the fraternyte and gilde of the Blissed Trinite ... maynteined by the northaundes of the said City all way except, and also alle maner of men sellyng London ware likewise'.<sup>180</sup> As early as 1446 Thomas Gryssop, a chapman, had in his possession eleven London coffers, seven London glasses, two London purses and a London girdle; he also owed money to four Londoners, one of them a capper, another a spicer.<sup>181</sup> By the early sixteenth century Londoners complained that they were being molested, whilst in pursuit of honest commerce, by York merchants, who presumably felt that their own hold on the city's commercial life was

178. P.R.O., E122/60/3 fo. 28v.

179. P.R.O., E122/202/4 fo. 9v. Legislation against a long list of such imports was first passed in 1463-4: 3 Edward IV c.4., Statutes of the realm ii, pp. 396-8.

180. Y.C.R. iii, p. 181.

181. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories.

threatened.<sup>182</sup>

The advent of Londoners in the north in the late fifteenth century was just one of a number of changes which profoundly affected the commercial life of York. It was connected with another crucial issue, the decline of overseas trade from the port of Hull and the recession experienced by the York merchants. There was still money to be made in overseas trade; the value of the goods exported by York merchants in the year 1525-6 has been estimated at £2,502.<sup>183</sup> This sum was however only a fraction of the value of trade of York merchants in 1398-9 which has been estimated at £10,387. The vitality of York's trade in the late fourteenth century, which made the city into so important a commodity market, must have done much to encourage manufacture. By the sixteenth century it would appear that direct imports of raw materials to York and its hinterland were being extensively supplemented by those transmitted through London. Although industry could therefore still get its supplies, the position of the York merchants was being undermined; because the industry of medieval York had been so dependent on the vitality of its merchant class in the supply and distribution of goods, the recession experienced by these merchants was likely to have had a vitiating effect on urban manufacture despite the rapidly growing rural market.

182. Y.C.R. iii, pp. 22-3. A letter of protection was sent from the Lord Mayor of London complaining of the treatment received at York by London merchants; the reply of the York merchants implies however that much of this particular conflict arose over the lead trade: Y.C.R. iii, p. 24. Attempts had already been made to try and prevent Londoners from selling to anyone but freemen of York: Y.C.R. i, p. 38.

183. Bartlett, 'Expansion and decline of York', pp. 31, 27. For the overseas trade of York in the 16th century see Palliser, Tudor York, pp. 194-200.

\* The industrial structure of the city had been altered in other ways as well. The range of goods manufactured in the city does not seem to have been significantly reduced. York remained an important commercial, ecclesiastical and administrative centre in which there would always be a demand for basic leather and metal goods. Additionally York could supply pewter, silver, fine tapestry and luxuries such as glass which were not generally available elsewhere. Nevertheless there had been a further shift in emphasis away from primary production towards secondary manufacture and the provision of services.<sup>184</sup> The most significant change was of course the exodus of the cloth industry, bringing as it did not only the demise of a series of subsidiary industries, but also with the reduction of the population, an inevitable contraction of those crafts which existed to provide townsmen with food and clothing.

The citizens of York who profited most from the changes in trade and industry appear to have been the middle men who combined small scale trading with manufacture. The butchers are an obvious example of a group who prospered not only in York but in most provincial cities; so too are the tailors. Perhaps the most typical however are the haberdashers, who occur in such numbers in the early sixteenth century. The sudden appearance of a new 'trade description' in the freemen's register is always suspicious as it can easily reflect a mere change in terminology. However in this case the alteration probably also represents a fundamental change in the pattern of York trading. It was

184. The number of craftsmen in the metal, leather and textile industries in secondary production had risen to over 70% by 1451-1500.

probably the haberdashers as much as the merchants who acted as dealers in the numerous barrels of unidentified 'dryware' and haberdashery which are recorded in the Hull customs particulars. That these men were often small scale dealers is confirmed by the fact that many of them combined haberdashery with a craft.

Table 9:3: HABERDASHERS ADMITTED TO THE FREEDOM 1301-1510

<u>Date</u>	<u>Haberdashers</u>	<u>Haberdashers with another occupation</u> <sup>185</sup>
1301-50	2	
1351-1400	1	
1401-50	4	
1451-90	5	
1491-1500	1	6
1501-10	31	12

Richard Plompton can be taken as a typical example of one of the more successful of these men; in 1505 he was made free as a goldsmith and haberdasher; by 1517 his business had expanded enough to make him an importer of herring and wine, madder and 200 fryingpans.<sup>186</sup>

By the early sixteenth century York's function as a market had

185. The other occupations practised by haberdashers were: innholder 4, 'professions' 3, yeoman 2, gentleman 1, chapman 2, one each of painter, goldsmith, weaver, tailor, capper.

186. Freemen's Reg., p. 229; P.R.O., E122/202/4/ fo. 6v, 7.

changed very considerably. Of course some things continued unaltered. The city always acted as a distribution centre for foodstuffs.<sup>187</sup> Other raw materials also passed through the city; investment in lead for example had become a vital element in York's economy.<sup>188</sup> The wool trade however had dwindled to a shadow of its former self and with it had gone the woollen industry. In other ways the type of manufactured goods sold in York had altered. Large quantities of London made goods were now being made available to the new consumer market that had grown up in the fifteenth century. The emphasis in the sale of these and indeed of locally made goods seems to have shifted away from wholesaling to retailing. It was not the draper who dominated the textile industry but the tailor. The growing status of men like barbers and innholders who were involved mainly in service industries emphasises the growing significance of consumer demand. The reduction of the scale of trading, emphasising York's role as a regional rather than an international market, seems to have created a forum in which the richer craftsmen were offered a somewhat better prospect in commercial competition with the merchants.

187. Palliser, Tudor York, pp. 190-2.

188. Palliser, Tudor York, pp. 189-90.

## Chapter 10. CRAFTSMEN IN THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF LATE

### MEDIEVAL YORK

The government of late medieval York and the way in which its commerce was handled, ensured the subordination of the city's craftsmen and their dependence on the merchant class for most of the period under consideration. The present chapter attempts to establish the consequences of this subordination in terms of the wealth, life style and the social status of the craftsmen and to chart, as far as possible, the way that their position changed with the rise and fall in York's economy. The evidence is necessarily disparate and a number of different topics have had to be woven together to produce an overall picture of the social standing and the prospects of the craftsmen. Firstly evidence is adduced for the wealth and property holding of the craftsmen, to suggest how this compared with other classes of society, the evidence being drawn largely from wills and tax returns. Secondly, drawing again mainly on wills and inventories, an attempt is made to establish the life-style of the craftsmen. Thirdly an assessment is made of the prospects available to the sons of craftsmen, the size of portion they could expect to inherit and the kind of occupation they took up. Finally the chapter surveys the geographical distribution of the crafts throughout the city and the social and commercial connections established by the craftsmen.

The wealth and the social status of the craftsmen were inextricably intertwined. It has been claimed that 'rank in the

medieval city was determined by wealth'.<sup>1</sup> To a large extent this was probably true, but it seems to be the case that office holding, the real mark of social acceptability was not always available on the basis of wealth alone. As already seen certain categories of craftsmen, notably the butchers and tanners, were excluded from office and therefore from the status that they might thereby have acquired. The assumption has sometime been made that social mobility was increasingly restricted in the difficult economic circumstances of the early sixteenth century and that in contrast the fifteenth century was fairly free of class barriers and full of opportunities for the aspiring craftsman.<sup>2</sup> It is doubtful if this was the case and indeed, as will be argued here, it seems very probable that the opposite was true in York. Overt discrimination against certain crafts in the sixteenth century may well be evidence of the fact that they now presented a genuine challenge to the ruling élite, whereas conversely the total control exercised by the merchant class from the mid-fourteenth to the mid-fifteenth centuries effectively subordinated the vast majority of craftsmen. Unfortunately no quantitative assessment of the social structure of York can be made before the early sixteenth century when the survival of the lay subsidy returns provide some evidence for the distribution of wealth.<sup>3</sup>

1. Carus-Wilson, 'Towns and trade', p. 251.
2. Reynolds, English medieval towns, p. 162; Bridbury, Economic growth, pp. 58-9.
3. For the use of the tax returns of 1327 see below pp.421-2; the 1377 poll tax returns for York only survive in part and those of 1381 have been shown to be very corrupt: 'Lay poll tax York, 1381', ed. Bartlett, pp. 6-8.



The lay subsidy returns for York for 1524 ostensibly reveal a social structure very similar to that of other provincial towns. In York 38% of the assessed population were wage earners, compared with 40% in Norwich and 46% in Exeter.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, 7% of the assessed population of York owned 50% of the wealth, comparable again in Norwich where 6% of the assessed population owned 60% of the wealth. The tax returns clearly imply a social hierarchy with a very broad base and a very narrow pinnacle. However attempts to make a closer analysis of wealth and status from tax returns are liable to be misleading. It has been suggested that the majority of wage earners assessed at £2 should be grouped with the untaxed paupers, and that together this class accounted for some two-thirds of the urban population who subsisted on the poverty line.<sup>5</sup> Work on Coventry has shown however that a number of men credited with nil assessments in the subsidy were heads of households with living-in servants and manifestly not paupers.<sup>6</sup> Moreover as basic wage rates were 4d. for labourers and 5d. to 6d. for craftsmen, an annual income of £2 was probably a gross underassessment for many working men.<sup>7</sup>

The disparities between rich and poor are clear from the tax returns, their social significance is not. Nor can conclusions be drawn from the 1524 tax returns be projected with any confidence back

4. Palliser, Tudor York, p. 137; Hoskins, Provincial England, p. 83. For a detailed breakdown of this return see below table 10:4.
5. Reynolds, English medieval towns, p. 161; Hoskins, Provincial England, p. 84; Pound, 'Social and trade structure of Norwich', pp. 50-55.
6. Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a city, p. 132.
7. A 39 week working year would mean wages of £3 8s. for a labour and nearly £5 for a craftsman: Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a city, pp. 132-5.

into the later middle ages. Writing of the 1520's, Phythian-Adams says 'the years of crisis which ushered in the Tudor price inflation also witnessed the making of the Tudor poverty problem.'<sup>8</sup> In many other ways the city of the 1520's was radically different from that of the later middle ages; most fundamentally the commerce and industry of York had undergone something of a transformation. In consequence the nature of poverty, of social mobility and of the distribution of wealth in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were probably very different to those of the early sixteenth century.

Tax returns have been used here to give evidence of the wealth and status of craftsmen. More reliance has however been put on evidence from other sources, particularly that of wills and inventories. The wills of craftsmen, being for the most part very brief, give usually an insight more into the state of mind of a testator than into the state of his finances; but the sheer numbers of surviving wills makes it possible to draw some conclusions from them.<sup>9</sup> Before dealing with the content of wills however there is the more fundamental problem of who made them to be considered. Maitland believed that practically all persons, regardless of status or wealth could make a will in medieval England.<sup>10</sup> Gottfried has claimed that some 70% and more of the <sup>adult male</sup> population of East Anglia in the fifteenth

8. Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a city, p. 134.

9. See table 10:1.

10. Pollock and Maitland, History of English law 6th ed. ii, p. 360.

Table 10:1: SURVIVING WILLS OF YORK CRAFTSMEN c. 1320-1534<sup>1</sup>

CRAFT	-1400		1401-50		1450-1500		1501-34		TOTAL	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
<u>Textile</u>										
Broudster			1						1	
Capper			2		3		3		8	
Draper	7	3	17	6	8	2	4		36	11
Hosier			2		1		3	1	6	1
Litster	4	2	17	4	21	1	7		49	7
Semster		1		2						3
Silkwoman				1						1
Sherman	3		4		3		4		14	
Stolemaker					1				1	
Tailor	5	1	29	1	21	1	10		65	3
Tapiter	3		7		6	1	4		20	1
Vestmentmaker			1		1				2	
Walker	2		6	1	5		2		15	1
Weaver	1	3	21	2	20	1	4		46	6
Total	25	10	107	17	90	6	41	1	263	34
<u>Leather</u>										
Bookbinder	1	1			1		1		3	1
Bucklermaker	1				1		1		3	
Cordwainer	4		22	8	19	1	12		57	9
Currier					1				1	
Girdler	3		8	2	5		2		18	4
Glover	2	1	7	1	5		3		17	2
Parchmentmaker	1				3		1		5	
Patoner			1						1	
Saddler	1	1	9		4	1	3		17	
Skinner	5		16	5	5		1		27	5
Tanner	5	1	13	4	28	3	15		61	8
Total	23	4	76	20	72	5	39		210	29

1. Wills are tabulated according to the occupation in which a craftsman died, which was not necessarily that in which he was made free, the only exception to this has been in the few cases where a man, once a craftsman, made his will describing himself as a mercer (see below p.436); these men have been included under the crafts in which they were made free.

Table 10:1 (continued)

CRAFT	<u>-1400</u>		<u>1401-50</u>		<u>1450-1500</u>		<u>1501-34</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
<u>Victualling</u>										
Baker		1	19	1	21	1	6	1	46	4
Butcher	3	1	20	5	19	1	11		53	7
Cook	1		8	1	7	1	2		18	2
Fisher	1		24	1	15		7	2	47	3
Miller					3		4		7	
Pulter					1				1	
Saucer	1		8	1	1		1		11	1
Brewer			3	1	2		1		6	1
Innholder							4		4	
Taverner	1								1	
Vintner	1	1	10		6		4		21	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>19</b>
<u>Metal</u>										
Armourer	4		2		2		3		11	
Bellmaker/potter	1		11	1	1		1		14	1
Founder			2	1	3		2		7	1
Bladesmith	1		2		1		2		6	
Cutler	2		8		2		1		13	
Camsmith			5		2				7	
Goldsmith	3	5	9	5	7	1	7		26	11
Ironmonger	2		1		1		1		5	
Moneymaker			3	1					3	1
Painter	3	1			1		1		5	1
Pewterer			3		12	1	2		17	1
Pinner			4	1	3	1	1		8	2
Smith			8	1	5		6		19	1
Locksmith					2	1			2	1
Spurrier/lorimer			1		6		1		8	
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>28</b>		<b>151</b>	<b>20</b>

Table 10:1 (continued)

CRAFT	-1400		1401-50		1451-1500		1501-34		TOTAL	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
<u>Building</u>										
Carpenter <sup>2</sup>	5		16	1	7	1	1		29	2
Carver/joiner					2	1	1		3	1
Glazier			6		6		2		14	
Mason	4		12	1	3		2		21	1
Plummer			1		4		2	1	7	1
Tiler/plasterer			8		1		3		12	
Tilemaker					1				1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>		<b>43</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>5</b>
<u>Miscellaneous</u>										
Apothecary	5	1	3		3		2	1	13	2
Leech	1		1		1				3	
Barber/chandler	5	2	11	3	15		15		46	5
Bower	1		14		3		3		21	
Fletcher	1	1	4	1	6	1	1		12	3
Stringer			2		1				3	
Cooper	3		6		3				12	
Horner			1		1	1	5		7	1
Roper			2		2		1		5	
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Total all crafts</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>421</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>344</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1048</b>	<b>118</b>

2. And associated crafts, e.g. shipwright, cartwright.

century left wills, but the statistical basis of his calculations seems very uncertain.<sup>11</sup> Dulley in his work on Kentish towns concluded

that perhaps up to half of the adult population did not have enough goods to justify leaving a will.<sup>12</sup> Evidence from York suggests that

among craftsmen no more than 20% at a maximum left wills.<sup>13</sup> The York

figure has been arrived at by calculating how many of the craftsmen

made free between 1401-1500 made wills that survive or are recorded

by the existence of probate acts.<sup>14</sup> Many reservations have already

been expressed about the accuracy of the freemen's register as a guide

to the numbers of men working in York and the number of master

craftsmen who did not take out the freedom is quite unknown.

However as it is quite clear from table 10:2 that the vast majority

of will makers were free, the calculation made on the basis of freemen

11. A.S. Gottfried, Epidemic disease in 15th century England, (Leicester, 1978), pp. 22-3. Gottfried uses three variables in his calculations, an assessment of the population in 1460 derived from Russell's figures from the 1377 poll tax, the proportion of the adult male segment of the population, and the mortality rate; he has then compared the potential number of will makers against the number of surviving wills and probate acts. He admits that his totals can be altered according to the accuracy of these three variables. However a further crucial factor that seems to be omitted is the replacement rate. Thus for Bury St. Edmunds he assesses a population of 2934 in 1460, a death rate of 40/1000 and the adult male segment of the population as 21%. Between 1460-1480 approximately 321 men over 25 left wills in Bury giving, on Gottfried's calculation, a will making population of 66%. As no account is taken of replacement rates, and given the massive immigration into every medieval town, it seems highly unlikely that all 321 testators are already resident in Bury in 1460.
12. A.J.F. Dulley, 'Four Kentish towns at the end of the middle ages', Archaeologia Cantiana, lxxxi, (1966), pp. 95-6.
13. A higher proportion of mercers probably made wills but in contrast there must have been a very large number of unskilled labourers who did not.
14. See table 10:2.

Table 10:2: PROPORTION OF WILLS SURVIVING FROM FIFTEENTH CENTURY YORK BY CRAFT

Craft	Total free 1401-1500	Free 1401-1500 and will or probate act survives	Will makers as % of freemen	Will makers not in the freemen's register	
				d. 1401-1440 <sup>1</sup>	other
<u>Textile</u>					
Capper	51	5	10		1
Draper	83	16	19	3	1
Litster	189	32	17	3	3
Sherman	103	8	8	1	
Tailor <sup>2</sup> /Hosier	522	64	12	4	4
Tapiter	128	10	8		3
Walker	164	13	8	1	1
Weaver	336	34	10	7	1
Other	29	2	7	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1656</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>
<u>Leather</u>					
Cordwainer	327	54	17	2	1
Currier	48	1	2		
Girdler	76	10	13	1	
Glover	105	16	15		1
Saddler	70	19	27	1	1
Skinner	146	16	11	2	
Tanner	224	46	20	2	2
Other	90	4	5		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1086</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>
<u>Victualling<sup>3</sup></u>					
<b>Total</b>	<b>1117</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>15</b>
<u>Metal</u>					
Armourer	41	4	10		
Potter/Founder	76	8	11	4	
Bladesmith	22	5	23		
Cutler	45	10	22	2	
Cardmaker	40	5	13		1
Goldsmith	107	15	14	2	2
Pewterer	71	16	23		1
Pinner	54	7	13		
Smith/Locksmith	191	18	9	1	
Spurrier/Lorimer	54	8	15		
Other	99	3		1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>

Table 10:2 (continued)

Craft	Total free 1401-1500	Free 1401-1500 and will or probate act survives	Will makers as % of freemen	Will makers not in the freemen's register	
				d. 1401-1440	other
<u>Building</u>					
Carpenters <sup>4</sup>	357	18	5	2	1
Glaziers	44	9	20	1	3
Masons	75	16	21	2	
Plasterers/Tilers	116	6	5		
Plumbers	34	5	15	1	1
Others <sup>5</sup>	100			1	
Total	726	54	7%	7	5
<u>Miscellaneous</u>					
Apothecary/Doctor	25	6	24	1	1
Barber/Chandler	138	30	22		
Bower	83	13	16		
Fletcher	45	9	20		
Cooper	51	7	14		
Other	101	3	3	3	1
Total	443	68	15%	4	2
Total all crafts	5828	731	13%	67	47

1. Most will makers who died before 1440 can be shown to have been freemen even when they do not appear in the freemen's register; they probably took out the freedom by patrimony before this category began to be recorded in 1397.
2. This figure includes 7 tailors who made wills describing themselves as drapers.
3. Victualling crafts cannot be categorized more closely as so many men took out the freedom in one branch of the food trade and died in another. 9 of these 160 did not take out the freedom as victuallers at all.
4. Includes sawyers, carvers, shipwrights, cartwrights, turners and joiners.
5. Mostly labourers.



appears to lead to an acceptable approximation. It should be noted that, although on the basis of surviving wills, the will makers only account for 13% of freemen, twenty years are missing from the probate registers of the exchequer court which would account for approximately 182 wills. Added to the surviving 731 wills this would bring the percentage of will makers up to 16%.

It may well be the case that many York citizens did not trouble to make a will because the customary threefold division of movables between the testator, his wife and his children was closely observed in the city.<sup>15</sup> Immovable property was in contrast not subject to the same strict division and was freely devisable by will; however only a small proportion of craftsmen were likely to have owned property.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore the evidence suggests that, as all transfers of property had to be enrolled in the city court, transactions in land were frequently completed independently and in advance of making a will, and the will itself therefore merely enumerated indentures that had already been drawn up in relation to the distribution of property. As a result most of the wills examined tend to be affirmations of personal aspirations of the testator, expressed in bequests to religious bodies or public works, together with a few personal legacies either in cash or of particular valuable or cherished objects.<sup>17</sup> In

15. For a discussion of probate rules in York see below, Appendix B.

16. Y.M.B. ii, p. 253; M.M. Sheehan, The will in medieval England (Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, Studies and texts vi, Toronto, 1963), pp. 275-7. M. de W. Hemmeon, Burgage Tenure (Harvard, 1914), p. 131. For a further discussion of probate practice in York see Appendix B.

17. Sheehan, The will in medieval England, p. 135.

these circumstances it seems likely to expect that the more affluent a man was, the more probable it was that he would make a will. In 1390 the Exchequer court noted of one John Witteby who had recently died 'because he was poor he did not make a will'.<sup>18</sup> Obviously in an age of high mortality and sudden illness and death, to die intestate did not always imply poverty, but it seems reasonable, using a large sample, to suggest that the proportion of men in particular crafts who left wills can give an indication of the relative affluence of that craft.

There are difficulties involved in using the figures set out in table 10:2. The problem of years missing from the register has already been mentioned. In addition figures for certain crafts, some of the metal crafts for example, are calculated from too small a sample to be reliable; for other crafts, most obviously in the textile trade, the freemen may well have been a minority among the craftsmen. However in this respect it is significant that despite the fact that only the most prosperous walkers and weavers were likely to be free, the proportion of these men who made wills was still very low. If the drapers and litsters are excluded from the textile workers, the contrast between textiles and leather workers is in fact fairly pronounced, which may well reflect the relative freedom and hence profitability with which the latter worked. The exception among the leather workers appears to be the carriers who, as already described, were employed mostly on piece work. Amongst the metal workers the contrast between the expanding craft of pewterers, where wills survive

18. B.I., Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 15v.

for 23% of all craftsmen who were free, and the smiths where wills survive for only 9%. is probably a fair comment on the different wealth and status of the two groups of craftsmen. The same applies to the contrast found in the building trade between plasterers, tilers and carpenters on the one hand and the glaziers on the other, for the former group only 5% of all freemen have wills that survive, for the latter, 20%.

The fact that most wills were primarily expressions of the aspirations of the testator means that they cannot provide an accurate impression of individual wealth; a wealthy man might well leave a will of uninformative brevity. However some impression of relative affluence can be obtained from using a large sample of wills. Most men were piously inclined during their last illness and made the best financial disposition that they could for their souls in the form of masses be sung or charitable uses. In the wills of men, bequests to individual friends and relatives were also frequently made in the form of cash. Many testators did specify certain valuables such as silver, armour and tools; household goods such as kitchenware and beds on the other hand, although they are mentioned, do not occur nearly so frequently as outright cash legacies.<sup>19</sup> The total bequeathed in both religious and individual legacies affords some idea of what the testator expected to be able to provide for his portion, one third or one half of the estate as the case might be, and reflects his assessment of his total resources.

21.

19. The same does not apply to women's wills, see below pp. 442-3.

The wills of craftsmen have been divided into three categories, those making bequests of under £5, those including bequests of between £5 and £19 and those including bequests of over £20. The results are shown in table 10:3. To avoid distortion, crafts where less than ten wills survive have been omitted.<sup>20</sup> Not surprisingly, the only crafts where testators made bequests of over £20 with any regularity were the drapers, litsters, vintners and apothecaries. Of the craftsmen proper, the record of the butchers is the most impressive, with nine of them, some 17% of all those whose wills survive, indicating considerable possessions. Even the most unlikely occupations could produce one or two who did spectacularly better than their fellows; among the shermen Thomas Easingwold assembled a fortune large enough to allow him to become mayor; he was however the only sherman in the later middle ages who has left any trace of affluence at all.<sup>21</sup> A better impression of the financial prospects afforded by a particular occupation is therefore obtained by taking the total number of craftsmen making bequests of over £5. The sums involved are admittedly by any standards unspectacular, but they imply that the testator made a sufficiently good living to afford him a standard of comfort well above that of the majority of his contemporaries.

Excluding the semi-mercantile crafts of drapers, litsters, vintners

20. For example of five parchmentmakers whose wills survive, one, John Wodhall, d. 1478, left well over £20 in legacies; he was probably unrepresentative of his craft and his inclusion in category 3 would only be misleading: B.I., Prob. Reg. 5, fo. 128.

21. Easingwold was mayor in 1423; his will made in 1428 shows him to have amassed a considerable fortune, partially invested in urban property: Skaife, 'Civil officials', B.I., Prob. Reg. 2, fo. 531.

**Table 10:3: WEALTH OF CRAFTSMEN; BEQUESTS IN WILLS**

	Craft	Total number of wills	Bequests of over £20		Bequests of £5-20		Total bequests of £5 and over	
			No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<u>Textile</u>	Draper	36	12	33	11	31	23	64
	Litster	50	13	26	9	18	22	44
	Shermen	14	1	7	-	-	1	7
	Tailor/Hosier	71	3	4	12	17	15	21
	Tapiter	17	2	12	4	23	6	35
	Walker	17	-	-	2	12	2	11
	Weaver	46	1	2	5	11	6	13
<u>Leather</u>	Cordwainer	58	5	9	8	14	13	22
	Girdler	17	-	-	3	18	3	18
	Glover	16	3	19	3	19	6	38
	Saddler	18	1	6	1	6	2	11
	Skinner	27	3	11	5	19	8	30
	Tanner	61	3	5	12	20	15	25
<u>Victualling</u>	Baker	46	2	4	11	24	13	28
	Butcher	52	9	17	12	23	21	40
	Cook	18	-	-	3	17	3	17
	Fisher	48	3	6	8	17	11	23
	Saucemaker	11	-	-	4	36	4	36
	Vintner	21	6	29	8	38	14	67
<u>Metal</u>	Armourer	11	-	-	2	18	2	18
	Potter/Founder	21	1	5	6	29	7	33
	Cutler	13	1	8	-	-	1	8
	Goldsmith	27	3	11	7	26	10	37
	Pewterer	17	2	12	4	23	6	35
	Smith	18	1	6	4	22	5	27
<u>Building</u>	Carpenter	27	-	-	3	11	3	11
	Glazier	14	1	7	2	14	3	21
	Mason	22	2	9	2	9	4	18
	Tiler/Plasterer	11	1	9	1	9	2	18
<u>Miscellaneous</u>	Barber	20	-	-	4	20	4	20
	Chandler	26	2	7	5	19	7	27
	Bower	21	3	14	3	14	6	29
	Fletcher	12	-	-	5	42	5	42
	Cooper	12	1	8	4	33	5	42
	Apothecary/Leech	16	4	25	4	25	8	50

and apothecaries, the crafts where over 30% of the wills which survive contain bequests of over £5 are the tapiters, glovers, skimmers, butchers, saucemakers, potters and founders, goldsmiths, pewterers, fletchers and coopers. An uneven distribution of wealth must have been evident in every craft, appearing more or less pronounced according to the organization of production and the nature of supply. If a craft depended heavily on piece work the gulf between rich and poor members of the craft was likely to become more exaggerated. This was probably true of the skimmers for whilst a number of skimmers left relatively extensive legacies, the overall proportion whose wills survive is small, only 11%.<sup>22</sup> The same would seem to apply to the tapiters where only 10% of all freemen have wills surviving. In contrast a high proportion of all enfranchised pewterers left wills, some 23%, and of these men over 35% left legacies of over £5.

At the other end of the scale, the craftsmen whose wills are significantly lacking in cash bequests are the shermen, walkers, weavers, carpenters, sadlers and cutlers. Of these the first four are crafts where a depressingly low proportion of men appeared to have made wills anyway; once again these occupations were characterized by work on a piece rate or wage basis, rather than by independent masters.

The impression of relative wealth obtained from testamentary evidence can be supplemented by that of the probate inventories which

22. See above table 10:2.

survive for twenty-two craftsmen.<sup>23</sup> One of these inventories dates from the 1390's, thirteen from the fifteenth century and eight from the early sixteenth century up to 1534. Despite the smallness of the sample, the surviving inventories cover a wide range of occupations and prosperity, although only one, that of the mason Hugh Grantham, shows the deceased to have been really affluent. In 1410 Grantham left assets to the value of £207. 15s. 3d. with a further £60. 19s. 8d. owing to him in 'debita non clara' which presumably would never be collected. His own debts came to £58. 13s. 5d., leaving a residue of £149. 1s. 10d. from which funeral and other expenses of £46. 11s. 10d had then to be subtracted.<sup>24</sup> Grantham was exceptional and, as has already been suggested, his considerable wealth may have been built up through his dealings in grain as well as by his skills as a master builder.<sup>25</sup> No other inventory shows a residue exceeding £42: sums of £12-30 were more common and in at least six cases expenses exceeded assets leaving a deficit.<sup>26</sup> Three craftsmen who left around £30 after

23. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories. The inventories of John Bradford, mason (d. 1438), John Carter, tailor (d. 1485), John Collan, goldsmith (d. 1490), Hugh Grantham, mason (d. 1410), John Stubbs, barber (d. 1451), Robert Tankerd, girdler (d. 1439) and John Tennand, founder (d. 1516) have been partly edited and transcribed in Test. Ebor. iii, pp. 47-53, 95-6, 96-7, 118, 300-4, iv pp. 56-60, v, pp. 79-80. The inventories of William Thwaite, founder (d. 1512) and Robert Loksmith, vestmentmaker (d. 1531) have been transcribed in Appendix A.
24. Other expenses include medical expenses and provision for his soul.
25. See above pp. 379-80.
26. The two richest craftsmen after Grantham were another mason, Robert Crackall, (d. 1395) who left, after the deduction of debts, over £41 with more than £16 owed to him in debita desperata, and John Stubbs, a barber (d. 1451) who left nearly £39 with £3 owing in debita desperata. For a comparison with the wealth of London grocers and merchants as assessed from wills and orphanage records see Thrupp, Merchant class, p. 110 which shows that 88% of estates were worth over £50 and 76% over £100.

the subtraction of debts can perhaps be regarded as typical of the more substantial members of their crafts: John Grene, a glover, who died in 1525, Thomas Litster, a hosier, who died in 1528 and William Thwaite, a founder, in 1512.<sup>27</sup> A tailor, John Carter, also apparently left a residue of £31. 1s. 4½d. when he died in 1485; however the men who made the inventory reported that 'the dett buke, ye whylk we suld have sett in ye inventore, acordyng to your commandment, we wyll your maistryschipe undyrstand yai will not suffyre us nor the prasarse to have it, nor to sett no part of it in ye inventore peiseably'.<sup>28</sup>

The surviving inventories show very clearly that the York craftsmen worked largely within a system of trading on credit. Few inventories record substantial sums of cash; John Tennand for example had 33s. 4d. and William Thwaite, 14s; Thomas Overdo a baker who died in 1444 had seven marks, Thomas Catton a weaver who died in 1413 had 41s. 8d.<sup>29</sup> In contrast many ran up substantial debts for working materials, domestic necessities, rents and gild subscriptions. Thomas Baker, a stringer, died in 1436 leaving goods to the value of £6. 11s. and debts amounting to £5. 3s. 2d., including the rent of his house, subscriptions to two gilds and money owing to a mercer and to a brewer.<sup>30</sup> Rather more spectacular were the debts of Roger Burton,

27. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories; Appendix A. The lay subsidy of 1524 assessed Litster at £10: 'Subsidy roll for York and Ainsty', ed. E. Peacock; Y.A.J. iv (1875-6), p. 172.
28. Test. Ebor. iii, pp. 303-4.
29. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1516, 1512, 1444, 1413).
30. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1436).



a skinner, unfortunately not detailed but most presumably contracted in the course of his business. He was worth at his death a nominal £303. 7s. 3½d., but his executors only had actual possession of £141. 4s. 3½d., as £162. 2s. 7d. worth of debts were still outstanding. Burton himself was in debt for £95. 13s. 5d; once these debts were paid and funeral and other expenses met the executors found that 'summatio solucionum excedit receptas suas ... xvii li. xiiis. lld. ob. qu.'

<sup>31</sup> The debts of Thomas Overdo, a baker, which amounted to over £27 began with 25s. 9d. owed to a miller.<sup>32</sup> The most revealing and comprehensive list of debts however comes from the inventory of the vestmentmaker Robert Loksmith. Loksmith had at one time been a fairly wealthy man; he was assessed at £16 in the 1524 lay subsidy; he rented a large house with five rooms in addition to the shop, kitchen and 'bowlting house' and his home was well furnished; he had possessed at least one piece of silver worth 45s., although this was already in pawn at the time of his death in 1531.<sup>33</sup> Either ill health or ill fortune must have destroyed his livelihood for his inventory shows his shop to have been startlingly empty and Loksmith himself in debt to a Wakefield man for silk and to 'Alys Legh ... for feyne hemyng of broderye'. He owed money to his apprentice and to a servant, and had run up debts for goods, clothes, shoes, pots and pans; he had not

31. The Burton family fortunes were probably undermined by a double tragedy as Roger and his wife both died in 1428 and Roger's inventory also accounts for the funeral expenses of his son who died within the year: B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1428).

32. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1444): Overdo's assets were £26. 14s.

33. See below Appendix A; 'Subsidy roll for York and Ainsty', p. 172.

paid either for the shoeing of his horses or for 'a hoole yere shavyn'.

Although wills and inventories remain the main source of information on the wealth of the craftsmen of fifteenth century York, evidence from tax returns throws some light on their relative prosperity in the fourteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The lay subsidies of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries are however of limited use.<sup>34</sup> Only a few of the returns survive and the quality of these has been questioned. The basis of the assessment is unknown; moreover the leading men of the community acted as assessors, the amounts of money involved are suspiciously low, and in some cases can be shown to be wildly inaccurate.<sup>35</sup> There is the additional problem of trying to identify the occupations of those who were taxed and it is in fact impossible to do this for most of the men mentioned in the 1301 returns. However the occupations of about 60% of those listed in the 1327 subsidy can be identified, which makes it possible to draw some tentative conclusions from this evidence.<sup>36</sup> Though the sums at which

34. Those for York which have been published are: 'Yorkshire lay subsidy, being a fifteenth collected 30 Edward I (1301)', ed. W. Brown (Y.A.S.R.S. xxi, 1896), pp. 117-121, (hereafter cited as 'Lay subsidy 1301'); 'Lay subsidy rolls 1 Edward III, North Riding of Yorkshire and the City of York', ed. Col. Parker, Miscellanea ii (Y.A.S.R.S. lxxiv, 1929), pp. 160-9 (hereafter cited as 'Lay subsidy, 1327').
35. J.F. Willard, Parliamentary taxation on personal property 1290-1334, (1934), pp. 35-6, 219-223; Glasscock, Lay subsidy of 1334, pp. xv, xxvi.
36. 292 names can be positively identified in the freemen's register, 60 more have trade descriptions attached to them and 110 have been given trade names only, which at this early date are probably a reliable guide to occupation: 'Lay poll tax York, 1381', ed. Bartlett, p. 1. Identification of names through the freemen's register is bound to distort the results, for a great many leather workers were made free at this time and hardly any textile workers.

men were assessed are clearly an underestimate they afford some basis for comparison. The majority of those assessed at over £5 were either mercers or had no trade ascribed to them; of these latter at least half had been chamberlains and the assumption has been made that these members of the governing élite were primarily involved in trade and not manufacture.<sup>37</sup> The prosecutions of 1304 demonstrate that many of these men were occupied to some degree in the victualling trades so it is not surprising to find four other victuallers, a taverner, a butcher and two fishers recorded as having over £5 worth of property.<sup>38</sup> The only other group that were well represented in the highest category were the metal workers of whom six were assessed at over £5: two potters, a furbur, a batur, a cutler and an ironmonger.<sup>39</sup> The vast majority of craftsmen who can be identified were assessed at under £2. Only a handful of crafts contained any significant numbers of men assessed at more than £2: amongst such men there were five tanners, seven skimmers, five butchers and four armourers.

The poll tax returns of 1377 survive for only a few parishes in York.<sup>40</sup> Those of 1381 have been shown to be a deliberate fraud, with the sums levied on each parish based on the lay subsidy returns of 1357, and bearing little or no relation to the actual wealth of the inhabitants.<sup>41</sup> There is also evidence of massive omission of servants

37. Of the 57 men assessed at over £5, 31 had no trade ascription, 7 were described as mercers or apothecaries.

38. Prestwich, York civic ordinances, pp. 22-28.

39. Furburs and batur were armourers: O.E.D.

40. '1377 poll tax returns', ed. Leggett.

41. 'Lay poll tax York, 1381', ed. Bartlett, pp. 7, 12.

from the returns. In all the returns cannot be used as a guide to the distribution of wealth in late fourteenth century York. This means that the only other taxation record that can be analysed for the present purpose is the 1524 lay subsidy. Reservations have already been expressed about the accuracy of these returns. Additionally comparison between the numbers of tax payers recorded on surviving subsidy returns for sixteenth century York shows a remarkable variety, one that throws doubt on the comprehensiveness of the assessment.<sup>42</sup> The returns cannot therefore be used as an accurate guide to absolute wealth. They can however afford some information on the comparative wealth of different sections of society, for although occupational descriptions are not given in subsidy returns, approximately 65% of those taxed on goods can be identified from the freemen's register.

When the distribution of income from goods is analysed by craft it becomes apparent that only a minority of craftsmen enjoyed any real affluence; table 10:4 shows this analysis by craft. There is no means of telling accurately what relation these assessments had to the craftsmen's standard of living; unfortunately too few inventories survive for men who appear to the subsidy. The majority, about 75%, of those taxed however appear to have had to be content with a fairly modest living, with goods up to the value of £9, though in most crafts, excepting the builders, it was only a minority who were in fact assessed at the lowest rate. Amongst the tanners for example, whereas three men were assessed at £2, seven were assessed at between £3 and £9 and five at over £10; rather less well off were the cordwainers, twelve of whom

42. V.C.H., City of York, p. 121.

Table 10:4: 1524 LAY SUBSIDY; INCOME FROM GOODS, DISTRIBUTION BY CRAFT<sup>1</sup>

	£2	£3-9	£10-19	£20-49	£50-99	£100+	Total
<u>Textiles</u>							
Capper	2	1					3
Draper			2	1			3
Hosier		3	1				4
Litster	1	4		1			6
Sherman	1	2					3
Tailor	7	13	4	1			25
Tapiter	1	6	1	1	1		10
Walker	1						1
Weaver	3	4		1			8
Vestmentmaker		1	1				2
Total	16	34	9	5	1		65
<u>Leather</u>							
Cordwainer	12	9	5	1			27
Girdler	2	2					4
Glover	5	2					7
Parchmentmaker	1		2				3
Saddler	2	2	1				5
Skinner	1	3	1				5
Tanner	3	7	3	2			15
Total	26	25	12	3			66
<u>Victualling</u>							
Baker	5	8	1	1			15
Butcher	6	2	2	4			14
Cook		1		1			2
Fisher	4	2	1	1			8
Miller	2	2	1				5
Saucer		1					1
Vitteler			1				1
Brewer		1					1
Innholder	1	3	3	1			5
Vintner	1			1			2
Total	19	17	9	9			54

Table 10:4 (continued)

	£2	£3-9	£10-19	£20-49	£50-99	£100+	Total
<u>Metal</u>							
Armourer	1	1					2
Founder	1	1					2
Potter		2					2
Goldsmith			2				2
Painter	2	1					3
Pewterer	1	2	3	1			7
Pinner		1					1
Smith	3	3					6
Locksmith	1						1
Bladesmith		1					1
Spurrier	1						1
Tinker	1						1
Total	11	12	5	1			29
<u>Building</u>							
Carpenter	3	1					4
Carver		1	1				2
Glazier	2						2
Mason		1					1
Plummer	1						1
Shipwright	1			1			2
Tiler	2	1					3
Tilemaker			1				1
Total	9	4	2	1			16
<u>Miscellaneous</u>							
Barber/Chandler	3	5	2	2			12
Bower		3		1			4
Cooper		1	1	1			3
Fletcher	1	2		1			4
Horner	2	1	1				4
Total	6	12	4	5			27

Table 10:4 (continued)

	£2	£3-9	£10-19	£20-49	£50-99	£100+	Total
<u>Mercantile and Transport</u>							
Mercer/Grocer	2	13	9	15	1	1	41
Haberdasher	2	2	1	2		1	8
Mariner			1	1			2
Carrier, etc.	5	1					6
Total	9	16	11	18	1	2	59
Other occupations <sup>2</sup>	3	2	3	2		1	11
Women	18	14	7	4			43
Not known <sup>3</sup>	59	40	21	9		1	130
Total	176	176	83	57	2	4	498

1. Taken from 'Subsidy roll for York and Ainsty' ed. E. Peacock, Y.A.J. iv (1875-6), pp. 170-191.
2. Professional, clerical and gentlemen.
3. Includes those to whom craft ascriptions are doubtful.

were assessed at the lowest rate, nine at between £3 to £9 and six at over £10. Few crafts however appeared in any great numbers in the categories of £10 and upwards. Those that did were the large leather crafts of cordwainers and tanners; the tailors and tapiters among the textile workers; the butchers and the innholders from among the victuallers; the pewterers and the barber-chandlers.

Two further types of evidence can be used in assessing the relative affluence of the York craftsmen; their property holdings and, a subject connected with the possession of property, the endowment of chantries. Property owning among craftsmen can only be described in fairly general terms for inquisitions post mortem on craftsmen's property are very rare.<sup>43</sup> Certain wills give a very detailed account of urban and rural property, but in many cases the bulk of the estate had already clearly been disposed of in a series of deeds and indentures.<sup>44</sup> The fact that such transactions are still mentioned by the testator makes it fair to assume on balance that if a man had urban property some reference to it was likely to appear in his will. A total of 1048 craftsmen left wills which survive; of these 176 have some reference to property or rents owned and a further thirty-five refer only to leaseholds, though the duration and value of these latter

43. One such is given in Y.C.L., House books ii, fo. 174-5; this lists the property of Edward Fisshe, tailor, who owned 7 messuages in Colliergate, 2 in Coney Street, 1 in Stonegate, 1 in Monkgate worth in all 44s. a year, held in free burgage.

44. As for example was the estate of John Newland, tailor (d. 1442). He bequeathed to his wife a life interest in an annual rent of 8s. 4d. from 2 messuages in Coney Street and on her death it was to go with his other lands and tenements 'as is drawn up in a separate indenture': B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 44.



cannot usually be estimated. The distribution of property as recorded in wills tends to confirm the pattern of wealth already found; the crafts where over 20% of the surviving wills make reference to property ownership are litsters, tailors, skippers, tanners, butchers, cooks, armourers, goldsmiths and fletchers.<sup>45</sup> At the other end of the scale, unsurprisingly, only six builders' wills contain evidence of property owning, out of a total of eighty nine.

Because ecclesiastical institutions owned so much property in the city centre, a proportion which probably increased during the later middle ages, the property owned by craftsmen tended to be located south of the river Ouse, or in the Walmgate area or beyond the walls altogether in the suburbs.<sup>46</sup> Only four craftsmen's wills mention property owned in Stonegate: the carver Thomas Drawsword who died in 1529; John Bouch, apothecary, whose will is dated 1420, Richard Tunnok and Alan Alnewyk, goldsmith.<sup>47</sup> When Alnewyk's wife died in 1376 this latter property also went into the hands of the church in the form of a chantry endowment. There are only a handful of references to houses

45. Wills of drapers also contain a high proportion of property owners but they cannot be strictly counted as craftsmen.

46. See for example the Vicars Choral chamberlains and rent rolls and the fabric rolls of York Minster: Y.M.L., Vn, D/C E3. For the use made of the former see Bartlett, 'Expansion and decline of York', pp. 28-32. Of the 211 testators who left property or leases, 52 specified that all or part of it should go to the church either immediately or on the death of their spouse.

47. B.I., Prob. Reg. 9 fo. 448; Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 200-201v, 8, 59-60. In addition John Rabuk, skinner claimed property in Stonegate which he was not in possession of at the time of his death: B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 661 (1429).

in Petergate, Coney Street and other streets in the city centre.<sup>48</sup> By contrast messuages and tenements in Walmgate are mentioned twenty-five times and properties owned by craftsmen in Micklegate are referred to fifteen times, in North Street fourteen times, in Skeldergate seven times and Fishergate ten times. The property holdings of William Barton, a prosperous skinner demonstrate this fairly well; he lived in the parish of St. Margaret, Walmgate where he owned three tenements, but he also rented a tenement from the mayor and council in Petergate on a long lease.<sup>49</sup> The extensive list of properties owned or leased by the walker Richard Thornton comprised tenements on either side of Walmgate Bar and a dovecot in Walmgate, together with property in Gate Halmsley, Donington and Water Fulford.<sup>50</sup> Thomas Easingwold, the sherman who achieved mayoralty, mentioned three blocks of land in his will situated in Walmgate, St. Laurence parish and St. Denis parish; he also had a tenement in Notgaile.<sup>51</sup>

Very seldom is the value of property, either inside or outside the city actually given, so it is dangerous to conclude too much about the part played in property ownership in the accumulation of capital. Even in the case of the merchant class, the acquisition of urban property on a large scale is unlikely to have contributed significantly to the capital formation of the owners.<sup>52</sup> Nor is there much evidence

48. Many wills do not specify the location of property so the city centre may be somewhat underrepresented.

49. B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 408-9 (1434).

50. B.I., Prob. Reg. 4 fo. 215v-216v.

51. B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 531-532v; Notgaile lay between the Foss and Fishergate: Palliser, 'Medieval street names', p. 13.

52. R.H. Hilton, 'Some problems of urban real property in the middle ages', Socialism, capitalism and economic growth, ed. C.H. Feinstein (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 534-6.

that craftsmen owned industrial property, either their own workshops or those rented to others. Most references to such ownership refer to mills, such as that owned by John Long, miller, who bequeathed to his son John his messuage on Castle Hill, together with 'molendinum meum equinum ibidem edificat' cum omnibus equis meis eidem molendino'.<sup>53</sup> Adam Silbarne, a tanner who died in 1529, seems to have owned a horsemill, but it was more common for a craftsman to lease terms in a mill than to own one.<sup>54</sup> John Towthorpe, a butcher who died in 1481, had taken terms in a windmill on Heworth Moor belonging to the mayor and council; Matthew Cotes, a cordwainer, leased a windmill from the nunnery of Clemethorpe.<sup>55</sup> Apart from mills references to industrial premises are very rare; however William de Abbathia, a girdler, received a rent of 5s. a year in the early fourteenth century from a garden and a tenter-ground in the parish of St. Margaret.<sup>56</sup>

The majority of properties mentioned in craftsmen's wills were in York itself or the suburbs of the city. Occasionally there are bequests of tenements in other towns. John Chesman, chandler and barber, recently arrived from Durham, still held land in Durham at the time of his death in 1509.<sup>57</sup> John Porter, a mason, had terms in a house in Lincoln, probably acquired in the course of his travels.<sup>58</sup> References to rural holdings often apply to inherited property in the testator's

53. B.I., Prob. Reg. 5 fo. 429v (1493).

54. B.I., Prob. Reg. 9 fo. 447v.

55. B.I., Prob. Reg. 5 fo. 50-50v, 9 fo. 114v-115.

56. Yorkshire Deeds ix, pp. 178-9. For the ownership of bakehouses see above p. 133.

57. His will is transcribed in Appendix A.

58. B.I., Prob. Reg. 4 fo. 109.

home village. For example Richard Scorton, a baker who died in 1445, bequeathed six roods and one bovate of arable land in Bishop Wilton to his wife and chaplain;<sup>59</sup> John Custance another baker inherited some property in his home village of Skirpenbek and purchased more of the family holdings from his relatives.<sup>60</sup> It seems clear however that some craftsmen systematically acquired rural holdings near to the city of York. Most obviously it was in the interests of butchers to purchase or rent pastures, but it was not only the victuallers who bought and leased land near York.<sup>61</sup> Thomas Gudebarn, a carpenter who died in 1473, either bought or inherited three acres of land in Clifton, just north west of York; he leased a further two and a half acres in the same area and two tenements in the adjoining suburb of Bootham.<sup>62</sup> John Duffield, a skinner, bequeathed to his wife in 1394 a tenement with four selions of land in Fulford which he had purchased from John de Selby, spicer.<sup>63</sup>

It was fairly common for the mercantile élite, both in York and elsewhere, to invest some of the profits of trade in rural real estate, partly as a sound investment and partly with an eye to moving upwards socially into the ranks of the country landowners.<sup>64</sup> Social ambitions

59. B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 101; Bishop Wilton is a village east of York on the edge of the Wolds.
60. B.I., Y/ASP F7 (Deeds relating to the Skirpenbek lands, late fifteenth century).
61. See above pp. 141-2.
62. B.I., Prob. Reg. 4 fo. 189. Rather larger were the holdings of Robert Allerton, tanner who in 1439 had at least 30 acres in Clifton: B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 579.
63. B.I. Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 68.
64. V.C.H., City of York, pp. 45-6, 112-3; Thrupp, Merchant class, pp. 125-30; In the late fifteenth century increasing numbers of townsmen are found taking up holdings on the estates of the bishops of Worcester: C.C. Dyer, Lords and peasants in a changing society (Cambridge, 1980), p. 314.

on this scale were quite beyond most craftsmen and their purchases of rural holdings more basic and utilitarian. The evidence of wills is too imprecise to demonstrate the building up of rural estates but the history of a few craftsmen's families shows the transition to landed society being made through wealth and marriage. The grandson of William Snawshill, a goldsmith, Seth Snawshill was made free of the city in 1488 as a gentleman; he married Elizabeth, daughter and heiress of William Davill esquire of Bilton, near York.<sup>65</sup> Wermbold Harlam was an immigrant, made free in 1386; he made a couple of very judicious marriages, firstly to the daughter of a wealthy goldsmith and secondly to Laurentia, daughter of William Selby, mayor of York.<sup>66</sup> Through Laurentia he acquired considerable property and amongst his own children his daughter Hawisia married John Wandisford, gentleman.<sup>67</sup> It is by no means accidental that both the Harlam and Snawshill fortunes were made from the craft of goldsmith. Goldsmiths consistently appear amongst the wealthiest York craftsmen, the fortune of Richard Wartre, who died in 1465, being the most spectacular.<sup>68</sup> One of the most characteristic expressions of a large fortune was the foundation of a perpetual chantry, and again, though only seven

65. Freememn's Reg., p. 213; The register of the guild of Corpus Christi in the city of York, ed. R.H. Skaife (Surtees Society lxxvii, 1871), pp. 91, 122, 201; Y.M.B. iii, pp. 228-30.

66. Details of his marriages appear in his own will and those of his first two wives: Freemen's Reg., p. 84; B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 668 and 636, 583; Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 131.

67. Harlam's relations with his son in law were extremely poor and he attempted to ensure that on his daughter's death all the property she inherited would revert to Laurentia's family, the Mowbrays, and not go to the Wandisfords. As might be expected the will was contested: Y.M.B. iii, pp. 49-50; B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 668, 636.

68. See above p. 183.

craftsmen can be proved to have founded chantries in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, two of these were goldsmiths, Richard Wartre and Alan Alnewyk.<sup>69</sup> The majority of chantry foundations were made in the fourteenth century; a contraction of numbers in the fifteenth century reflected increasingly difficult economic circumstances rather than lack of belief in the value of chantries themselves. Not unexpectedly therefore of the craftsmen who endowed chantries, only Wartre did so in the fifteenth century. Those who, with Alnewyk, founded them in the fourteenth century were Richard Tunnock, bellfounder and potter (1328), Robert Ampilford, an ironmonger (1378), Robert Barneby a butcher (1378), Robert Swetmouth, a tanner (c. 1350) and John de Stayngate, a saddler (1368).<sup>70</sup>

Despite the disparity of the types of evidence which have been assembled to demonstrate the wealth of the craftsmen, certain conclusions are fairly evident. The distribution of wealth between crafts in the city altered significantly between the early fourteenth and the early sixteenth centuries. Excluding the victuallers, who at this date were often equated with merchants, the most successful craftsmen of the early fourteenth century were the metal workers, especially potters and armourers, the latter prospering most probably from the current wars with Scotland. These metal crafts gradually lost ground through the succeeding two centuries; by the early sixteenth century the leading metal workers, who were indeed among

69. Dobson, 'Foundation of perpetual chantries'; B.I., Prob. Reg. 4 fo. 115v-116v; Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 59-60; C.P.R. 1461-7, p. 520.

70. Dobson, 'Foundation of perpetual chantries', pp. 26, 34.

the leading craftsmen, were the pewterers.

Two other crafts which are fairly prominent in the early fourteenth century records should also be singled out, the tanners and the butchers.<sup>71</sup> The craftsmen in these two industries were consistently successful; large numbers of them left wills with sizable bequests; they owned or leased a more than average amount of property; a butcher and a tanner even founded chantries. Their success emphasises once again that the availability of raw materials, without the agency of merchant middlemen was crucial to the prosperity of craftsmen.<sup>72</sup>

The surviving evidence, particularly that from wills, demonstrates the prosperity which accrued to entrepreneurs employed in the cloth trade; drapers and litsters appear regularly among the richest citizens in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The same is also true of other craftsmen who, it would appear acted as small scale entrepreneurs. This was the case with the tapiters; the majority of tapiters appear to have been without resources or prospects, a minority did very well indeed and were numbered among the leading citizens of the early sixteenth century. Of course there was always a considerable disparity in the fortunes of the members

71. Tax returns for other towns reveal much the same story. In Wallingford for example the butchers, tanners and cordwainers were among the most numerous crafts in the taxable population in the 13th century: Hist. MSS. Comm. 6th Report, pp. 576-8; V.C.H., Oxfordshire iv, p. 36 describes the importance of tanners and cordwainers in 12th and 13th century Oxford: see above p.100.
72. Surviving Lincoln wills suggest that by the early 16th century tanners and cordwainers in the Lincoln diocese, especially in the smaller centres, were men of substance: Lincoln wills i, 1271-1526, ed. C.W. Foster (Lincoln Record Society v, 1912), pp. 49-50, 84-85, 93-94. The will of John Pereson, butcher, is transcribed in Appendix A.

of the same craft. However, outside the cloth industry, certain other crafts show a particular imbalance between a majority of poor craftsmen and a minority who were extremely rich. In the fourteenth century, the skimmers' craft supported a few very wealthy men who probably dominated the manufacture of fine furs. The same was probably true to a lesser extent of the goldsmiths, the leading members of which craft were spectacularly wealthy. It seems likely that a similar disparity existed within the tailors' craft, particularly by the early sixteenth century when the leading tailors were equated overtly with drapers.<sup>73</sup>

By the early sixteenth century the most successful craftsmen were numbered for the most part in the clothing, victualling and service industries: tanners and even some cordwainers, tailors and tapiters, butchers, innholders, barber-chandlers and pewterers.<sup>74</sup> The question remains, how great a gulf existed between these successful craftsmen and the merchant class. Table 10:4 shows that in 1524 about 40% of the merchants who can be identified were assessed for tax purposes at under £10. Even if these are gross underassessments, this puts them on much the same financial footing as leading craftsmen.

Firstly it should be noted that there was a recognised social distinction between merchants and craftsmen and one that could operate as a bar to office holding.<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless it would seem to be the case that the economic superiority of the merchant class had, by the

73. The rather bizarre appearance of a handful of wealthy fletchers may reflect the dominance of this small craft by a few men as well. The will of one successful fletcher, Robert Denton, is transcribed in Appendix A.

74. The will of John Chesman, barber-chandler is transcribed in Appendix A.

75. See above p. 348.



early sixteenth century, been successfully assailed by craftsmen who were probably competing with them most effectively in the commodity market. It seems likely that the situation in the fifteenth century was rather different. Despite the success of individual craftsmen it seems probable that the strength of mercantile fortunes made the gap between the two classes greater and more difficult to bridge at that date. An exceedingly small number of men in fact made the transition from craftsmen to mercer in their own lifetime. A sample has been taken of 237 men for whom wills or probate acts survive for the years between 1389 and 1515, and who in those wills described themselves as mercers. Of these men, 206 can be identified from the freemen's register and of these only six can be definitely shown to have been made free as craftsmen; a further six may have been craftsmen when they took out the freedom but identification cannot be positive.<sup>76</sup> The successful craftsmen were a glover, a potter, two goldsmiths, a sherman and a weaver. Even including the six men to whom a craft ascription is doubtful, under 7% of the mercers who left wills began their working

76. 27 men cannot be traced in the register and a further 17 are entered with no trade. Additionally there were 3 men made free as drapers, 2 as vintners, and 2 as mariners, who left wills describing themselves as mercers.

life as craftsmen.<sup>77</sup>

The standard of living which the craftsmen of medieval York could expect to enjoy is best illustrated from the surviving inventories, supplemented by testamentary bequests which distinguish those objects that the testators considered most valuable. Most craftsmen did not own their place of work or house. Rents, of course varied considerably; those best documented are the properties of corporate bodies and the rent of those tended to fall during the fifteenth century as the houses fell into disrepair.<sup>78</sup> The custodians of the Minster fabric let property in Petergate at sums ranging from 5s. to 33s. 4d. a year; rents in Stonegate were similar, but Vicars Choral property in Hungate and Aldwark was very much cheaper.<sup>79</sup>

Tenements and shops let by the council on Ouse and Foss Bridges,

...

77. Thomas Clynt, glover, free 1419, d. 1439: Freemen's Reg., p. 128; B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 567v-568. William Scorburch, potter, free 1398, d. 1431: Freemen's Reg., p. 100; B.I., Prob. Reg. 2, fo. 60lv. William de Hawneby, goldsmith, free 1362, d. 1406: Freemen's Reg., p. 56; B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 526. Richard Wartre, goldsmith, free 1416, d. 1465: Freemen's Reg., p. 124; B.I., Prob. Reg. 4 fo. 115v-116v. Thomas Easingwold, sherman, free 1384, d. 1428: Freemen's Reg., p. 80; B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 531-532v. Thomas Bracebrig, weaver, free 1393, d. 1437: Freemen's Reg., p. 93; B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 487v-490. Additionally Richard Taunton, litster, free 1351, d. 1437, although he died describing himself as a litster, was listed in the 1381 poll tax as a mercer: Freemen's Reg., p. 44; B.I., Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 63-4; 'Lay poll tax York, 1381', ed. Bartlett, p. 60.
78. Bartlett, 'Expansion and decline of York', pp. 30-32.
79. Y.M.L., E3.21 m. 2d, Vn 34 (Fabric rolls, Vicars Choral chamberlains' accounts, 1436).

commercially very advantageous sites, ranged from 4s. to 20s. per annum for shops, with one or two properties that carried a rent of up to 50s. and more.<sup>80</sup>

It has been found that in Coventry a real distinction seems to have existed between cottages and houses rented at sums below 12s., and those worth 12s. and more; within the latter category 50% or more of the households contained servants and were probably rented by persons of no less standing than a master craftsman.<sup>81</sup> Details of some of the leases granted to York craftsmen by the mayor and councils, have survived for the 1420's. John Basyngham, cordwainer, paid 12s. a year for a shop with a room above in Coney Street; Peter Clynt, glover, paid 10s. for a similar shop and room on Ouse Bridge.<sup>82</sup> John Poppilton, barber, rented a shop alone on Ouse Bridge for 5s. a year; in contrast William Calthorn, armourer, rented a tenement with summer hall and fireplace in Thrusland for 17s.<sup>83</sup>

Nearly all the men whose inventories survive can be shown to have lived in rented accommodation, for they owed rent at the time of their death. Unfortunately the period of arrears is seldom stated, though it was specified that Thomas Cok, carpenter, owed the master of the Minster fabric 20s. for a year's rent for his fairly modest house which consisted apparently of a hall, bowtynghouse and chamber.<sup>84</sup>

80. Y.C.L., C82.10 m.2 (custodians of Ouse Bridge, 1440-1). Y.C.L., C80.5 m.1 (custodians of Foss Bridge, 1445-6).

81. Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a city, pp. 164-5, 239.

82. Y.M.B. iii, p. 64.

83. Y.M.B. iii, p. 66.

84. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories; his wife appears to have owed 10s. for two years rent on her own account. The bowtynghouse was used for sifting flour for breadmaking: O.E.D.

Equally small was the house of John Cotom, possibly a tapiter, who died in 1426, which contained a hall, a chamber and a kitchen.<sup>85</sup> Most of the houses described in the inventories contained three or four rooms: the house of Thomas Catton, a weaver, contained for example a hall, chamber, parlour, kitchen and shop; Robert Crackall, a mason whose work was not done on the premises, rented a house with a hall, chamber, buttery, kitchen and brewery, for which at the time of his death he owed 23s. 4d. rent to the Vicars Choral.<sup>86</sup> At least seven of the houses were of a particularly impressive size, with five or more rooms, excluding the kitchen and associated buildings such as the gylehouse and brewery; such for example were the houses of William Thwaite, Robert Locksmith and John Collan.<sup>87</sup> The spacious residence of John Stubbs, a barber, with its summer and winter hall and six chambers seems to have doubled as an inn, for it contained as well as extensive kitchen premises, 'le hostery', a stable and a hay loft.<sup>88</sup>

85. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories; the craft ascription cannot be certain as the inventory contains no reference to tools or a loom. Platt, Medieval Southampton, p. 184 suggests that even the smallest houses were sometimes built with an eye to comfort and gives for an example the houses built in York in St. Martin's Row in 1335, where each house had its own hearth, mantel and chimney. Platt, English medieval town, pp. 60-69 has a general survey of plans of late medieval town houses. For published descriptions of surviving medieval houses in York see R.C.H.M. vol. iii, South West of the Ouse, pp. lxii-lxiv.
86. For comparison with the houses of London merchants see Thrupp, Merchant class, pp. 130-5. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1413, 1395); Caton had goods assessed at £34. 11s. 6d. with debts of £4. 10s. 8d.; Crackall had goods assessed at £65 and debts of 24s. 6d.
87. See Appendix A; Test. Ebor., iv, pp. 56-60.
88. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1451); Stubbs was worth £46. 1s. 4d. when he died, with debts of £7. 5s. 1d. See above pp. 171-2 for inns.

The furniture in all medieval houses was simple; what distinguished the homes of men such as William Thwaite, John Collan and John Stubbs were the variety and quality of bedding and hangings and a great profusion of metal goods.<sup>89</sup> Likewise the most expensive item in the house of William Coltman, a cordwainer, was 'a fedder bed with a bowster an a qwyt testur and iii curtens' worth 20s.<sup>90</sup> At least one brazen pot was standard equipment in the kitchen for even poor men; brazen ware was purchased in large quantities for the houses of more substantial craftsmen. However the introduction of domestic pewter in the mid-fourteenth century rapidly eclipsed bronze and latten as tableware. All but one of the inventories that are complete contain reference to pewter in considerable quantities, for the most part as plates, saucers, candlesticks and basins. The earliest surviving craftsman's inventory, that of Robert Crackall, made in 1395, included two pewter salts and two pewter bowls in the buttery as well as pewter to the value of 5s. 6d. in the kitchen; by the early sixteenth century pewter must have become fairly commonplace in the houses of craftsmen, the hosier, Thomas Lytster for example had 'fyfty pound powder' when he died in 1528, in addition to pewter pots worth 16s. 8d.<sup>91</sup>

89. For a comparison with the wills of London merchants see Thrupp, Merchant class, p. 141.

90. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1486); Coltman was less well off than Thwaite or Collan with goods valued at £12. 19s.

91. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1395, 1528). Robert Loksmith, vestmentmaker, owned 27 pounds of pewter at the time of his death in 1531: Appendix A. In 1504 Anne Baret of Bury made a bequest in her will to 20 poor maidens for their marriage 'to yche of them xii pecys of pewtyr, that is to say iiiii platers, iiiii dysshys and iiiii sawssers and ych of them a pewter basyn, an ewer therto, or else a quart pot of pewter': Wills and inventories from the registers of the commissary of Bury St. Edmunds and the Archdeacon of Sudbury, ed. S. Tymms (Camden Society O.S. xlix, 1850), p. 97.

Silver was vastly more expensive than pewter and silver spoons and vessels, because they were so valuable, were likely to be made the subject of specific bequests. An impressively high proportion, nearly 30%, of all wills consulted contained reference to silver items, though some included no more than a couple of silver spoons.<sup>92</sup> Few bequests were as exotic as John Carre's gift of 'a payr of spectacles of sylver and gylted' to the abbot of St. Mary's.<sup>93</sup> More characteristic were the legacies of Robert Allerton, a particularly prosperous tanner; who left his son John a covered piece of silver topped by an eagle, a silver casket, a covered silver salt, six silver spoons, the best mazer and a silver patterned girdle with a lion on the buckle.<sup>94</sup> Few craftsmen however had silver in such quantities as Allerton; more typical was Henry Flasby a glover, who bequeathed one piece of silver and a total of fifteen silver spoons, or Robert Denton who left a silk girdle studded with silver and a maser that was probably bound with silver.<sup>95</sup> Eleven of the surviving inventories, about half, contain items of silver, usually up to a total of £5 in value. Those of Robert Morlay, barber, and Richard Wynder, pewterer, contain the most impressive collections of plate: that of Morlay was valued at over £15, whilst Wynder's plate and jewels were worth over

92. 299 wills mention silver, though this includes 18 drapers, 9 vintners and 6 apothecaries; 111 wills mention masers, but as they are not always specified as being bound in silver these have not been included.

93. He also gave the abbot a bonnet that had belonged to the 'Bisshoppis of Hertforth' (sic); this is probably a mistranscription of Thomas Spofford Bishop of Hereford and abbot of St. Mary's York from 1405-21; B.I., Prob. Reg. 5 fo. 328v (1487); A.B. Emden, A biographical register of the University of Oxford to 1500 3 vols. (Oxford 1957-9), iii, p. 1744.

94. B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 579.

95. B.I., Prob. Reg. 1, fo. 48 (1392); Appendix A.

£30.<sup>96</sup>

Apart from silver, few other valuables are mentioned in wills; there are some references to rings and to jewelled paternosters; furs were usually of lamb, although the barber John Stubbs had a gown furred with wild cat.<sup>97</sup> Books were very rare possessions, only twenty-six being mentioned in all. Those specified by title were generally primers and tended to be owned by men in the more prestigious crafts, for example vintners, drapers, goldsmiths. However John Yong, cordwainer bequeathed a primer and a book of prayers in 1512.<sup>98</sup> More unusual still was the bequest of John Newton, a glover who died in 1443; he left a book of 'devynyte qui sequitur regulam a.b.c.d. de anglico' and another book called 'ponecronakyll'; most probably the Polychronicon of Ranulf Higden.<sup>99</sup> The apothecary George Essex made reference in his will to his professional texts.<sup>100</sup>

Sheehan found that 'wills that read like an inventory of household effects' were more common among women than among men.<sup>101</sup> The York evidence supports this view with the proviso that the wills of widowers also contain similar lists of goods and that such wills are in fact often an indication that a household was being broken up. The wills

96. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1522, 1525).
97. 62 wills mention jewellery or paternosters; B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1451).
98. B.I., Prob. Reg. 8 fo. 95.
99. B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 72v.
100. B.I., Prob. Reg. 8 fo. 51v (1510). The record of a purchase by the apothecary Thomas de Yarm survives as early as 1334; he bought one volume of Avicenna's medicine from Thomas de Burgh, Vicar Choral in that year: Y.M.L., M2(4)f fo.7.
101. Sheehan, Will in medieval England, p. 283.

of women such as Matilda Alnewyk, wife of Alan, the goldsmith, or of Ellen Couper, widow of a pinner each contain long lists of clothes, ornaments, pots and pans, upholstery and linen.<sup>102</sup> Equally full, however, and more moving is the will of John Chesman, chandler and barber, drawn up in 1508 shortly before he was due to be married; he left to his fiancée Agnes Muston the household goods that would have been hers, some of them only recently purchased, together with 'a gowne cloth yat shud have beyn my weddyng gown'.<sup>103</sup>

Evidence for the standard of living enjoyed by craftsmen derived mostly from the richer amongst them. A sharp contrast to the majority of inventories is afforded by that of John Cotom, possibly a tapiter, who died in 1426. The total value of the contents of his three roomed house was 10s. 6½d.<sup>104</sup> The soft furnishings in his sparse hall comprised two old hangings and four cushions and his one chamber contained nothing but two beds, a mattress and a chest. For the most part the poverty of the unsuccessful makes them elusive and only if they were recorded as criminals do they appear in the records. Robert Wencelay, a bower outlawed in 1419, affords a further contrast to those craftsmen already described as the total value of his goods was under 7s; John Brigenhall, a bucklermaker who was hanged for felony in 1416 possessed chattels worth less than £2.<sup>105</sup> It seems

102. Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg., 1 fo. 62v-63 (1376); B.I., Prob. Reg. 4 fo. 135v-136v (1460).

103. See Appendix A.

104. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories.

105. Y.M.B. i, pp. 54, 77-8.



unlikely that either Wencelay or Brigenhall was typical of master craftsmen any more than Richard Wynder at the other extreme. Circumstances varied so much over the period and from craft to craft that generalizations are hardly possible. Wealth and poverty are themselves relative terms and though in comparison to most merchants the majority of craftsmen in York cannot reasonably be described as affluent, enough of them made a sufficiently comfortable living to explain at least in part the powerful draw that the city had on countrymen and the inhabitants of smaller provincial towns.

It has frequently been recognized that the populations of late medieval towns, subject to a high rate of mortality, failed to replace themselves and depended on a high rate of immigration.<sup>106</sup> The wills of York craftsmen are too brief and selective to be useful in the calculation of replacement rates; the assumption has to be made that craftsmen were subject to the same or even greater attrition than that experienced by the merchant class.<sup>107</sup> What the surviving evidence can show however are the opportunities open to the sons of master craftsmen, the size of the portions they might expect to inherit and the kind of careers on which they could embark.

The portion that the son of a craftsman could expect to receive

106. V.C.H., City of York, p. 41; Thrupp, Merchant class, pp. 199-206; Hatcher, Plague, population and the English economy, pp. 26-30; Reynolds, English medieval towns, p. 144.
107. In Coventry the poorer wards of the city in the early 16th century apparently had a replacement rate considerably lower than that of the richer wards: Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a city, pp. 231-3.

was not large; the tripartite division of chattels was adhered to fairly closely so that the most that a child could expect was one third of the estate, less if he or she had brothers and sisters. Frequently the testator specified that the child's portion was to be made up from tools or itemized household effects; in most families where cash was not easy to realize in any quantity this step was presumably taken to avoid breaking up a household. The testator must often have hoped to stop ugly quarrels as well; that certainly seems to have been in the mind of Thomas Grene a fuller who left to his son John as his portion 'meum tentorum cum aliis parvis instrumentis pertinentibus illóarte' and 20s. as well ; William the second son was to have five marks in full settlement of his portion 'et si non placeat illis habere partes suas' then they were to take their legal portions.<sup>108</sup> The larger business of Adam Hetch, an armourer, could be equally divided between his son and daughter; to John went all the instruments of 'artificio meo de fourbourcraft' and to Agnes all the instruments of 'artificio meo de mayle werk'.<sup>109</sup> Richard Carlell, a butcher who died in 1453, took steps to ensure that his wife had an adequate livelihood after his death by bequeathing to his son William 'de porcione mea xx s. ac unum equum cum cella et freno eidem equo pertinenti cum toga mea

108. Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 99v-100 (1390). John Aldfield, tapiter, left his son a 'bedde lome continens in latitudine tres ulnas' on condition that it formed part of his child's part: B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 211 (1450). His son took out the freedom by patrimony in 1451: Freemen's Reg., p. 171.

109. B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 102-3.

optima (after the one set aside for his mortuary) sub condicione quod si idem Willelmus non clamet nec implitet Agnetem uxorem meam pro aliqua porcione bonorum et catallorum eidem Willelmo Carlell filio meo post mortem meam pertinentem.<sup>110</sup>

Certain expenses made by a father on behalf of his child during his lifetime could be counted against the child's portion, the dowry of a daughter being the commonest such expense.<sup>111</sup> The girdler Robert Rede who was survived by a wife, two sons and seven daughters not surprisingly required his son Dom. John Rede to accept 20s. or else 'all that y have spendyd on hym and giffyn hym shall stond .. in full contentacion of his barne parte'.<sup>112</sup> William Barton, a bower may have advanced his son some money to set up in business for in his will he remitted 'all the debt he owes me in a certain bill included in this testament on condition that he does not vex Agnes my wife and my executors for any reason or pretext for any goods'.<sup>113</sup>

The portions which the sons of London merchants inherited ranged from £20-£200 for the most part.<sup>114</sup> The richest York craftsmen could afford to leave equivalent sums to their children, though they were

110. B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 284v.

111. E.g. Richard Norton, baker, bequeathed to Nicholas Gylfeld 'for the residew of mariage guddes of Margaret my doghter' £6. 13s. 4d. on condition that the two of them claimed no more: B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 133v (1522).

112. B.I., Prob. Reg. 6 fo. 200. Rede's estate, said to be worth £200, was the subject of litigation as Agnes Rede who claimed the third part of the estate was declared by the executors not to be the wife of the testator; two of the daughters also complained that they had not received their portions, worth £35 each: P.R.O., C1/351/16, 351/56.

113. B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 360-360v (1462).

114. Thrupp, Merchant class, p. 103.

always the exception. The largest amount mentioned was the £200 bequeathed by Richard Wartre to his children; most of the capital of William Barker, a baker, seems to have been invested in land and property the bulk of which estate he bequeathed to his son, however one house and £20 in cash went to his unmarried daughter and £60 to his married daughter.<sup>115</sup> The will of the saucemaker Richard Rumby was contested by his two sons who claimed they had not received their portions amounting to £29. 7s. 8½d. each.<sup>116</sup>

The surviving inventories show however that the estates of the majority of craftsmen extended only to much smaller portions and as has already been mentioned at least six inventories show an overall deficit.<sup>117</sup> Amongst the larger portions were those provided by John Stubbs, a successful barber who left a total wealth of just over £46; after his debts had been paid the executors calculated that 'remanent clare ad dividendum in tres partes, videlicet inter defunctum, uxorem eiusdem et tres proles xli li. xvii s. ix d.', making the portion of each child £4. 13s. 1d.; additionally each child received 20s. as a legacy from their father's portion and a further 12s. 2d. from the residue of the estate, making a total of £6. 5s. 3d.<sup>118</sup> The two children of John Grene, glover, worth £35. 15s. at his death, received portions very similar to those of Stubbs.<sup>119</sup> Stubbs and Grene were

115. B.I. Prob. Reg. 4 fo. 115v-116v (1465); 8 fo. 65v-66v (1510).

116. P.R.O., C1/31/159, 27/372.

117. See above p. 418.

118. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1451); Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 266-266v; as the 'desparate debts' owing to the defunct were allocated between the three portions, the children received somewhat less in fact.

119. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories (1525).

richer than the average; the children of the cordwainer William Coltman were allocated 27s. 8d. each and the majority of craftsmen's children could probably expect rather less.

However small the portion that he inherited, the son of a freeman had the advantage of being able to take out the freedom by patrimony, with apparently no charge for most of the period; it would seem logical to assume that most sons who wanted to set up business on their own account did so in their home town initially. Some emigrated, though the motivation of those who left can only be guessed at. London obviously presented vast opportunities for the ambitious, but recruits from the north accounted for only a small proportion of immigrants to the capital.<sup>120</sup> In general it tends once again to be only the most successful or the criminal who can be traced. William Muston, an exceptionally prosperous fishmonger, educated his son 'ad scolae apud Hull et Pocklington' as a preliminary to apprenticing him to John Alesham, a London apothecary.<sup>121</sup> One of the sons of Thomas Bracebrig, weaver turned mercer, began as a mercer in York and then transferred to London to set up as a draper.<sup>122</sup> The path of John Polard, made free in 1402 in York, was rather more tortuous and less successful: in 1420 he received a pardon of outlawry in which he was described as 'John

120. Thrupp, Merchant class, p. 209.

121. For Muston's trade as a fishmonger see above p. 153. Muston reckoned the cost of education and apprenticeship altogether to have come to £17. 6s. 8d.; his ambition for his children can best be measured in the marriage portion of £100 he gave to his daughter's husband, the son of a Beverley merchant: B.I. Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 605v-606v (1418).

122. Yorkshire deeds iv, p. 1611; For Thomas Bracebrig see above p. 44

Polard citizen and brouderer of London, alias of Herwych co. Essex,

brauderer, late citizen and Brauderer of London alias of Ipswich co.

Suffolk, browderer alias gentleman alias John Pollard of York yeoman'.<sup>123</sup>

Of those craftsmen's sons who did stay in York and took out the

freedom of the city by patrimony, only a half elected to follow the

same craft as their father.<sup>124</sup> Table 10:5 shows for each craft how

many sons chose to follow their father's profession and how many changed

occupations. The mere chance of survival will to some extent have

distorted the figures for smaller crafts, however the results do

suggest certain conclusions. Where the tools of a craft were relatively

expensive there was clearly a strong reason for a son to follow in his

father's footsteps. This was the case for nearly all metal workers

and may account for the fact that 71% of all potters and founders'

sons and 78% of goldsmiths' sons who took out the freedom by patrimony

did so in their fathers' craft.<sup>125</sup> Crafts such as the goldsmiths

and the pewterers also offered financial rewards to aspiring masters

that were considerably above average. Relative financial security

may well account for the fact that so many victuallers' sons, especially

amongst the butchers, millers and vintners, followed their fathers'

line of business. Amongst the builders it is surprising to find such

123. C.P.R. 1416-22, p. 291; he apparently had debts of over £70 with London grocers, drapers and mercers.

124. Palliser, 'Some aspects of the economy of York', p. 289 found that an ever decreasing proportion of all freemen followed their father's trade and that in the years 1500-30 only 34% of all freemen did so; this situation was reversed in the second half of the 16th century.

125. The figures for the pewterers, pinner and spurriers are even more dramatic but less reliable because of the small numbers involved.

Table 10:5: OCCUPATION OF CRAFTSMEN'S SONS TAKING OUT THE FREEDOM BY PATRIMONY, 1397-1534<sup>1</sup>

Father's craft	Total sons free by patrimony	Sons following father's craft	%	Sons who change occupation	%
<u>Textiles</u>					
Capper	8	4	50	4	50
Draper	22	6	27	16	73
Linenweaver	1	-		1	
Litster	30	15	50	15	50
Sherman	10	3	30	7	70
Tailor	61	28	46	33	54
Tapiter	28	15	54	13	46
Walker	34	20	59	14	41
Weaver	50	29	58	21	42
Other	4	3		1	
Total	248	123	50	125	50
<u>Leather</u>					
Cordwainer	51	17	33	34	66
Currier	5	-	-	5	100
Girdler	14	5	35	9	64
Glover	13	6	46	7	54
Saddler	23	13	57	10	43
Skinner	24	13	54	11	46
Tanner	51	24	47	27	53
Others	2	-		2	
Total	183	78	43	105	57
<u>Victualling</u>					
Baker	40	21	53	19	48
Butcher	49	32	65	17	35
Cook	15	8	53	7	47
Fisher	37	22	59	15	41
Miller	6	4	66	2	33
Saucer	3	1		2	
Innholder	1	-		1	
Vintner	10	7	70	3	30
Other	-	-		-	
Total	161	95	59	66	41

1. Taken from the freemen's register.

Table 10:5 (continued)

Father's craft	Total sons free by patrimony	Sons following father's craft	%	Sons who change occupation	%
<u>Metal</u>					
Armourer	3	1		2	
Potter/Founder	14	10	71	4	29
Bladesmith	2	1		1	
Cutler	10	6	60	4	40
Cardmaker	4	2	50	2	50
Goldsmith	18	14	78	4	22
Ironmonger	5	1	20	4	80
Painter/Stainer	6	4	67	2	33
Pewterer	6	5	83	1	17
Pinner/Wiredrawer	7	6	86	1	14
Smith	13	1	8	12	92
Locksmith	6	5	83	1	17
Spurrier/Lorimer	4	4	100	-	
Other	2	1		1	
Total	100	61	61	39	39
<u>Building</u>					
Carpenter	23	6	26	17	74
Cartwright	4	2	50	2	50
Carver	2	-		2	
Shipwright	3	2		1	
Turner	4	3	75	1	25
Glazier	15	10	67	5	33
Mason	6	1	16	5	84
Plasterer/Tiler	15	10	67	5	33
Others	2	1		1	
Total	74	35	47	39	53
<u>Miscellaneous</u>					
Barber/Chandler	19	11	57	8	42
Bower	12	8	67	4	33
Fletcher	3	3		-	
Stringer	1	1		-	
Roper/Hairster	1	-		1	
Cooper	2	-		2	
Horner	2	-		2	
Other	-	-		-	
Total	40	23	58	17	42
Total all crafts	806	415	51	391	49



a high proportion of plasterers and tilers carrying on their father's craft, as many in fact as did so in the much more prosperous craft of glaziers. It may be the case that the most skilled plasterers formed something of an elite in an industry based largely on unskilled or semi-skilled labour, so that without being affluent themselves they were in a fairly enviable position compared to others of their occupation.<sup>126</sup>

By contrast certain crafts seem to have proved definitely unattractive.<sup>127</sup> By a large majority both carpenters' and smiths' sons elected not to follow the unprofitable occupations of their parents. More interesting is the apparent reluctance of many leather workers to stay in their father's craft, particularly among the cordwainers but also among the tanners. These two crafts although affording a reasonable number of their members a comfortable income were apparently socially unacceptable. Both crafts were constantly in trouble with the council in the fifteenth century and it is very noticeable that despite their size and the not inconsiderable wealth of specific individuals, neither was afforded any representation in the constitution of 1517.<sup>128</sup> Therefore the cordwainers and tanners who could afford to do so bought their sons training or apprenticeship in alternative occupations.

126. Masons' children seem to have been reluctant to take up an itinerant occupation if their fathers had become sufficiently established to take up the freedom of the city. See above p. 227.

127. The low number of litsters, drapers and ironmongers sons who followed the trade of their fathers is accounted for by the fact that they tended to move into mercery.

128. See above p. 341.

A total of 806 craftsmen's sons took out the freedom by patrimony from 1387-1534, of whom 415 kept their father's trade and a further 184 moved into a different craft; 74% therefore remained as manufacturing craftsmen. Sixty-nine took out the freedom as merchants or chapmen, that is about 9%.<sup>129</sup> It was the food crafts that produced the most merchants and the butchers who established the highest number for any single craft, six sons, as mercers.<sup>130</sup> Virtually all the other 119 craftsmen's sons took out the freedom either as clergy or, in a small minority of cases, as members of the legal profession. A far greater proportion must have joined the church, either as religious or secular clergy, without wishing or needing to be freemen of the city; the numbers in which men took orders suggests that this course of action constituted the most attractive and possibly the only viable alternative to the burden of manufacture.<sup>131</sup>

The distribution of the population through the city was influenced primarily by the location of industry. Certain key sites

129. As only some 12 or 13 craftsmen at the very outside can be shown to have become mercers in their own lifetimes, it seems as if social mobility was more easily achieved over two generations and that a successful craftsman would apprentice his son to a merchant.
130. A closer analysis of sons who became merchants, by craft, is impossible because the numbers are so small that one large and successful family can distort the entire picture.
131. In his will of 1472, John Shirwood, butcher, referred to John Shirwod, archdeacon of Richmond, my son; this butcher's son later became bishop of Durham: B.I., Prob. Reg. 4 fo. 118; Le Neve, Fasti; Northern Province, pp. 26, 109. Emden erroneously describes him as the son of John Shirwod, town clerk: Emden, Oxford iii, p. 1692.

obviously held commercial advantage: the crossing of the Ouse for example, the market area, and Stonegate at the Minster gates; the wealthier merchants and craftsmen tended to congregate in these areas.<sup>132</sup> But the most obvious feature of residence patterns amongst the York craftsmen is the consistency with which certain industries congregated in specific areas throughout the period studied. In a city as large as York it was only to be expected that craftsmen who practiced those industries and services that were in greatest demand, should be widely scattered and found in most parishes. Bakers and cooks and innkeepers lived in many of the city centre parishes, as did tailors, cordwainers and smiths.<sup>133</sup> Building workers, whose work was done on site and not in their own shops, were equally scattered.<sup>134</sup> It had been argued that the majority of crafts in York in the later middle ages were dispersed, a dispersal that became even more pronounced by the mid 16th century; however the evidence from wills,

132. Various assessments for parish subsidies occur in the York records. The basis of these is not given, nor can the sums be related to the size of the population. However the parishes consistently taxed most were St. Michael Spurriergate, and St. John Ouse Bridge (at either end of Ouse Bridge), St. Crux and Holy Trinity King's Court (near Thursday market) and St. Michael le Belfrey (at the Minster gates): Y.M.B. iii, pp. 184-5, Chamberlains' Rolls, pp. 49-53.

133. Bakers and cooks tended to be congregated on the main thoroughfares; for example in the Micklegate area, three bakers wills survive for the parish of St. Nicholas, four for the parish of St. Martin-cum Gregory and three from St. John Ouse Bridge, but no wills survive from the Bishopshill parishes or from All Saints North Street which lay away from the main highway. Over three quarters of all bakers' wills come from 8 parishes on main roads or in marketplaces.

134. The exception being the glaziers who were concentrated in St. Helen Stonegate.



dating mostly from the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, suggests that in fact specific areas of the city were given over to certain types of manufacture, and that there was a fairly clear geographical concentration of industry.<sup>135</sup> The fact that the York parishes were so small meant that in the city centre craftsmen apparently scattered over four or five parishes could in fact be living virtually next door to each other, or only a short street away.

Amongst the victualling crafts, the fishmongers and the butchers were the most concentrated. Saltfishmongers lived near Foss Bridge and the freshfishmongers at Ouse Bridge, where their respective markets were.<sup>136</sup> The butchers, as is well known, congregated in the parishes around the Shambles; of fifty-two butchers' wills to survive, forty-two were made by residents of the adjacent parishes of St. Sampson, St. Crux and Holy Trinity King's Court.<sup>137</sup> The horners, who depended on the butchers for their raw materials, gave their name to Hornpot Lane by the late thirteenth century; this lane lay close to King's Court in the parish of St. Michael le Belfrey. Four horners' wills come from this parish and a fifth from Holy Trinity Kings' Court.<sup>138</sup>

135. 'Lay poll tax York, 1381', ed. Bartlett, pp. 8-9; Palliser, 'Some aspects of the economy of York', p. 287 suggests that certain crafts were concentrated but that by the mid-sixteenth century these were the exception rather than the rule. Both Bartlett and Palliser cite butchers, tanners, fishmongers as crafts with particular concentration in one area.

136. See above p. 150.

137. In many towns the butchers were to be found among the most tightly concentrated of crafts: Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a city, pp. 159-60; V.C.H., Oxfordshire iv, p. 27; Hill, Medieval Lincoln, p. 154; Sabine, 'Butchering in medieval London', p. 335.

138. Wenham, 'Hornpot lane and the horners of York', pp. 28, 41.

The parishes around King's Court were also the centre of an important section of the leather industry: the poll tax returns place thirteen out of nineteen girdlers in the parish of St. Sampson, Holy Trinity King's Court and St. Crux; of seventeen girdlers wills that survive, thirteen were made in either Holy Trinity King's Court or Holy Trinity Goodramgate, this latter parish running north from King's Court. Cordwainers were rather more dispersed, but as many as seventeen out of fifty-eight cordwainers whose wills survive lived in either Holy Trinity King's Court or St. Crux parishes.<sup>139</sup> Six of the sixteen glovers' wills come from St. Crux, Holy Trinity King's Court and Holy Trinity Goodramgate, and the parchmentmakers, also working in white leather, were based in Holy Trinity Goodramgate and the adjacent parishes around Monk Bar.<sup>140</sup>

Three leather crafts were centred at some remove from King's Court. Just over half the tanners who left wills that survive lived in North Street, in which parish lies the street now called Tanner Row;

139. 14 in St. Crux and 3 in Holy Trinity King's Court. Other towns had a specific cordwainery e.g. Oxford: V.C.H., Oxfordshire iv, p. 27.

140. 'Lay poll tax York, 1381', ed. Bartlett, p. 9 shows that many of the parchmentmakers lived near Monk Bar; 3 out of 5 parchmentmakers wills come from the parish of Holy Trinity Goodramgate. The concentration of leather and victualling crafts in the parish of Holy Trinity King's Court can be seen in an analysis of wills made in that parish by craft group: victualling 38, leather 15, miscellaneous crafts 3, textile 2, metal 1, building 1. The parchmentmakers and other dealers in skins seem to have been similarly closely grouped in Lincoln: Hill, Medieval Lincoln, p. 154.

this concentration appears even more pronounced in the poll tax returns where forty-one of the forty-three tanners listed were resident in this parish. Those tanners who did not live in North Street tended to be dispersed along the River Foss; ten wills survive from the parishes of St. Margaret, St. Lawrence, St. Peter le Willows and St. Denis.<sup>141</sup>

The skimmers showed a certain concentration in the three parishes of St. Michael Spurriergate, St. Martin Coney Street and St. Peter the Little, all adjacent to each other and lying close to Ouse Bridge.

The final group of leather workers, the saddlers, were located logically enough with the spurriers, lorimers and armourers in Spurriergate and Coney Street. Nearly 60% of the men of these three crafts who left wills lived in the parishes of St. Michael Spurriergate and St. Martin Coney Street, including all of the spurriers and lorimers.<sup>142</sup> The same parishes also contained four fletchers, at

141. The wills from these parishes are from the late 15th century and early 16th century and suggest that the removal to the new location was a fairly recent one: B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 415; 5 fo. 227, 263, 467; 6 fo. 76, 201; 9 fo. 18, 203, 447, 475 (the earliest dated 1459, the remainder between 1484 and 1530). This dispersal is reflected in the lay subsidy of 1546: Palliser, 'Some aspects of the economy of York', p. 288. Tanners in other towns also tended to be congregated along the rivers: Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a city, p. 161. In 1395 the Nottingham tanners were accused that 'obturant aquam communem quae vocatur 'Lene' cum stakkes, pollis, et turbariis ... et jacent coria sua in predicta aqua, ad magnum nocumentum totius populi et villae': Records of the borough of Nottingham i, 1155-1399, ed. J. Raine (1882).
142. 'Lay poll tax York, 1381', ed. Bartlett, p. 8 shows that in 1381 cutlers were concentrated in St. Martin Coney Street, that 12 out of the 13 lorimers lived in the parishes of St. Mary Castlegate, St. Michael Spurriergate and All Saints Pavement and that saddlers were to be found in St. Mary Castlegate, St. Michael Spurriergate and St. Martin Coney Street. By unlucky accident ten out of twenty-one bowers did not name their parish in their wills.

least three bowers and nine cutlers and bladesmiths amongst those whose wills survive.

The crafts which showed perhaps the greatest geographical concentration were the metal workers. Of those metal workers whose wills survive, 48% lived in one of four parishes and 31% in fact came from the two parishes of St. Michael le Belfrey and St. Helen Stonegate alone.<sup>143</sup> The armourers and associated crafts were to be found in Coney Street; goldsmiths were also based in the parish of St. Michael Spurriergate, next to one end of Ouse Bridge, and in St. John Ouse Bridge, at the other end. Ouse Bridge, both as the only bridge over the Ouse and as the location of the council chamber and the municipal chapel, was an ideal site for a luxury industry. Equally suitable were the streets around the Minster where craftsmen were well placed to take advantage not only of the considerable amount of work afforded by the Minster itself but also the custom of an endless stream of visitors and pilgrims; in consequence ten of the surviving goldsmiths' wills come from St. Michael le Belfrey and three more from St. Helen Stonegate.<sup>144</sup>

143. The other two parishes are St. Michael Spurriergate and St. Martin Coney Street.

144 4 goldsmiths' wills come from St. Michael Spurriergate and 3 from St. John Ouse Bridge. Out of a total of 27 wills therefore, 20 goldsmiths lived in four parishes. The figures for the 1381 poll tax show a greater concentration of goldsmiths than is allowed by Bartlett; of 12 goldsmiths and goldbeters named, 6 lived in the parish of St. Helen Stonegate and St. Michael le Belfrey, another 3 in the adjacent parishes of St. John Ouse Bridge, St. Michael Spurriergate and St. Martin Coney Street and one each in All Saints Pavement, Holy Trinity Goodramgate and probably St. Olave.



The pewterers were even more closely concentrated, for ten of the seventeen surviving wills come from the parish of St. Helen Stonegate and two more from St. Michael le Belfrey.<sup>145</sup> Six out of seven founders' wills were made in these two parishes and, as already noticed, the distinction between the crafts of potter and founder seems to have been based in part on the geographical location.<sup>146</sup> The only other concentration of metal workers in the city was in the parishes of St. Crux and St. Sampson, where the pinner and the camsmiths worked.<sup>147</sup>

Amongst the textile workers the litsters, who required a constant supply of water for their work, were located along the river; thirty-five out of fifty surviving litsters' wills were made in the parishes of St. Denis Walmgate, St. John Ouse Bridge and All Saints North Street.<sup>148</sup> The Ouse Bridge end of North Street seems to have been socially the 'better' end to live; sixteen litsters had their homes in the parish of St. John Ouse Bridge as opposed to six in North Street and the former parish also housed goldsmiths and some of the richer chandlers. In the case of the other clothmaking crafts it is hard to be certain where the craftsmen lived, though it seems likely that they were fairly scattered. What is noticeable is that tapiters' and walkers' wills are almost wholly absent from the city centre parishes. In the

145. By 1546 they appear to have shifted to St. Sampsons, a move anticipated in two late 15th century pewterers' wills made in this parish: Palliser, 'Some aspects of the economy of York', p. 288; B.I., Prob. Reg. 4 fo. 86; 5 fo. 89 (1472, 1480).

146. See above pp. 189-90.

147. The lay poll tax of 1381 located 10 out of 12 pinner in St. Crux.

148. As in York the litsters of Coventry were spread out along the river: Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a city, p. 161.

lay poll tax returns the only textile craft to show any marked concentration was that of the walkers based in Walmgate; the wills of walkers come from parishes on the fringes of the city such as St. Lawrence, St. Maurice or the Bishophill parishes. Tapiters' wills mostly survive from south west of the Ouse, though by the mid-sixteenth century they had apparently transferred to the Foss.<sup>149</sup> There does not seem to have been any great concentration of the clothing trades, although fifteen tailors' wills survive from the parish of St. Crux, near the market, in an area where there were many cordwainers.<sup>150</sup>

The major manufacturing areas of the city accordingly seems to have been fairly well defined. Tanning, dyeing and the fishing industry were located along the rivers, leather working in the parishes around King's Court and armoury around Spurriergate; the metal workers centred themselves near Ouse Bridge or around the Minster; near the Minster also could be found, logically enough, the glaziers, vestmentmakers and some of the chandlers. The butcheries were concentrated around the Shambles and other victuallers, though more dispersed, tended to be located along main roads or in markets. It was only among textile workers and building workers that crafts existed without a geographical centre and more particularly amongst those like the carpenters and weavers who were employed as wage labourers.

The physical proximity of most members of the same craft must have

149. Palliser, 'Some aspects of the economy of York', p. 288.

150. A greater concentration of clothing trades was evident elsewhere, as for example in Coventry: Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a city, p. 160.

added considerably to the solidarity of the craft. The social connections of the medieval craftsman were probably determined very largely by his parish and the associations he made in his craft. Unfortunately almost no information survives about the social and fraternal aspects of craft organization for these functions were of little interest to the city council. Nor, perhaps rather surprisingly, are the wills of craftsmen very much more forthcoming. There are relatively few references either to bequests to the craft or of money given for the lights on the gild altar. Certain large crafts attracted members, or at least donations, from members of other crafts. This was most obviously the case with the gild of St. John the Baptist of the tailors.<sup>151</sup> The gild of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the weavers received bequests from Agnes Hulott, a litster's widow in 1404 and from Thomas Copgrave, a tapiter, in 1403.<sup>152</sup>

However although wills are in general uninformative on the subject of craft fellowships, they do throw considerable light on other aspects of the craftsmen's social life. Wills demonstrate very well how the friends and associates of craftsmen were determined by their occupation and the area in which they lived. Although it is usually impossible to trace extended family connections, except in a few instances, the executors chosen by the testator give some impression of the people whom he most trusted.<sup>153</sup> Many men simply

151. See above pp. 79-80.

152. B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 228, 98.

153. In many cases even the immediate family of a craftsman cannot be established as he refers in his will simply to 'children'.

appointed their wives and children as executors, with the parish priest to act as supervisor.<sup>154</sup> Such a choice was probably dictated largely by the fact that not only were an executor's duties extremely onerous, but he was also liable to honour the debts of the deceased.<sup>155</sup> Not infrequently however a man looked to a fellow craftsman to assist his wife, particularly if appraisal of his working materials was likely to be complicated. If the testator's wife was young, or he simply did not trust her, then the estate would be put into the hands of his friends.<sup>156</sup>

The richest and most successful craftsmen established themselves within, or more often on the edge of the mercantile élite and asked mercers to act as executors or supervisors of their wills. John Newall, a girdler who died in 1473 and whose son took out the freedom as a chapman, appointed Thomas Mariot a mercer and Robert Rede as two of his executors.<sup>157</sup> Robert Rede was himself a girdler, supposedly

154. Sheehan writing of the 13th century found this to be generally the case; he also quotes the warning from Handlyng synne against selecting children as executors:

'Of all executours that men fynde  
 Werst are thyn owne kynde  
 And thy chyldryn specyaly  
 Are to thy soule unkyndely'

Sheehan, Will in medieval England, pp. 184-5.

155. Sheehan, Will in medieval England, pp. 212-4; Register of Henry Chichele Archbishop of Canterbury 1414-1443 ii; wills proved before the archbishop or his commissaries, ed. E.F. Jacob (Canterbury and York Society xlii, 1937), p. xxiii.

156. John Adamson, a litster, required that if his wife refused to give formal surety that she would hand over the portion due to his younger son when the boy came of age then John Tesedale, tapiter, was to have administration of this portion; Tesedale was accordingly made co-executor of the will: B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 478-479 (1462).

157. B.I., Prob. Reg. 4 fo. 196v-197; Thomas Newall was made free as a chapman in 1472: Freemen's Reg., p. 192.

worth £200 at his death in 1505; he appointed as his executors John Birkhed, another mercer and William Huby described as 'horner and merchant tailor'.<sup>158</sup> Litsters not unnaturally chose their executors and supervisors from amongst the mercers fairly frequently; the choice of William White, erstwhile mayor of York fell however on a goldsmith and a chandler and a tailor, which at least suggests that by 1504, when White died, increased status was being accorded to certain prosperous craftsmen.<sup>159</sup> The goldsmith chosen as guardian of White's son was William Willson, who himself attained the office of mayor in 1513; he lived in the parish of St. Michael Spurriergate near to Robert Denton, the fletcher whose daughter he married.<sup>160</sup>

There had, for most of the fifteenth century been some notably prosperous individuals amongst the chandlers. One such was Richard Knight who, when he died in 1435 appointed as his executors his wife, John Caterik a merchant who had married his daughter Joanna, Thomas Crathorne another mercer and William Couper a wealthy pinner.<sup>161</sup>

158. B.I., Prob. Reg., 6 fo. 200v-201.

159. B.I., Prob. Reg. 6 fo. 127 (1504).

160. William Willson also acted as executor for William Whit, goldsmith, and as an overseer of the will of John Mason, hosier: B.I., Prob. Reg. 6 fo. 189, 166 (1506). The Willsons present a classical case of the rise of a particularly successful family. William Willson's father was a cordwainer who presumably prospered for his son took out the freedom as a goldsmith, by patrimony, in 1491; in 1540 Robert Willson, son of William Willson, goldsmith, took out the freedom as a mercer: B.I., Prob. Reg. 9 fo. 52 (1518); Freemen's Reg., pp. 216, 260. For Denton see Appendix A.

161. Knight himself was the son of a chandler and free by patrimony in 1408; his will and that of his son John who died shortly after him both contain large cash bequests: B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 112v; 3 fo. 431-2; Freemen's Reg., p. 112. Couper and Crathorne were also executors of Knight's daughter Agnes who died in 1438: B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 543v.

The supervisor of his will was Thomas Bracebrig, the weaver turned merchant.<sup>162</sup> Somewhat less illustrious, though certainly prosperous, was the circle that William More moved in; he was a chandler who lived in the parish of St. John Ouse Bridge and who chose for his executors three of his neighbours in the same parish, John Close, a goldsmith, Richard Hebson, another chandler and John Lamlay, a butcher.<sup>163</sup>

Similar to More's circle of acquaintance was a group of craftsmen in the parishes of St. Helen Stonegate and St. Michael le Belfrey, composed of substantial but not outstandingly wealthy pewterers, glaziers and founders. William Riche seems to have been one of the most prestigious pewterers in the late fifteenth century; he himself had acted as executor for two pewterers and on his death he appointed two other pewterers, Ralph Hall and Robert Gill to administer his estate.<sup>164</sup> Hall died twenty years later in 1485, making Robert Preston, a glazier, one of his executors; Preston had already acted as executor of William Inghish, a fellow glazier in 1480 and was subsequently to be executor for two founders.<sup>165</sup> Five out of seven founders' wills name either pewterers or glaziers as administrators or executors; curiously the reverse is not the case and no surviving pewterers' or glaziers' wills name founders. From early in the fourteenth century

162. Bracebrig died in 1437 and also chose Thomas Crathorn as an executor, together with four other mercers: B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 487v-490.
163. B.I., Prob. Reg. 4 fo. 254-254v. Wills also survive for his three executors: B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 45v-46, 441, 37-37v.
164. B.I., Prob. Reg. 4 fo. 248-248v (1465). He had acted for Thomas Layburn (d. 1440) and Robert Fawcett (d. 1460): Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 250v-251, 294-294v.
165. B.I., Prob. Reg. 5 fo. 179v, 268v-269, 425-425v, 443-443v. Richard Wynder, pewterer acted as a joint executor with Preston for both of the two founders.

this tendency had been apparent among the founders and it is possible that the founders saw the connexion as one that was socially advantageous.

Close connections between crafts were also established within the armoury trades, probably encouraged by their geographical concentration. The spurriers, Robert Butler and Adam Watre chose saddlers to help administer their estates; the saddler John Been chose an armourer, and William Bubwith an armourer asked a fellow armourer and a saddler.<sup>166</sup> The situation in the leather industries was very different; tanners and cordwainers almost always appointed executors and supervisors from amongst their own craft. When cordwainers chose tanners, and vice versa, it was usually because they were related; Christopher Thomlynson for example was the uncle and executor of John Dobson, like him a cordwainer, whilst Thomlynson's own executors were his brother Richard, a tanner and Adam Atkynson, also a tanner.<sup>167</sup> The same is true for the butchers who showed a marked preference for appointing other butchers as executors.

The leading craftsmen of late medieval York undoubtedly enjoyed a very comfortable standard of living; the houses which they owned or rented were large and evidence from the end of the period in particular

166. B.I., Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 46 (1391); 2 fo. 669v (1430); 5 fo. 191-191v (1477); Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 270v-271 (1447).

167. Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 344; B.I., Prob. Reg. 5 fo. 379v-380 (1490). Adam Atkynson additionally acted for three other tanners; his own will was made in 1502: B.I., Prob. Reg. 6 fo. 23v-24.

shows that they were coming to be increasingly well furnished. These craftsmen moved on the edge of mercantile society, but in general their resources could not begin to match those of the leading merchants. In consequence the portions with which craftsmen were able to endow their children were small, and the best inheritance that they could contrive was probably an apprenticeship to a successful master. A small number of craftsmen effectively transferred to the merchant class in their own lifetime; a maximum of 6% of those who left wills describing themselves as mercers had begun life as craftsmen.<sup>168</sup> A slightly higher proportion of craftsmen's sons, some 9%, took out the freedom as mercers.<sup>169</sup>

However the leading members of the craft comprised a small minority of the total number of master craftsmen. Much of the evidence for wealth and standards of living has had to be drawn from the surviving wills. Yet at most only 30% of these wills show even a modest accumulation of resources. Furthermore wills only survive for 15-20% of all craftsmen. Although the remaining 80-85% cannot all have been so poor that it was not worth their while to make a will, neither is there any real reason to suppose them to have been in any degree affluent.

It is very difficult to assess the standard of living of the majority of master craftsmen. Sixteenth century evidence from Coventry suggests that they lived in houses worth 12s. or more a year in rent, which in York would appear to mean that they had at least two rooms.

168. See above p. 436.

169. See above p. 453.



Coventry evidence also suggests that well over 50% of master craftsmen in the textile, leather and metal industries had living in servants in the early sixteenth century.<sup>170</sup> The position of these craftsmen was obviously more secure than the body of wage labourers in the city. Nevertheless the surviving inventories show that even the more prosperous craftsmen depended heavily on credit in their daily transactions. The poorer masters must often have been totally dependent on their suppliers and their net assets at the time of their death may well have been very limited.

The society in which the people of medieval York moved seems to have been determined very largely by their occupation and the area in which they lived. The location of industry in specific and well-defined areas reinforced the social connections which existed in the parish. Although the wealthiest craftsmen associated with merchants, the evidence from wills suggests that in general there was a marked social distinction between the majority of the craftsmen and the merchant class. This distinction was in fact overtly declared on occasion both in York and elsewhere. John Petty elected alderman in York in 1504, was ordered to 'leve his kepyng of hostery and take down his signe upon payne of forfeittour of the payn provided'.<sup>171</sup> A similar sentiment inspired ordinances regulating the crafts of Norwich drawn up in 1449,

170. In contrast only about 25% of the builders' households contained servants: Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a city, pp. 208-9. The majority of these servants were female; the economic difficulty experienced by Coventry in the 1520's was probably reflected in the lack of male servants.

171. Y.C.R. iii, p. 10; Palliser, Tudor York, p. 107.

which required that anyone of sufficient wealth to bear office who belonged to a craft from which a civic official had not hitherto been chosen, was required to change his craft.<sup>172</sup>

The York evidence suggests that in general upwards social mobility between craftsmen and merchants was very limited for much of the later middle ages. By the late fifteenth century and early sixteenth century the situation was changing. Increasing prosperity amongst the majority of the population and the rise in real wages in the century following the Black Death had in some ways created a new consumer demand which must have worked to the advantage of urban craftsmen. Specific crafts such as the tanners and butchers did not only benefit from a more affluent market; increased livestock farming probably gave them access to large supplies of raw materials. There is simply no means of showing whether in terms of real wealth the leading craftsmen of the early sixteenth century could be equated with those of a hundred years earlier. Nor can a genuine comparison be made between their resources and those of the merchants; the 1524 subsidy is an uncertain source and there is no early subsidy with which it may be compared. However it is clear that by the late fifteenth century the merchant class was experiencing very considerable economic difficulties, difficulties which may well have worked to the advantage of the more substantial craftsmen. To a certain extent the

172. This ruling was tested in 1463 when Thomas Antryngam, cordwainer, was chosen for the common council and the question arose as to whether his occupation debarred him: Records of Norwich ii, pp. li, 278.

craftsmen must have benefitted from the weakened position of the merchants in expanding their own operations in regional trade. The increased relative strength of their financial position probably also brought social advantages. The most obvious instance was the broadening of the office holding class which must have endowed many craftsmen with the status which money alone could not buy. Despite, or rather because of the economic difficulties faced by urban society, it can be argued that in many respects social mobility was probably greater in early sixteenth century York than it had been in the more prosperous years between 1350-1450.

173. For the composition of the governing class in the later sixteenth century see Palliser, Tudor York, pp. 106-7.

## Chapter 11. CONCLUSION

'I am all wery  
Of so many names to name  
Of so many craftes  
Of so many offices, so many services  
I wyll reste me'.

Caxton, 'Dialogues', lines 26-30.<sup>1</sup>

York, as befitted its role as a provincial capital, supported a particularly impressive range of industries in the later middle ages. Demand from the church, from the army, from a growing consumer market throughout the county, all provided work for a wide range of specialized craftsmen and craftswomen. Although in the years c. 1330-1460 the most obviously lucrative manufacture of the city was the cloth industry, York was always far from being a 'cloth town'. The broad base of the city's industry provided the foundation on which its fortunes could be rebuilt after the economic crisis of the early and mid-sixteenth century. Even in the particularly difficult years of the 1510's and the 1520's goldsmiths, pewterers, glaziers, tailors, vestmentmakers, barber-chandlers, tanners and victuallers were able not only to make a living but also to prosper.

The very variety of York's industry makes it difficult to categorize. The surviving records abound with occupational descriptions such as silkwoman, jeweller, organ-maker, marbler, shipwright, nailer,

1. Dialogues in French and English by William Caxton, ed. H. Bradley (E.E.T.S. lxxix, 1900), p. 47.

shearsmith, platemaker and pointmaker which reflect the multifarious manufactures of the city. Within the larger crafts there was probably very considerable specialization of manufacture, a specialization which is not immediately apparent from the records. The carpenters' craft included men who at various stages in their careers worked specifically as shipwrights, wheelwrights, cartwrights, turners and joiners. The more highly specialized smiths worked as locksmiths and clockmakers; the poorer among them as nailers. The degree of association that groups of specialized craftsmen established with their parent craft constantly varied over time, depending on demand, and probably the personalities of the craftsmen involved. If the relationships within a craft were very fluid, so too were those between crafts. It usually proved quite impossible to restrict the manufacture of specific items to particular crafts. This is perhaps most obvious among the metal workers where the work of smiths, cutlers, bladesmiths and armourers constantly overlapped. Such overlapping was also evident in the cloth industry between the weavers and the linenweavers, the tapiters and the litsters; in the leather industry between glovers, whit-tawers and pouchmakers; in the building industry between carpenters, plasterers and tilers.

Craftsmen working in the same materials and on the same types of manufactured goods naturally tended to club together. The structure of craft organizations in the later middle ages would seem however to reflect not only these natural associations but also, and perhaps rather more, the attempt of the civic authorities to impose order on the heterogenous collection of crafts to be found within the medieval city.

The craft fellowships were there to be exploited; for the city council they provided a free executive arm for the maintenance of standards and for the control of what was, because of extensive immigration, a very fluid labour force. As a result the ordinances of the craft guilds all too often fail to represent the realities of manufacture. It is only by comparing craft ordinances with the lives of craftsmen that the fabric of urban industrial society can in fact be described.

Within the manufacturing crafts of York there was a fair variety of industrial organization to be found. Admittedly the standard unit of production remained the small artisan workshop; few industries in York show positive evidence of the employment of more than five or six men by one master.<sup>2</sup> It seems probable that the textile industry was the only one which supported entrepreneurs on a large scale. There seems however to have been a very considerable amount of 'putting-out' in other branches of manufacture. John Lylling distributed iron among smiths to be made into osmunds;<sup>3</sup> other large orders for iron goods, particularly the manufacture of nails, were also put out on a piece-work basis. The same was true of the manufacture of rope.<sup>4</sup> To judge by the unusual wealth of some of the pinners or the powerful position of the early fourteenth-century girdlers for example, similar conditions may well have prevailed in other industries. It seems

2. c.f. R.H. Hilton, 'Capitalism - what's in a name', in The transition from feudalism to capitalism ed. R.H. Hilton (1976), pp. 151-2. The largest workshops in York were often to be found amongst the founders of non-ferrous metals: see above p. 186.

3. See above p. 196.

4. See above p. 293.

likely, that the wealthiest bowers and fletchers were also profiting from some sort of putting out system. As a result the labour relations described in craft ordinances, requiring as they frequently did the employment of one servant by one master for a specific contracted period of time, were often idealistic; sometimes, as was the case with the carpenters, many of whom worked on a wage basis, they must have been very far from the truth.

Certain craftsmen within the medieval town were always likely to prosper. This was true of groups of men within the victualling and leather industries. Indeed many of the victuallers of early fourteenth-century York could have been classed among the mercers; only as the later middle ages drew on did a more rigid distinction between victualling craftsmen and victualling wholesalers seem to have been established. The butchers, amongst the victuallers, and the tanners, amongst the leather workers, always seem to have been in a position to make adequate or even good livings for themselves. Both crafts were discriminated against in the later middle ages. It may have been in part the noxious nature of their crafts which made them socially unacceptable; undoubtedly the considerable power which they wielded over the supply of basic raw materials aroused the suspicion of the authorities.<sup>5</sup>

The more mundane victuallers and leather workers were however increasingly eclipsed by the dramatic rise in the fortunes of the

5. For the continued discrimination against butchers in the later 16th century see Palliser, Tudor York, p. 107.

entrepreneurs in the textile industries from the mid-fourteenth century onwards. In general the rich profits of the cloth industry were denied to manufacturing craftsmen and were directed into the pockets of the merchant class which provided the majority of entrepreneurs. The drapers and litsters who did succeed in making fortunes from cloth should really be equated with merchants rather than craftsmen. Few textile workers ever made much money from their trade; Thomas Bracebrig and Thomas Easingwold were exceptional.<sup>6</sup> However other craftsmen, bowers and cordwainers for example, profited by investing in the cloth industry. The rise and fall of the cloth industry was indeed spectacular. Other industries flourished at various stages in York's history and suffered a less dramatic demise. The armoury industry was particularly important in the early fourteenth century and declined slowly during the course of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Similarly the remarkably wealthy potters of the early fourteenth century do not seem to have had their counterparts in the fifteenth century. Whereas in the fourteenth century money was to be made in the manufacturing industries, by the early sixteenth century the emphasis had shifted to the service industries, to victualling and to the clothing trades.

How important was mercantile capital to the industrial life of late medieval York? It would seem to have been a crucial factor in the expansion of the cloth industry, in the middle decades of the

6. See above pp. 44, 415,



fourteenth century.<sup>7</sup> The impact of such capital in other branches of industry is rather harder to assess and its significance oblique. It does seem clear however that the vitality of much of York's industry depended on the vitality of the city's overseas trade. The location of industry was dictated to a large extent by trading patterns; to take one example, the rise and decline of the York bow-making industry seems to have been closely connected with the level of imports of bow-staves at Hull. All the more specialized industries of York, those which distinguished it from smaller provincial towns, depended to some extent on imported raw materials. For York therefore the competition of London merchants in the fifteenth century presented a very serious threat. Raw materials and manufactured goods were increasingly distributed through London.<sup>8</sup> The operations of London merchants in the West Riding exacerbated the acute problems already created by the withdrawal of the cloth industry to the countryside. In many crucial respects York was coming to be by-passed as a commercial centre. The falling customs returns from the port of Hull tell their own story about the dwindling role of Yorkshire merchants in international trade.<sup>9</sup> Local manufacture must have suffered as a result of falling imports and the breakdown of a distributive system which had depended on mercantile capital. Additionally some branches of industry may have been adversely affected

7. See above pp. 30-32, 368-70.

8. For the continued importance of London's trade with York in the later 16th century see Palliser, Tudor York, pp. 193-4.

9. V.C.H., East Riding of Yorkshire i, pp. 86-9; Bartlett, 'Some aspects of the economy of York', p. 136.

by an increase in imported manufactured goods; it has been argued that foreign 'batterie' for example competed strongly with local manufactures.<sup>10</sup> It is significant that the only consistently successful metal industry in late medieval York was the pewter industry which used English tin. Certainly by the mid-sixteenth century there was general concern over the level of imports of a wide variety of foreign manufactured goods.<sup>11</sup>

Two of the crucial props of York's economy, overseas trade and the cloth industry, were accordingly knocked away. The importance of these two factors in the prosperity of the city is further emphasised in comparing York's plight with the growing affluence of the rapidly expanding ports which seem to have served an industrial hinterland, towns such as Colchester, Ipswich and Exeter.<sup>12</sup> York was somewhat more fortunate than other old established towns, for example Southampton, where prosperity had been based almost entirely on trade and the town had no industry of its own.<sup>13</sup> York did have a broader industrial base. In the late medieval period this was in a large measure a result of York's role as a major ecclesiastical centre. York craftsmen were suppliers to the churches of Yorkshire, and indeed of the north, of a number of goods which were, after the Reformation, gradually to become redundant: stained glass, candles and imagery.<sup>14</sup> However, ultimately the crucial factor for the survival

10. See above pp. 190-1.

11. Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a city, p. 286.

12. Phythian-Adams, 'Urban decay', p. 170.

13. O. Coleman, 'Trade and prosperity in the fifteenth century; some aspects of the trade of Southampton', Ec.H.R. 2nd series xvi (1963-4), pp. 17-18.

14. Palliser, Tudor York, p. 192.

of industry in medieval York was the city's continued importance as a market.

The collapse of the cloth industry brought the marketing function of the city into greater prominence in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. In the circumstances those crafts which were most successful were the ones which drew their strength from York's role as a market town. The same was true elsewhere. A statute of 1511 declared that many corporate towns were in decay 'and not inhabited wyth marchaunts and men of such substances as they werre at the tyme of making of the foreseid statute and ordinaunce; for at this day the dwellers and inhabitauntes of the same cities and borowghes be most comenlye bakers, brewers, vynteners, fyshmongers and other vytelers and fewe or noone other persones of substaunce be wythin meny of the seid cities borowghes and townes corporate other then the foreseid vytaillers at this day able and sufficient to bere office'.<sup>15</sup>

The strength of many provincial towns in the mid-sixteenth century lay in having 'a good, quik market'.<sup>16</sup> Even in new industrial towns such as Birmingham, which Leland distinguished as being in great part 'mayntayned by smithes', the wealthiest townsmen were still tanners and butchers.<sup>17</sup> The spectacular fortunes to be made in overseas trade and in the cloth industry tend to obscure the

15. 3 Henry VIII c. 8, Statutes of the Realm iii, p. 30; the previous act referred to was an act of 6 Richard II st. 1 ch. 9, preventing victuallers from being civic officials: see above p. 174.

16. Hoskins, Provincial England, p. 81; Phythian-Adams, 'Urban decay', pp. 173, 183.

17. Hoskins, Provincial England, p. 69.

fact that much of the prosperity of the late medieval town lay in its function as the principal market of the region.<sup>18</sup> The complete interdependence of the town and the country is most obvious in terms of the market. Not only was the market essential for the distribution of provisions, but most craftsmen in the medieval town obtained the bulk of their raw materials from the surrounding rural hinterland. Emphasis has been laid in this study on the fact that much urban industry was secondary industry. Primary processing of raw materials was often undertaken in rural areas and the countryside supported a significant number of peasant craftsmen in the metal, pottery, glass and woodworking industries. It would be a mistake to see medieval industry as an urban phenomenon; urban craftsmen very frequently depended on their rural counterparts for supplies. The balance between rural and urban industry was liable to change constantly as new resources were discovered, distribution patterns shifted or new sources of investment were found. Rural competition in the early sixteenth century was particularly fierce, especially with regard to the textile industry which attracted the large profits of the mass market. In consequence the industry of York in the sixteenth century turned away from the mass market, albeit reluctantly, towards local consumer demand, towards the provision of specialized services and of manufactures. The scale of industrial enterprise in York had been radically reduced. The variety of manufacturing industry remained remarkably wide.

18. E. Ennen, The medieval town (Oxford, 1979), pp. 78-9.

Appendix A. WILLS AND INVENTORIES OF YORK CRAFTSMEN<sup>1</sup>

Will of Robert Tothe,<sup>2</sup> potter; made 18 July 1404, proved 21 July 1404:  
B.I., Prob. Reg. 3, f. 212-3.

In dei nomine amen. xviii die mensis Julii anno domini millesimo cccc<sup>o</sup> quarto. Ego Roberto Tothe, civis et ollarius Ebor', sane memorie existens condo et ordino testamentum meum in hunc modum. In primis commendo animam meam deo omnipotenti beate marie matri sue et omnibus sanctis eius et corpus meum ad sepiendum in ecclesia sancti Martini in Mykelgate in Ebor'. Et lego rectori ecclesie predicte nomine mortuarii mei pro corpore mee talliatum optimum pannum meum prout custuma est. Et lego eidem rectori pro decimis et oblacionibus meis oblitis xiii s. iiii d. Item lego fabrice ecclesie predicte pro anima mea et pro sepultura corporis mei in eadem ecclesia xx s. Item lego Capellano parochiali eiusdem xx d. Item lego cuilibet capellano in dicta ecclesia Sancti Martini ex consuetudine divinas celebranti vi. d., ita quod intersint et quilibet eorum intersit ibidem die ac nocte sepulture mee cum exequiis ut mos est. Item lego clerico ecclesie predicte xx d, et subclerico eiusdem ecclesie xii d. Item lego xxv libras cere ad comburendum circa corpus meum die sepulture mee in dicta ecclesia sancti Martini. Item lego lumini in eadem ecclesia vocato Rudelyght xl d.

1. Punctuation and capitalization have been modernized in the wills and inventories, as has the use of the letters u and v, i and j.
2. Made free in 1368 as 'Robert Toth of Stillingflete', chamberlain in 1393: Freemen's Reg., pp. 64, 92; Stillingfleet is a village 7 miles to the south of York.

Item lego ad sustentacionem luminis beate marie in dicta ecclesia xl d.  
Item lego ad lumen ceram i imaginem beate marie et i imaginem sancti  
Thome de Judea in ecclesia predicta v s. Item lego lumini sancti  
Johannis Baptiste in ecclesia predicta xl d. Item luminibus sancte  
Katerine et Sancti Nicholai in eadem ecclesia Sancti Martini per equales  
porciones v s. (f. 213) Item lego Johanni de Brymlay nuper  
servienti mee ii C. pondum de ollis eneis parvis. Item lego Elene  
servienti mee ollam eneam pond de xvi libras et i patellam precii  
xvi d. Item lego Johanne servienti mee i ollam eneam pondam de xii  
libris et i patellam precii xii d. Item lego Johanne Lassell servienti  
mee i ollam eneam pondam de xvi libris et i patellam precii xvi d.  
Item lego Willelmo Berwyk i C. pondum de ollis eneis. Item lego  
Willelmo servienti mee dimidium C. pondum de ollis eneis et ii patellas  
precii iiii s. Item lego Stephano servienti meo dimidium c. pondum de  
ollis eneis et ii patellas precii iiii s. Item lego Elene uxori  
Johannis Carter de Stillingflete x s. Item lego Cecilie Pete de  
Stillingflete vi s. viii d. Item lego Johanne Routh de eadem vi s.  
vii d. Item lego Alicie de Ednestow de Qweldryk vi s. viii d. Item  
lego Alicie de Grauncewyk de Knapton xl s. Item lego Johanne de  
Escryk potter de Ebor<sup>3</sup> xx s. Item lego Roberto filio predicti  
Johannis Escryk i pecium argenti et vi s. viii d. Item do et lego

3. Possibly John de Escryk, junior, made free as a potter in 1396:  
Freemen's Reg., p. 96. A John de Escryk, potter, who lived in  
the same parish as Robert Tothe, that of St. Martin Micklegate,  
died in 1429 and asked that he should be buried next to his  
father John Escryk: B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 573v.

Alicie uxori mee i tenementum cum pertinentis quod habeo extra Mikillyth in suburbio Ebor' iacentem inter tenementum Willelmi de Selby ex parte una et tenementum quodam Stephani Littester ex parte altera, et abbuttantem super regiam stratam extra Mikillyth' ante versus Fossatum dominis regis retro; ac etiam do et lego predictae Alicie i toftum <sup>or</sup>iiii acras terre et dimidiam in Knapton' cum omnibus aysiammentis commoditatibus et pertinentis quod nuper habui ex dono et feoffamento Alicie de Grauncewyk de Knapton', habendum et tenendum predictum tenementum cum pertinentiis et predictum toftum <sup>or</sup>iii acras et dimidiam terre cum omnibus aysyamentis commoditatibus et pertinentiis prefate Alicie ad totam vitam suam de capitalibus dominis feodi illius per servicia inde debita et de iure consueta. Et post decessum prefate Alicie volo quod predictum tenementum et predictum toftum <sup>or</sup>iiii acras et dimidiam terre cum omnibus aysyamentis commoditatibus et pertinentiis remaneant Alicie filie mee et heredibus de corpore suo legitime procreato de capitalibus dominis feodi illius per servicia inde debita et de iure consueta. Et si contingat predicta Aliciam filiam meam sine herede de corpore suo legitime procreato obire tunc volo quod predictum tenementum cum predicto tofto <sup>or</sup>iiii acris et dimidiam terre cum omnibus aysyamentis commoditatibus et pertinentiis remaneant Thome filio meo et heredibus de corpore suo legitime procreato de capitalibus dominis feodi illius per servicia inde debita et de iure consueta. Et si contingat predictum Thomam sine herede de corpore suo legitime procreato obire tunc volo quod predictum tenementum cum predicto tofto <sup>or</sup>iiii acris et dimidia terre cum omnibus aysyamentis commoditatibus et pertinentiis remaneant rectis heredibus predicti Roberti Tothe

imperpetuam. Item lego prefate Alicie uxori mee optimam peciam argenti cum pede et coopertorio. Item lego predicte Alicie filie mee secundam peciam argenti cum pede et coopertorio. Item lego Thome filio meo terciam peciam argenti cum pede et vi coclearia argenti cum capitibus de acorns et omnia instrumenta arti mee qualitercumque pertinentia. Item do et lego Alicia uxori mee prefate post discessum meum totum statum et terminos quos habeo in uno tenemento in quo inhabito in Mykylgate in Ebor' ad totam vitam suam. Et si contingat predictam Aliciam uxorem meam mori infra eosdem terminos predictos tunc volo quod predicti Alicia filia mea et Thomas filius meus coniunctim habeant totum statum et terminos predictos in tenemento predicto cum pertinentiis illis et heredibus et assignatis suis durante terminis predictis. Item lego Johanni de Stillingflete<sup>4</sup> optimam peciam meam argenti cum coopertorio sine pede. Item lego Willelmo de Neuton Belman' i C. pondum de ollis eneis. Item lego Willelmo Cuk servienti meo l C. pondum de ollis eneis. Item lego Johanni Stillyngflete optimam zonam meam argentatam cum baslard et c s. Residuum vero omnium bonorum meorum superius non legatorum do et lego executoribus meis ut ipse inde pro me ordinent et disponant taliter qualiter eis videbitur expedire melius, ad que omnia et singula premissa in omnibus fideliter perimplendum et observadum ordino et constituo meas executores Johannem de Stillingflete, Aliciam uxorem meam et Thomam filium meum ut presens testamentum in omnibus exequetur cum effectum. In cuius rei testimonium sigillum meum huic presenti testamento meo apposui. Hiis

4. Probably the John de Stillingflete who was chamberlain in 1409: Freemen's Reg., p. 112.



testibus Rectore ecclesie Sancti Martini in Mikilgate in Ebor', Roberto Harpham,<sup>5</sup> Johanne Candiller, Henrico de Doncaster Skynner,<sup>6</sup> Henrico Goldsmyth, Johanne Bautre Cordwyner,<sup>7</sup> Roberto Albrist Bouer, Johanne Ludyngton', Willelmo Cuke et aliis datum apud Ebor' anno et die supradictis. Item voluntas mea est quod si contingat predictam Aliciam filiam meam obire infra terminam xii annorum quod tunc sua pars bonorum prefate Alicie uxori mee, Thome filio meo et Alicie de Grauncewyk de Knapton' per equales porciones dividatur. Probatum fuit presens testamentum xxi.<sup>o</sup> die mensis Julii anno domini millesimo cccc<sup>mo</sup> iiii<sup>to</sup> et commissa administracio executoribus in eodem nominatis in forma et cetera.

5. Possibly a weaver made free in 1365: Freemen's Reg., p. 61.

6. Made free in 1386 as a tawer, resident in the parish of St. Martin Micklegate at the time of his dean in 1445: Freemen's Reg., p. 84; B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 113.

7. Free in 1385: Freemen's Reg., p. 82.

1.  
2.

Will of John Pereson,<sup>1</sup> butcher; made 4 August 1445, proved 23 September 1445: B.I., Prob. Reg. 2, f. 109-109v.

In dei nomine Amen. Quarto die mensis Augusti anno domini millesimo quadringentissimo quadragesimo quinto. Ego Johannes Pereson, civis et boucher Ebor', compos mentis et memorie condo ordino et facio testamentum meum in hunc modum. In primis de et lego animam meam deo omnipotenti et beate marie ac omnibus sanctis corpusque meum ad sepeliendum in ecclesia mea parochiali sancte crucis in Fossegate in Ebor. Et lego rectori eiusdem ecclesie pro mortuario meo optimum meum pannum cum capicio pro corpore meo talliatum. Et lego fabrice eiusdem ecclesie pro sepultura mea ibidem habenda v s. Et lego fabrice ecclesie cathedrale beati Petri Ebor' xiii s. iiii d. Et lego Abbati et conventui de Fontibus, ita quod me absolvant vi s. viii d. Et lego cuilibet masendieu in civitate et suburbis Ebor vi d. Et lego cuilibet capellano continue celebranti in ecclesia mea parochiali venienti ad exequias et missam meas iiii d. Et clerico meo parochiali iiii d. Et subclerico ii d. Et remitto Roberto Pereson fratri meo de debito quod michi debet xl s. Et lego Johanni Pereson alias dicto Johanni Henryson<sup>2</sup> filio meo duos boves quos emi de Roberto Carter, unam vaccam white hedded, unam aliam iuvenecam nigram eiusdem etatus, unam equam cum duobus suis pullis, unum lectum plumalem cum duobus coopertoriis et ii paribus lynthaminum, ii novas ollas quas emi de Henrico Potter, vi

1. Free as a butcher in 1409: Freemen's Reg., p. 112.

2. Possibly the John Henrison free as a butcher in 1440: Freemen's Reg., p. 156.

dobler, vi disshis and vi salsars de pewdre, unam pelvum cum lavacro et  
 unum pruce kyst stantem ad pedem lecti mei. Et lego Elizabeth  
 Browdester nuper servienti mee unum magnum cacabum. Et lego Thome  
 Pereson alias dicto Thome Hundson filio meo omnia utencilia et  
 hustiliamenta domus mee in Wheldrik<sup>3</sup> cum plaustro cum ferro ligato et  
 harnasiamentis, viii boves et duas equas eidem plaustro pertinentes.  
 Et lego Thome Pereson<sup>4</sup> seniori filio meo optimam ollam meam eneam in  
 Ebor' et unum urciolum, unam pelvim seniore, vi doblers, vi disshis et  
 vi salsars de powder, ii vaccas cum uno nigro pullo etatus duorum annorum.  
 Et lego Willelmo Pereson fratri meo optimam meam togam preter  
 mortuarium. Et remitto eidem Willelmo totum debitum quod michi debet.  
 Et lego cuilibet puerorum suorum non maritorum xii d. Et lego Alicie  
 filie Roberti fratris mei iii s. iiii d. Et lego Stephane Clone unam  
 ollam eneam apud Ebor'. Et lego Johanne uxori mee vi cocliaria argenti  
 et unam parvam murram. Et lego ecclesie de Wheldrik ii torchas precii  
 vi s. Ac in super do et lego Johanne uxori mee omnia terras et  
 tenementa mea in Ebor' habenda et tenenda (109v.) omnia predicta  
 terras et tenementa prefate Johannes ad terminum vite sue; ita quod  
 inveniatur Johannam Crokebayn amitam meam esculenta et potulenta cum  
 vestimentis statui suo convenienti ad terminum vite sue. Et quod post  
 mortem predictae Johanna uxoris mee volo quod duo tenementa mea iuxta  
 le mercer', quorum unum est in tenura Waltere Ultyng et alterum in mea

3. Wheldrake, a village 6 miles S.E. of York.

4. Free per patres as a butcher in 1445: Freemen's Reg., p. 164.

propria tenura, ac omnia terre et tenementa mea in Wystow<sup>5</sup> remaneant Thome Pereson seniori filio meo et Willelmo filio suo habenda et tenenda predicta due tenementa prefati Thome et Willelmo heredibus et assignatis suis imperpetuum. Et volo eciam quod post mortem eiusdem Johanni uxoris mee tenementum meum cum camino in quo modo inhabito in Ebor' remaneat Johanne Cluyn filie mee et Stephanus filio suo habendum et tenendum predictum tenementum prefatis Johanne Cluyn et Stephano filio suo heredibus et assignatis sui imperpetuum. Ac eciam in super volo quod quartum tenementum meum iuxta domum Archiepiscopi Ebor' remaneat Thome Hudson filio meo habendum sibi heredibus et assignatis suis imperpetuum. Residuum vero omnium bonorum meorum superius non legatorum porcionam meam continentem, debitis meis deductis, expensis meis funeralibus factis, do et lego executoribus meis ad disponendum inde pro salute anime mee prout coram summo Judice voluerint rendere in die iudicii, huius autem testamenti mei executores meos facio videlicet Robertum Pereson et Andream Darras ad omnia premissa in forma predicta debite exequantur. Et lego eidem pro labore suo vi s. viii. d. In cuius rei testimonium huic presenti testamento meo sigillum meum apposui. Datum Ebor' die et anno domini supradicta vicesimo tercio die mensis Septembris anno domini supradicti. Probatum fuit presens testamentum et administracio commissa Roberto Pereson executori in eodum testamento nominato iurato in forma iuris, reservatus potestate consimilem administracionem committendi Andree Darras alteri coexecutori in huiusmodi testamento nominato cum venerit eam in forma iuris receptur.

5. A village 10 miles S. of York.

Will of Robert Denton,<sup>1</sup> fletcher; made 4 February 1492, proved 11 February 1492: B.I., Prob. Reg. 5, f. 405v.

In dei nomine Amen. Anno domini millesimo cccc<sup>mo</sup> lxxxxi<sup>mo</sup> quarto die mensis februarii, ego Robertus Denton civis Ebor' compos mentis et sane memorie condo testamentum meum in hunc modo. In primis lego animam meam omnipotenti deo creatori meo meo (sic) et beate marie et omnibus sanctis corpus que meum seplendum in ecclesia mea parochiali sancti Michaelis iuxta pontem Use. Et lego rectori meo pro mortuario meo optimam meam togam prout moris est. Et lego eidem rectori meo pro decimis et oblationibus meis oblitis xx d. Et lego fabrice ecclesie mee parochialis pro sepultura mea ibidem habenda vi s. viii d. Et lego viii libras cere conficiendas in iii<sup>or</sup> ceriis comburendis circa corpus meum die sepulture mee. Et lego uno honesto presbiterio ad celebrandum pro anima mea et animabus omnium benefactorum meorum in ecclesia mea parochiali per unum annum integrum iiii li xiii s. iiii d. Et lego Margarete Denwik famule mee unam togam viridi coloris ut duas ollas eneas, unam de media mensura et altera de minima mensura. Item lego Jacobo Walker<sup>2</sup> servienti meo centum shayfe pro sagittis sicut jacent. Item lego Thome apprenticio meo aliud centum shaife sicut jacent. Et lego Agneti Sawtree sorori mee unam murrantem x unc., unam zonam sericam blodii coloris stipatam cum argento et unam togam de violet penulatam. Et lego filie sororis mee unam ollam eneam. Et

1. Free as a fletcher in 1467: Freemen's Reg., p. 186.
2. Free as a fletcher in 1492: Freemen's Reg., p. 216.

lego Alicie matri Thome apprenticii mei unam ollam enneam. Et lego patri Thome apprenticii mei unam togam russet' coloris. Et lego Thome Sawtree<sup>3</sup> fratri meo unam togam de iiii<sup>or</sup> eligendam. Et volo quod expense mee funerales sint honeste facte secundum discrecionem executorum meorum et supervisorum testamenti mei. Residuum omnium bonorum meorum superius non legatorum do et lego Alicie filie mee et Willelmo Wilson<sup>4</sup> aurifabro qui habebit filiam meam in uxorem suam, quos ordino et facio executores meos ad disponendum pro anima mea. Et ordino et facio supervisores huius testamenti mei Dominum Willelmum Brigham capellanum et Thomam Kitchynner.<sup>5</sup> Hiis testibus Johanne Carter, Willelmo Jakeson et Roberto Huchonson. Probatum fuit presens testamentum xi<sup>mo</sup> die mensis Februarii anno domini supradicto. Et commissa administratio executoribus in eodem testamento nominatus iuratis in forma iuris.

3. Free as a baker in 1453: Freemen's Reg., p. 182.

4. Free in 1491, died in 1518: Freemen's Reg., p. 216; B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 52.

5. Free as a tapiter in 1473: Freemen's Reg., p. 193.

Will of John Chesman,<sup>1</sup> chandler and barber; made 6 January 1509,  
proved 27 February 1509: B.I., D. & C. Prob. Reg. 2, f. 78v-79.

In the name of God amen. The vi<sup>th</sup> day of January the yere of our lord  
god m<sup>l</sup> ccccc<sup>mo</sup> and viii, I John Chesman, chanler and barbur of the citie  
of York, seek in body beyng of good and hole mynd ordante and makys  
my testament in maner and forme folowyng. First I giff and bequeth  
my saull to almyghty God, our lady saint Mary and to all the saintes in  
the celestiaall cowrte of hewyn and my body to be buryed in the mynster  
afore the blissed roode. Item I bequeth for my mortuary as the law  
requireth. Item I bequeth for forgottyng tythes ii s. Item I  
bequeth v li wax to be about my body the day of my buryall and to half  
off the wax to goo to my parich church and Saint Michael. Item I  
bequeth to Saint William colage iii s. iiii d. to pray for me. Item I  
bequeth to Agnes Murton my wiff shuld have beyn and God had wold, I gyff  
to hir a feder bed, a boster, ii pillows, a pare of sheites, a pare of  
blankites, ii coverlites and viii yerds of new lynyng cloth, a burde  
cloth, a towell. Also I giff to ye said Agness ii powder dublers,  
ii dishis, ii sawsers, a new saltseller of powder, iiii candilstikes  
of laton, a posnet of laton, ii meslyng pannys a bigar and a les, a new  
ladyll of laton, a gowne cloth yat shuld have beyn my weddyng gown.  
Item I bequeth to Thomas Murton my best dublet, a chamelet jakit and  
jakit blewmeld hanised, a batell ax, ii gusseittes of maill. Item I  
bequeth to Agnes Murton his wiffe a gowne of bewticolour lyned with blak,

1. Free as barber and waxchandler in 1507: Freemen's Reg., p. 230.

vi yerdes of lynnyng cloth, a litill sheit with rede silk goyng thurght it, ii new charys oon to hir husband and the toder to hir self. Also I bequeith to William Murton my scarleit bonet with a trewlove of silver and gilt a pone it, a fyne steill bonet, a dubleit of sataine of sypers. Item I bequeth to Isabell Cheisman my nawnt my best gowne exsept on of violet. Item I bequeith to Robert Towrys a gowne yat is furrid with whitlame, (79) a fyne worseit dubleit bown with blak velvit, a pare of violet hose. Item I bequeith to William Myld a gowne furred with cony. Item I gyff to Robert Perkyn my prentes a rasour bage with vi rasours, a pare of sissoures, a heed come, a basyng, a lavour, ii shaiffyng clothis and part of my tuyllis to wirk with all. Also I bequeth to Richard Carlton my prentes iiii rasours, a litill basyng, a shaffyng cloth. Item I bequeith to Sir Harry Jakson my curet a fyne meslyng basyn with owt ryngis. Also to ye said Sir Herry a silver spone with a knope gilted forto remembre me in his beed role. Item I bequeith to John Thorp dwellynge in Dorame a silver spone for a tokyng. Item I giff to Sir William Clark my nawunt sone a silver spone. Item I bequeith to John Cook my tennand iii s. iiii d. for his trew dwellyng with me. Item I bequeth to Janet Kynra my servaunt a russet gowne. Item I bequeth to Saint Gylis church in Duram vi s. viii d. for to pray for my frendes saullis and myne. Item I bequeith to Sir Thomas Forne, ye chaumerlaing of the mynster of York, all my land yat be in ye town of Duram, and he forto dispose evere yere as lang as he liffes for my saull and my fader and mother and all my frendes saullis, xiii s. iiii d. The residew of my land I giff it to ye said Sir Thomas to his awn proper us, and after forto dispose ye said land for my saull and his



both for evermore to be praed for. The residewe of my gudes not bequeth and my funerall expences maid abowt my body and my dettes paid I giffe yame not to my executor bot forto dispose yame for ye welle of my saull. Also I maik and ordantes Sir Thomas Forne ye chamberlane of ye mynster of York my executor forto dispose my guddes for the heill of my saull as my tryst is in hyme. And I giff to ye said Sir Thomas for his labour xx s., a hameblyng horse and a basyn. Witnes hereof Sir Herry Jackson ye parich prest, Robert Turnor, Robert Loksmyth,<sup>2</sup> John Huyd and Robert Tows with other moo. In die nomine Amen. Admissio probacionis super faccionem testamenti presentibus Annexis coram nobis venerabilium virorum capituli ecclesie metropolitice Ebor' causarum auditore ipsum testamentum rite factum et legitime probatum pronunciamus administracionem omnium bonorum dicti defuncti infra nostram jurisdictionem existentium executori in eodem testamento nominato iuxta formam constitutionis legatis in hac parte editis iurati. Datum Ebor' xxvii die februarii anno domini m<sup>l</sup> quingentissimo octavo.

2. Vestmentmaker, died 1531. His inventory is transcribed in this Appendix.

Inventory of William Thwaite,<sup>1</sup> founder: B.I., Original wills and inventories, 16 September 1512.

m.1. Inventorium omnium bonorum que nupper (sic) fuerint Willelmi Thwaite founder appreciatorum per Cristoferum Horner,<sup>2</sup> Willelmum Duke et Johannem Tennant<sup>3</sup> xvi<sup>mo</sup> die Septembris anno domini millesimo quingentesimo duodecimo.

In pecunia numerata	xiiii s.	
The chammer over the shopp		
In primis a bolster	ii s.	
Item a coveryng of a bede	vi s.	viii d.
Item a par blankettes	ii s.	viii d.
Item ii coverlettes	iii s.	
Item a testur and ii curttyns	iii s.	iiii d.
Item a noyer ffedderbed with a bolster	xiii s.	iiii d.
Item a coveryng of a bed		xx d.
Item a blankett		viii d.
Item a noyer ffedderbed with a bolster	viii s.	
Item a par blankettes		xvi d.
Item a coverlett		xii d.
Item a coverlett and a coveryng of say	ii s.	ii d.
Item a matres with a boster	ii s.	
Item a coverlet		xvi d.
Item xiii pillous	iiii s.	
Item the hallynges		xvi d.
Item a par bedstokes and a Chare		xiiii d.
Item two formes		i d.
Item a doblett of saten in brigges	ii s.	iiii d.
Item a doblett of red worsed with fustian sleffes		xx d.
Item a ledder doblett		xii d.
Item a peticote and a jaket of grene chamlet		xxii d.
Item a jakett off blew	iii s.	iiii d.
Item a jakett of tawney	iiii s.	
Item a jakett of motley	ii s.	
Item a nold jakett		iiii d.
Item two par of hosse	iii s.	
Item a gowne of violett furred with white lame	xiii s.	iiii d.
Item a gowne of tawney furred	x s.	
Item a blakke bonett with a broche off silver	ii s.	iiii d.
Item a hatte and a cappe		x d.
Item iiii sharttes	vi s.	
summa vi li xvii s. x d.		

1. Free in 1487: Freemen's Reg., p. 212.

2. Free as mason in 1490: Freemen's Reg., p. 215.

3. Free as founder in 1508; died 1516: Freemen's Reg., p. 232; B.I., D/C. Prob. Reg. 2 fo.113. John Tennant's inventory has been transcribed in part: Test. Ebor. v, pp. 79-80.

Anoyer chammer

Item ii mattresses and iiii old coverlettes	ii s.	viii d.
Item a matres and iii coverlettes		xx d.
Item a matres and a blankett a coverlett and a pillow	ii s.	
Item iii curtyns	iii s.	
Item xiiii hallynges	iiii s.	ii d.
Item chyste		xii d.

summa xiiii s. vi d.

The chammer over the parlour

Item a ffedderbed with a boster		xvi d.
Item a coveryng of a bed	vi s.	viii d.
Item a coverlett and a ppar blankettes	iiii s.	viii d.
Item a testur a curtyne with the lyngyng	iii s.	
Item a par lynne shetes	xv s.	viii d.
Item x par of samron shetes	xvi s.	viii d.
Item iii tabyl clothis	iiii s.	
Item two towelles of dray and ii of playne	iii s.	
Item v hardyne towelles		xv d.
Item vi napkyns		xii d.
Item v pillow beres	ii s.	
Item a kyst	ii s.	viii d.
Item a pressour	iii s.	
Item a nold matres		xxii d.

summa iiii li xvii d.

The halle

In primis the hallynges	vi s.	viii d.
Item vi banqwars	ii s.	
Item di. dosen qweshyns	vi s.	
Item a contter	iii s.	
Item ii tabilles with a par trestes		xx d.
Item a litill tabill		iiii d.
Item a coburd	iii s.	
Item ii basyns of overse warke with ii lawers	iiii s.	
Item a basyn with a laver	iii s.	
Item viii candilstekes	v s.	
Item a chawffer		xii d.
Item a hyngyng laver		xvi d.
Item a jak and a salet a gorget ii gussettes		
a napron and iii gantlettes	vi s.	iiii d.
Item ii batell axis and ii oyer axis		xxii d.
Item a byll		viii d.
Item ii swordes and a dager and a hynger	iii s.	
Item a buckler		xvi d.
Item ii formes and iii chares	ii s.	x d.
Item iii oyerchares and a langesettill		xx d.

summa lv s. ii d.

The parlour

In primis the hallyng		xx d.
Item a tabill with trestes and a forme		xii d.
Item vii qweshyns	ii s.	vi d.
Item iii banqwares		iiii d.
Item ii pouched basyns with ii lavers	iii s.	iiii d.
Item a plome basyne		xx d.
Item iii holow basyns	iii s.	vi d.
Item iiii candil stekes	ii s.	iiii d.
Item v dosen weght basyns lavers and candilstekes	xii s.	
Item iichares and ii boffett stolys		xviii d.
Item par botes and spores		viii d.

summa xxx s. vi d.

Buttre

Item vi sylver sponys	xiii s.	iiii d.
Item vii dosen and iiii li powder	xxix s.	
Item xi li weght of laythemetell	ii s.	iiii d.
Item a lytyll coburd		viii d.
Item a salt kett		vi d.
Item ii barell with verious		xx d.

summa xlvii s. vi d.

The kechyn

In primis ix dosen weight of pannes	xxix s.	
Item xvi dosen weght and iii li of pottes	xlii s.	vi d.
Item iiii spittes and a broche	iii s.	
Item ii rakkys a par of cobyrens and a rost yerne	iii s.	iiii d.
Item a brandreth and a frying[ ]ii par pothyngynges		xiiii d.
Item ii fleshe crukys a knyff and a sclyse		iiii d.
Item a bawk of yerne iiii crokes a par togges a scomer a yerne pestell		xxii d.
Item a par bellous and a water cane		viii d.
Item a dressyng borde		ii d.
Item a brewledde	viii s.	
Item iiii standys and vi tobbs	ii s.	viii d.
Item a knedyng troughe a soo and ii cyfvys		xii d.
Item a ladill		ii d.
Item a ste and a galon		iiii d.
Item a stone mortar		viii d.

summa iiii li xiiii s. x d.

The shoppe

In primis a haly waterfatt and a par sensors	iiii s.	iiii d.
Item a par of sensors un' garnyshed		xii d.
Item a chawfyng dishe		xvi d.
Item vii lavers	v s.	
Item xi candilstekes of viis ware	v s.	
Item xv small candilstekes	iii s.	
Item a tabar dishe		vi d.
Item iiii sacryng bellys		xii d.
Item a dosen ladilles and scommers	v s.	
Item ii sensor sette		viii d.
Item xvii candilstekes stantes turned		xvii d.
Item x li dosen metall of weshe and thrawyng	xli s.	
Item xxvii dosen hukshankes		xviii d.
m.2. Item x fylys greate and small		xviii d.
Item ii rowners		ii d.
Item vi hake hamers <sup>4</sup>		x d.
Item iiii clynch hamers <sup>5</sup>		vi d.
Item a par of clames <sup>6</sup>		ii d.
Item a greate hamer and ii lesse		vi d.
Item ii shavyng knyffe		viii d.
Item iii pykys		viii d.
Item a par of compase		iii d.
Item ii ryne spyndilles <sup>7</sup>		xii d.
Item ii par sheres		xx d.
Item many small instrumentes		xvi d.
Item iii lathes	v s.	
Item ii kystes	ii s.	iiii d.
Item shelffe		iii d.

summa iiii li vii s. viii d.

The warkhusse

In primis cccc weght save viii li metall	iii li.	xviii s.	viii d.
Item ii dosen viis ware patrons		vi s.	viii d.
Item v greate ffete patronssand ii floures		iii s.	
Item iii dosen small patrons		vi s.	
Item xxi ladill and scomer patrons		vii s.	
Item iii dosen and v flowres patrons		iii s.	vi d.
Item iiii belles and a lytill bell and a pyke			xii d.

4. An instrument with an adze-like cutting edge: O.E.D.
5. A hammer for clinching, that is driving a nail or bolt head back into the metal or wood through which it has been passed: O.E.D.
6. Vice: O.E.D.
7. Iron rod into which a spindle is set: O.E.D.

Item rynges and stapill patrons		ii d.
Item a yerne bauke	ii s.	viii d.
Item a lesse yerne bauke		vi d.
Item a noyer lytill bauke		iiii d.
Item a weght of laton of vi li		vi d.
Item iiii stane of ledweghts		xviii d.
Item ii crose hedde of led		iii d.
Item a ruling gunne	ii s.	viii d.
Item lx save ii mawrettes	iii s.	
Item xxiiii dosen and iiii li ieren ger	x s.	
Item vi dosen old ierne		xviii d.
Item xxiiii <sup>ti</sup> spyndilles iiii latyn	ii s.	
Item the molde	xv s.	iiii d.
Item vi dosen chaufer spyndilles		xii d.
Item xxiii pottes for meltyng	iii s.	iiii d.
Item a barell with white erth		xii d.
Item x baukes over ye fornes		xx d.
Item a lode of erth		iii d.
Item mayd erth		vi d.
Item a tour stole with all thynges pertenyng		iii d.

summa vii li xiiii s. iiii d.

#### The stabyll

In primis two horse	xiii s.	iiii d.
Item a noyer horse	xvi s.	
Item ii sadylls and ii bridilles	iii s.	iiii d.
Item two paksadylls and ii waintawys	ii s.	
Item ii greate panyers		x d.
Item ii greate plankes		xii d.
Item ii ierenforkes		ii d.
Item a bord with oyer trasment		xii d.
Item a lod sadiltre		vi d.
Item a grendy[lig] with trowghe		xii d.
Item hay	vi s.	iiii d.
Item wode	vi s.	viii d.
Item in collys	vi s.	ii d.

summa lvii s. iiii d.

summa totalis xxxvi li x s. xi d.

Debita qua defunctus debet

In primis husse farme	xxx s.	
Item to Master Evers	xiii s.	iiii d.
Item to Master Thornton	x s.	
Item to John Denne of Todcaster	viii s.	
Item to Master William Wright	iiii s.	
Item to Sir Gylbart Rane		xviii d.
Item to Master Mason		vii d.
Item to Robert Judson		xx d.
Item to James Taliour		xiiii d.
Item to Elezabeth Clerke	ii s.	vi d.
Item to Isabell Harforth		viii d.
Item to Elezabeth Clerke for hir lyveray	iii s.	iiii d.
Item to Benett		xii d.
Item to Huchynson		xviii d.
Item to William Bakster	xl s.	
Item to the kidman for kiddes	ii s.	viii d.
Item to the smyth for horsshoeinge		x d.

summa vi li ii s. ix d.

Expense funerales die sepulture

In primis to preste and clerke	x s.	
Item for v messes doying		xx d.
Item for wax	ii s.	
Item for brede and ale	xii s.	
Item for spice and wyne	ii s.	xi d.
Item the dener the day of the beriall	v s.	
Item the prevyng of the testament	ii s.	x d.
Item for his beriall	iii s.	iiii d.
Item expenses the day of prasyng	ii s.	
Item for makyng the inventarie	iii s.	iiii d.
Item for the acquitans	ii s.	ix d.
Item for makyn of the obligacion		vi d.
Item for registering of the testament and for wrytting of it and parshment		xvi d.

summa xlix s. x d.

Inventory of Robert Loksmith,<sup>1</sup> vestmentmaker: B.I., Original wills and inventories, 11 December 1531.

Inventarium omnium bonorum Roberti Loksmith vestmentmaiker parochie Sancti Michaeli vocati le belfra in civitate Ebor' appreciatorum per Henricum Hutchenson,<sup>2</sup> Brianum Tesemond<sup>3</sup> et Jacobum Wood<sup>4</sup> undecimo die decembris anno incarnationis domini millesimo quingentesimo trigesimo primo.

In primis in pecunia xv s. iiii d.

The haulle

In primis a counter	v s.	
Item ye coveryng yerof		iiii d.
Item a long burde and a tristle		viii d.
Item a fyrme with a natte		iii d.
Item iiii chares		xiiii d.
Item a copburd	v s.	
Item the hawlynges	ii s.	viii d.
Item viii qwisshynges with the old bankers	ii s.	viii d.
Item a falden burde		iiii d.
Item a shelve		i d.
Item an ald copbord		xii d.

summa xix s. ii d.

The lawe parlour

In primis a furred gown	viii s.	
Item one olde blak gown	iii s.	
Item a fether bed and a bowser	x s.	
Item one old matteres		viii d.
Item ii codes		vi d.
Item a blanket happynge	ii s.	
Item a twylte		xii d.
Item a coveryng of a bed	vii s.	
Item one olde coveryng		vi d.

1. Free in 1484: Freemen's Reg., p. 208.
2. Probably a cooper free in 1501: Freemen's Reg., p. 225.
3. Free as cordwainer in 1516: Freemen's Reg., p. 239.
4. Probably a tailor free in 1507: Freemen's Reg., p. 230.



Item iii olde coverletes		xx d.
Item a payr of blankettes		xviii d.
Item a feather bed and bowster	viii s.	
Item one olde matteres		vi d.
Item iii olde shetes		xvi d.
Item peces of sheytes		iiii d.
Item one old teistour with frynges		xvi d.
Item a bed stonyng		vi d.
Item a payr of bed stokes		iiii d.
Item one olde counter	ii s.	
Item one olde chiste		iiii d.
Item a chist		viii d.
Item the hawlynges yer		xvi d.
Item a teistour with ye border		iiii d.
Item a baissyng with adam and eve and one ewar withowt lyde		xx d.
Item a baisyng with ye rose of it and ye ewar	ii s.	
Item a baisyng and one ewar		xx d.
m.3. Item a quart' weight of meslyn	iii s.	viii d.
m.2. Item a lytle fatte of messlyn		vi d.
Item ii candlestikes		xx d.
Item iii candlestikes		xviii d.
Item ii candlestikes		vi d.
Item a candlestik with iii flowres and one other with ii flowres		viii d.
Item a chawfyng dishe		xviii d.
Item a chawfyng dishe		xvi d.
Item a chawfyng dishe		x d.
Item xxvii li weight of powder	ix s.	
Item iiii spetes		xiiii d.
Item ii pottes and a posnett weyng ii doosen	iii s.	iiii d.
Item a kettell and a pan		xvi d.
Item a choppyng knyffe		ii d.
Item a spruce shist		xx d.
Item a chist with lok and key		xx d.
Item a burde clothe		xiii d.
Item a diepere table clothe		xii d.
Item one old diapere table clothe		vi d.
Item a lyn' table clothe		x d.
Item a lyn' towell		vi d.
Item ii lyn' toweles		vi d.
Item one old lyn' table clothe		viii d.
Item a lyn' towell		ii d.
Item a payr of old lyn' shetes		viii d.
Item a lyn' shete		x d.
Item a long lyn' towell		xvi d.
Item a shete and lytle towell		v d.
Item a chiste and a coffer		viii d.
Item a lytle buffett stule		i d.
Item a payr of cobiyerns		xvi d.
Item a chawfyngdishe		xx d.
Item a fyer layver	iii s.	iiii d.
Item in lyn garne		xvi d.

summa v li vi s. viii d.

The hie chawmer

In primis one olde coveryng of a bed	iii s.	
Item a standyng bed		xvi d.
Item a teistor of waynscott		x d.
Item ii curtaynes with frynges	ii s.	
Item one old coveryng a bed	iii s.	iiii d.
Item a payr of blankettes		xvi d.
Item a feether bed and a bowster	xii s.	
Item one old standyng bed		vi d.
Item iii litle fyrmes		ii d.
Item one olde iyern bownd chist		xii d.
Item a teistor and a frynge		x d.
Item the hawlynges		xvi d.
Item ii old chares		iiii d.
Item a coverlett		x d.
Item one old bowster and one olde cod		vi d.

m.3. summa xxix s. iiii d.

The fore chawmer

In primis a bed coveryng	iiii s.	
Item a coverlett		xvi d.
Item a payr of shetes		xx d.
Item one old blankett		vi d.
Item a feether bed with the bowster	x s.	
Item a pece of a matteres		iiii d.
Item a standyng bed		viii d.
Item one olde teistor with frynge		vi d.
Item vi olde coverlettes	v s.	viii d.
Item a pressor		xx d.
Item a poke with feethers and a bowster		xii d.
Item a coverlett		x d.
Item a matteres	ii s.	
Item one old bed and a tryndle bed		viii d.
Item a teistor with blew frynge		x d.
Item one olde broken counter		vi d.
Item one old chist		iiii d.
Item iii litle fyrmes		iii d.
Item ii old broken chares		iii d.

summa xxxiii s.

The shope

In primis a copburde	ii s.	
Item a chist	ii s.	
Item a lytle stule		ii d.
Item a lytle chist		iiii d.
Item ii lytle old hawlynges		vi d.

summa v s.

The bowtyng howse

In primis one old chist	iiii d.
Item a bushell	iii d.
Item a sadle with maile pilyon	viii d.
Item a swa[ ]	iiii d.
Item one old chist	iiii d.
Item a knedyng troghe	ii d.
Item a maile of harnes	ii d.
Item a tub, a hogeshede with oyer thinges	viii d.
Item a tub and a stande	iiii d.
Item a lytle broken stye	i d.
Item a wirt tub	ii d.
Item a bowtyng tub	ii d.
Item a grete burde	x d.
Item a planke	iiii d.
Item one old almere	ii s.
Item one old lede	iiii s.

summa x s. x d.

m.4. The kytchyng

In primis a chist	xii d.
Item a shelve	i d.
Item one old almerey	xiiii d.
Item one old copburd	vi d.

summa ii s. ix d.

A bak chawmer

In primis hay	xvi d.
Item a broken pressor with trumpere	xvi d.
Item ii pair of tristles and ii litle fyrmes	vi d.
Item a payr of tent bealmes	vi d.
Item ii cloges without the door	viii d.
Item a lytle nage	ix s.

summa ii s. ix d.

summa totalis bonorum xl li xv s. v d.

Expense funerales

In primis to the prestes and clerkes at derige and mes	iii s.	vi d.
Item for brede and ail spent in the howse and at the derige	v s.	iiii d.
Item for wax		vii d.
Item for talloy candle		v d.
Item to Matterdall wyff for wyndyng hym		iiii d.
Item for wrytyng the stuff in the howse		iiii d.
Item spent about ye praisyng of ye goodes and sellyng ye same	iii s.	ii d.
Item for wrytyng at the praisyng and makyng the inventarie	iii d.	
summa xvi s. viii d.		

Item paid for howse rent and expenses necessarie

In primis to the landeslord	xv s.	vi d.
Item in espenses maid in goyng to se ye nage		x d.
Item payd for the gerse of ye same nage and taiken of hym <sup>5</sup>	ii s.	iiii d.
Item to one for fechyng of ye same naige		iiii d.
summa xix s.		

Item for a lettre of administration		vi d.
Item for makyng of the inventory in parshment and indentid	iii d.	
Item for makyng of an obsigation for the Indempnity of the offis		xii d.
Item to the administrators of the goodes for thair labour	vi s.	viii d.
summa xi s. ii d.		

Summa totalis integre solvendo	xlvi s. x d.
sic restant clare	ix li viii s. vii d.

In primis to William Wilson <sup>6</sup> for a paire of sylver beides xl s, ii baissynges, ii lavers and ii greate candilstikes of sevyn groites a coppyl	xlvi s.	viii d.
Item to Master Gabriell Warcope for iii yerdes of bryges satan	vii s.	

5. Grazing for the nag: O.E.D.

6. Goldsmith: see above p. 489.

Item to Elizabeth Walkar dowghter and executrix to James Walkar <sup>7</sup> fletcher of Yorke for whete, rye, barlye and haye which dide growe of a farmholde lyenge in Medylthorpe	iiii li		
Item to Alys Legh somtyme wife to Michaill Makkarell for feyne hemynge of broderye		xxvi s.	viii d.
Item to Richard Baiteman <sup>8</sup> for i lez C herynge ii s. and ii mettes of collis viii d.		ii s.	viii d.
Item to William Wightman for halfe a quarter of malte and ther dide remayne unpaide for yat di. quarter yat he had laste and immediatlie before yat and for horse gresse a nyght and halfe a daye		ii s.	v d.
Item a Alan Aire servaunte to the duke of Somersette as doithe appere by a byll of Roberte owne hande	xi li	x s.	
Item to Richard Thikpeny <sup>9</sup> barbour for a hoolle yeire shavyn		ii s.	
Item to John Wheteman for ii paire of corke shone			xx d.
Item to William Taillour for the warkmanship of a lyttyl darke tawmye gowne viiid and for iii blaklamskynnys viii d. and for a pursell of shankes and v taulynge of shankes		iii s.	x d.
Item to James Wodde for aile and wodde takyn at certayn tymes		ii s.	vi d.
Item to Briane Tessemonde <sup>10</sup> fore shone to Christopher and Sybbell and oyer as aperith by his byll		iii s.	i d.
Item to James Tailyour his prentice for certayne thynges as doithe apeire bye a byll		ii s.	ii d.
Item to Randall Bulaye for one yere servys a leveray vis. viiid, ii s. to spende a pare of hoise and a paire of shone			
Item to Master Thomas Water <sup>11</sup> of the citie of Yorke notorie xxx s. as doithe apere by a obligacion subscribide with the saide Roberte Lokesmythe owne			

7. See above p. 488.

8. Shipman, free in 1512: Freemen's Reg., p. 235.

9. Barber and chandler free in 1517: Freemen's Reg., p. 239.

10. See above p. 499.

11. Clerk to the Dean and Chapter, responsible for calendaring the Dean and Chapter's muniments in the early 16th century: History of York Minster, ed. Aylmer and Cant, pp. 95n., 498; K.M. Longley, 'Towards a history of archive-keeping in the church of York', Borthwick Institute Bulletin i (1976), pp. 60-1.

hande and sealide withe his seale (of  
aravage of the same - crossed through)

x s.  
(xx s. crossed out)

Item to Christopher Lernuth clerke of the Belfray for certayn thynges as doithe apere bye a byll	ii s.	ii d.	ob.
m.5. Item to Noell Mores <sup>12</sup> for horse mete and mans mete yat he laide for his servaunte in the countre and for bokes yat he sende to Bilande Abbay and for hay and fagottes as aperith by a byll	iiii s.	iiii d.	
Item to Marmaduke Smythe <sup>13</sup> for certayne thynges as dothe apere more planelye by a byll	lvi s.	i d.	
Item to Henry Straket of Newburght for mony yat he lente hym xls, for silke yat he hadde of Christopher Felde of Wakefelde xiii s. iii d., for a quarter of whete xiii s. iiii d., for horse grisse iii s. iiii d. to Master Vilde yat ye saide Roberte Loksmyth shulde have paide	iiii li	x s.	
Item to Richard Benson <sup>14</sup> smyth laite dwellinge in Bothom or to his executors for shoinge of horssis as aperith by his taile	iiii s.		
Item to Agnes Hylton cremet of Saunte Leonardes in lente monye	xvi s.	vi d.	
Item to Sir Richarde Dawson chanon of Shappe Abbay for a masor price	liii s.	iiii d.	
Item to William Richardson for musterd		viii d.	
Item to Roberte Drape for halfe a quarter malte ii s. vi d., horse breide viis and white brede as aperith by a byll	ix s.	vi d.	
Item to George Warkcope for a horse	xi s.	iiii d.	

summa totalis debitorum xxxiii li. xs. iiii d. ob.

12. Stationer free in 1520: Freemen's Reg., p. 242; D.M. Palliser and D.G. Selwyn, 'The stock of a York Stationer, 1538', The Library, 5<sup>th</sup> series xxvii (1972).
13. Brouderer free in 1531: Freemen's Reg., p. 251.
14. Free in 1515, died 1522: Freemen's Reg., p. 238; B.I., Prob. Reg. 9 fo. 256.

Et sic solvendi sunt ad libra, v s. vii d.; ad x s., ii s. ix d. ob.;  
ad v s., xvi d. ob. qu.; ad ii s. vi d., viii d. qu.; ad xv d.,  
iiii d. ob. di. qu.

Item ulterius dicti administratores habuerunt de Magistro Roberto  
Elwold de bonis dicti defuncti i peice standding cum coopertorio argenti  
pond. xvi unc. lez Unc. iis xd. non positur in inventario ponitur in  
pleagium per xxx s. dicto Roberto Elwald xlv s. iiii d.  
inde

soluti eidem Roberto Elwold ante deliberacionem dicti peic' cum  
cooperaturio pleag' ut supra per dictos administratores pro debito  
predicto xxx s. vi d. ob.

sic restant clare xiii s. vd. unde soluti ut supra iuxta rationem  
bonorum Elizabeth Sawyer de Newbirgge per mandatum Magistri Thome Tashe  
auditoris pro debitis per eam petitis ut patet billam extendentes se  
ad xii s. iiii d., iii s. v d.

Item soluti dictos administratores per mandatum dicti Magistri Thome  
Tashe, Gabrieli Warkop pro uno lez fier chawfer ac duobus lez  
basinges ac iibus ewers in dicto inventario appreciatis ac allocatis pro  
bonis dicti Gabrielli per Magistrum Robertum Elwold et Magistrum  
Johannem fforman Mason arbitratores indifferentes electos et pro rata  
viis. posita in dicto inventario xs. Et allocatur pro dicto auditor pro  
solutione facta vicecomitibus civitati Ebor' et pro expensis circa  
premissis vi s.

Appendix B. A NOTE ON TESTAMENTARY PROCEDURE IN LATE

MEDIEVAL YORK

Two bodies were responsible for proving the wills of the vast majority of the inhabitants of late medieval York: the peculiar court of the Dean and Chapter, and the Exchequer and Prerogative court of the Archbishop. The wills for this study have been drawn from the probate registers of these two courts which survive for the period up to 1534: the registers of the court of the Dean and Chapter commence in the 1320's, those of the Archbishop's Exchequer and Prerogative court in 1389.<sup>1</sup> The wills of 1048 craftsmen have been used, together with 118 made by their female relatives; these women were usually the wives or widows of craftsmen, or occasionally their daughters.

The Dean and Chapter of York had spiritual jurisdiction within a very extensive ecclesiastical peculiar; this included twelve parish churches within the city of York itself.<sup>2</sup> It appears however that the probate jurisdiction of the Dean and Chapter within York was

1. D.M. Smith, A guide to the archive collections in the Borthwick Institute of Historical Research (Borthwick texts and calendars: records of the Northern Province 1, York, 1973), pp. 155-161 describes the jurisdiction of the various probate courts in the city of York and the extent of the records which survive from these courts. For a fuller description of the probate registers and original wills used in this study see above pp. 18-19. For the procedure before probate courts see Sheehan, Will in medieval England, pp. 196-214.
2. History of York Minster, ed. Aylmer and Cant, pp. 101-2; V.C.H., Yorkshire iii, pp. 80-8.



restricted to St. Peter's liberty, an area which included most of Petergate, the Minster end of Stonegate and Goodramgate, parts of Grape Lane and parts of Aldwark, together with the Minster close.<sup>3</sup> Of the wills proved before the Dean and Chapter in which the testator named his parish, the vast majority (ninety-eight out of a total of 129) were made by parishioners of St. Michael le Belfrey. A majority, but by no means all of those living in the parish of St. Helen's Stonegate who left wills also came under the jurisdiction of the Dean and Chapter. In addition, five parishioners of St. John del Pyke, four from Holy Trinity Goodramgate and one each from St. Sampson, St. Maurice and St. Michael Spurriergate had their wills proved in the court of the Dean and Chapter. In all 182 wills out of a total of 1166 were proved in the court of the Dean and Chapter, that is about 15%. The remaining 85% were proved before the Archbishop's court.<sup>4</sup>

It was customary in York for a tripartite division to be made of movable goods, one part to provide for the testator's bequests and soul, one part for his wife and one part to be divided amongst his children. Such a division was the practice throughout England in the early middle ages, but seems to have been abandoned in the southern province by the fourteenth century, save where it was adhered to by local custom.<sup>5</sup> In the north the tripartite division was maintained until 1692.<sup>6</sup>

3. History of York Minster, ed. Aylmer and Cant, pp. 102-3; J.S. Purvis, A medieval act book (York, 1943), pp. 41-4; V.C.H., City of York, pp. 339-40.
4. For the chronological distribution of wills see above table 10:1.
5. Holdsworth, History of English law iii, p. 552.
6. H. Swinburn, A treatise of testaments and last wills 4th ed. (1677), pp. 151-3; Pollock and Maitland, History of English law ii, pp. 348-52.

Swinburn, following Bracton and Lindwood, declared that the third part should not include the rateable part of leases, though it should include debts owing to the deceased, and chattels; however before any division was to be made, the expenses and debts of the deceased were to be met.<sup>7</sup> Calculations in the inventory of John Stubbs, barber (d. 1451) show him to owe debts of £7. 5s. 1d., which were subtracted from a total of £49. 2s. 10d., leaving £41. 17s. 9d.<sup>8</sup> This was divided between the defunct, his wife and three children, making £13. 9s. 3d. in each third. Each child got £4. 13s. 1d. The same procedure was adopted in the cases of William Coltman, brewer (d. 1481) and Thomas Litster, hosier (d. 1528); in these instances the residue was divided into two parts as there were no children.<sup>9</sup> The wills of craftsmen also abound with references to the legal division of movables into three parts. To take just two instances, in 1384 Nicholas de Malham, a barber, bequeathed to the child with which his wife was pregnant the portion of goods which was customary.<sup>10</sup> Thomas Bellamy, a vintner who died in 1510, made arrangements that '*liberis uxoris mee non contenti nec soluti suarum porcionum de bonis Thomas Glover patris eorundem habeant porciones suas de bonis meis sicut dictus Thomas Bellamy filius meus habebit*':<sup>11</sup> As has already been mentioned the portions of children

7. Swinburn, Treatise of testaments, p. 151; Register of Henry Chichele ii, ed. Jacob, pp. xxxv-xxxvi.
8. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories.
9. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories.
10. Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 78-78v.
11. Y.M.L., D/C Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 96v-97.

often took the form of craft tools, or in the case of girls, of marriage portions.<sup>12</sup>

Women in York made wills far less frequently than men. Common law declared that a married woman could only make a will with the permission of her husband, though in practice women seem to have been given rather more latitude.<sup>13</sup> The wills of some York women, those of Matilda Benson (1427) and Esolda Brame (1442) for instance, specifically state that they had been made with the permission of their husbands.<sup>14</sup> The goods of a widow were however her own to dispose of.

Real property was subject to a different law from that applied to movable goods. Borough custom ensured the right of free devise of urban property in York.<sup>15</sup> The city custumal, dating probably from the late fourteenth century, ruled that 'toute la cite Deverwik est tenuz de nostre seigneur le roy en fraunk burgage et sance mesne, et toutz lez terres et tenementz, rentz et servicez deins la dite cite et lez suburbes dicelle, sibien en reversion come en demeasne, sont devisables par usage de la dite cite, issint que homes et femmes par usage de la dite cite preint deviser lour tenementz rentz et reversions deins la dite cite et suburbes dicell, a qi qils voueront'.<sup>16</sup> The custumal also states that all wills which devised property should be read before

12. See above p. 446.

13. Holdsworth, History of English law iii, p. 543; Sheehan, Will in medieval England, pp. 234-6.

14. B.I. Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 526, 35.

15. Sheehan, Will in medieval England, pp. 275-7; Hemmeon, Burgage tenure, p. 131.

16. Y.M.B. ii, p. 253.

the mayor and enrolled in the city records.<sup>17</sup> The civic authorities of York do not however seem to have developed a judicial procedure for probate equivalent to the London court of Hustings. The jurisdiction of the London Hustings ran concurrently with that of the ecclesiastical courts; it was ostensibly established to prove legacies of real estate held in burgage tenure, but came to embrace movable as well as immovable goods.<sup>18</sup> Surviving evidence suggests that no similar court existed in York. In 1280 Archbishop Wickwane specifically forbade wills to be proved twice in the northern diocese; the ecclesiastical courts, established and experienced in probate as they were, seem naturally to have assumed most testamentary business.<sup>19</sup> In Norwich it was only the tenement clause of a will which was enrolled in the common roll of deeds of the city, and it seems probable that much the same procedure was followed in York.<sup>20</sup> As has been mentioned, in the majority of cases the real estate of York testators was disposed of in a series of deeds and indentures; reference was made to such indentures in the will, but the property was seldom described in detail.<sup>21</sup>

The devise of real property was not subject to the same tripartite division as movables. The will of William Barker, a baker

17. Y.M.B. ii, p. 253.

18. Register of Henry Chichele ii, ed. Jacob, p. xii; R. Sharpe, Calendar of wills proved and enrolled in the court of Hustings, London 1258-1688 i (1889), p. xxxii; Pollock and Maitland, History of English law ii, pp. 330-1.

19. Register of William Wickwane, Lord Archbishop of York 1279-85, ed. W. Brown (Surtees Society civ, 1907), p. 236. The wills of a majority of the civic élite appear in the ecclesiastical records, many of them recording bequests of land.

20. Register of Henry Chichele ii, ed. Jacob, p. xiii.

21. See above p. 427.

who died in 1510, affords a good example of the various distribution of immovable and movable goods.<sup>22</sup> He bequeathed to his wife Janet, for life, the tenement in which he lived, with all the household goods, excepting the plate. His son John was to have this property on her death, together with a tenement in Acomb and all William's other properties in Yorkshire, excepting one called Fenton Hall. This was to go to Alice his daughter. His silver plate was to be divided three ways, one third to go to his wife and another third to be divided between his son and his daughter.

Women were very commonly left a life interest in the property of their husbands. In most boroughs they were allowed to inherit such properties outright if their husband should so devise his land. This was the case in York, in contrast to the London custom which dictated that a man could not bequeath more than a life estate in his own property to his wife.<sup>23</sup> Women in York would appear also to have had free devise over property that they had inherited in their own right. Agnes Dyghton, the wife of Robert Dyghton a fletcher, bequeathed to her husband in 1391 all her property in Thursday market which she had inherited from her father. Robert was to have a life interest in the property and after his death it was to revert to Agnes' mother and finally it was to be sold for the souls of all three.<sup>24</sup>

22. B.I., Prob. Reg. 8 fo. 65v-66.

23. Sheehan, Will in medieval England, p. 276; Hemmeon, Burgage tenure, pp. 144-5; H.A. Miskimin, 'Legacies of London, 1259-1330' in The medieval city, ed. H.A. Miskimin and others (1977), pp. 215-6; T. Widdrington, Analecta Eboracensia (1897), p. 67.

24. B.I., Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 32.

Margaret del Bank, the wife of a litster, required in her will, made nine years before her husband died, that her own properties in North Street and some rents in Petergate should be sold and the money used for the benefit of her soul.<sup>25</sup>

The administration of the will was undertaken by the executor, whose power to act for the deceased was fully defined by the mid-fourteenth century.<sup>26</sup> The work of the executor was extremely burdensome, particularly as he or she could be made liable for the debts of the deceased.<sup>27</sup> In consequence it was common for spouses to act as the chief or sole executor.<sup>28</sup> Not infrequently the executor renounced the responsibility of administration, in which case the supervisor nominated by the testator was appointed.<sup>29</sup> Thomas Lyvland, a cordwainer who died in 1394, clearly suspected his wife would prove uncooperative, for his will reads 'et si predicta Elena uxor mea recusat accipere administracionem huius testamenti mei ultra quatuor dies proxima sequentes post decessum meum tunc penitus revoco omnia legata mea predicta Elene uxori mee aliquanter legata ita quod nichil habeat de bonis meis nisi quod iusticia sua debit'.<sup>30</sup> Rather different was the attitude of Thomas Bracebrig, weaver and merchant (d. 1437) who appointed his third wife Juetta as executor 'because my heart confides in her much'.<sup>31</sup>

25. B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 66v-67.

26. Holdsworth, History of English law iii, p. 584.

27. Sheehan, Will in medieval England, pp. 215-9.

28. For the law on women as executors see Holdsworth, History of English law iii, p. 544.

29. Register of Henry Chichele ii, ed. Jacob, p. xxiii.

30. B.I., Prob. Reg. 1 fo. 70-70v.

31. B.I., Prob. Reg. 3 fo. 490; see above p. 462ff for a further discussion of executors.

Guardianship of minors seems, among the York craftsmen, to have been committed generally to the surviving parent by the testator. Fairly frequently a proviso was made that should a widow remarry, then the guardianship should pass to one of the other named executors or supervisors; this appears to have been in order to protect the child's portion.<sup>32</sup> However Robert Rede, who was survived by seven daughters, allocated four of them to unrelated guardians and a fifth to her eldest sister; none were to remain with his wife.<sup>33</sup> Should a man die intestate the court appointed an administrator of his goods, an appointment which held nearly all the same powers as an executor.<sup>34</sup> Such administration was normally granted by probate act. Until the early sixteenth century these acts were recorded in the probate registers, but in the medieval period they occur only infrequently, so it must be presumed that such a step was only taken if there was substantial property to be administered.

Wills were generally made in the last illness of the testator. Although the actual date of death is not known, it is clear that probate could be granted very quickly, for not infrequently the date of probate was within two weeks of the date of the will.<sup>35</sup> Sometimes it was the very next day. It is not altogether clear from the surviving inventories what fees were paid to the court in all. The basic charge for probate in most cases seems to have been 2s. 9d.; an

32. E.g. John Kirkby, litster, Thurstan Lodge, barber; B.I., Prob. Reg. 2 fo. 532; 9 fo. 416 (1428, 1528).
33. This was probably a wise move as the true identity of Rede's wife was disputed at law after his death: see above p. 446.
34. Register of Henry Chichele ii, ed. Jacob, p. xxxii; Holdsworth, History of English law iii, p. 556.
35. This is very similar to the prerogative court of Canterbury: Register of Henry Chichele ii, ed. Jacob, p. xxxv.

additional charge was made for 'acquittance on account' when the inventory was completed; further charges could be made for the examination of witnesses or other such expenses. So for example the inventory of Thomas Lytster, hosier, who died in 1528, records payment of 2s. 9d. 'for probacion of the wyll', 2s. 9d. 'for the inventori' and a further 3s. 8d. 'for examinacion of wytnesse'.<sup>36</sup> The inventory of John Colan, a goldsmith who died in 1490, recorded a payment of 5s. 6d for probate of the will together with an acquittance; the inventory of William Thwaite, founder (d. 1512), records, perhaps in error, a payment of 2s. 10d. for probate and the customary 2s. 9d. for the acquittance.<sup>37</sup> There does not seem, on the slender evidence which exists, to have been a sliding scale of probate fees in operation in York as there apparently was in Canterbury.<sup>38</sup>

36. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories.

37. B.I., D/C Original wills and inventories.

38. Register of Henry Chichele ii, ed. Jacob, p. xxxiv.



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