The Formation of Urban Élites:
Civic Officials in Late-Medieval York
1476-1525

by

Charlotte Carpenter

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<u>Acknowledgements</u>

Abstract

Through focusing on the 'civic élite' of York 1476 to 1525, this thesis explores the structuring of late-medieval urban societies and constructions of élite status and identity. It examines York's mayors, sheriffs, chamberlains and bridge masters, the extent that they formed an 'élite' group within the city and the processes through which this was achieved.

Part One contains an overview of the historiography of medieval urban élites. It also examines how historians have approached the social structure of medieval and early modern towns. Finally, it considers and advocates alternative methodologies to compliment the traditional approach, particularly prosopography and sociological approaches to élites.

Part Two deals with access to the civic élite. Using prosopographical methodologies it challenges the dominant historiography which portrays late-medieval urban élites as mercantile oligarchies. It argues that historians have neglected the importance of factors besides occupation and wealth in the election of civic officials. It also looks at the significance of personal characteristics in this respect. Finally, an analysis of the civic records reveals discourses of honesty, discretion and wisdom which reflect notions of ideal civic rulers.

Part Three examines the élite's structure. It explores the extent that the élite was a socially unified group and the means through which social and ideological unification was facilitated. It also examines the real and ideological perpetuation of the group. Family, patrilineage, marriage and social ties are all explored. In the widespread absence of patrilineal ties between members, marriage and apprenticeship seem to have played an important role in binding the group together, and in protecting its real and ideological perpetuation. Part Three also explores the role of ritual in this respect. It considers everyday or secular rituals of langauge and gesture which aimed to present the élite as a unified group.

Finally, Part Four discusses the power and authority of the élite. It challenges the argument that York's unrest was the inevitable consequence of what has been viewed as a city polarised in terms of political power. Instead it argues that few of the outbreaks of violence can be ascribed to the commons of York lobbying for an increased role in government. It also considers the extent that power in York really was polarised, arguing that the authority of the élite derived from its relationship with the commons of the city. Further, it stresses the role that guild, parochial, territorial and minor civic posts played in diffusing power throughout the city.

Abbreviations

BIHR	Borthwick Institute of Historical Research
YCA	York City Archives
YCL	York City Library

Part One:
Introduction

The subject of medieval English urban élites has generally been approached through the study of civic officials or merchants.[1] Terms such as mercantile élite, merchant class, urban élite and civic élite have often been used haphazardly and, in some cases, interchangeably. With few exceptions, historians have given little consideration to the implicit or explicit connotations of the terms 'class' or 'élite', or to the applicability of their implied qualities and attributes to the groups in question. This thesis examines the 'civic élite' of York for the period 1476 to 1525. Central to this thesis is the examination of the extent and ways in which the group of men who held civic office in this period constituted an élite. It examines in much closer detail than before the validity of assumptions embodied in the use of the term 'élite', assumptions such as the possession of coherence and power. In doing so it contributes to and challenges much of the existing historiography concerning civic officials, urban government and strategies of social stratification and consolidation in later-medieval towns. Just as importantly, though, it also offers a framework through which élite groups in other towns might be approached in the future.

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[1] See historiography below.

A) Historiography

I) Élites and Oligarchy: Overview

Whereas much of the interest in towns during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth

centuries was focussed on constitutional, legal and jurisdictional matters, more recently

historians have turned their attentions towards social and economic issues.[2]

Most urban historians have emphasized the restrictive and élitist nature of municipal

governments during the medieval period.[3] A striking exception to this trend is Anthony

Bridbury, who argues that the economic challenges of the time resulted in increasingly

democratic urban governments.[4] Clearly, the most fundamental division in medieval towns

was that between freemen and aliens.[5] However, most urban historians have focussed on

divisions higher up the social hierarchy. In particular, much attention has been devoted to

divisions between merchants and artisans, and between civic officials and the politically

disenfranchised masses. Historians have been especially concerned with the nature of civic

government and the extent to which towns were governed by mercantile oligarchies.[6] Of

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[2] For early constitutional histories of medieval towns see: A. Ballard (ed.), *British Borough Charters 1042-1216* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1913); A. Ballard and J. Tait (eds.), *British Borough Charters 1216-1307* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1913); C. Gross, *The Guild Merchant*, 2 vols. (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1890); J. Tait, *The Medieval English Borough* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1936).

[3] See in particular H.C. Swanson, 'The Illusion of Economic Structure: Craft Guilds in Late Medieval English Towns', *Past and Present* 121 (1988): 29-48; R.H. Hilton, *English and French Towns in Feudal Society* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1991), pp. 87-104. For individual studies see notes 7 and 8 below.

[4] A.R. Bridbury, *Economic Growth: England in the Later Middle Ages* (Allen and Unwin: London, 1962), pp. 58-64.

[5] See, for example, H.C. Swanson, *Medieval Artisans: An Urban Class in Late Medieval England* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1989), pp. 107-10; R.B. Dobson, 'Admissions to the Freedom of the City of York in the Later Middle Ages', *EcHR*, 2nd series 26 (1973): 1-22; A.F. Butcher, 'Canterbury's Earliest Rolls of Freemen Admissions 1297-1363: A Reconsideration', in F. Hill (ed.), *A Kentish Miscellany*, Kent Records 21 (1979), pp. 1-26; M.M. Rowe and A.M. Jackson (eds.), *Exeter Freemen, 1266-1972*, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, extra series 1 (1973), pp. xi-xxix.

[6] For an early study of oligarchy see C.W. Colby, 'The Growth of Oligarchy in English Towns', *English Historical Review* 5 (1890): 633-53. The recent literature dealing with this subject is vast and much of it is cited below. For more thorough considerations of the topic as applied to a range of towns, see in particular S. Reynolds, 'Medieval Urban History and the History of Political Thought', *Urban History Yearbook* (1982): 14-

central interest have been issues such as methods of election, the organisation of councils and the membership of governing bodies, and in particular the wealth, occupation and family connections of civic officials. In general, though, the consensus is that oligarchic control was either consolidated or increased over the medieval period. Historians of towns such as Norwich, Lincoln, Southampton, Bury St. Edmunds and Exeter, have all concluded that the higher civic offices were dominated by a clique of men, generally wealthy merchants.[7] Indeed, it has been argued that the development of the 'closed' corporations of the Tudor period began during the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries.[8] For example, Stephen Rigby has drawn on sociological theories of social closure to argue that "exclusionary social closures on the basis of property ownership and wealth were central to the urban social hierarchy, offering status and a role in town government", although some wealthy occupations such as butchers were excluded from civic office.[9] He goes on to argue that pressure from the politically disenfranchised for a more 'democratic' system of government was successfully resisted and that urban governments became increasingly closed and

23; S. Rigby, 'Urban "Oligarchy" in Late-Medieval England', in J.A F. Thomson (ed.), *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century* (Sutton Publishing: Gloucester, 1988), pp. 62-86; J. Kermode, 'Obvious Observations on the Formation of Oligarchies in Late-Medieval English Towns', in Thomson (ed.), *Towns and Townspeople*, pp. 87-106.

[7] W. Hudson and J. Cottingham Tingey (eds.), *The Records of the City of Norwich*, 2 vols. (Jarrold and Sons Limited: Norwich, 1906-10), pp. xlii-liii; F. Hill, *Medieval Lincoln* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1965), pp. 289-303; C. Platt, *Medieval Southampton: The Port and Trading Community, 1000-1600* (Routledge and Keegan Paul: London, 1973), pp. 92-105 & 175-7; R.S. Gottfried, *Bury St Edmunds and the Urban Crisis: 1270-1539* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1983); M. Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade in Medieval Exeter* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1995), pp. 95-119.

[8] P. Clark and P. Slack, *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700: Essays in Urban History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 20-25. Works which have emphasised the increased trend towards oligarchy over the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries include: C. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1979), pp. 269-90; D. Palliser, *Tudor York* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1979), pp. 92-110; A.D. Dyer, *The City of Worcester in the Sixteenth Century* (Leicester University Press: Leicester, 1973), pp. 224-6.

[9] S.H. Rigby, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages: Class, Status and Gender* (Macmillan: London, 1995), p. 176. See also Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p. 124-6. For the closure theory which underlies Rigby's work see, for example, F. Parkin, 'Strategies of Social Closure in Class Formation', in F. Parkin (ed.), *The Social Analysis of Class Structure* (Tavistock: London, 1974), pp. 1-18.

oligarchic.[10]

The most vociferous objection to the emphasis on oligarchy has come from Susan Reynolds. Taking issue with the use of the term and its associated pejorative implications, Reynolds has argued that more attention should be paid to the contemporary intellectual context of medieval civic rule.[11] She stresses the importance of a dominant ideology which advocated rule by the wealthy. For her, harmony within medieval communities was maintained through an ethos which stressed the particular roles expected of different sections of the community in creating an effective and integrated society. Few historians have taken up Reynold's call for more attention to be paid to the intellectual or ideological context of late-medieval urban politics.[12] Notable exceptions have included Stephen Rigby and, more recently, David Shaw.[13] Through his work on medieval Wells, Shaw has sought to explore "the crucial connections between mentality and economy, social structure and political life".[14] Shaw's examination of the civic officials of medieval Wells is interesting and unusual in that he explores the personal qualities and characteristics deemed necessary or desirable in urban officials, and the values which underpinned these.[15] His work suggests

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[10] Rigby, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 145-177.

[11] Reynolds, 'Medieval Urban History and the History of Political Thought', pp. 14-23; *idem, An Introduction to the History of English Medieval Towns* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1977), p. 171; *idem, Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900-1300*, 2nd edn. (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1977), pp. 198 & 203-4.

[12] An exception here is the work which has been carried out on late-medieval urban drama and ritual, see for example, C. Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the Citizen: The Communal Year at Coventry, 1450-1550', in G. Holt and G. Rosser (eds.), *The Medieval Town: A Reader in English Urban History 1200-1540* (Longman: New York, 1990), pp. 238-64; M. James, 'Ritual, Drama and the Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town', *Past and Present* 98 (1983): 3-29; B. Hanawalt and K. Reyerson (eds.), *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe*, Medieval Studies at Minnesota 6 (1994), especially. pp. 171-207.

[13] Rigby, 'Urban "Oligarchy"', pp. 62-86; *idem, English Society in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 170-6; D. Shaw, *The Creation of a Community: The City of Wells in the Middle Ages* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1993), pp. 167-215.

[14] Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, p. 1.

[15] *Ibid*, pp. 188-197.

that more attention needs to be given to these issues in the study of other medieval towns.

Both Reynolds and Shaw have highlighted the role of integration and the tradition of harmony within medieval communities.[16] For them disharmony tended to arise only when the system was abused.[17]

In general, however, the overriding emphasis has been on "crisis, conflict and social polarisation", in medieval as in early-modern towns.[18] Violent tensions and unrest have been seen as the inevitable outcome of what has been viewed as a society polarised in terms of wealth and power. Urban unrest was common throughout the late-medieval period and much of it has been ascribed to quasi class-based struggles over the control and administration of town government.[19] Indeed, Barrie Dobson has argued that attacks against the ruling élite by a disgruntled commons anxious for constitutional change were "one of the major themes in the constitutional history of the late medieval town".[20]

It could be argued, though, that this dominant historiography which stresses oligarchy, exclusion, social polarisation and conflict contains several serious lacunae, as will

[16] On early medieval aspects of community see Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities*, pp. 155-218.

[17] In contrast, Rigby argues that the inferior socio-political position of those excluded from power meant that they were limited in their means of protest, even when they objected to the established hierarchy of power. He suggests that, unable to attack the overriding structure of civic power and exclusion, malcontents instead tended to direct complaint towards specific abuses of power. Only rarely was discontent voiced in an overtly radical form. Rigby, 'Urban "Oligarchy"', *passim*.

[18] V. Pearl, 'Change and Stability in Seventeenth-Century London', in J. Barry (ed.), *The Tudor and Stuart Town: A Reader in English Urban History 1530-1688* (Longman: London, 1990), p. 140. For the leading exponents of what Pearl has cited as a "philosophy of doom and gloom" see Clark and Slack (eds.), *Crisis and Order*, especially pp. 19-35; P. Clark and P. Slack, *English Towns in Transition 1500-1700* (Oxford University Press: London, 1976), especially pp. 126-140.

[19] For detailed studies of urban unrest in medieval towns, see for example, P. Nightingale, 'Capitalists, Crafts and Constitutional Change in Late Fourteenth-Century London', *Past and Present* 124 (1989): 3-35; C.M. Barron, 'Ralph Holland and the London Radicals, 1438-1444', in Holt and Rosser (eds.), *The Medieval Town*, pp. 160-83; B. McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Civic Order', *Speculum* 67 (1992): 69-97; R.B. Dobson, 'The Risings in York, Beverley and Scarborough, 1380-1381', in R.H. Hilton and T.H. Aston (eds.), *The English Rising of 1381* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1984), pp. 112-42; M. Dormer Harris, 'Laurence Saunders', *English Historical Review* 9 (1884): 633-51.

[20] R. B. Dobson (ed.), *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381*, 2nd edn. (Macmillan: Basingstoke, 1983), p. 284.

be outlined below.[21] Further, the debate over oligarchy and the place of civic officials in medieval urban society is in danger of stagnating. The work of early-modern historians, continental historians and some of the more recent scholarship within the field of medieval English urban history all suggest new ways in which this area might profitably be approached in the future.

II) Élites and Prosopography

Prosopography has been used extensively in continental studies of urban élites where the influence of the work of Ottokar has been important.[22] Writing on the political history of Florence during the late thirteenth century, Ottokar rejected the prevailing Marxist interpretation of Florence's history which he believed had reduced the history of the city to a crude conflict between an aristocratic clique and a popular movement.[23] Like his contemporary, Namier, he broke with the tradition of placing emphasis on classes and constitutional forms, and instead sought to explain the political life of Florence through a detailed investigation of the composition of the personnel of government and a careful study of the city's rival political factions, their use of power and their social foundations.[24] The work of Ottokar and Namier is important for the student of historical élites for two interrelated reasons. First, it marked the beginning of a trend towards detailed

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[21] See pp. 6-22 below.

[22] N. Ottokar, *Il Commune di Firenze alla fine del Dugento* (Vallecchi: Florence, 1926).

[23] For brief summaries of the main phases of writing on Florentine history see J.N. Stephens, *The Fall of the Florentine Republic 1512-1530* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1983), pp. 1-5; D.V. Kent, 'The Florentine Reggimento in the Fifteenth Century', *Renaissance Quarterly* 28 (1975): 575-577.

[24] L. Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III*, 2nd edn. (London: Macmillan, 1929). In turn the prosopographic methodology employed by Namier and Ottokar stems back to the work of German historians working on classical Rome. See in particular, M. Gelzer, *Die Nobilität der Römischen Reepublik* (B.G. Teubner: Leipzig-Berlin, 1912); F. Münzer, *Römische Adelspartein und Adelsfamilien* (J. B. Metzler: Stuttgart, 1920).

prosopographical investigations of ruling élites and patriciates in late-medieval urban centres. Second, it rejected the dichotomy by which society was viewed in terms of inherently antagonistic social polarisation.

Since Ottokar, several generations of continental historians have been concerned with researching the role and attributes of influential groups and factions within urban government and society, and prosopography has become one of the mainstays of research into urban élites.[25] Similarly, what Powell has termed as "one of the most common forms of historical research" has also been much used in English medieval history in studies of the gentry and peasantry.[26] Surprisingly, though, prosopography is a tool that has been under used by English urban historians. With the notable exception of work by Jennifer Kermode and Sylvia Thrupp on medieval merchants, and work by Maryanne Kowaleski on the civic élite of medieval Exeter, few urban historians have undertaken detailed studies of urban élite groups.[27] Indeed, biography has been favoured over prosopography by many historians

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[25] For example, for summaries of influential prosopographical research which has since been carried out on Renaissance Florence see, Stephens, *The Fall of the Florentine Republic*, pp. 2-3; Kent, 'The Florentine Reggimento in the Fifteenth Century', pp. 576-77. For summaries and evaluations of prosopographical work which has been carried out on the Low Countries for the medieval period see H. De Ridder-Symoens, 'Prosopographical Research in the Low Countries Concerning the Middle Ages and the Sixteenth Century', *Medieval Prosopography*, 14:2 (1995): 27-120. For prosopographical studies of Continental élites in general, see D. Nicholas, *The Later Medieval City 1300-1500* (Longman: London, 1997), pp. 180-202; S. Rowan, 'Urban Communities: The Rulers and the Ruled', in T.A. Brady Jnr., H.A. Oberman, & J.D. Tracy (eds.), *Handbook of European History 1400-1600: Late Middle Ages Renaissance and Reformation, Volume One: Structures and Assertions* (E.J. Brill: Leiden, 1994), pp. 197-229.

[26] E. Powell, 'After "After McFarlane": The Poverty of Patronage and the Case for Constitutional History', in D.J. Clayton, R.G. Davies and P. McNiven (eds.), *Trade, Devotion and Governance: Papers in Later Medieval History* (Alan Sutton: Stroud, 1994), p. 7. For the impact of prosopography on English constitutional history see also: C. Richmond, 'After McFarlane', *History* 68 (1983): 46-60. Examples of gentry studies utilising this form of historical research include N. Saul, *Knights and Esquires: The Gloucester Gentry in the Fourteenth Century* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1981); S.M. Wright, *The Derbyshire Gentry in the Fifteenth Century* (Derbyshire Record Society: Chesterfield, 1983). For its use in studies of the peasantry see L.R. Poos, 'Peasant "Biographies" from Medieval England', in N. Bulst and J.P. Genet (eds.), *Medieval Lives and the Historian: Studies in Medieval Prosopography* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1986), pp. 201-14.

[27] S. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London (1300-1500)*, revised edition with a new introduction (Ann Arbour: Michigan, 1989); Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*; J. Kermode, *Medieval Merchants* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1998). See also R. Frost, 'The Aldermen of Norwich 1461-1509: A Study of a Civic Élite', PhD thesis, department of History, University of Cambridge (1996).

within this field, no doubt in part due to the fact that urban historians have been wary of an inherent tendency of prosopographic studies to encourage generalisation or homogenisation.[28] Ironically, though, it could be argued that it is precisely this lack of thorough prosopographical research which has helped to foster dangerous generalisations within the study of medieval urban élites.

Much of what we know about English urban élites is based on occasional chapters in wide-ranging studies of individual towns.[29] Although these can be useful in sketching a broadly representative overview of late-medieval towns, such studies are limited in the detail and scope which they can give to individual groups within society. Inevitably, the better documented, higher profile social groups dominate even in the more specialised studies. Indeed, even these studies are often limited precisely because they concentrate on one, not necessarily representative, constituent group within the urban élite.[30] The criticisms that Dale Kent, writing in 1975, levelled at work carried out on the civic government of Renaissance Florence can equally well be applied to much of the study of medieval English urban history today.[31] Namely, while our overall understanding of the nature of the civic élites of English towns in the later-middle ages is broadly sound, the detail has often been sketched in impressionistically and has tended to be modelled on assumptions that might be

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[28] See, for example, the criticism that Caroline Barron makes against prosopography in the introduction to C.M. Barron and A.F. Sutton (eds.), *Medieval London Widows 1300-1500* (The Hambledon Press: London, 1994), especially p. xv. For biographic studies see also C.M. Barron, 'Richard Whittington: The Man Behind the Myth', in A.E. Hollaender and W. Kellaway (eds.), *Studies in London History Presented to Philip Edmund Jones* (Hodder and Staughton: London, 1969), pp. 197-248; A. Hanham, *The Celys and Their World: An English Merchant Family of the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1985); R. Horrox, *The de la Poles of Hull*, East Yorkshire Local History Series 38 (1983).

[29] See notes 7 and 8 above.

[30] For excellent examples of such studies see: Thrupp, *Merchant Class*; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*; EM Carus-Wilson, 'The Merchant Adventurers of Bristol in the Fifteenth Century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, fourth series 11 (1928): 61-82: P. Nightingale, *A Medieval Mercantile Community: The Grocers' Company and the Politics of Trade of London, 1000-1484* (Yale University Press: Yale, 1995).

[31] Kent, 'The Florentine Reggimento in the Fifteenth Century', pp. 576-7.

more thoroughly tested and explored.

While the few detailed prosopographical studies carried out on English medieval civic élites have tended to confirm the "impressionistic picture in its broader outlines", they have also "stressed the complexity and even the ambiguity of the details".[32] For example, Kowaleski's impressive study of late fourteenth-century Exeter has shown that the civic élite of the town was confined to a small but inordinately powerful group of merchant oligarchs which carefully excluded artisans.[33] Indeed, she notes that "the evidence concerning Exeter's guilds supports the argument of Swanson regarding the ultimate power of urban mercantile élites over craft guilds".[34] In contrast, detailed prosopographical studies carried out on members of the civic élites in other towns, particularly those studies concerned with the late-fifteenth century, have concluded precisely the opposite. These studies show that while civic government was restrictive, it was far more open to artisans, non-guild members and people of only moderate wealth than has previously been suggested.[35] Two important points need to be made concerning these differences. First, it is apparent that the control of merchants over the civic government of late medieval towns was not constant throughout the whole of the medieval period, and second, such control was not equal in all places at the same time. The different findings do not merely reflect different dates and geographical locations, though. They are also due to different methodologies.

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[32] Kent, 'The Florentine Reggimento in the Fifteenth Century', pp. 576-7.

[33] Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, pp. 90-119.

[34] Ibid., p. 101. For Swanson's thesis see Swanson, 'The Illusion of Economic Structure', pp. 29-48.

[35] C.I. Hammer, 'Anatomy of an Oligarchy: the Oxford Town Council in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries', *Journal of British Studies* 18 (1978): 1-27; A. Rogers, 'Late Medieval Stamford: A Study of a Town Council 1465-1492', in A. Everitt (ed.), *Perspectives in English Urban History* (London, 1973), pp. 16-38, 242-43, 252-54; C. Carpenter, 'The Office and Personnel of the Post of Bridgemaster in York 1450-99', unpublished MA dissertation, Centre for Medieval Studies, University of York (1996).

III) Dichotomous Divisions

The lack of detailed prosopographical research into the composition of medieval civic councils is only one of several lacunae in the historiography of medieval English urban élites. Perhaps more seriously, it could be argued that the emphasis placed upon the highest posts of municipal government and the dominance of the mercantile occupations within these posts has influenced the ways in which historians have perceived the wider social structure of the late medieval English town. Historians of medieval English urban communities have both implicitly assumed and explicitly argued that the civic hierarchy reflected and reinforced social status and relations within the medieval town. Thus, much of the literature on the subject reflects a bipartite conception of the social structure of medieval urban society whereby such society is viewed in terms of inherently antagonistic social polarisation between merchants and artisans and between civic officials and the 'masses'. For example, Swanson states in her study of York artisans that "the assumption that has been made here is that urban artisans can be defined as a class".[36] Additionally, she states that "the towns considered...are those large enough to support a distinct and self-conscious merchant class, in sufficient numbers to isolate themselves from the artisans. It is in terms of this deliberate polarization of merchant and artisan that the artisan class can be defined".[37]

Part of the reason for this emphasis on polarisation and oligarchy is that, to date, studies of late-medieval or Tudor town governments have overwhelmingly concentrated on the higher civic offices. Recently, though, this approach has begun to be challenged. Of particular interest in this respect is work which has been carried out by urban historians of a slightly later period. Reacting against the work of Clark and Slack, London historians such as Stephen Rappaport have argued that it is erroneous to view higher civic offices as

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[36] Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 2-3.

[37] *Ibid.*

a city's "primary sources of power".[38] Stressing the important role minor civic, guild and

parochial offices played in increasing participation in civic government, Rappaport and

Valerie Pearl have argued that participation in government was much wider than has

previously been accepted.[39] Pearl has suggested that, as a result of such participation, "the

roots of urban government" in early-modern London "were diverse and pluralistic".[40]

Similarly, David Shaw, working on medieval Wells, has also stressed the extent to which

positions of responsibility were accessible to men from a wide variety of socio-economic

backgrounds. He argues that while these posts did not engender social homogeneity or

equality, they did engender social cohesion and allow the honour of public recognition at

each stage of the socio-economic hierarchy.[41]

Work in this field should be viewed as important in several respects. First, it

highlights the arbitrariness of focussing on only the higher civic officials. Second, it

suggests that rather than dividing medieval society into those who ruled and those who were

ruled, a more accurate or helpful way to conceptualise civic status may be in terms of a more

gradual hierarchy of power. More attention needs to be given to élite hierarchies within

civic élites and also to élite substructures. One historian who has done just that is

Kowaleski. In her study of civic officials in medieval Exeter, Kowaleski has conceptualised

Exeter society in terms of a number of different ranks.[42] For example, included among the

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[38] S. Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1989), p. 175.

[39] Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp. 180-2; Pearl, 'Change and Stability in Seventeenth-Century London', pp. 139-166. For a more general critique of the overall Clark and Slack thesis see I.W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1991), *passim*. For studies of the role of minor posts in the medieval period see Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, pp. 95-119; Carpenter, 'The Office and Personnel of the Post of Bridgemaster', *passim*.

[40] Pearl, 'Change and Stability in Seventeenth-Century London', p. 152.

[41] Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, p. 159.

[42] Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, pp. 95-119, esp. pp. 101-4.

town's 'oligarchy' were 'rank A' and 'rank B' citizens. Whereas the men who frequently held higher civic offices were drawn from 'rank A', 'rank B' encompassed those who held higher civic offices less frequently. Clearly, in Exeter there existed a hierarchy of status and power within the civic élite. Furthermore, below the oligarchy was a third substructure of 'rank C' citizens who lacked what Kowaleski terms 'real power', but who were nevertheless invested with a degree of civic responsibility by virtue of holding minor civic posts.[43] She concludes that significant in this respect was "Exeter's electoral system, which allowed men of more moderate means to have some say in local government, and which created a buffer zone or 'middle class'...between the truly wealthy and the poorer majority" thus easing "social and political tensions within the town".[44]

IV) Alternative Systems of Stratification

Kowaleski's work is also notable in that she examines in great detail correlations between wealth, occupation, political power, family connections and status. In general, though, the emphasis she places upon the 'mercantile élite' has caused her to underestimate the potential significance of factors other than wealth or occupation in the formation of urban élites. Furthermore, the delineation of certain social groups on the sole basis of occupation fails to take account of Weberian sociology which stresses the many dimensions of social stratification.[45] In contrast, continental historians such as Weissman have argued that we should be wary of one-dimensional stratification systems which search for a single underlying category of classification (such as family, guild membership, or class dynamics)

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[43] *Ibid.*, pp. 103.

[44] *Ibid.*, pp. 118.

[45] M. Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. A.M. Henderson & T. Parsons (New York: Free Press, 1964); *idem, Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology*, 2 vols. (Berkeley: California University Press, 1978).

in order to provide the key to the fundamental structure of a past society.[46] He suggests that instead we should accept the fact that "modes of stratification were simultaneous and varied", and that "groups segmented along the lines of class did not always overlap well with groups partitioned along the lines of prestige or political power".[47]

Within the field of English medieval urban history, the importance of the multivalent nature of social stratification has been most strongly argued for by Gervase Rosser.[48] Rosser directs his argument against the division of medieval society by both medieval and modern writers into "those who prayed, those who fought, and those who worked".[49] He also objects to a persistent view of the ordering of labour as "a mere function of socio-economic relations" that was "characterized by a developing polarization between...masters and journeymen".[50] Instead he calls for the study of a wider range of social processes including "patterns of local residence, marital behaviour, political involvement and membership (of clubs or societies)".[51] Rosser argues that labour relations were not dualistic but multivalent, and that they linked individuals "not only 'horizontally' but also across

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[46] R.F.E. Weissman, 'Reconstructing Renaissance Sociology: The "Chicago School" and the Study of Renaissance Society', in R.C. Trexler (ed.), *Persons in Groups: Social Behaviour as Identity Formation in Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (Binghampton: New York, 1985), pp. 39-46.

[47] Weissman, 'Reconstructing Renaissance Sociology', p. 40. For this reason Weissman has suggested that the nature of society lies in its conduct and not its systems of stratification, and he therefore argues that historians should move away from the study of social groups and structures. See also R.C. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (Academic Press: New York, 1980), pp. 12-44. Weissman's work draws heavily on the work of the 'Chicago School' of Sociology and the writings of John Dewey and Herbert Mead. See for example J. Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology* (George Allen and Unwin: 1922); G.H. Mead, *Mind, Self and Society* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1938). For an introduction to Symbolic Interactionism see J.M. Charon, *Symbolic Interactionism: An Introduction, An Interpretation, An Integration*, 5th edn. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1995).

[48] See in particular, G. Rosser, 'Crafts, Guilds and the Negotiation of Work in the Medieval Town', *Past and Present* 154 (1997): 3-31.

[49] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[50] *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

socio-economic divisions".[52]

This emphasis on the variety of forms of social stratification and consolidation necessitates a much more fluid understanding of social structures and hierarchies. Moreover, it demands a far more thorough exploration and understanding of social processes. In terms of studies of élite groups, it encourages the examination of how alternative modes of social stratification and cohesion (neighbourhood, family, occupation or wealth) might have affected the interaction of members within the élite as well as the interaction of discrete groups within the rest of society. Further, an emphasis on the variety of forms of social stratification and consolidation can also be useful in examining issues connected with the perpetuation of élites.

Besides occupation and wealth, family is the mode of social stratification which has most interested historians of medieval English urban élites. As early as 1948 Sylvia Thrupp was examining a wide range of family issues in relation to urban élites. She considered demographic, social and cultural aspects of family life, from the average number of surviving male heirs to the received roles of husbands and wives within the domestic sphere.[53] Similarly, Phythian-Adams's work on late-medieval and early-modern Coventry is also important in terms of its examination of the role of families and households in the social, economic and political life of the city.[54] Nonetheless, the extent and scope of research on the English family within the urban sphere has remained somewhat limited.[55] Many studies

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[52] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

[53] Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 169-74, 191-206, 222-33, 263-9.

[54] Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 80-98 & 148-57.

[55] Indeed, Kowaleski argues that such studies have "only added small details into the picture drawn...by Thrupp". M. Kowaleski, 'The History of Urban Families in Medieval England', *Journal of Medieval History* 14:1 (1988): 47-63 (quote p. 48). This view has been echoed more recently in J.I. Kermode, 'Sentiment and Survival: Family and Friends in Late Medieval English Towns', *Journal of Family History: Studies in Family, Kinship and Demography* 24:1 (1999): 5-18 (quote p. 5).

have concentrated primarily on demographic issues, such as determining the average age at marriage, average family size and average replacement rates.[56] The three other dominant issues in urban studies have been: the extent to which élite families were interrelated; the extent to which there existed an urban patriciate; and the extent to which urban élites were subject to a process of gentrification.[57] The concentration on these issues has clearly affected historians' understanding of late-medieval urban élites. In particular, the preoccupation with the extent that élite families were interrelated has tended to reinforce already pervading notions of oligarchy.

Many historians have noted the prevalence of family networks linking prominent merchants and civic officials, although there is a general consensus that (possibly due to failure to produce male heirs) dynasties lasting for more than a couple of generations were rare in English towns.[58] If correct, this situation obviously contrasts sharply with that on the continent, and particularly in southern Europe, where long-lasting dynasties and patriciates were common.[59] Concentrating on merchants in northern England, Jennifer Kermode has

[56] For example, S. Thrupp, 'The Problem of Replacement Rates in the Late-Medieval Population', *Economic History Review*, Second Series 18 (1965): 101-19; R.M. Smith, 'Some Reflections on the Evidence for the Origins of the "European Marriage Pattern" in England', in C.C. Harris (ed.), *The Sociology of the Family: New Directions for Britain* (University of Keele, Keele, 1979): 74-112; J. Beauroy, 'Family Patterns and Relations of Bishop's Lynn Will-makers in the Fourteenth Century', in L. Bonfield *et al* (eds.), *The World We Have Gained: Histories of Population and Social Structure* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1986), pp. 23-42; P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Marriage, Migration, Servanthood and Life-Cycle in Yorkshire Towns in the Later Middle Ages: Some York Cause Paper Evidence', *Continuity and Change* 1 (1986): 141-69; *Idem.*, *Women Work and Life Cycle in a Medieval Economy: Women in York and Yorkshire c. 1300-1520* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1992).

[57] For an examination of these issues in relation to the élites of late-medieval towns see, in addition the citations listed in notes 55 and 56 above; Dyer, *Worcester in the Sixteenth Century*, pp. 179-88; W.T. MacCaffrey, *Exeter, 1540-1640: The Growth of an English County Town*, 2nd edn. (Harvard University Press: Cambridge Mass., 1975), pp. 246-69; Gottfried, *Bury St Edmunds*, pp. 131-66; J.I. Kermode, 'The Merchants of Three Northern English Towns', in C.H. Clough (ed.), *Profession, Vocation and Culture in Later Medieval England: Essays Dedicated to the Memory of A.R. Myers* (Liverpool University Press: Liverpool, 1982), pp. 7-48.

[58] Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 191-206; Gottfried, *Bury St Edmunds*, pp. 59-63 & 137; Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, pp. 173-5; Platt, *Medieval Southampton*, pp. 23 & 104-5; Dyer, *Worcester in the Sixteenth Century*, pp. 179-188.

[59] See, for example, J. Heers, *Family Clans in the Middle Ages: A Study of Political and Social Structures in Urban Areas*, trans. B. Herbert (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Company, 1977); D. Herlihy and C. Klapisch-Zyber, *Tuscans and Their Families: A Study of the Florentine Catasto of 1427* (Yale University Press:

recently argued that family networks and affinities among the merchants of York, Beverley and Hull were prevalent enough for them to be viewed as evidence of embryonic class formation.[60] Nevertheless, one is inclined to agree with Shaw's observation that historians studying élite urban dynasties in England have been inclined to "make more of the successful dynasties than of the general trend".[61] Moreover, it must be emphasised that studies concentrating on links between merchants or aldermen (civic officials of a lower status have rarely been studied in this respect) are limited in their value for a variety of reasons.

First, it is not clear whether similar patterns of family and social ties were always the same lower down the civic hierarchy or amongst men of different occupations. Derek Keene has shown that tanners' widows tended to remarry other tanners.[62] However, it seems likely that there may have been differences in patterns of social cohesion amongst different groups of artisans. It is clear, for example that butchers were much more likely to live in clustered groups within some late-medieval towns, whereas other occupations were more dispersed. It is possible that a clustered residency pattern such as that displayed by the butchers may in turn have led to a higher degree of social cohesion and inter-familial integration among men of this occupation.[63]

Second, most English research into urban families has concentrated on identifying links between members of similar social groups. Unlike on the continent, family links between people of different socioeconomic or occupational backgrounds have been largely

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New Haven, 1985), pp. 337-360.

[60] Kermode, 'Sentiment and Survival', pp. 5 & 12; idem, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 77-90; idem, 'The Merchants of Three Northern English Towns', pp. 16-19. See Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 3-4; Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, especially pp. 27-41.

[61] Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, p. 174, note 117.

[62] D. Keene, 'Tanners' Widows, 1300-1350', in C.M. Barron, and A.F. Sutton (eds.), *Medieval London Widows 1300-1500* (The Hambledon Press: London, 1994), pp. 1-27.

[63] Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, pp. 64-71.

ignored in English studies. Clearly, this methodological oversight introduces a strong

predetermining factor into the English findings. Interestingly, continental research, such as

that of Heers on Italian cities has actually emphasised the importance of ties between men

of very different social, economic and occupational status.[64] Similarly, it has been tentatively

suggested by van Kan that bonds of dependance between members of the urban élite and

lower levels of urban society also existed within medieval Leiden.[65] One of the few English

urban historians to consider this phenomenon is Phythian-Adams. Although he did not

explore this area in depth, Phythian-Adams suggested that familial ties between men with

different occupations, and between men who did and did not hold civic office, may have

acted to reinforce a sense of social responsibility amongst civic office holders, and may also

have served to lessen potential 'class' divisions and foster a sense of community within late-

medieval Coventry.[66] Indeed, Phythian-Adams' work on Coventry is notable in that he

opens up issues concerning the interaction between different social spheres such as family,

household, neighbourhood and guild, and the wider social structures of the town.[67] One of

the essential features of his research is his exploration of the importance of the "inter-action

of both separate social themes and of differing social groups".[68]

Although English historians have highlighted marriage links between élite mercantile

and aldermanic families, they have concentrated on patrilineal descent.[69] Little research has

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[64] Heers, *Family Clans in the Middle Ages, passim*.

[65] F.J.W. van Kan, 'Élite And Government in Medieval Leiden', *Journal of Medieval History* 21 (1995): 51-75 (quote pp. 69-70).

[66] Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 148-157.

[67] *Ibid.*, pp. 80-98, 142-7, 148-57, 189-98, 221-37, 238-48. For the early-modern period see Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp. 162-214 & 285-376.

[68] Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, p.1.

[69] Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 28-9, 191-204, 222-33; Kermode, 'Sentiment and Survival', pp. 6-10; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 77-90; Kermode, 'The Merchants of Three Northern English Towns', pp. 16-19.

been carried out into the perpetuation of élite families through the female line. Writing on the state of family history in England, Kowaleski has challenged the emphasis on patriarchy.[70] She argues that women played an important role in the "formation and descent of urban properties and businesses".[71] The role of women in the formation of civic élites and the inheritance of civic identity or status has received even less attention. Kermode has suggested that marriage alliances often "echoed political associations".[72] However, as Carole Rawcliffe has demonstrated, marriages could also be used to create political alliances and associations.[73] Clearly, the role of women in the formation and perpetuation of élite groups demands further consideration.

Akin to the issue of the dynastic reproduction of urban élites is the less studied issue of the ideological perpetuation urban élites. How were the values and ideologies of civic élites perpetuated over the generations? It would be interesting to consider the role that family, guardians and godparents may have played in the socialisation of young men as future office holders and members of the civic élite. For example, might family, apprenticeship and fictive kinships have acted as locale for the training and inculcation of a specific set of urban or civic values?

Beyond the family, parish and guilds also played important roles as systems of social stratification and consolidation, and as channels of recruitment and socialisation. Late-medieval English cities often displayed marked social and occupational topography.[74]

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[70] Kowaleski, 'The History of Urban Families', p. 49

[71] *Ibid.* See also Kermode, *Sentiment and Survival*, p. 7.

[72] Kermode, *Sentiment and Survival*, p. 7.

[73] C. Rawcliffe, 'Margaret Stodeye, Lady Philipot (d.1431)', in Barron and Sutton (eds.), *Medieval London Widows*, pp. 85-98.

[74] Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, pp. 64-71; Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 159-69; Platt, 'Southampton, 1000-1600 A.D.: Wealth and Settlement Patterns in a Major Medieval Seaport', *Hanische Geschichtsblatter* 91 (1973): 12-23.

However, even the most homogeneous parishes tended to contain a variety of occupations and levels of wealth.[75] Phythian-Adams has argued that this heterogeneity "must have done something to dilute social segregation".[76] Similarly, for London, Archer has stressed the role of parishes as important units of identity and cohesion units which created "mutual ties among (their) members, rich and poor alike".[77] This is not to suggest that the late-medieval parish was some form of ideal egalitarian community.[78] There is a consensus among historians that parishes were very hierarchical and far from egalitarian.[79] In his study of St. Mary-At-Hill in London, Clive Burgess has illustrated that the institution of the parish, its financial and social activities and its intercessory regimes all served to create or reinforce highly integrated, yet hierarchical communities.[80] Nevertheless, it is likely that parishes played an important role in increasing cohesiveness within the wider urban sphere and in reducing potentially antagonistic social polarisation precisely because they cut across socio-

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[75] Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 163-6; N. Alldridge, 'Loyalty and Identity in Chester Parishes 1540-1640', in S.J. Wright (ed.), *Parish, Church and People: Local Studies in Lay Religion 1350-1750* (Hutchinson: London, 1988), pp. 88-90; B. Kümin, *The Shaping of a Community: The Rise and Reformation of the English Parish c. 1400-1560*, St Andrews Studies in Reformation History (Scholar Press: Aldershot, 1996), pp. 222-5.

[76] Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, p. 166.

[77] Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, p. 92, but see also pp. 74-92. For the expression of similar sentiments see also Kümin, *The Shaping of a Community*, p. 27; Alldridge, 'Loyalty and Identity in Chester Parishes', pp. 90 & 118.

[78] For calls for the rejection of the use of the term 'community' in historical studies on the grounds that it has become too encumbered with nostalgic connotations of social harmony and egalitarianism, see C. Carpenter, 'Gentry and Community in Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies* 33 (1994): 340-80; M. Rubin, 'Small Groups: Identity and Solidarity in the Late Middle Ages', in J. Kermode (ed.), *Enterprise and Individuals in Fifteenth-Century England* (Alan Sutton: Stroud, 1991), pp. 132-50.

[79] Kümin, *The Shaping of a Community*, pp. 232-3; J.A. Ford, 'Marginality and the Assimilation of Foreigners in the Lay Parish Community: The Case of Sandwich', in K.L. French, G.G. Gibbs and B.A. Kümin, *The Parish in English Life 1400-1600* (Manchester University Press: Manchester and New York, 1997), pp. 211-5.

[80] C. Burgess, 'Shaping the Parish: St Mary at Hill, London, in the Fifteenth Century', in J. Blair and B. Golding (eds.), *The Cloister and the World: Essays in Medieval History in Honour of Barbara Harvey* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1996), pp. 246-86. For the role of charity and intercessory regimes in this respect see in particular, C. Burgess and B. Kümin, 'Penitential Bequests and Parish Regimes in Late Medieval England', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 44 (1993): 610-30; J.M. Bennett, 'Conviviality and Charity in Medieval and Early Modern England', *Past and Present* 134 (1992): 19-41.

economic boundaries in the same way as did urban family networks.

In contrast, some historians have suggested that guild communities played an important role in increasing homogeneity among otherwise disparate élites. For example, Blockmans has argued for the Netherlands that the "maintenance of social contacts in a genial atmosphere was essential for the formation of an homogeneous urban élite which would embrace all professional groups".[81] Similarly, Andrew Brown has suggested that the St. George Guild of Salisbury served to bind civic officials in a common cause and lessen social tensions.[82] However, the role of guilds in lessening tensions and increasing integration within the élite of late-medieval towns has been most closely examined by Gervase Rosser and Ben McRee.[83] For Rosser, one of the most important roles of medieval guilds was their function as mechanisms through which changes in the 'social structure' could be negotiated and overcome.[84] He has argued that feasting offered opportunities for the establishment, re-enforcement and re-negotiation of relationships between guild members, particularly those of different occupations and social status.[85] Both men have viewed feasts, ceremonial, and guild codes and legislation as particularly important in this respect. Interestingly, though, McRee also recognizes that guilds could act as catalysts for divisions within the social community.[86] In particular, he has suggested that the importance placed on

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[81] W.M. Blockmans and W. Prevenier, *The Burgundian Netherlands* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1986), p. 175.

[82] Brown, *Popular Piety*, pp. 168-9 & 177.

[83] See in particular, G. Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast: Commensality and Social Relations in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies* 33 (1994): 430-46; B. McRee, 'Unity or Division? The Social Meaning of Guild Ceremony in Urban Communities', in Hanawalt and Reyerson (eds.), *City and Spectacle*, pp. 189-207; McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Civic Order', pp. 69-97.

[84] G. Rosser, 'Communities of Parish and Guild in the Late-Middle Ages', in Wright (ed.), *Parish Church and People*, pp. 29-55.

[85] Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast', pp. 431-3.

[86] McRee, 'Unity or Division?', pp. 189-207.

precedence in guild and civic processions could itself be a highly divisive rather than unifying force within the urban community.[87]

The work of Rosser and McRee is important to the study of élites in two respects. First, it points to the importance of guild membership in systems of social stratification and consolidation.[88] Second, their approach to the role of feasting, ceremonial and social codes is one that could equally well be applied to civic élites. The role of drama and of civic and guild ceremonial in the renegotiation and consolidation of English urban social systems is well researched.[89] However, much less attention has been given to everyday or secular ritual and ritualised actions. Nevertheless, it is likely, that ritualised activities such as feasting, and the use of special language and social codes served as mechanisms through which alliances could be renegotiated, differences could be overcome and relationships could be consolidated within wider civic élites as well as among guild members.

Also of relevance to the study of urban élites is the role of parishes and guilds as channels of recruitment and socialisation. Interestingly, Burgess suggests that parochial pre-eminence "was the result not simply of economic and social success, but had to be attained by following certain pathways".[90] This raises several questions. First, was the same also true of civic offices? Second, to what extent did parochial institutional hierarchies interlock

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[87] *Ibid.*, p. 189.

[88] See also David Crouch's work on guilds in Hull and York in this respect. D. Crouch, 'Piety, Fraternity and Power: Religious Gilds in Late Medieval Yorkshire', D.Phil Thesis, department of History, University of York (1995).

[89] See, for example, Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the Citizen', pp. 238-64; M. James, 'Ritual, Drama and the Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town', in M. James (ed.), *Society, Politics and Culture, Studies in Early Modern England*, Past and Present Publications (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1986), pp. 16-47; D.H. Sacks, 'Celebrating Authority in Bristol 1475-1640', in S. Zimmerman and R.F.E. Weissman (eds.), *Urban Life in the Renaissance* (University of Deleware Press: Newark, 1989), pp. 187-223; N. Zemon Davis, 'The Sacred and the Body Social in Sixteenth-Century Lyon', *Past and Present* 90 (1981): 40-70; E. Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1981); see also the essays in Hanawalt and Reyerson (eds.), *City and Spectacle*.

[90] Burgess, 'Shaping the Parish, p. 262.

with the civic *cursus honorum*? Finally, it must be wondered whether guilds played an explicit role in the socialisation of future civic officials. Both McRee and Rosser have highlighted the importance of moral regulation in guilds. To what extent might this moral regulation correspond with the type of civic discourses on the importance of personal characteristics in civic officials that have been examined by Shaw? Ultimately, might not urban guilds have acted as an informal training ground or a type of filter mechanism for civic office itself?[91]

V) York 1476-1525

This thesis aims to address the above issues and lacunae through a detailed case-study of the civic élite of late-medieval York during the period 1476-1525. York's administrative structures and civic offices have been well-detailed elsewhere. In particular, Edward Miller's account of Medieval York includes a thorough and lucid overview of the city's councils and civic offices.[92] However, for the benefit of those not already acquainted with the structures of government in the city, a short recapitulation is necessary here.

The highest civic office in late-medieval York was that of the mayoralty. The mayor represented the king's interests within the city and swore to maintain peace and justice within the city and to maintain and advance its franchises, usages and customs.[93] From at least as early as 1343 the mayor was elected annually on St. Blaise's day (3 February).[94] Re-

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[91] Rosser, 'Communities of Parish and Guild', pp. 36-7.

[92] E. Miller, 'Medieval York', in P.M. Tillott (ed.), *A History of Yorkshire: The City of York*, Victoria History of the Counties of England (1961), especially pp. 70-5, 76-9 & 80. See also Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, appendix 1. For an excellent unpublished account see A. Kulikundis, 'The Cursus Honorum in Fifteenth-Century York: The Rise to Power', unpublished MA dissertation, Center for Medieval Studies, University of York (1993), pp. 1-28.

[93] YCA, Freemen's Register, D1, fol. 1v.

[94] For lists recording the election of mayors see YCA, Freemen's Register, D1, fols. 4r-27r.

election to this post was common during the first half of the fourteenth century, but increasingly, measures were introduced to prevent this happening.[95] In 1372 it was enacted that no one was to be re-elected in the eight years following their holding the post of mayor, and in 1392 re-election was barred until all other aldermen had served in the post.[96] By 1475 it was very unusual for anyone to hold the post of mayor more than twice, and most mayors held the office only once.[97] The method of election of the mayor also changed over the later-medieval period, possibly as a result of the repeated occurrence of election-day riots.[98] During the late-fourteenth century the outgoing mayor presented the commonalty of the city with the names of two or three candidates drawn from the city's council of aldermen. The commonalty then chose one of these men to be the city's mayor for the following year.[99] In 1464 this process was reversed by Edward IV. The king decreed that the crafts should choose two aldermen as mayoral candidates and that the mayor, aldermen and council of twenty-four should then decide which of these men was to become the next mayor.[100] In 1473 the role of the crafts was further increased by Edward when he gave them the power to elect directly any one of the aldermen as mayor.[101] Finally, in response to a petition from the city's council, the process was changed once again in 1490 when the 1464

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[95] Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 70.

[96] M. Sellers (ed.), *York Memorandum Book, part I, 1376-1419*, Surtees Society 120 (1912 for 1911), p. 116; YCA, Freemen's Register, D1, fol. 9v.

[97] See Appendix 1.

[98] The changes in the electoral procedures and the reasons behind these changes are explored more fully in Part Four below.

[99] M. Sellers (ed.), *York Memorandum Book, part II, 1388-1493*, Surtees Society 125 (1914), p. 255.

[100] *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1461-7*, p. 366.

[101] *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1467-77*, p. 416.

electoral procedure was restored.[102]

Below the office of mayor was that of sheriff. Until 1396 the city had three

bailiffs.[103] However, under the royal charter of that year the bailiffs were replaced by two

elected sheriffs chosen annually on the 21 September.[104] The sheriffs' primary functions

were judicial and financial. They headed three of the city's main courts which dealt mainly

with cases of debt, assault and trading or market offences.[105] The sheriffs also collected the

city's revenues for the crown and paid its fee farm. In general the candidates for the posts

of sheriff were chosen from amongst the past chamberlains of the city by the mayor,

aldermen and the council of twenty-four, and their choice of candidates was then endorsed

by the commonalty.[106] In 1504 this electoral procedure was unsuccessfully challenged by

the commonalty who demanded the right to elect the sheriffs directly.[107]

Immediately below the sheriffs in rank were the city's chamberlains. They were

responsible for the collection and control of the city's internal finances.[108] This primarily

amounted to collecting land and property rents (often through the services of the city's

bridge masters), revenues from city farms such as that of the common crane, and fines and

duties. The revenue raised from these sources paid the wages of the city's MPs, legal

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[102] This procedure was also reconfirmed in 1492. *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1485-94*, p. 297; A. Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 8 vols., Yorkshire Archaeological Society Records Series 97, 103, 106, 108, 110, 112, 115 & 119 (1939-52), 2: 39-44, 49, 54-5 & 104.

[103] For a list of York's bailiffs see YCA, Freemen's Register, D1, fols. 288v-294r.

[104] For York's charter, which conferred on the city the right of internal self-government and elevated the city to county status, see *Calendar of Charter Rolls 1341-1417*, pp. 354-6 & 358-60.

[105] Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 75. For the few surviving medieval records of York's Sheriffs' Courts see YCA, Sheriffs' Court Books, E25 & 25a.

[106] Sellers (ed.), *York Memorandum Book, part II*, pp. 52, & 74-5.

[107] Raine (ed), *York Civic Records*, 3: 8-9. This event is discussed in greater depth in Part Four.

[108] For the duties of the chamberlains see R.B. Dobson (ed.), *York City Chamberlains Account Rolls*, Surtees Society 192 (1980), especially pp. xxi-xxxi.

advisers and chaplains and additionally covered the expenses and paid for the liveries of the

civic officials.[109] By the late-fifteenth century it was common for the balance of revenues

to be in deficit.[110] Any expenses which could not be paid for out of the common funds were

met from the personal finances of the incoming chamberlains, who were then reimbursed

their initial outlay at the end of their period in office.[111] As a result of the increasing

financial difficulties faced by York over the period of this study and the resultant financial

burden placed on the chamberlains, the number of men elected to the post was increased.

Whereas only three men had been originally elected each year, this number increased to four

in 1484, and to six in 1487.[112] However, in 1499 it was possible to reduce the number of

chamberlains back down to four, and in 1501 the number once again reverted to three.[113]

From 1376 the chamberlains were elected on St. Blaise's day following the election of the

mayor. Like the sheriffs, they were chosen by the mayor, aldermen and twenty-four.[114]

While it was common throughout the second half of the fifteenth century for chamberlains

to have served as bridge masters before becoming chamberlains, it became compulsory for

them to have done so from 1475.[115] In practice, however, this ruling could be circumvented

easily by the payment of a fine, as happened in the case of 52% of the men who held of the

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[109] Numerous records pertaining to the city's chamberlains survive from the period up to 1525. In addition to the Chamberlains Rolls, YCA, C1:1(1396-7)-C6:5 (1523-4), of which those up to YC4:4 (1499-1500) have been edited by Dobson (ed.), *York City Chamberlains Account Rolls*, three Chamberlains Account Books also survive, YCA, CC1 (1446-50), CC1A (1448-54), CC2 (1520-5).

[110] See Dobson (ed.), *York City Chamberlains Account Rolls*; Miller, 'Medieval York', pp. 72-3.

[111] Miller, 'Medieval York', pp. 73-4.

[112] Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 74; Dobson (ed.), *York City Chamberlains Account Rolls*, p. xxxvii. For lists of chamberlains which show their fluctuating numbers see YCA, Freemen's Register, D1 fols. 321r-v, 330r-331v, 58r-209r (cited in chronological order).

[113] Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 74.

[114] Sellers (ed.), *York Memorandum Book, part 1*, pp. 16-17.

[115] Sellers (ed.), *York Memorandum Book, part II*, pp. 245-6.

post of chamberlain during the period 1476 to 1525.[116]

The post of bridge master was the lowest of the annually elected civic offices in terms of status.[117] Until 1569 four men were elected each year, two for Foss bridge and two for Ouse bridge.[118] These men were responsible for collecting all of the rents assigned to their bridges for the purposes of the bridge's maintenance. In addition, the Ouse bridge masters also oversaw the upkeep of Saint William's chapel on Ouse bridge and were responsible for the payment of the chapel priest's fees.[119] Any surplus revenue generated was then passed on to the chamberlains. As Professor Dobson has noted, the net income collected by the bridge masters constituted the single most valuable source of revenue received by the city council during the late-medieval period.[120] From 1381 the bridge masters were elected on the same day as the mayor and the chamberlains.[121] Like the chamberlains, they were elected by the mayor, alderman and the council of twenty-four and were then presented to the commonalty for endorsement.[122] However, in February 1490 this situation changed when in response to a petition from the commonalty the posts of bridge master became directly elected by the commons.[123]

Besides the annually elected officials there were also a number of other personnel

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[116] Appendix 1.

[117] For a far more detailed exploration of this post see Carpenter, 'The Office and Personnel of the Post of Bridgemaster'.

[118] The holders of this post are listed in YCA, Freemen's Register, D1, fols. 318r-320v & 322r-329v.

[119] For the records of the medieval bridge masters up to 1525 see YCA, Bridge Masters' Account Rolls, C80-C87.

[120] Dobson (ed.), *Chamberlains Accounts*, p. xxvii.

[121] YCA, Freemen's Register, D1, fol. 319r & 327r.

[122] L.C. Attreed (ed.), *York House Books, 1463-1490* (Alan Sutton Publishing: Stroud, 1991), pp. 80-1, 300 & 630-1.

[123] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 675.

associated with the government of late-medieval York who are referred to in this thesis. To support the civic officials the city had a recorder and a common clerk.[124] Both men were employed for their professional expertise and were paid a salary. The recorder acted as the city's main legal adviser, while the common clerk compiled the city's civic records. Alongside these professional men the city also employed a number of ceremonial officials such as the sword and mace bearers and the sergeants. The most important of the ceremonial officers were the mayor's mace and sword bearers- he had one of each from 1388.[125] These men were required to process before the mayor throughout the city bearing the civic regalia.

Besides the functions of the annually elected civic officials much of the government of the city was achieved through the use of councils. It seems likely that York was initially governed by a territorial system of courts based on the city's wards and parishes.[126] Although this system had largely been replaced by the late-fourteenth century, remnants still persisted as late as the sixteenth century. Each of the city's six wards were assigned two aldermen, and they, or a warden, headed the quarterly wardmote courts which dealt with neighbourhood problems such as encroachment, blocked drains and gutters, rubbish dumping, gossip mongering or night walking.[127] More serious criminal or financial cases were increasingly dealt with in the central courts or by the craft searchers, but they were

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[124] Miller, 'Medieval York', pp. 74-5.

[125] *Ibid.*, p. 70. The mayors' esquires are listed in YCA, Freemen's Register, D1, fols. 6v-27r.

[126] S. Rees Jones, 'York's Civic Administration', in S. Rees Jones (ed.), *The Government of Medieval York: Essays in Commemoration of the 1396 Royal Charter*, Borthwick Studies in History 3 (1997), p. 123. For a discussion of this development in Norwich, see W. Hudson (ed.), *Leet Jurisdiction in the City of Norwich*, Selden Society 5 (1892), pp. lxxii-lxxxiii.

[127] Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 77. For the wardmote records see YCA, Chamberlains Account Book CB1a, fols. 136r-139r; YCA, Wardmote Court Book E31, pp. 1a-20a. Although these are unpublished they have been transcribed by T. Andrew, 'The Fifteenth Century Wardmote Court Returns for York' (Unpublished MA thesis, Centre for Medieval Studies, University of York, 1997), Appendix.

often presented at the wardmote courts in the first instance.[128] Alongside their judicial

function, the wards also retained their role as the principal unit of organisation for the

mustering, training and financing of troops throughout this period.[129]

Below the ward, the parish also acted as a further unit of government. Each parish

had several annually elected constables who were sworn to oversee the keeping of the peace

in their parish (which included the power of arrest) and who had to ensure that the streets

and walls were kept clean.[130] The parish constables also played a role in the mustering of

troops and the collection of money for soldiers wages. The role of posts such as ward

sergeant or parish constable in York's civic administration and in the general hierarchy of

civic posts is explored in much greater depth in the final section of this thesis.[131]

Although the city's parishes and wards retained a residual role in the government of

fifteenth and sixteenth-century York, the city's style of government had undoubtably

become conciliar and, to a large extent, centralised by 1476. From the late-fourteenth

century, York was governed by a three-tiered conciliar system of administration which ran

alongside the hierarchy of executive offices. At the heart of the civic government sat the

mayor and the city's council of aldermen, usually twelve in number. Whereas the mayor was

elected annually, membership of the council of aldermen was normally for life. New

aldermen were drawn from the ranks of the twenty-four and were chosen by the mayor and

existing aldermen.[132] The council of twenty-four, often referred to as the *probi homines*

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[128] Rees Jones, 'York's Civic Administration', p. 123.

[129] Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 77.

[130] *Ibid.*, p. 77.

[131] See Part Four, pp. 248-273 below.

[132] See, for example, Atreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 305-6, 334 & 669; Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records* 2:141, 160, 176, & 190.

comprised those men who had reached the office of sheriff in the city.[133] Membership of this

forum was for life or until further promotion to the council of aldermen. The third layer of

administration was the council of forty-eight, sometimes referred to as the *communitas*. This

was a far more shadowy body than the two senior councils, and one whose function seems

to have been to represent the interests of the 'commonalty' of the city. The membership of

the council of forty-eight is only recorded twice in surviving York records for the whole of

the medieval period. Its membership and functions are explored in much greater depth

below.[134] Unlike the other two councils it does not seem to have met frequently. From the

evidence available it appears that the forty-eight acted primarily as a petitioning body and

as a mechanism through which the commons were able to give assent and approval to

financial burdens and to changes in civic legislation and ordinances. Indeed, as Sarah Rees

Jones has argued, the existence of a civic petitioning and assenting body designed to

represent the interests of the wider civic community was perhaps reminiscent of the

functions exercised by parliament within the framework of contemporary royal

government.[135]

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[133] Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 78.

[134] See Part Four, pp. 248-273 below.

[135] Rees Jones, 'York's Civic Administration', p. 123.

B) Élite Theory[136]

I) Class, Status and Authority

As we have seen, the work of many medieval urban historians assumes a convergence between Marxist class divisions, Weberian status divisions and the notion of a ruling or governing élite. For some historians this assumption is explicit. For others, though, it is the result of confusion which is perpetuated through a failure to define key concepts. This confusion is unsurprising. As Giddens has noted, even within the discipline of sociology "the theoretical literature dealing with élites and power...wallows in a sea of ineffable confusion- a situation which results from variation in terminological convention, conceptual ambiguity, and profound divergencies in theoretical standpoints of different authors".[137] To a notable extent such confusion can be framed in terms of fundamental ambiguities in our understanding of the concepts of class and status.

In its truest form, Marxist class divisions relate structural and social inequalities to economic divisions within a society. Under this schema, class is defined by a group's position in the system of production.[138] Since Marx, the concept of class has been broadened to embrace groups defined in the first instance by non-economic systems of social stratification. In particular, class has increasingly embraced primarily political and ideological divisions.[139] Seeking to clarify this situation, Weber developed a theory of social

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[136] This section is not intended as an exhaustive overview of élite theory. Rather it is a discussion of the key concepts within the work of Pareto, Mosca and subsequent sociologists which relate to this thesis and the historiography of medieval urban élites.

[137] A. Giddens, 'Preface', in P. Stanworth and A. Giddens (eds.), Élites and Power in British Society (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1974), p. ix.

[138] For a discussion of 'class' as a mode of social stratification and the varieties of ambiguities, confusions and conceptual disagreements involved, see R. Scase, Concepts in Social Sciences: Class (Open University Press: Buckingham, 1992), especially pp. 1-26; R. Crompton, Class and Stratification: An Introduction to Current Debates, 2nd edn. (Polity Press: Cambridge, 1998), especially pp. 1-23; J. Scott, Stratification and Power: Structures of Class Status and Command (Polity Press: Cambridge, 1996), especially pp. 1-19.

[139] Scott, Stratification and Power, p. 3.

stratification in which he clearly separated 'class' and 'status'.[140] To Weber and his

followers, 'status', that is to say divisions "referring to moral judgements of relative social

standing and differences in life style", was clearly distinct from 'class', which referred to

economic power and resources.[141] Although hugely influential, this division is still not

universally accepted, no doubt in part due to the fact that in many societies there is a strong

correlation between economic classes and lifestyle status groups. Many sociologists have

therefore continued to fuse these two key concepts. As John Scott argues, this has

particularly been the case with American sociologists who, being concerned with the

openness and 'classlessness' of American society, have been reluctant to embrace the

economic divisions, political ideologies and sharp boundaries of Marxist class

delimitations.[142]

For students of historical élites a further element of confusion is added with notions

of authority, power and command. The concept of power is, in itself, highly problematic.[143]

If power is understood in Weber's terms as "the chance that an actor's will can be imposed

on the other participants in a social relationship, even against their resistance", then it can

clearly be seen that certain economic classes and status groups will inevitably also constitute

power groups.[144] However, Weber and several of his contemporaries also sought to

introduce a system of categorisation whereby authority or command was viewed as a third

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[140] For Weber's conception of 'status' and its development as a tool of sociological analysis see, in addition to works cited in note 138; B.S. Turner, *Concepts in Social Sciences: Status* (Open University Press: Milton Keynes, 1988).

[141] Scott, *Stratification and Power*, p. 3. See also Turner, *Status*, especially pp. 2-16.

[142] Scott, *Stratification and Power*, pp. 4-5.

[143] See for example, S.M. Lukes, *Power* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1986).

[144] Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1: 56; cited in Scott, *Stratification and Power*, p. 22. So for example, Marxist sociologists have argued that in all class-based societies there is a dominant class which controls material production, but also mental production, by which means they are able to supervise the construction of a coherent set of beliefs. This view is contested in N. Abercrombie, S. Hill and B.S. Turner, *The Dominant Ideology Thesis* (George Allen & Unwin: London, 1984).

theoretically independent mode of social stratification alongside class and status. Unfortunately Weber's work on 'parties' remained unfinished and was the least developed area of his research.[145] Instead, it is in the work of Mosca and Pareto, the founders of élite studies, that this area was first fully developed.[146] Pareto's conception of élites embraced those at the top of any socially significant hierarchy, and his understanding of élite groups still holds much validity today.[147] Both Pareto and Mosca were primarily concerned with governing or ruling élites (in other words, groups which exercised power by virtue of the offices they held), and it is these groups which are of interest here.

Both Pareto and Mosca developed the notion of a minority ruling group in the context of theories which, like Marxism, emphasised "the centrality of conflict and struggle in social development".[148] Further, both men drew on the Marxist vocabulary of 'classes'. Pareto in particular tended to assimilate the terms 'élite' and '(ruling) class'.[149] However, Mosca's 'classe politica' and Pareto's 'le classi elette' (which he translated from Italian into French as 'l'élite' and then into English as 'élite') were not classes in a Marxist sense.[150]

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[145] Sociologists have since disagreed over how to interpret this aspect of his work, variously arguing that Weber was concerned with parties, power, authority or command. Scott, *Stratification and Power*, pp. 20-47.

[146] The key works of these two men are: V. Pareto, *a Treatise in General Sociology*, ed. a. Livingstone (Dover: New York, 1963); G. Mosca, 'Elimenti de Scienza Politica', 1896 edn. and 1923 edn., both in G. Mosca, *The Ruling Class* (McGraw Hill: New York, 1939). For a discussion of the work of these two men and the evolution of élite studies see in particular, T. Bottomore, *Élites and Society*, 2nd edn. (Routledge: London, 1993); S.F. Nadel, 'The Concept of Social Élites', *International Social Science Bulletin* 8:3 (1956): 413-424; G. Moyser and M. Wagstaffe (eds.), *Research Methods for Élite Studies* (Allen and Unwin: London, 1987), pp. 1-24.

[147] Moyser and Wagstaff, *Research Methods for Élite Studies*, p. 8. Following on from this work Nadel has argued that in many societies there exists "a stratum of the population which, for whatever reason, can claim a position of superiority and hence a corresponding measure of influence over the fate of the community". He has suggested that it is useful to distinguish between three different types of élite: social élites, specialised élites and governing élites. Although these three groups often overlap, there is never a perfect correspondence. Therefore, the assumption of a single élite "probably always involves some degree of over-simplification, of a more or less dubious reality". Nadel, 'The Concept of Social Élites', pp. 413 & 421.

[148] Scott, *Stratification and Power*, p. 128.

[149] Giddens, 'Preface', p. ix.

[150] Scott, *Stratification and Power*, p. 139.

This autonomous conception of social categorisation was "essentially a political division, concerning those who rule and those who are ruled (the mass)" and was not dependent on relationships of economic production.[151] However, the initial assimilation of the terms 'class' and 'élite', and the subsequent introduction and ill-defined use of terms such as 'power élite' or 'ruling élite', has led to a confusion among sociologists and historians as to the relationship between the concepts of class and élite theory.

While accepting the interdependence of class, status and authority, this study embraces the Weberian distinction between these three spheres of social stratification. The primary reason for this is that only by distinguishing between class, status and authority can the true significance and interplay of these forms of social stratification be fully understood.[152] However, rather than relying on Weber's underdeveloped theories of parties, the concept of authority as a form of social stratification has instead been understood in this thesis in relation to approaches pioneered by Mosca and Pareto in the field of élite studies.

As has already been discussed, Pareto and Mosca were primarily concerned with élites as constituted by people who exercised power by virtue of holding offices and positions of government. The theories of these two men, together with those of subsequent sociologists, offer the means by which the formation and operation of ruling groups in past societies may be more fully explored. In the words of Scott, "Mosca and Pareto provide tools for understanding the ways in which authority relations establish divisions between rulers and the ruled that may underpin class and status relations or run counter to them".[153] Therefore, rather than accepting or assuming an inherent correlation between civic office

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[151] Giddens, 'Preface', p. ix.

[152] Bottomore argues that in the case of class and élite theory, although they are "totally opposed" as wide ranging theories, at another level they may be seen as "complimentary concepts, which refer to different types of political system or to different aspects of the same political system". Bottomore, *Élites and Society*, p. 44.

[153] Scott, *Stratification and Power*, pp. 17-18.

in later-medieval York and class-based or status-based forms of stratification, it is actually

the analysis of the interplay between these two spheres which will constitute one of the key

aspects of this thesis.

II) Boundaries, 'Circulation', Coherence, Consciousness and Power

Several other key issues and points of debate within élite studies are germane to this study.

Most obviously there is the problem of boundaries. To what depth should the élite stratum

extend?[154] The point of departure for both Pareto and Mosca was the conception of a

division between rulers (the élite) and the masses.[155] The masses were defined as those who

lacked any *meaningful* involvement in government or politics.[156] But how do we define

meaningful involvement? In an attempt to lessen the dichotomous conception of society

embodied in the division of society into rulers and masses, many sociologists advocate the

inclusion of substratums. For example, Bottomore refers to the existence in modern

societies of 'sub-élites' which join the élite to the non-élite.[157] Similarly, Giddens argues that

authority is best represented as a graduated hierarchy of spheres of administration.[158] He

suggests that concepts of authority should include the élite, a 'secondary structure' and the

non-élite. Under this schema the secondary structure includes an 'administrative stratum'

of office holders of a lower rank, and also a 'recruitment stratum' which represents a pool

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[154] Moyser and Wagstaffe (eds.), *Research Methods for Élite Studies*, p. 10.

[155] However, both men were concerned with the relationship between an élite comprised of people who held positions of authority and other élite groups comprised of the people at the top of other socially significant hierarchies.

[156] Scott, *Stratification and Power*, p. 132.

[157] Bottomore, *Élites and Society*, p. 5.

[158] A. Giddens, 'Élites in the British Class Structure', in Stanworth and Giddens (eds.), *Élites and Power in British Society*, p. 4.

of individuals from which the élite are drawn.[159] These two groups may or may not overlap.

Clearly, the problem of boundaries remains. However, these models do at least recognise

the artificiality of concrete divisions and allow and encourage an exploration of the ways in

which élite groups are linked to the rest of society.

Closely related to the issue of boundaries is the issue of recruitment to political

élites. One of the key elements of Mosca and Pareto's theories was the notion of the

'circulation of élites', which addressed changes in the make up of élites over time through

the introduction of new members and the assimilation of new interests.[160] Mosca believed

that the circulation of élites is necessary because of the emergence of new social forces

which represent new interests in society.[161] For Mosca and Pareto, the circulation of élites

is the fundamental force of history which drives social development. In order for an élite

to survive it is necessary that it should continue to recruit members whose interests and

skills should correspond with those required for the successful implementation of political

or authoritative power.[162] Fundamental to the successful process of regeneration is the

capacity of individual élite members to continue to represent the interests and purposes of

other important and influential groups in society.[163]

While élites should engender within society a generalised recognition of their own

superiority, they should also remain close enough to the rest of society to retain influence

and power.[164] Several key notions are therefore crucial to the exploration of the circulation

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[159] Giddens, 'Élites in the British Class Structure', pp. 13-14.

[160] Bottomore, *Élites and Society*, pp. 5-6. The circulation of élites is also used to refer to the interchange of personnel between élites in different spheres of society. Giddens, 'Élites and Power in British Society', p. 16.

[161] Bottomore, *Élites and Society*, p. 6.

[162] Scott, *Stratification and Power*, p. 133.

[163] Bottomore, *Élites and Society*, pp. 4-5.

[164] Nadel, 'The Concept of Social Élites', p. 417.

of élites between the generations. First, it is necessary to explore the degree of openness

of élites to the acquisition of new skills and attributes.[165] Second, rule by an élite minority

can only be held to be possible because individuals within élites possess attributes which are

highly esteemed by their society.[166] Indeed, Nadel has suggested that élite groups exemplify

by their conduct those qualities considered valuable or important within a society.[167] Clearly

then it is equally necessary to examine the ethos and actions of élite groups, as it is to

examine the issues of mobility and recruitment within élite groups.[168]

In addition to the issues of boundaries and circulation there are two other elements

of élite theory which are problematic, namely the assumptions of coherence and power.

These two issues are of particular interest here, as they are both germane to historical

studies of élites. Bottomore has argued that there is an assumption within élite doctrines

that élites, or individuals possessing power, constitute cohesive groups.[169] This assumption

is also readily apparent in the work of many historians of medieval élites.[170] In more recent

years this area has been increasingly problematised. In particular, Giddens has suggested

that in addition to the study of 'social integration', 'moral integration' should also be

examined, by 'moral integration' Giddens refers to the extent to which members of élites

share common ideas and a common moral ethos.[171] To Giddens, consciousness of an overall

solidarity is also one of the key facets of moral integration.[172] Similarly, Nadel has argued

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[165] Scott, *Stratification and Power*, p. 133.

[166] Bottomore, *Élites and Society*, p. 3.

[167] Nadel, 'The Concept of Social Élites', p. 418.

[168] Giddens, 'Preface', p. xii.

[169] Bottomore, *Élites and Society*, p. 22.

[170] For the application of this criticism against medieval historians see above pp. 10-22.

[171] Giddens, 'Élites in the British Class Structure', p. 5.

[172] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

that élite groups must have some sense of corporateness, group characteristics and self-awareness of exclusivity: that in short, an élite must be a "more or less self-conscious unit in society".[173]

Undoubtedly, the assumed relationship between office-holding and power has been viewed as one of the main problems within Mosca and Pareto's work.[174] Indeed, the problem of the notion or definition of power is in itself a thorny issue in this context.[175] While some sociologists argue that the possession of some form of power is necessary for a group to be deemed élite, others argue that this is not so. For example, Giddens makes a distinction between formally defined authority and what he regards as 'real' or 'effective' power. He suggests that "the fact that an individual possesses certain formal trappings of authority does not, *ipso facto*, allow us to infer what effective power he wields".[176]

III) The Purpose of Élite Studies

Despite problems with the definition of élites, the study of élite groups remains highly important. For Pareto and Mosca it was the rise and fall of élite groups which provided the key to social progress.[177] Other sociologists have argued that it is only through the study of élite groups that systems of power or domination can be adequately understood: how and in what ways power is exercised and by whom.[178] This in turn allows judgments to be made

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[173] Nadel, 'The Concept of Social Élites', p. 415.

[174] Bottomore, *Élites and Society*, p. 22.

[175] Moyser and Wagstaffe (eds.), *Research Methods for Élite Studies*, pp. 8-9.

[176] Giddens, 'Élites in the British Class Structure', p. 4.

[177] Scott, *Stratification and Power*, pp. 127-138.

[178] Giddens, 'Preface', p. xii; Giddens, 'Élites in the British Class Structure', p. 1; Moyser and Wagstaffe (eds.), *Research Methods for Élite Studies*, p. 2.

concerning the freedom and equality of a society.[179] In the context of a study of late-medieval York, the usefulness of élite studies can be located in its providing a means of illuminating systems of social stratification, and its providing a mechanism for measuring the degree and nature of interaction between such different systems of stratification. This applies to more overt systems of stratification such as class and political power, but also to more veiled aspects of stratification and consolidation such as family or occupation. Further, through examining the criteria on which privilege was accorded, and the processes by which political, moral or cultural power was exercised, the study of élites can shed light on the values of a particular group or society. Finally, the study of élites also holds wider relevance to questions concerning the processes of social mobility and social stability in the past.

IV) Methodological Framework

It is not the intention of this thesis to resolve any of the above outlined issues *per se*. Rather, these issues have been highlighted for two reasons. First, many of the conceptual confusions and ambiguities present in élite studies are also present in historical studies of élites. These are, in particular: the conflation of class, status and authority: the assimilation of the terms 'class' and 'élite': the dichotomous division of society into rulers and the ruled: and the assumption of coherence, consciousness and power. Second, these debates cut to the heart of this thesis. Rather than taking as given the élite status of the men who held civic posts in later-medieval York, the overriding aim of the thesis is to determine to what extent and in what respects this group of men may be classed as an élite. For this reason, and in order to address the problems outlined above, this thesis follows the methodological

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[179] Moyser and Wagstaffe (eds.), *Research Methods for Élite Studies*, p. 2.

structure suggested by Giddens for the study of modern ruling élites.[180]

First, on the issue of boundaries, this thesis follows Giddens in adopting a broad overall definition of élite' as "referring to positions of higher authority...(recognising) that it should be a principal endeavour of research to determine how far the effective distribution of power diverges from this".[181] The bulk of the prosopographical work in this thesis and much of the analysis, particularly that contained in Parts Two and Three, relate only to the higher civic officials, that is to say those who held the posts of mayor, sheriff, chamberlain or bridge master, and the term 'civic élite' is used in reference to this group of men. To a certain extent this group was self-delimiting as it encompassed all civic officials who were regularly listed as such in York's Freemen's Register.[182] Moreover, in terms of the prosopographical research, only sporadic evidence survives detailing the personnel of the common council or the parochial or ward-based posts. My analysis also focuses on the 'civic élite' in order to address issues raised in the existing historiography, particularly in relation to the occupation, wealth, and family and social connections of higher civic officials. However, it should be noted that this thesis does not seek to define York's civic élite solely in terms of these higher posts. Indeed, it is one of the main contentions of the thesis that more attention should be paid to the fluidity of the boundaries between the higher civic officials and members of the common council, and holders of territorial or guild offices. For this reason, the thesis consciously examines problematic issues such as whether, the concept of the civic élite should be widened to encompass *ad hoc* civic posts, members of lower councils and territorial or guild officers. The importance of these posts and their relationship with the higher civic officials is addressed in greater detail in Part Four.

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[180] Giddens, 'Élites in the British Class Structure', pp. 1-21.

[181] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

[182] See, for example, YCA, Freemen's Register D1, fols. 4r-27r, 209v, 288v-310r, 318r-339r.

Second, Giddens isolates three primary dimensions involved in the study of élites: recruitment, structure and power.[183] These areas form the basis of the three main sections of this thesis. Part Two on 'Access' is concerned with recruitment to the élite. In particular it is concerned with how 'open' or 'closed' the civic élite was to men of different socio-economic backgrounds. As well as analysing different rates of mobility this study is also concerned with examining typical avenues of mobility and processes of 'socialisation'.[184] However, since these processes are often related to the social structure of the élite, however, they are mainly examined in Part Three. In addition, Part Two goes beyond Giddens' methodological schema in analysing, in the words of Parkin, the 'moral vocabularies' used by York's civic élite in order to justify their authority.[185] Part Three on 'Structure' is concerned with the level of integration displayed by York's civic élite. Whereas Giddens distinguishes between social and moral integration, it is primarily the former which is examined here, although issues relating to the moral integration of the élite are discussed throughout the thesis. Finally, Part Four on 'Authority and Power' examines the extent to which power was either centralised in the hands of the élite or diffused throughout society. Again, the possession of power by the civic élite is not taken as given, rather it is one of the main points of analysis.

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[183] Giddens, 'Élites in the British Class Structure', pp. 4 ff.

[184] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[185] F. Parkin, *Max Weber* (Ellis Horwood: Chichester, 1982), p. 77. Throughout this thesis 'discourse' is used to mean a range of language which "implies particular ideological valuations of the subjects it has defined". S. Copley, *Literature and Social Order in Eighteenth-Century England* (Croom Helm: London, 1984), p. 2. For an introduction to discourse theories see D. Macdonell, *Theories of Discourse: An Introduction* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1986).

C) Prosopography

Fundamental to the study of any élite group is the examination of its personnel. For this reason this thesis makes extensive use of prosopographical methodologies. Prosopography has been defined as "the investigation of the common background characteristics of a group of actors in history by means of a collective study of their lives".[186] It involves the collection of biographical data for a group of people on subjects such as occupation, family background and personal relationships, education and career. Aside from its heuristic benefits, prosopography has two main purposes. First, it allows a detailed understanding of otherwise unvoiced mechanisms and structures of society. It is used to explore the "roots of political action: the uncovering of the deeper interests that are thought to lie beneath the rhetoric of politics; the analysis of the social and economic affiliations of political groupings; the exposure of the workings of a political machine; and the identification of those who pull the levers".[187] Second, it is useful for exploring a society's social structure and the methods of social mobility.[188] Finally, although not an aim, prosopography can also offer the advantage of aiding the elimination of the traditional boundaries between social, institutional, political and economic history.

Of course, prosopography is not without its detractors and, like most historical methodologies, it inevitably poses conceptual and methodological problems. Obviously, there are the practical methodological problems such as those of identification and

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[186] L. Stone, 'Prosopography', in F. Gilbert and S. Graubard (eds.), *Historical Studies Today* (Norton: New York, 1972), p. 107. For what follows see *ibid.*, pp. 107-140 and G. Beech, 'Prosopography', in J.M. Powell (ed.), *Medieval Studies: An Introduction* (Syracuse University Press: Syracuse, 1992), pp. 185-226.

[187] Stone, 'Prosopography',p. 107.

[188] *Ibid.*, p. 107.

classification.[189] Since these problems relate to specific historical sources they are discussed

in more depth in the appendices.[190] However, prosopography also poses more fundamental

problems of a conceptual nature. In particular, there is the assumption that factors such as

family ties or occupation were more important than personality or ideals in determining

social and power structures and networks. The historical role of "ideas, prejudices,

passions, ideologies, ideals or principles" is ignored.[191] Indeed, the historical intangibility

of personality and ideals means that inevitably "we de-emphasise the individual vignette and

the individual experience".[192] Although it is possible to include more personal sources

including wills, tombs, and records of book ownership, Powell points out that we are still

"largely in the world of externals of acquisition, consumption and display, touching only

indirectly upon the internal world of reflection and motivation".[193] To an extent this is

compounded by problems of evidence involved in any prosopographic study. Records of

one kind tend to survive more than records of another. In particular, economic records are

often far more abundant than more personal records. Due to this imbalance there can be a

resultant tendency to treat the individual as "*homoeconomicus*, and to study him primarily

in the light of his financial interests and behaviour".[194]

Similarly, family ties often tend to be one of the keystones of prosopographic

studies. Unfortunately, however, the study of family ties is often accompanied by an

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[189] For the more practical difficulties associated with prosopography, see F.T. Carney, 'Prosopography: Payoffs and Pitfalls', *Phoenix* 27, (1973): 156-179; Stone, 'Prosopography', pp. 107-140.

[190] See Appendices below.

[191] Stone, 'Prosopography', p. 124.

[192] Barron & Sutton (eds.), *Medieval London Widows*, p. xv.

[193] Powell, 'After 'After McFarlane'', pp. 7-8.

[194] Stone, 'Prosopography', p. 120.

assumption about the consolidating role of family ties in systems of stratification.[195] Clearly,

family ties do not guarantee political consensus or solidarity. Further, it remains important

to be wary of researching kinship connections beyond the point at which they would truly

have been meaningful (or even traceable) to the people in question.

An over-concentration on key group characteristics to the neglect of other

characteristics also holds ramifications for the issue of group integration. As Caroline

Barron has noted, by focussing on only a handful of group characteristics it is all too easy

to "(lose) sight of the extent to which the apparent unity (of the group in question) is our

own construct".[196] Clearly, one of the main problems of prosopographical studies is that

they risk becoming deterministic and myopic. It is all too easy for historians to become

engrossed in the collection of biographic data to the neglect of analysing the larger

implications of this information. Too often prosopographical studies fall into the category

of "New Antiquarianism- data collection for data collection's sake".[197] Particular care must

be taken with the study of élite groups. As Stone has warned, by focussing on élites there

is always a danger that changes amongst other groups in society "to which the élite will

eventually be obliged to respond" will be ignored.[198]

These problems have been addressed in this thesis in a variety of ways. Since the

thesis is structured around a clear theoretical framework, the problem of 'data collection for

data collection's sake' has been avoided. The relative abundance of evidence available for

later-medieval York would have allowed the compilation of far more detailed biographical

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[195] *Ibid.*, p. 121.

[196] Barron and Sutton (eds.), *Medieval London Widows*, p. xv.

[197] Stone, 'Prosopography', p. 132.

[198] *Ibid.*, 'Prosopography', p. 123.

profiles for many of the men.[199] However, this thesis has concentrated on the evidence

which is best suited to addressing those issues which have been raised in the Introduction.

Further, in an attempt to avoid generalising on the basis of limited evidence (which possibly

only pertains to certain groups of men) this thesis has concentrated on records which are

more complete or which are representative of the group as a whole.[200] Areas of research

which lie beyond the methodological boundaries of prosopographic analysis have been

addressed through the use of alternative methodologies. For example, in parts of the thesis

ideologies and ideals have been approached through the examination of the varieties of

discourse contained within York's civic writing. Indeed, it could be argued that

prosopography is particularly suited to interdisciplinary theses such as this one where its

strengths and limitations can be complemented by those of other disciplines and

methodologies.

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[199] For example, see Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, appendix 3 (pp. 332-47).

[200] Exceptions to this are discussed in the relevant parts of the thesis text.

Part Two:
Access to Civic Office

What were the qualities which constituted a medieval civic élite? To Pareto and Mosca a political élite was a minority group that ruled. As has been discussed in the thesis introduction, Mosca's *classe politica* was not a class in a Marxist sense. Rather, in common with Pareto's governing élite, it was primarily an authoritarian group, as opposed to a group whose position was based on wealth. However, for many late-medieval historians, urban civic officials were members of the élite in two senses. First, they were members of a political élite by virtue of the civic offices they held.[1] Second, it is also generally thought that they were members of an economic élite or 'class', by virtue of their possession of other qualities such as wealth and occupation. As I have already indicated, most historians have assumed that there was a conflation between political power and economic power in later-medieval towns.[2] In short, they view towns and cities as having been ruled by closed, wealthy, mercantile oligarchies.

This thesis challenges the dominant historiographical view of late-medieval urban élites in England through a study of the civic officials of late-medieval York. Drawing on social closure theories, extensive prosopographical research and discourse analysis to examine access to civic office, Part One of the thesis aims to explore a number of related issues. Who held civic office? How open was civic office to men of different occupational and wealth backgrounds? And in what ways was access to civic office informed by wider contemporary notions of urban government and social structure? Part One is divided into two sections. The first section on occupation and wealth examines the importance of these

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[1] The position of the civic élite as a political élite and its relationship with the rest of York's population is discussed in Part Four of the thesis below.

[2] For a fuller discussion of this historiography see Part One, pp. 1-22 above.

two qualities for recruitment into civic office in later-medieval York. It is argued that with

the exception of the highest civic offices of mayor and alderman there is little literary or

prosopographical evidence of exclusionary closure on the grounds of occupation. However,

both forms of evidence suggest exclusionary closure at all levels of the civic hierarchy on

the grounds of wealth. It is argued that this exclusion was 'individualist' and could not be

inherited.[3] Consequently, the perpetuation of the civic élite depended on the nomination of

'suitable' replacements. In turn this process of nomination was controlled by prevailing

ideologies concerning occupation and wealth, as well as related qualities of 'character'.

Although much attention has been paid to the relationship between civic office and

occupation and wealth, very little consideration has been given to the importance of

contemporary perceptions of character. The second section in Part One addresses this

lacuna by exploring personal qualities and characteristics such as wisdom, discretion and

honesty, all of which were portrayed as being necessary or desirable in holders of civic

office. This section is also concerned with the values or ideologies which informed this

portrayal of the ideal civic official. An examination of the variety of discourses of

governance contained within York's civic writing suggests that these ideologies were

important in two respects. First, they offered a mechanism through which 'unsuitable' men

could be denied access to civic office. Second, they were vital in serving to create or

reinforce the civic identity of the office holders, and to legitimise their exercise of power.

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[3] Clearly, wealth, unlike academic distinctions (for example), would normally be regarded as a readily heritable attribute. However, it is argued in Part Three of the thesis that father to son wealth transmission in late-medieval York was in fact poor.

A) Occupation and Wealth

I) Social Closure Theory

The idea of social closure was first proposed in an undeveloped form by Max Weber in his *Economy and Society*.[4] Later sociologists, and in particular Frank Parkin, helped evolve Weber's initial idea into what has become known as 'social closure theory'.[5] As Parkin states, "by social closure Weber means the process by which social collectivities seek to maximise rewards by restricting access to rewards and opportunities to a limited circle of eligibles".[6] Opportunities for outsiders beneath this group are closed off because these outsiders are held to be inferior or ineligible.[7] From this it can be seen that social closure theory assumes an inherently antagonistic relationship between those excluded and those who are excluding. Indeed, one major contributor to 'closure theory' prefers to call it 'conflict theory'.[8] This antagonism is seen to result from the struggle to monopolise (scarce) resources.

In terms of medieval urban history, closure theory can be used to analyse the ways in which certain groups sought to monopolise political power by excluding others on such grounds as occupation or social background. Parkin suggests that this type of exclusion can be either individualist or collectivist.[9] Clearly, this distinction is highly important to the

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[4] Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1: 43-6, 302-7, 341-3. This thesis follows on from the work of Stephen Rigby in the application of these theories. For a fuller introduction to social closure theory and its uses for the medieval historian see: Rigby, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 9-14.

[5] This introduction to social closure draws on Parkin, 'Strategies of Social Closure', pp. 1-18; and R. Murphy, *Social Closure: The Theory of Monopolization and Exclusion* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1988), especially pp. 8-14.

[6] Parkin, 'Strategies of Social Closure', p. 3.

[7] Murphy, *Social Closure*, p. 8.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

[9] Parkin, 'Strategies of Social Closure', p. 6.

historian as it holds profound implications for the perpetuation of social groups. Collectivist exclusion refers to exclusion on the grounds of "generalized attributes of collectively defined qualities", such as race, religion or lineage.[10] As these attributes are often inherited, it becomes relatively easy for a group to safeguard privileges for subsequent generations of the same group, thereby preserving the *status quo*. By contrast, individualist exclusion refers to exclusion on the grounds of personally acquired characteristics such as academic qualifications, or a commitment to a specific set of values or ideas. Here the perpetuation of social groups can only be achieved through the nomination of suitable replacements.[11] Arguably, strategies of individualist exclusion allow for greater scope for social mobility within a group than are allowed by strategies of collectivist exclusion, while still ensuring the preservation of an ideological *status quo*.

By locating my research into the civic officials of later-medieval York within the framework of closure theory it will be possible to explore the issue of what type of men comprised the membership of York's civic élite, as well as the associated issue of what were the means through which the perpetuation of the civic élite was safeguarded. The following section will begin by examining the degree to which social closure was evident among the civic élite in terms of occupation and wealth. It will then explore the extent to which there existed contemporary ideologies concerning access to civic government that were influenced by the contemporary intellectual climate. Finally, the section will consider how any such ideologies interacted with the methods of exclusion that have been identified. Social closure theory will also enable some consideration to be given to the implications of any revealed ideologies for urban social mobility and the perpetuation of specific value systems in late-medieval York.

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[10] *Ibid.*

[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

II) Occupation and Wealth: Introduction

It has frequently been asserted that "rank in the medieval city was determined by wealth".[12]

In practical terms, the financial burden of many of the civic posts meant that wealth was

necessary in order to hold higher civic office. Prosopographical analysis of the civic élites

of medieval English and continental urban centres has demonstrated a correlation between

the most wealthy citizens and the holders of civic posts.[13] More recently this view has been

refined slightly to take into account the additional importance of occupation: it has been

argued that access to government in late-medieval English towns was restricted not just to

the most wealthy, but specifically to those practising mercantile trades. Indeed, as was

outlined in the introduction to this thesis, late-medieval English urban history has often been

characterised in terms of urban centres that were controlled by wealthy mercantile

oligarchies.

The historiography of late-medieval York is no exception to this general trend.

Historians such as Edward Miller, David Palliser, Jennifer Kermode and Heather Swanson

have all concluded that for much of the late-medieval period the government of York rested

in the hands of a wealthy mercantile oligarchy.[14] On the whole, these historians appear to

view oligarchy as a natural result of inherited systems of election and government combined

with economic determinism. Heather Swanson, however, places a much greater emphasis

on what she views as inherently antagonistic class tensions that existed between the ruling

merchants and the politically disenfranchised artisan 'class'. For her, the government of

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[12] E.M. Carus-Wilson, 'Towns and Trade', in A.L. Poole (ed.), *Medieval England* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1958), p. 251; Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 14-27.

[13] For a fuller historiography of the government of later-medieval towns and their dominance by mercantile oligarchies, see the introductory chapter of this thesis.

[14] See, for example, Miller, 'Medieval York', pp. 70-5, 77-9; Palliser, 'York in the Sixteenth Century', especially pp. 165-6, 206-14, 225-44; Kermode, 'Obvious Observations', pp. 87-106; Swanson, 'The Illusion of Economic Structure', pp. 29-48.

late-medieval York was symptomatic of a self-interested and exploitative dominance of political and economic resources by merchants, to the deliberate exclusion of artisans. While Swanson's work clearly reflects a Marxist dialectic, her understanding of the government of late-medieval York has much in common with closure theory.[15] For example, she describes the merchants as seeking collectively to safeguard their political (and therefore their economic) position by restricting access to political power through the deliberate exclusion of men with artisan occupations.[16]

Before proceeding to explore the broader implications and intellectual context of this system of government, it is first necessary to determine whether the men who held civic office in York during the period 1476 to 1525 conform with the model advanced in the established historiography. At this point, a thorough prosopographic study may seem superfluous given that the occupation and wealth of civic officials in late-medieval York is already well-researched. However, such a study is necessary for two main reasons.

First, although work has been undertaken on the wealth and occupation of higher civic officials such as the council aldermen, the lower posts have not previously been fully researched. For example, Palliser's study of the sixteenth-century councillors of York is confined to those who belonged to the councils of twenty-four and twelve, or in other words, to those officials who had at least reached the post of sheriff.[17] Kermode's study of York merchants and Swanson's study of York artisans are more wide-ranging in their inclusion of chamberlains, yet neither study considers in any detail the post of bridge master,

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[15] This is perhaps not surprising for although closure theory originated in the work of Weber, it also drew heavily on elements of the Marxist school. Indeed, as was noted above, social closure is held to be inherently antagonistic and is held to be driven by competition for scarce resources.

[16] Swanson, The Illusion of Economic Structure', pp. 29-48; *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 107-126; *idem*, 'Craftsmen and Industry', pp. 107-126.

[17] For his study of this group of men see Palliser, 'York in the Sixteenth Century', chapters 4, 5 & 6. A less detailed version of Palliser's thesis is published as Palliser, *Tudor York*.

the personnel of the forty-eight or holders of parochial and ward posts.[18] A notable exception to this trend is my own study of the bridge masters of later-medieval York.[19] As this study demonstrated, the post of bridge master was extremely important both as an access point to the higher civic offices, and as a 'buffer-zone' between the innermost circles of the political élite and the wider, politically disenfranchised civic community.[20] The importance of more minor municipal, craft and territorial posts in increasing popular participation in local government during the later-medieval and early-modern periods has also been discussed briefly by several historians of other English towns.[21] These 'gateway' posts were held predominately by men of only moderate wealth and non-mercantile occupations. Indeed, it could be argued that one of the many reasons why historians have concluded that late-medieval civic government was dominated by wealthy merchants is precisely because they have not given enough consideration to the numerous personnel who held the lower civic offices.[22] Historians have argued that little real power was attached to posts below the rank of sheriff, noting that the chamberlains and bridge masters were not admitted to the council of twenty-four, which was the main governing body of the town.[23] Arguably, however, this view establishes an unrealistically dichotomous division within the socio-political hierarchy of the late medieval town. Furthermore, this rationale also

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[18] See in particular J.I. Kermode, 'The Merchants of York, Beverley and Hull in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries' (PhD thesis, Department of History, University of Sheffield, 1990), especially chapter 5; idem, *Medieval Merchants*, especially pp. 25-69; idem, 'Obvious Observations', pp. 87-106; Swanson, 'Craftsmen and Industry', pp. 107-126; idem, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 107-26.

[19] Carpenter, 'The Office and Personnel of the Post of Bridge Master'.

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 38-9, 45 & 68-9.

[21] Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp. 180-3; Hudson and Tingey (eds.), *Leet Jurisdiction in the City of Norwich*, pp. ix-xcv; Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, pp. 102-6; Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 183-4.

[22] For a fuller discussion of this point see the Introduction.

[23] See for example J. Kermode, 'Urban Decline: The Flight from Office in Late-Medieval York', *Economic History Review* 2nd Series 35 (1982): 187.

presupposes that the primary motivation of the civic office holder was the achievement of power. This somewhat blinkered analysis fails to give proper consideration of the sociological importance of the honour, prestige and even the self-esteem which may have been conferred by office holding even at minor levels.[24]

Second, a detailed prosopographical study has not actually been carried out on civic office holders in York for the whole of the period 1476 to 1525.[25] Part of the reason for this is that 1500 has tended to be regarded somewhat arbitrarily as an historical cut-off date so that the decades either side of this divide have become artificially marginalised. If considered at all, these years tend to be viewed as the end or the beginning of a much wider time span, rather than as a coherent period in their own right. In fact, the period 1476 to 1525 was one of turmoil, change and unrest within York. Not only did this period witness an array of constitutional changes in York, it also saw the city's economic fortunes plunge to a new nadir. Tentative comments in other less detailed studies have indicated that York's economic decline may have encouraged an increase in access to civic office within the city. Indeed, my own study of the York bridge masters, together with another useful and detailed MA thesis on York's civic élite in the fifteenth century, have both indicated that the influence of wealthy merchants over the government of later-medieval York was never constant and has in some instances been overemphasised.[26]

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[24] Indeed, at a higher level, Anthony Fletcher has argued that, "prestige not wealth was the principal reward of office"; A.J. Fletcher, 'Honor, Reputation and Local Office Holding in Elizabethan and Stuart England', in A.J. Fletcher and J. Stevenson (eds.), *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1985), p. 92. Social status deriving from political success is discussed in Part Three of the thesis on the structure of the civic élite of later-medieval York.

[25] Since David Palliser's studies are primarily concerned with the Early Modern period, his consideration of York's civic élite begins in 1500. Although Kermode and Swanson are both dealing with the medieval period, they concentrate on the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. See in particular Kermode, 'The Merchants of York, Beverley and Hull in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries'; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*; Swanson, 'Craftsmen and Industry'; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*.

[26] Carpenter, 'The Post of Bridge Master', p. 38. See also Kulikundis, 'The Cursus Honorum in Fifteenth-Century York', pp. 38-9. This very useful dissertation largely consists of a detailed prosopographic analysis of the occupational background of the men who held the offices of mayor, sheriff and chamberlain in York during

It is in order to address these lacunae that I have conducted an extensive and detailed prosopographical study of the occupation, wealth, political careers, and family and kinship networks of the 315 men who can be identified in the civic records as having held the civic offices of bridge master, chamberlain, sheriff or mayor in York between the period 1476 and 1525.[27] This part draws largely on findings relating to the political careers, occupation and wealth of these 315 men. A detailed summary of this together with a list of the numerous and diverse sources used in this study can be found in tabular form in Appendix 1.

III) A Note on Occupational Categorisation

Perhaps the key reason why occupation has received so much attention from urban historians is because it is the personal attribute of civic officials that is most readily identifiable and quantifiable. However, occupation is not unproblematic as a basis for analysis. In order to address the various issues outlined in the historiography it is necessary to classify occupations into categories and groups. However, such classifications are problematic in several respects: no clear consensus exists over how medieval occupations should be grouped, and once a method of classification has been adopted, the historian is inevitably faced with the problem of 'marginal occupations' which can be placed in several categories.[28] Particularly problematic is the process of choosing which occupations should be placed into which categories. Rather than inventing a new scheme, this thesis follows the

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the fifteenth century. I have checked the prosopographic information contained in the dissertation's appendices and am very satisfied with its accuracy and reliability.

[27] The methodology behind this research is outlined in the Introduction.

[28] For examples of contrasting patterns of classification for late-medieval urban occupations see Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, pp. 350-2; Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp. 154-9; Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, pp. 44-5; Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp.308-17.

scheme adopted by Phythian-Adams and adapted by Goldberg.[29] This scheme also fits

closely with the occupational categorisation adopted by Swanson in her analysis of wealth

distribution, inter-generational occupational progression, and entrance to the freedom of

York by occupation.[30]

Table 2:1
Occupational Categories Adopted

Category	All Occupations Included
Mercantile	Chapman, Draper, Haberdasher, Merchant, Mercer, Shipman.
Clothing/ Textiles	Capper, Cardmaker, Dyer, Fuller, Girdler, Hosier, Tailor, Tapiter, Textor, Upholdsterer, Vestmenter, Walker, Weaver, Woolman.
Craft	Armourer, Bower, Carvour, Cooper, Fletcher, Glazier, Goldsmith, Ironmonger, Mason, Organ Maker, Painter, Pewterer, Pinner, Plumber, Potter, Smith, Tilemaker, Waxchandler, Wiredrawer.
Leather	Cordwainer, Glover, Horner, Parchment maker, Saddler, Skinner, Tanner.
Victuals	Baker, Butcher, Cook, Fisher, Fishmonger, Grocer, Hosteller, Innholder, Miller, Spicer, Vintner.
Professional/ Other	Apothecary, Barber, Chandler, Clerk, Gentleman, Litteratus, Marshall, Notary, Pardoner, Parish Clerk, Questor, Sergeant, Yeoman.

Sources: Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 308-17; Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, pp. 44-5.

Since these categories are artificial constructs, several of the occupations could be placed

in more than one category. In this regard, categorisation of occupations as being either

mercantile or non-mercantile is particularly problematic, not least because it is not possible

to make a concrete distinction between the categories of artisan and merchant. An

important point to make is that the definition of 'mercantile' adopted here is narrower than

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[29] The only exception here being that the metal, building, wood and armaments crafts have been placed into one general craft category.

[30] Swanson offers two simultaneous schemes of occupational classification: one is used for her analysis of wealth distribution, inter-generational occupational progression and entrance to York's freedom, while the other is used for her occupational analysis of civic officials. The latter scheme offers a narrower definition of mercantile than does the former scheme. The method of occupational classification adopted here lies somewhere between the two.

that adopted by Swanson in her occupational analysis of fourteenth and fifteenth-century

civic officials. Swanson includes spicers, grocers, vintners and apothecaries in her

calculations of mercantile civic officials. However, since only 4% of the men who held civic

office in York during the period 1476 to 1525 practised these occupations, the difference

between Swanson's definition of 'mercantile' and the definition adopted in this thesis is not

as significant as it may at first seem.

It might be argued that the classification system adopted here is crude in its failure to

take full account of craftsmen who were also involved in wholesale retail and distribution.[31]

For example, some tanners may have been artisans who merely worked to produce goods

which others sold. Meanwhile, other tanners may mainly have acted as wholesalers or

retailers, selling on the finished goods made by others and supplying the producers with raw

materials.[32] The essential problem here is that surviving civic records do not provide the

historian with the type of evidence that would allow them to draw these types of distinctions

with confidence. Of course, it might be countered that membership of York's guild of

merchants can be taken as evidence of mercantile interests. However, such an approach

presupposes that membership of this guild during the period in question was conditional on

wholesale retail or distributive activities. Yet it is by no means clear that this was the case.

Between 1470 and 1510 less than 50% of those admitted to the Mercers' Guild were

merchants or mercers in comparison with 71% of those admitted prior to this period.[33] It

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[31] Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, pp. 120-74, 350-2.

[32]*Ibid.*, *Town and Country in Late Medieval England: The Hide and Leather Trade* in P.J. Corfield and D. Keene, *Work in Towns 850-1850* (Leicester University Press: Leicester, 1990), pp. 57-73.

[33] See L. Wheatley, 'The York Mercers' Guild, 1420-1501: Origins, Organisation and Ordinances' (MA dissertation, Department of History, University of York, 1993), table 2, p. 11. Research carried out by Wheatley, archivist of the York Mercer' Guild, for her D.Phil thesis on the Guild has indicated that while the percentage of men admitted to the guild who were merchants steadily declined from 83% in 1420-9 to 46% in 1500-9, this trend saw a reversal around 1510 with the result that by 1530-9, 90% of men admitted to the Mercers' Guild were merchants. I am grateful to Mrs Wheatley for this information.

could of course be argued that this trend merely represents increased trading activities among the craft-based occupations. However, two additional pieces of evidence suggest that this pattern of admissions may be more indicative of changing admission policies on the part of the guild than a changing occupational structure. First, 6% of those admitted to the guild between 1420 and 1510 were members of the clergy, a group unlikely to be engaged in wholesale or distributive trade, in comparison with less than 0.5% before this date.[34] Second, the percentage of entrants who can be found engaged in shipping activities declined significantly between 1420 and 1505. Whereas evidence can be found to suggest that 51% of those who entered the guild in the period 1420-69 were engaged in shipping activities, this percentage falls to 33% for the period 1470-1505.[35] This evidence suggests that it would be unwise to adopt membership of York's Mercers' Guild *per se* as evidence of engagement in mercantile activities. Perhaps a more reliable measurement would be membership of the Mercers' Guild combined with some other form of evidence suggesting mercantile activities; for example, evidence of overseas shipping contained in the Mercers' accounts. Cases where membership of the guild can be linked with evidence of shipping are indicated in Appendix 1 of this thesis.[36] Meanwhile, the extent to which craftsmen who held civic office, particularly the offices of sheriff and mayor, may have been engaged in mercantile activities is discussed in the relevant sections below by means of reference to this information.

Aside from the methodological problems associated with occupational categorisation there remain wider reasons to doubt the validity or usefulness of this means of analysis. The

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[34] Similar trends are evident among other groups unlikely to be engaged in wholesale or distributive activities, such as gentlemen.

[35] Source: L. Wheatley, 'The York Mercers' Guild', table 5, p. 16.

[36] I am very grateful to Louise Wheatley, archivist of the York Mercers' Guild for this information. For details of membership of the guild and shipping activity before 1500, see Wheatley, 'The York Mercers' Guild', appendix.

Introduction has argued that far too much emphasis has been placed on the importance of occupation and wealth in systems of stratification.[37] It is one of the primary aims of this thesis to challenge this dominant approach and to look beyond these categories to other, possibly more significant or important, methods of social consolidation and delineation. These alternative methods are explored primarily in Parts Three and Four of the thesis. However, before turning to new approaches, it is first necessary to analyse the role of occupation in late-medieval York in order to address a number of issues prevalent in the existing historiography.

IV) Occupation

A total of 315 men can be identified as having held the offices of mayor, sheriff, chamberlain or bridge master between 1476 and 1525.[38] Of these 315 men, the occupation of all but seven (2%) can be traced.[39] As has already been indicated, historians in the past have tended to argue that York was ruled by a mercantile oligarchy.[40] However, this view is not entirely supported by the prosopographical evidence collated for the purpose of this thesis. The table below, which is derived from Appendix 1, illustrates the occupations of the 315 men who can be identified as having held the civic offices of bridge master, chamberlain, sheriff

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[37] See above, pp. 12-22

[38] The main sources used to identify these officers were, for mayors (and also the officers of the mace and sword): York, York City Archives, D1 (Freemen's Register), ff. 17r-27r. For sheriffs: YCA, D1, ff. 209v & 298v-306v; House Book 11, ff. 27r, 46r, 81r, 104v. For chamberlains: F. Collins (ed.), *The Register of the Freemen of the City of York, volume 1 1272-1558*, Surtees Society 96 (1897), pp. 174-262. For bridge masters: YCA, D1, ff. 324r-329v; YCA, CB2 (chamberlains' account book), f. 40r, 77r, 79r, 126v, 172r. For the main sources used for the identification of recorders, common clerks and men who acted as lawyers during the period 1476 to 1525 see: R.B. Dobson (ed.), *York City Chamberlains' Account Rolls*, Surtees Society 192 (1980), *passim*; YCA, C5:1- C6:4 (chamberlains account rolls), *passim*.

[39] The main source used in the identification of occupation was Collins (ed.), *York Freemen's Register*.

[40] See in particular, Miller, 'Medieval York', pp. 70-5, 77-9; Palliser, 'York in the Sixteenth Century', especially pp. 165-6, 206-14, 225-44; Kermode, 'Obvious Observations', pp. 87-106; Swanson, 'The Illusion of Economic Structure', pp. 29-48; idem, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 20-5.

or mayor at some point between 1476 and 1525.[41]

Table 2:2
Occupations of Men Holding the Civic Offices of Bridge Master, Chamberlain, Sheriff and Mayor During the Period 1476-1525
(Numbers expressed as a percentage of all men in each period.)

Occupational Group	1476-1500	1501-1525	1476-1525
Mercantile	28	29	28
Clothing/Textiles	18	18	18
Craft	19	17	18
Leather	9	13	11
Victuals	19	15	17
Unknown	1	3	2
Professional/ Other	6	5	5
Total	**100**	**100**	**99***

* Totals do not always equal 100 due to rounding error.
Source: Appendix 1

As the prosopographic research indicates, at 28%, men with mercantile occupations were the largest single occupational group among the civic officials. However, almost three quarters (71%) of the men who held civic office during the period 1476 to 1525 cannot be identified in the original sources as having practised mercantile occupations. Clearly, in numerical terms, men with mercantile occupations did not dominate the civic élite of York during this period. This finding is at odds with the past conclusions of other historians. In part, the difference reflects the wider definition of 'civic élite' employed in this study. However, a second reason relates to chronological changes. Kulikundis's detailed prosopographical study of the civic officials of fifteenth-century York has demonstrated that while men with mercantile occupations did dominate the civic government at the beginning

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[41] Men have been placed in the time period during which they held their highest reached civic office in York. The methodology of and problems associated with occupational grouping is discussed in the introductory chapter.

of the fifteenth century, this was no longer the case by 1475.[42] Indeed, as her study has

indicated, the final quarter of the fifteenth century was the period in which the civic élite of

later-medieval York was the most open in terms of occupation.[43] While historians'

conclusions concerning the dominance of civic offices by merchants seem to be valid for

much of the medieval period, this view is clearly not valid for the late-fifteenth, or indeed,

the early-sixteenth centuries. Moreover, Table 2:2 does not indicate any significant changes

in the composition of the civic élite having taken place over the fifty-year period under

study.[44]

The decline in the percentage of men with mercantile occupations holding civic offices

towards the end of the fifteenth-century may have been at least partly due to a decline in the

percentage of freemen practising these occupations. Kermode has demonstrated that this

period witnessed a marked decrease in the numbers of men who became free as mercers or

drapers. The numbers of merchants entering the freedom also declined over the course of

the fifteenth century, although the decade 1460-70 saw a temporary reversal of this trend.[45]

Historians have argued that factors such as competition from the West Riding and a

deterioration of trading links with the Hanse and Gascony adversely effected York's textile

and woollen industries, thereby effecting the prosperity and hence also the size of York's

mercantile and textile community.[46] While these explanations partially explain the decline

in York's economic fortunes, it has also been suggested that the economic crisis was due

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[42] Kulikundis, 'The Cursus Honorum in Fifteenth-Century York', p. 28.

[43] That the civic élite of York may have been generally more closed (in terms of occupation at least) in the fourteenth century than it was in the fifteenth is indicated in Miller, 'Medieval York', pp.71-2 & 78-9.

[44] None of the occupational groups witnessed a change of more than 5%. The two largest changes were the decline in the percentage of civic officials who were victualers (from 19% to 15%) and a corresponding increase in the percentage of civic officials who were leather workers (from 9% to 13%).

[45] Kermode, 'Merchants, Overseas Trade and Urban Decline', p. 53.

[46] Bartlett, 'Expansion and Decline of York', pp. 17-33; V.C.H., pp. 89-91.

in some part to a shortage of investment in terms of both cash and credit.[47] Thus, by the end

of the fifteenth century, a variety of economic and monetary factors seem to have caused

a decline in the city's overall economic prosperity.[48] This situation is likely to have effected

the occupational make-up of the city's civic officials in two ways. First, the pool of

merchants from which civic officials could be drawn was shrinking in proportion to the

overall population of freemen.[49] Second, the afore-mentioned economic and monetary

factors effected the occupational distribution of wealth in the city in favour of those with

non-mercantile occupations.[50]

Although the civic government of later-medieval York was not dominated by men

with mercantile occupations, such men were more likely to gain civic office than men with

non-mercantile occupations. This is evident from the fact that although 28% of all civic

officials during this period can be identified through prosopographic research as merchants,

only approximately 12% of men who were eligible to hold civic office practised a mercantile

trade.[51] The prosopographical evidence also suggests that men who practised mercantile

occupations were more likely to progress higher up the civic hierarchy than those who did

not. The table below divides the 315 civic officials into groups according to the highest

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[47] J. Kermode, 'Merchants, Overseas Trade and Urban Decline: York, Beverley, and Hull, c.1380-1500', *Northern History* 23 (1987): 51-73.

[48] It should be noted though that some areas of the city's economy, the service sector in particular, continued to prosper. Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, pp. 77-8.

[49] For a detailed decadal breakdown of entrants into the city's freedom by occupation, see H.C. Swanson, 'Craftsmen and Industry in Late-Medieval York', (DPhil thesis, Department of History, University of York, 1980), pp. 24-25. It is possible that the decline in merchants and mercers within the city during this period led to a 'recruitment crisis' for the Mercers' Guild itself, precipitating a more expansive recruitment policy.

[50] J.N. Bartlett, 'The Expansion and Decline of York in the Later Middle Ages', *Economic History Review*, second series 12 (1959), 17-33; Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 159-90; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 173-5.

[51] Goldberg, who employs the same occupational categorizations as this thesis, has calculated that 12% of men entering York's freedom during the period 1450 to 1509 practiced mercantile trades. The vast majority (90%) of the men who held civic office between 1475 and 1525 entered York's freedom during this period. Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, p. 61.

civic office reached during each man's lifetime.

Table 2:3
Percentage of Men Who Held Civic Office 1476-1525 Who Practised Mercantile Occupations: Shown by Highest Office Attained

Highest Civic Office Attained	As a % of all men who held civic office 1476-1525	% of group practising mercantile occupations.
Bridge Master	28	2
Chamberlain	32	28
Sheriff	22	36
Mayor	18	61
Total	**100**	**28**

Source: Appendix 1

As the prosopographic evidence summarised in Table 2:3 above illustrates, just over a quarter (28%) of the men who held civic office during this period reached no higher than the post of bridge master. Only an extremely small minority of these men (2%) can be identified as having practised mercantile trades. In contrast, just over one quarter (28%) of those who only reached the post of chamberlain, and over one third (36%) of those who only reached the post of sheriff can be identified as merchants. The most striking figure in this respect is that for the post of mayor (61%), which will be discussed below.

Although these figures suggest that men with mercantile occupations become increasingly represented higher up the civic hierarchy, it can be argued that merchants did not comprise a truly dominant group within any post below the rank of mayor, even when those posts are viewed in terms of the total percentage of merchants holding each post.[52] Furthermore, the prosopographical evidence does not corroborate suggestions that the

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[52] The total percentage of merchants who held each of the posts (irrespective of whether they went on to hold higher civic office) is 12% for the post of bridge master, 43% for the post of chamberlain, 46% for the post of sheriff and 61% for the post of mayor.

occupations of men who held the posts of sheriff or below were vetted in order to exclude those with non-mercantile occupations, or those deemed 'common' or 'vulgar'. For example, among those who held the post of sheriff between 1476 and 1526 there were three butchers, four tanners, two saddlers, two bowers, a cook, a cardmaker, a potter and a horner.[53] Of course, it is possible that such men were admitted to the post of sheriff on the basis that although nominally craftsmen, they were in fact engaged in mercantile activities. While impossible to disprove, the evidence does not support such a hypothesis. Of the forty-five sheriffs who whose occupation was not designated as 'mercantile' in the records, the evidence suggests that only two, John Elys (sheriff 1503), variously described as a waxchandler, innholder and vintner, and William Huby (sheriff 1506), a horner, were involved in overseas or inland shipping activities.[54]

David Shaw, working on late-medieval Wells has suggested that the grip of merchants on the civic offices of Wells may have been loosening towards the end of the fifteenth century.[55] The discussed evidence suggests that York may have been experiencing a similar phenomenon: the civic élite of later-medieval York was more open in terms of occupation than at any other time previously. However, while the prosopographic evidence does not suggest an <u>overall</u> exclusionary closure of the civic élite on the grounds of occupation, it does suggest exclusionary closure on the grounds of occupation *within* the civic élite,

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[53] Butchers: Richard Huchonson (sheriff 1523), Thomas Bailley (sheriff 1522) and Richard Tebbe (sheriff 1507); tanners: Thomas Freeman (sheriff 1485), John Hall (sheriff 1501), Richard North (sheriff 1513), John Smith (sheriff 1526); saddlers: John Chapman (sheriff 1512), Miles Greenbank (sheriff 1482); bowers: Roger Gegges (sheriff 1521) & John Gegges (sheriff 1509); cook: Robert Turner (sheriff 1525); cardmaker: Richard Marston (sheriff 1479); potter: John Huton (sheriff 1491); horner: William Huby (sheriff 1506). These findings contradict Kermode, 'Urban Decline', p. 193, who argues that such men were not admitted past the post of chamberlain.

[54] Appendix 1.

[55] Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, p. 173; see also Hammer, 'Anatomy of An Oligarchy', pp. 1-27; Frost, 'The Aldermen of Norwich', pp. 61-2.

namely at the level of alderman and mayor.[56]

As Table 2:3 above demonstrates, well over half (61%) of the men who reached the post of mayor were merchants by occupation. Additionally, a further three men, Robert Johnson (mayor 1496), William Lambe (mayor 1475) and Richard Thorneton (mayor 1502) were involved in inland or overseas shipping, although they were not formally designated as merchants by occupation.[57] William Hoskins has argued that occupations which were deemed suitable for officials at certain levels of the civic hierarchy were considered unsuitable or unfitting for the honour and dignity of the highest posts.[58] This may well have been the case in late-medieval York. As David Palliser has shown, there does exist a small amount of documentary evidence for such exclusion taking place in York.[59] The first example concerns the innkeeper, John Petty. Upon his election to the post of alderman in 1504 Petty was ordered to "Leve his kepyng of hostery and take downe his signe".[60] What is striking about this example is that although the civic élite appear to have objected to Petty's occupation this did not prevent him from becoming elected: it was the occupation rather than the man that was deemed unsuitable. Petty's case is not unusual as innkeepers were also barred from certain offices in other towns.[61] Indeed, the universality of this exclusion is perhaps best indicated by the fact that the town records of medieval Romney specifically state that innkeepers could hold town posts.[62] This was not a blanket ban,

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[56] See Frost, 'The Aldermen of Norwich', p. 41.

[57] Appendix 1. The addition of these three men would take the percentage of men who reached the post of mayor who practiced mercantile occupations to 66%.

[58] W.G. Hoskins, *The Age of Plunder: King Henry's England, 1500-1547* (Longman: London, 1976), p. 100.

[59] Palliser, *Tudor York*, p. 107.

[60] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 3: 9-10.

[61] Kermode, 'Urban Decline, pp. 193-4; Hudson and Tingey (eds.), *Records of the City of Norwich*, 1: 98.

[62] A.S. Green, *Town Life in the Fifteenth Century* (Macmillan: London, 1894), p. 404.

though. In York the civic offices below that of mayor or alderman do not seem to have

been affected. For example, besides John Petty another innkeeper, John Ellis, was admitted

to the post of sheriff without any fuss during the period 1476 to 1525.[63] Furthermore, as

David Palliser has noted, restrictions on the admittance to the aldermanic circle of men

whose occupation was hostelry lessened over the course of the sixteenth century.[64]

Why was innkeeping singled out in this way? One explanation relates to the notion

that inns and ale houses frequently played a seditious role in urban unrest during this period

both in York and elsewhere.[65] Naturally, from the corporate point of view, the civic élite

would be anxious not to compromise its authority by being in any way associated with such

conventicles. Indeed, Marjory McIntosh has argued that the second half of the fifteenth

century witnessed increasing attempts to control and police "bad rule or governance" which,

she suggests, challenged the social order.[66] In particular, McIntosh argues that this period

witnessed the extension of blame to "those who permitted or promoted misbehaviour",

including keepers of disorderly inns and alehouses. Such houses were associated not only

with drunkenness, but also with gaming, prostitution, and vagabondage.[67] Taverns were

also criticized during this period for causing idleness, indulgence and crime.[68] A second

explanation relates to the negative moral connotations that were associated with drink. For

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[63] John Petty was elected to the post of sheriff in 1494 and John Ellis in 1503.

[64] Palliser, *Tudor York*, p. 107.

[65] See for example, L.C. Attreed (ed.), *The York House Books 1461-1490* (Alan Sutton Publishing: Stroud, 1991), pp. 311, 394-5, 540-2, 643 & 707; P. Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History* (Longman: London, 1983), pp. 145, 157-9.

[66] M. McIntosh, 'Finding Language for Misconduct', in B. Hanawalt and D. Wallace (eds.), *Bodies and Disciplines: Intersections of Literature and History in Fifteenth-Century England*, Medieval Cultures 9 (1996), pp. 97-102.

[67] *Ibid.*, pp. 97 & 99. See also M.K. McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior in England 1370-1600*, Cambridge Studies in Population, Economy and Society in Past Time 34 (1998), pp. 74-8.

[68] Clark, *The English Alehouse*, p. 12.

example, numerous 'courtesy texts' of this period warned against excessive drinking or

drunkenness and one cautioned "Be waar of vsinge of þe tauerne/ And als þe dijs y þee

forbede".[69] Indeed, London's *Liber Custumarum* includes advice to mayors to keep

themselves from drunkenness.[70] Finally, it is also possible that the principal problem with

the occupation of innkeeper (as opposed to the occupation of vintner) was that it entailed

the retail rather than the distributive trade of victuals. The medieval period witnessed

intense scrutiny of the sale of victuals in York, with the civic officials closely regulating the

price, weight and conditions of sale for all victuals sold in the city.[71] One of the most

contested of these areas was the city's bi-annual assizes of wine, bread and ale, according

to which the prices of these goods were fixed by a jury selected by the civic élite.[72] Given

this situation it is possible that the civic government of later-medieval York would have felt

there was a potential conflict of interests with regard to the regulation of the retail price of

Petty's goods.

While no other written evidence exists to suggest that victuallers were excluded from

the highest ranks of civic office in York during the late-medieval period, such evidence

certainly does exist for other towns. For example, Thrupp notes that in London even "the

subordinate officers ... were under oath to ... abstain, as mayor, sheriffs and alderman were

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[69] F.J. Furnival (ed.), *The Babees Book*, Early English Text Society, original series 32 (1868), p. 50, lines 59-60 (on drunkenness see also pp. 11& 17). For a comprehensive overview and discussion of this genre see J. Nicholls, *The Matter of Courtesy: Medieval Courtesy Books and the Gawain-Poet* (D.S. Brewer: Woodbridge, 1985).

[70] H.T. Riley (ed.), *Munimenta Gildhallae Londoniensis: Liber Albus, Liber Custumarum et Liber Horn*, 3 volumes, Rolls Series 12 (1859-1862), 1:22.

[71] Sellers (ed.), *York Memorandum Book, part I*, pp. lxv, lxvi-lxviii, 12-19 & 45-6; Sellers (ed.), *York Memorandum Book, part II*, pp. 13, 72-3. For a summary of the control of markets and the retail sale of victuals in York, see Miller, 'Medieval York', pp. 97-100.

[72] Sellers (ed.), *York Memorandum Book, part I*, p. xxii-lxv, 39, 142, 172-3; Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 2: 85-6, 121; 3: 109, 117-8, 135.

also bound to do, from any retail trade in victuals on their own account".[73] Similarly, the

1318-19 statute of York forbade victuallers from trading in wine or food whilst holding any

office of assize.[74] So, does the prosopographic evidence suggest that victuallers of other

occupations were likewise excluded from the highest civic office in York? It is certainly true

that only four victuallers reached the office of mayor during the period 1476-1525, all of

whom were grocers or spicers, occupations often classed as being quasi-mercantile.

Moreover, several other victuallers failed to reach the post of mayor despite their great

wealth.[75] The most striking example of this type is that of the fishmonger, John Roger.

According to the lay subsidy of 1524 Roger was assessed on goods to the equivalent value

of nearly £200, which was almost double the value of the goods of the next most wealthy

civic official.[76] However, it should be noted that no examples can be found of victuallers

whose assessed wealth in 1524 was equal to or above that of the average assessed wealth

of mayors of the period, and who also lived long enough for them to have been reasonably

expected to have reached the post.[77]

The only other explicit example of prejudice against certain occupations concerns not

a victualler but a tailor. Thomas Bankehouse, a tailor, was elected to the council of

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[73] Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p. 95. One of the reasons for this ban was that officials were expected to control the price of victuals. For the wider context of political conflict in medieval London between victualers and non-victualers and disputes over trading rights see Nightingale, 'Capitalists, Crafts and Constitutional Change', pp. 1-35; R. Bird, *Turbulent London of Richard II* (Longmans: London 1949).

[74] Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p. 25.

[75] According to the lay subsidy of 1524 the average assessed value of the goods of men who held the post of mayor was £23. Three victualers were assessed on wealth over this level: Robert Turner (sheriff in 1525), John Roger (sheriff in 1524) and Thomas Toone (chamberlain in 1519), all of whom failed to reach the post of Mayor. See E. Peacock (ed.), 'Subsidy Roll for York and Ainsty', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 4 (1877): pp. 173, 177 & 183.

[76] Peacock (ed.), 'Subsidy Roll for York and Ainsty', p. 177.

[77] John Roger died 8 years after he had held the post of sheriff. Since the average amount of time between holding the post of sheriff and becoming mayor was 9 years, it could be argued that Roger's failure to become mayor was due to his death rather than his occupation. Thomas Toone died before he could even reach the post of sheriff, while Robert Turner's date of death is not know; see Appendix 1.

aldermen in 1511. Upon his election the House Books note that "it was graunted þt he might occupie and wyrke by his servante þe taillercraft by the space of ij yeres next ensuying.....and from then ... he nor no servant of his within his house to occupie the same craft upon payne of xli. for every yere that he occupie the said Taillor craft...".[78] This extract reflects the sentiments expressed in the London ordinance cited above that while certain occupations were sometimes excluded from the highest offices, this rule could occasionally be circumvented by allowing the officer's servant to trade or practise on his behalf. As with Petty, it was the occupation rather than the man that was objected to.

What was probably at issue in the case of Bankehouse was that he should not be seen to be actively engaged in a manufacturing occupation or in menial labour.[79] This might suggest that what we are witnessing is not the desire to control or monopolise access to the highest offices, but an attempt to protect the perceived status of the higher officials. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore fully the relative status of different trades and occupations.[80] However, two points can be made concerning this issue. The first is that the fifteenth century witnessed a pejorative attitude towards those who worked with their hands. Indeed, fifteenth-century continental writers divided the commons into two distinct estates: those who practised trade and those who laboured.[81] Furthermore, Sylvia Thrupp has demonstrated the stigma attached to manual labour in medieval England: Nicholas Upton, the early fifteenth-century cannon of Salisbury and Wells, was not alone in referring to all

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[78] York, York City Archives, House Book 9, fol. 57r.

[79] Although Bankhouse entered the freedom of York as a tailor he is later referred to as a draper, indicating that he was concerned with the distribution and retail of textiles as well as their manufacture. It was presumably the later aspect of his business that caused concern among the civic élite. See the sixteenth-century Norwich ordinance which ended the city's policy of banning cordwainers from the higher civic offices; Hudson and Tingey (eds.), *Norwich Civic Records* 2: 135.

[80] Indeed, attitudes towards different occupations and the ideological context for these attitudes is an area which deserves further research.

[81] Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p. 292.

occupations involving manual labour or menial service as 'vile'.[82] However, the evidence concerning attitudes in late-medieval York towards the indignity of manual labour is not so straightforward. Although Bankehouse was not permitted to practise the craft of tailor while in office, there exist no other examples of artisans who reached the post of mayor during this period who were similarly required to change their occupations. This is despite the fact that it is possible to identify seventeen other artisan mayors.[83] Included in this number were four dyers, four goldsmiths, two tanners, a carver and a glove maker.[84] Although ten of these seventeen were members of the Mercers' Guild, which possibly indicates that they also had trading interests, the remaining seven were not members. Further the evidence suggests that only two of these men were engaged in inland or overseas shipping.[85] Indeed, there is no evidence suggesting that these men were involved in mercantile activities. Furthermore, the carver Thomas Drawsherd was admitted to the company on the condition that he remade the company's pageant wagon and the props for the Corpus Christi plays.[86]

In the case of late-medieval York it could not even be argued that a distinction was made between clean and unclean trades on the basis of the nature of the work. It has already been mentioned that three of the artisans who held civic office as mayor were leather workers. As the civic records demonstrate, with the exception of butchery, tanning was one

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[82] Cited in *ibid.*, p. 305-6.

[83] Excluded from these 17 is John Petty and other men besides Thomas Bankhouse who fall into the tailor/ draper category.

[84] The dyers Henry Dayson, John Newton, Michael White and William White, were mayors in 1531, 1483,1494 & 1505, and 1491 & 1505 respectively; the goldsmiths George Gayle, Thomas Gray, Randolph Pulleyn and William Wilson were mayors in 1534, 1497, 1537 and 1504; the tanners John Hall and John North were mayors in 1516 and 1538; the carver Thomas Drawsherd was mayor in 1515 & 1523; and Thomas Mason the glover was mayor in 1528. See Appendix 1.

[85] Appendix 1. The two men engaged in shipping activities were the spicer/ grocer Robert Johnson (mayor 1496) and the grocer/ spicer Richard Thorneton (mayor, 1502). I am grateful to Louise Wheatley for this information.

[86] Wheatley, 'The York Mercers' Guild', appendix p. 251.

of the most antisocial of the trades in terms of its smell and its waste products.[87]

While merchants were more likely to become mayor than men of other occupations, there is little evidence from York to suggest an overt prejudice against manufacturing occupations *per se* during this period.[88] However, what was perhaps more of an issue was the relative status of the different crafts. On this point it is useful to turn to London evidence. As Alfred Beaven noted when writing on the history of the aldermen of London during the medieval period: "it was understood, though I have not found any express enactment or ordinance to that effect, that an Alderman must necessarily belong to one of the greater Companies: hence the translation on election as Alderman from their parent inferior Companies, in some cases under extreme pressure...".[89] There are five such London examples recorded for the first third of the sixteenth century: John Warner, an armourer, was translated to the grocers; John Thurston, a broderer, was translated to the goldsmiths; Ralph Dodmer, a brewer, was translated to the Mercers; John Brown, a painter and stainer was translated to the Haberdashers; and Richard Choppyn, a tallow chandler, was translated to the grocers.[90] In other words, it seems to have been important that the aldermen and mayors of late-medieval London were seen to belong to one of the city's most powerful and wealthy trade groups.

Returning to York, it might be wondered whether similar patterns in craft members are discernible. Although occupations such as tanning might be viewed negatively because of the antisocial and dirty nature of this trade, the tanners were also one of the most wealthy

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[87] Sellers (ed.), *York Memorandum Book, part 1*, pp. xix, 14-16.

[88] This begs the question of whether attitudes towards labor might have changed substantially between the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries.

[89] A.B. Beaven, *The Aldermen of the City of London: temp. Henry III.- 1912* (Corporation of the City of London: London, 1913), 2: xlvi.

[90] *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 23, 25, 27. After the mid sixteenth century the practiced of translating aldermen appears to have ceased, although the practice persisted for mayors until the eighteenth century. *Ibid.*, p. xlvi.

occupational groups in late-medieval York.[91] Indeed, Heather Swanson has demonstrated

that by the first quarter of the sixteenth century, mercers and merchants were no longer

unquestionably the most wealthy occupational group in the city. She has shown that aside

from victuallers, the goldsmiths, tanners, dyers and glovers were among those crafts which

were increasingly challenging the economic dominance of the merchants.[92] It must be

presumed that any possible negative connotations which may have been associated with the

manufacturing element of such occupations were in some part ameliorated, if not by the

personal characteristics of the men in question, then by the social status and economic

power conferred by their great wealth.

To conclude this section on occupation, it would appear that there existed certain

occupational distinctions within the civic élite of later-medieval York. There is little

evidence to suggest any exclusionary closure of the civic élite in general on the grounds of

occupation: the civic élite of later-medieval York was open to men from a wide variety of

occupational backgrounds. However, the evidence does suggest exclusionary closure within

the highest civic posts. Men with mercantile occupations seem to have been favoured to the

exclusion of victuallers and the more lowly crafts, such as that of tailor. It seems possible

that such exclusion may have rested not on the basis of attitudes towards manufacturing

occupations, but on the relative status and wealth of the different craft groups.

Furthermore, the fact that some men elected to the highest posts were required to change

their trade to a trade that was more suitable, would seem to indicate that recruitment to

office was sufficiently flexible to allow factors such as positive personal characteristics or

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[91] Swanson 'Craftsmen and Industry', p. 433. Similarly, Andrew King has suggested that the appearance of dyers among the mayors of the city of Norwich during the second half of the fifteenth century was due to their economic ascendance. A. King, 'Merchant Class and Borough Finance in Later-Medieval Norwich, PhD thesis, department of History, University of Oxford (1989), p. 234.

[92] Swanson, *Craftsmen and Industry*, pp. 415-33.

connections to override or to outweigh other basic occupational considerations.

At the beginning of this Part a distinction was made between collectivist and individualist exclusion, the distinction being dependent on whether the attribute in question was a personally acquired characteristic or not.[93] This issue is clearly pertinent here since it holds profound implications for the perpetuation of élites. It could be argued that in some cultures, occupation should be seen not as a personally acquired characteristic but more as a 'generalized attribute', since there exists little room for occupational mobility even between generations. To a certain extent this was the case for later-medieval York. It was common for merchant's sons to go on to become merchants themselves, as is shown by the fact that in sixteenth-century York only 21% of aldermens' sons failed to follow their father's trade.[94] In this sense, through a favouring of those with mercantile occupations, the innermost circle of the civic élite of York can be said to have safeguarded the privileges of the city's highest civic offices for subsequent generations of their own families. However, even this top section of the civic élite of York was not quite as closed as such evidence might at first suggest. David Palliser has demonstrated that throughout the late-medieval period the percentage of all freemen following their father's occupation was steadily decreasing, so that by the period 1500 to 1530 only 35% of all freemen followed their father's trade.[95] Furthermore, it was not uncommon for men to change occupations within their own lifetime. For example, there exist numerous examples of successful artisans expanding into a retail or distributive trade associated with their former occupation.[96] While

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[93] See above pp. 47-8.

[94] Palliser, 'York in the Sixteenth Century', p. 179.

[95] *Ibid.*, p. 289. See also Heather Swanson who distinguishes between the different crafts in this respect: Swanson, 'Craftsmen and Industry', pp. 449-53.

[96] Perhaps the best form of evidence for this in medieval York are examples of men who entered the franchise as tailors and who at a later date are denoted as drapers. See for example Thomas Bankhouse, Bertram Dawson, John Lister and Thomas Parker; Appendix 1. There is also evidence that men with other artisan occupations also

it was not common, upward occupational mobility was evident in later-medieval York, although Swanson has concluded that this was most easily achieved over two generations, with the placing of a successful craftsman's son as an apprentice to a merchant.[97] Indeed, several men of merchant status who went on to hold the highest civic offices in York were the sons of fathers who practised a craft.[98] In conclusion, the occupational exclusion evident in the highest posts of civic office in later-medieval York must be viewed as having been primarily individualist: although the ideological *status quo* was preserved, there clearly remained room for social mobility albeit on a restricted scale.

V) Wealth

The comparatively high proportion of merchants serving as civic officials throughout the medieval period might be explained in terms of their relative wealth, rather than in terms of any deliberate exclusion of craftsmen from civic office by merchants eager only to admit their own. Clearly, this conclusion has been reached by historians of some other towns. In the case of Wells, David Shaw has argued that there was "no overwhelming bias against any craft *per se*, no custom that only merchants could rule... merchants and gentlemen were simply the most successful, the richest men in a system that rewarded wealth with socio-political recognition".[99]

It is possible that a similar case could be made for later-medieval York.

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expanded into distributive trade as is demonstrated in the Mercers account rolls. See for example, William Huby, a horner, for whom there is evidence of shipping activity; Wheatley, 'The York Mercers' Guild', appendix p. 262.

[97] Swanson, 'Craftsmen and Industry', p. 453.

[98] For example, the merchant John Hoggeson (mayor 1533) was probably the son of Thomas Hoggeson, a glover and innholder; the draper Henry Holme (sheriff 1519) was the son of the hosier John Holme; the merchant Thomas Jameson (mayor 1504) was the son of the yeoman William Jameson; and the merchant John Norman (sheriff in 1490) was the son of the chapman John Norman of Malton; Appendix 2.

[99] Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, pp. 165-7. For identical conclusions see Dyer, *Worcester in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 225.

Unfortunately, however, the period 1476 to 1525 saw only one assessment of wealth in York: the lay subsidy of 1524. This means that it is not possible to assess with any high degree of accuracy the wealth of the men who held civic office during the beginning and middle portions of the period under review.[100] Nevertheless, the subsidy can be used to assess the wealth of those who held office during the latter period. The tables below, which are derived from Appendix 1, summarise the results of prosopographic research on the wealth and dates of death of the men who held civic office between 1476 and 1525.[101] Of the 315 men who were civic officials at some point between 1476 and 1525, only 73 men are known to have been alive at the time of the subsidy. However, two of these men no longer lived in York.[102] The assessed wealth of the remaining 71 men who are known to have both been alive and living in York at the time of the subsidy is summarised in the first table below. This table also shows David Palliser's breakdown of the percentage of tax-payers in each tax bracket.[103]

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[100] Wills or inventories have been used by historians as an indicator of wealth. However, not enough inventories survive to be used in this instance, while the reliability of wills as an indicator of individual wealth remains questionable. See Swanson, 'Craftsmen and Industry', p. 414.

[101] Information concerning the assessed wealth, and the dates of death of the men who were civic officials in York during the period 1476 and 1525 is given in Appendix 1. Information on dates of death was largely garnered from: York, Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, Probate Registers of the Exchequer and Prerogative Court of the Archbishop, regs. 3, 5-11, 13-14; York Consistory Court Act Books AB 2 & 4; York Minster Archives, Dean and Chapter Probate Registers 1-3. The source used for the assessed wealth of the civic officials was Peacock (ed.), 'Subsidy Roll for York and Ainsty', pp. 170-220.

[102] John Langton (sheriff 1509), a draper, had moved to Hull and had subsequently become Mayor of that town, while John Robynson (bridge master 1511), a clerk, had moved to Malton.

[103] This division of tax-payers into different groups is a modern construct that has been imposed on the evidence, and which is used here as a convenient mechanism for summarising findings. Some of the men's goods were valued in marks and for the purposes of comparison all values have been converted into pounds at a rate of 0.66 marks to the pound.

Table 2:4
Breakdown of Assessed Wealth of Civic Officials from the Period 1476-1525 Who Were Alive and in York during the 1524 Lay Subsidy

Assessment	No. of men	As % of Civic Officials Alive at Time of Subsidy	% of all Tax-payers in Each Tax Bracket
Wage Earners	0	0	37.8
Under £10 in Goods	5	7	40.3
£10-£19 in Goods	23	32	9.5
£20-£100 in Goods	39	55	6.7
Over £100 in Goods	1	1	0.3
Income from land	1	1	2.3
Unstated	0	0	3.1
Not Assessed	2	3	NA
Total	**71**	**99***	**100**

*Totals do not always equal 100% due to rounding error.

Sources: Appendix 1; Peacock (ed.), 'Subsidy Roll for York and Ainsty', pp. 170-220; Palliser, *Tudor York*, p. 136.

Table 2:4 above demonstrates that most of the men who held civic office between 1476 and 1525 and who can be shown to have been alive at the time of the 1524 subsidy were men of substantial wealth. The subsidy records indicate that over half (55%) of the 71 men analysed were assessed on goods between the value of £20 and £100, while a further third (32%) of these men were assessed on goods between the value of £10 and £19. When these figures are compared with the breakdown of the percentage of all tax-payers in each category, it becomes quite clear that in many cases the civic officials who were assessed in the 1524 subsidy were on average substantially better off than the majority of other York tax-payers.[104] Clearly, these findings pertain to wealth amassed over the course of a lifetime rather than to wealth at the time of an officials election to civic office. Nonetheless, few

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[104] However, there is evidence to indicate a wealth élite in York in 1524 which was distinct from the civic élite. Only 15 men were assessed in 1524 as owning goods or land equal to or greater than the value of £40. Of these 15 men 5 never held civic office in York. Indeed, David Palliser notes that whereas by the latter part of the sixteenth century the richest citizens of York were almost all aldermen, in 1524 most of the most wealthy men were not aldermen of the city: Palliser, 'York in the Sixteenth Century', p. 240.

among the civic population could ever hope to attain such levels of wealth. What the

prosopographic evidence seems to suggest is that wealth was normally a pre-requisite for

holding civic office in the early-sixteenth century.

Further, evidence seems to suggest that there existed a relationship between levels of

wealth and opportunities for promotion up the cursus honorum. Table 2:5 below combines

the prosopographic research concerning the political careers of the men who held civic

office between 1476 and 1525, with information garnered from the lay subsidy of 1524. It

shows the average wealth of the men who held civic office during the period 1476 to 1525

according to the highest office they reached.

Table 2:5
Average Level of Assessed Wealth of Civic Officials from the Period 1476-1525 Who Were Alive and in
York During the 1524 Lay Subsidy by Highest Civic Office Attained[105]

Highest Civic Office Attained During Lifetime	Average Assessed Value of Goods (to the nearest £)
Bridge master	13
Chamberlain	16
Sheriff	28
Mayor	23

Sources: Appendix 1; Peacock (ed.), 'Subsidy Roll for York and Ainsty', pp. 170-220.

Table 2:5 demonstrates that a clear correlation existed between levels of wealth and

the highest civic office attained. However, this relationship appears to break down at the

level of sheriff. The average assessed value of goods of those who held the posts of sheriff

and mayor during this period was £28 and £23 respectively. Men who reached the posts of

sheriff and mayor were therefore substantially better off in terms of their assessed wealth

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[105] These figures exclude the two bridge masters who were not assessed and also John Roger the sheriff who was
assessed on goods valued at £198. The effect of including these anomalous examples would have heavily skewed
the average. It would not, however, have affected the conclusions to be drawn from this table.

than men who only ever reached the posts of bridge master or chamberlain. However, on average, the assessed wealth of the men who only ever reached the post of sheriff was greater than that of men who reached the highest post of mayor. One possible explanation for this phenomenon is that at the level of the mayoralty the civic élite were more concerned to choose men on the grounds of personality, occupation or social connections, than they were simply to choose men on a criterion of greatest wealth. Additionally, it may also be pertinent to note that the post of sheriff seems to have required a higher level of expenditure than that of mayor, as it involved the payment of the city's farm.[106]

It has already been shown from prosopographic and documentary evidence that recruitment to civic office in York was biased in favour of men with mercantile occupations. This finding is further confirmed if we look in more detail at the nineteen men who were assessed in 1524 on goods valued at greater than £23.[107] This information is summarised in table 2:6 below.

Table 2:6
Men Who Held Civic Office 1476 -1525 Who Were Assessed In the 1524 Lay Subsidy on Goods Over the Value of £23: By Occupational Group

Occupational Group	Number of Men	Of Whom were Mayors	% of Occupational Group Who Were Mayors
Mercantile	9	5	56
Non-Mercantile	10	2	20
Total	**19**	**7**	**37**

Sources: Appendix 1; Peacock (ed.), 'Subsidy Roll for York and Ainsty', pp. 170-220.

Table 2:6 demonstrates, only 20% of the men with non-mercantile occupations who were assessed on goods valued at over £23 in the 1524 lay subsidy reached the post of

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[106] YCA, House Book 9, fol. 60v.

[107] This being the average assessed value of the goods of men who were mayor.

mayor as compared to 56% of merchants with goods valued at a similar level. This would

clearly suggest that occupation was a more important factor than wealth in the choice of

mayor.

At the beginning of this statistical section on the relative importance of wealth and

occupation for civic office it was argued that the prosopographical evidence suggests an

exclusionary closure of the civic élite in general on the grounds of wealth. These findings

are supported by evidence of regulations and discourses of wealth contained in York's

House Books. For example, it was agreed in 1496 that men who had borne the office of

chamberlain were to be excused from the post of sheriff for the following six years. If any

former chamberlain was called to the post of sheriff before six years had elapsed from

vacating office he was not admitted to the office if he came and swore "þat he is not able

in havour of goods, þt is to said to þe value of CCli to bere and occupie þe said rome and

office of shereffwyke".[108] This amount was later reduced to £100, and indeed in 1511 we

are told that Roger Gegges came before the council pleading that "he was not able to

consent and pay the kyngs farme and bere the other charges of this citie for the said tyme

and þt upon made his othe and swore on the holy Evangeliste that he was not of goode to

the value of Cli".[109]

In part, such concern over the wealth of office holders was undoubtedly driven by

practical motivations. The burden of bearing office was great in terms of both time and

money spent. Financial deficits were expected to be met from the official's own purse. The

sheriffs were expected to provide an annual feast for the rest of the senior council,

meanwhile, the House Books show that members of the councils of twelve and twenty-four

were occasionally expected to contribute to *ad hoc* levies to cover costs such as "þe

[108] YCA, House Book 7, fol. 142r.

[109] YCA, House Book 9, fol. 60v.

clensyng of þe dikes".[110] Indeed, this period witnesses numerous examples of men pleading

to be excluded from holding civic office on the grounds that they could not afford to do so.

For example, it was agreed in 1478 that "Brian Conyers shalnot be called to the office of

shirefwyk within this cite of Yorke within the space of viij yeris, olesse than he be the grace

of God within the said viij yeres may growe in gudes and ryches to have the said office, than

he to be exlect and accepte to the same office".[111] Similarly, in 1492, Roger Breer was

found to be unable to occupy the office of chamberlain because he was "not sufficient and

no able in havour of goods".[112] Likewise, it is recorded that in 1509 the fishmonger John

Roger was granted an exemption from holding the post of sheriff on the grounds that he was

a "smal person and not of sufficiaunt statur to occupy the sayd office...".[113]

However it needs to be asked to what extent the exclusion of less wealthy men from

civic office may have been sanctioned on ideological grounds as much as practical grounds?

In particular, could it have been that wealth was viewed as befitting the dignity or honour

of civic offices partly due to the status that wealth conferred? This implication was certainly

present in the slandering of John Tonge, mayor of York in 1479, by the parson of the church

of St. Peter the Little. It is reported that the parson suggested Tonge was "not able to be

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[110] YCA, House Book 7, fols. 37r-v. The ideological importance of such collections are explored in the next chapter.

[111] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 137; Indeed, the number of chamberlains elected each year increased from three to four in 1484, and then again to six in 1487 in response to the increasing financial burdens of the post; YCA, D1, fols. 207r & 211r. Jenny Kermode has argued that the corporation of York cynically elected men to the higher civic post in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries when they knew they could not afford to hold civic office and then fined them as a means of increasing civic revenue during a time of financial crisis. Kermode, 'Urban Decline', *passim*. This is discussed in greater depth below, see pp. 220-221.

[112] House Book 7, fol. 55v.

[113] YCA, House Book 9, fol. 50. A statement that is particularly ironic given that by the lay subsidy of 1524 John Roger was by far the most wealthy of the civic officials, his goods being valued at almost twice the value of the next most wealthy officer; Peacock (ed.), 'Subsidy Roll for York and Ainsty' p. 177.

mare of the wirshupfull cite and bad fye uppon hym for he was bot a begger".[114] Similarly, the association between wealth, rank and the desirability of these qualities for civic office is also evident in the description of the men chosen to act on a land inquisition in 1522. These men were to be the "fowre worthiest parisshonours of state, degree and substaunce", in other words, men of suitable social standing and wealth.[115]

Arguably, status was not the only quality thought to have been conferred by great wealth. For example, in 1494, Alan Stavely was exempted from the office of chamberlain for such time until he was "able & sufficient" in terms of "Reson & discrecion &... of his gudes".[116] Here the civic officials seem to have perceived a correlation between Stavely's lack of wealth and his personal characteristics. Susan Reynolds has argued that "the richest and most established burgesses or citizens of a town... were perceived as the most solid, respectable and responsible members".[117] Certainly some medieval political commentators advocated rule by the wealthy, as is most famously exemplified in Brunetto Latini's twelve requirements for a good governor which were copied into London's *Liber Custumarum*. In his prescriptions Latini suggests that a ruler should be rich and powerful because then with the other virtues he should possess he will be less likely to be tempted towards corruption.[118]

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[114] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 207. While 'beggar' had developed into a general term of abuse by the sixteenth century, it appears to have been used as an alternative to rascal or knave, which would not be relevant in this context, or, more pertinently, to identify someone of the lowest social class. H. Kurath, S.M. Kuhn and R.S. Lewis (eds.), *Middle English Dictionary* (University of Michigan Press: Michigan, 1956) begger(e, n., 4; G. Hughes, *Swearing: A Social History of Foul Language, Oaths and Profanity in English* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1991), p. 52.

[115] YCA, House Book 10, fol. 39r. See S.H. Rigby, *Medieval Grimsby: Growth and Decline* (University of Hull Press: Hull, 1993), pp. 131-2; Kurath, Kuhn and Lewis (eds.), *Middle English Dictionary*, stat, n., 2(b) ; degre, n., 4(a-c), 6(a) & 8; substaunce, n., 5(a).

[116] House Book 7, fol. 109r.

[117] Reynolds, 'Medieval Urban History', p. 15.

[118] Brunetto Latini, *Li Livres dou Tresor*, trans. P. Barrette and S. Baldwin, The Garland Library of Medieval Literature, series B 90 (1993), p. 354. See also "Soit riches et manamis" in Riley (ed.), *Munimenta Gildhallae*

Nevertheless, the relationship between wealth and the right to rule was not as straightforward or as uncontested as Reynolds and other historians have sometimes suggested. Quentin Skinner has demonstrated that many of the early Continental rhetorical writers, Latini included, were deeply suspicious of individual wealth. These writers argued that the pursuit of riches resulted in the degeneration of virtue and political factiousness, and that ultimately wealth was the enemy of strong and stable civic government.[119] Indeed Latini's pupil, Dante, is careful to divorce wealth from virtue or nobility (which, Latini argues, qualifies a man for leadership), concluding that "wherever virtue is there is nobleness".[120] Skinner notes that "the radical outcome of this argument is thus the suggestion that the quality of nobility... is taken as a purely personal property, an individual attainment rather than the possession of families which happen to be ancient or rich".[121]

It seems then that political commentators were qualified in the espousal of wealth as a desirable prerequisite for leadership. Wealth was often placed below personal virtues in importance, and these personal virtues were in turn often seen to be independent of wealth. Thus while the *Liber Custumarum* advocated rule by the wealthy, this was on the condition that the men in question also possessed other virtues. Indeed, Latini is careful to note that a good poor man makes a better ruler than a bad rich one.[122] Such sentiments are clearly reflected in the civic writing of late-medieval York. While wealth was a desirable quality,

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Londoniensis, 2: 18.

[119] Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols. (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1978), 1: 42-4. However, see the views of scholastic writers, in particular Bartolus of Saxoferrato, who suggested that wealth "tends to promote virtue." *Ibid.*, p. 56. In a wider context the medieval period also witnessed debate over a perceived conflict between wealth and salvation: see for example, *Dives and Pauper*. Here Dives is advised that one means by which he can be both wealthy and ensure salvation is by keeping God's commandments. P.H. Barnum (ed.), *Dives and Pauper*, Early English Text Society, original series 275 & 280 (1976-1980).

[120] Skinner, *Foundations of Political Thought*, p. 46.

[121] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

[122] Latini, *Li Livres dou Tresor*, p. 354.

wealth in the absence of other qualities was not sufficient. As the next section will argue, an equal stress was placed on more personal characteristics, and is also true in civic writing of other medieval towns. For example, it has been argued that the right of the wealthy to rule is reflected in a letter from the king to the citizens of Lincoln in 1438, which has been translated and published by Francis Hill. In this letter the king stated that the city is best governed by the "more worthy, more powerful, more good, and true, more influential and more sufficient and more befitting to occupy and exercise the office of mayor and sheriffs therein".[123] Here straightforward terms of wealth are absent, instead the importance of both wealth and virtue is stressed. Similar sentiments were yet more clearly stated by the élite of medieval Wells, who commanded that in order to be elected to the Mastership of the city a man was to be *"bonis temporalis, bonis moribus"*; in other words, civic leaders were expected not only to be wealthy but to possess both money and morality.[124] In fact, Beaven has noted that from as early as the thirteenth century, the aldermen of London were required to be chosen by the "wealthier and wiser men from each ward", while men suitable to be chosen were described in 1397 as "reputable and discreet men, either of whom in morals and worldly goods should be fit to be a judge and an Alderman of the City".[125]

While below the level of mayor there is little evidence for exclusionary closure on the grounds of occupation within York's civic élite, exclusionary closure on the grounds of wealth is evident at all levels of the civic hierarchy. However, occupation appears to have been a more important issue than wealth at the level of the mayoralty. As with occupation, exclusionary closure on the grounds of wealth must primarily be viewed as being what has

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[123] Hill, *Medieval Lincoln*, p. 278.

[124] Cited in Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, p.188.

[125] As translated and cited in Beaven, *The Aldermen of London*, pp. xxiv, xlvii & xix-xx.

been termed as 'individualist exclusion'. Obviously, wealthy parentage would have been advantageous for a rising civic official in the late-medieval period. The benefits of wealthy parentage were not simply in terms of financial or material legacies, but were also manifested in terms of a ready-formed network of advantageous business contacts. Nevertheless, there are plenty of examples of men who either gained great wealth from humble beginnings or who experienced downward social mobility after a promising start in life. Indeed, failing business fortunes were not the only factor which served to accentuate fluidity within the civic élite. Historians of both London and York have demonstrated the consistent failure of successful families to survive in the male line more than a couple of generations.[126] As a result, social mobility was not only possible, it was also vital for the perpetuation of the élite.

The evidence that we have looked at so far concerning occupational and wealth restrictions on access to the civic élite suggests that in as far as social closure existed in late-medieval York (and it has been suggested that it was less evident than has sometimes been argued), it was achieved largely through a process of the nomination of suitable replacements. In turn this nomination process was controlled by the prevailing ideologies concerning the relationship of occupation and wealth to civic government. Thus the social closure evident within the civic élite of later-medieval York can be understood in two subtly different ways depending on how one defines ideology. Traditionally, the term 'ideology' has tended to be used in a pejorative sense to express "the interests of the dominant class in the sense that the ideas which compose ideology are ideas which...articulate the ambitions, concerns and wishful deliberations of the dominant social group as they struggle

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[126] See Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 191-233; Palliser, 'York in the Sixteenth Century', pp. 175-178 & 257. The next chapter will argue that the élite of late-medieval York appears much more entrenched if one takes into account the perpetuation of a family through the female line.

to secure and maintain their position of domination".[127] However, it could be argued that

the social processes of the later-medieval city should be viewed in a less cynical light. More

recently the term has been 'neutralised' and ideology is now widely taken to refer to "a

system of thought and modes of experience which are conditioned by social experiences".[128]

It is in this sense that the social exclusion that is evident among the civic élite of later-

medieval York should be viewed. This is supported by the evidence concerning desirable

qualities of civic officials besides those of wealth and occupation. As has been argued

above, it appears that civic rulers were expected to be moral as well as rich. It could be

argued that this discourse merely reflects an attempt on the part of the élite to "assert the

moral superiority of the richer townsmen".[129] In part such an assertion is justified: the next

section will argue that morality and status are inter-dependant throughout the civic writing.

However, it will also be argued that such language should be placed, at least partly, within

the wider context of established discourses concerning governance.

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[127] J.B. Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture: Critical Social Theory in the Era of Mass Communication* (Polity Press: Oxford, 1990), pp. 37-8.

[128] *Ibid.*, p. 44.

[129] Hilton, *English and French Towns*, pp. 115-6.

B) Character

So far discussion in Part One has focussed on the importance of tangible qualities such as wealth and occupation for election to the civic élite of later-medieval York; these being the qualities which have attracted the attention of historians in the past. Very little consideration has been given by English urban historians to the personal qualities and characteristics deemed necessary or desirable in civic officials. In a large part this situation reflects the fact that prosopographical studies have dominated research on urban élites. An underlying assumption of such studies is that factors such as family ties or occupation are more important than personal characteristics in determining power structures or networks. This, combined with the historical intangibility of personality or character, has led to the virtual exclusion of such factors from consideration in the historiography of late-medieval civic government. A notable exception to this historiographical pattern is Shaw's work on medieval Wells.[130] Enlarging on the emphasis that Reynolds places on the ideological context of civic rule, Shaw's work has illustrated the importance of moral vocabularies and discourses which stressed the personal qualities found in and expected of civic officials. Similarly, in this section of the thesis I will argue that personal qualities and characteristics were important both for the gaining of access to the civic élite of later-medieval York, and for the creation or perpetuation of an ideology of civic authority.

My analysis of character differs from the preceding discussion of wealth and occupation in several important respects. Whereas the previous section was based largely on prosopographic sources, the main source of evidence here will be the language used in the civic writing of the period: in particular, in the York House Books (the majority of which are yet to be fully transcribed), the Memorandum Books and certain unpublished

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[130] Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, pp. 188-97.

folios of the Freemen's Register.[131] More importantly though, the methodology of this

approach is significantly different from that of the previous section. Rather than exploring

the actual qualities possessed by the civic officials of late-medieval York, this section instead

focuses on those qualities which were portrayed as being necessary or desirable for civic

office. In some instances it will be possible to compare image and reality in order to

determine the extent to which the civic élite of later-medieval York lived up to a portrayed

ideal. However, such cases will be the exception. On the whole, the recovery of personality

by the historian is not possible. It is precluded by the nature of the available evidence and

by the historical intangibility and subjectivity of personality.

In any case it is worth stressing in this context that the question of 'what' the civic

officials were like is far less interesting, or indeed relevant, than that of 'why' certain

personal characteristics were portrayed as being necessary for access to the civic élite. As

Paul Strohm has written, such ideal types "offer crucial testimony on....contemporary

perception, ideology, belief, and- above all- on the imaginative structures within

which...participants acted and assumed that their actions would be understood".[132]

Furthermore, it has been argued, by Ronald Weissman, that identity is constructed through

interaction.[133] Clearly then, the language used in sources such as the House Books could

be viewed as having served to construct the identity of the civic élite of later medieval York.

Indeed, as Richard Britnell has noted, texts such as civic records "stretched [authority] to

new limits" through "safeguarding boundaries by expanding the reach of memory on

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[131] For a discussion of the evolution of such records see: G. Martin, 'English Town Records, 1250-1350', in R. Britnell (ed.), *Pragmatic Literacy, East and West 1200-1330* (Boydell Press: Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 119-30.

[132] P. Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow: The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1992), p. 4 (see also pp. 3-9 for a fuller consideration of this matter).

[133] Weissman, 'Reconstructing Renaissance Sociology', pp. 39-46; R.F.E. Weissman, 'The Importance of Being Ambiguous: Social Relations, Individuals and Identities in Renaissance Florence', in Zimmerman and Weissman (eds.), pp. 269-280.

resources and procedures, by enabling closer supervision and discipline of officials, and by enhancing the status of those in command of the records".[134]

This section argues that explicit references to the qualities which a man ought to possess in order to be elected to certain posts (as seen in the language used in York's House and Memorandum books and the Freemen's Register), can be said to constitute a variety of discourses concerning good governance. These discourses in turn reflected the ideologies of the civic élite on governance and status. It is possible that such ideologies may have influenced the type of men who gained access to the civic élite. However, they also served both to construct the identity of the civic élite of later-medieval York and to legitimise the power of those in office.[135] That many of the discourses are in some way concerned with issues of morality is indicative of the fact that during this period morality was often indivisible from status.[136]

I) Discretion and Wisdom

The most immediately apparent discourse contained in the York House Books is the discourse of discretion. It is noticeable that the term 'discreet' is used frequently in texts emanating from the civic élite of York, especially in the context of the election of men to various of the civic posts. For example, upon the death of "þe Right honest and discret person Oliver Middilton", an aldermen of the city, there was elected in his place "þe Right

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[134] R. Britnell, 'Pragmatic Literacy in Latin Christendom', in Britnell (ed.), *Pragmatic Literacy*, pp. 3-4. For a wider discussion of these issues see pp. 3-14. See also M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307* (Edward Arnold: London, 1979), *passim*.

[135] This issue is explored in greater depth in the final chapter of the thesis.

[136] Throughout this section the two are viewed as mutually dependant. It could be argued that it is not possible to disentangle the two and examine which preceded which. Rather, the relationship between status and morality was symbiotic and ongoing.

honest and discret person Robert Symson".[137] Similarly, in March 1517, the House Books

record the election of "the right discreit and honest parsons, Paul Gylle and Simon Vycars

to be alderman".[138] Indeed, by the end of the fifteenth century the use of the word

'discreet', together with 'honest', had become the standard way of describing men who were

elected to the higher posts of civic office, and this phrase continued to be used throughout

the rest of the period in question.

Besides being used to refer to men who were elected to the aldermanship of the city,

the term 'discreet' was also used to describe men at other levels of the civic hierarchy. For

example, at the lowest level, "iiij of the moste connyng, discrete and able players" of the city

were required to go and check that the other of the city's waits were of a sufficient

standard.[139] A requirement of the officers of the mace and sword was that they should be

"able and discrete", as well being capable of riding a horse.[140] Similarly, it was not unusual

for the common clerks of the city to be recruited "discrete personne[s]".[141] The notion of

discernment is also reflected elsewhere in House Books. Following the death of the mayor

of York in 1505 the aldermen and council of the city were instructed to chose a new mayor

"after their discrecons".[142]

'Discreet' in Middle English meant wise, discerning or prudent.[143] Indeed, it and the

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[137] YCA, House Book 9, fol. 21v.

[138] *Ibid.*, fol. 9v.

[139] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 29.

[140] *Ibid.*, p. 353. See the records of York's Mercer's guild where, according to the guild's ordinances, the members were to choose leaders who were described in Middle English as being "most able and discrete persons". M. Sellers (ed.), *The York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers 1356-1917*, Surtees Society 129 (1918 for 1917), p. 75.

[141] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 75.

[142] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 3: 11.

[143] Kurath, Kuhn and Lewis (eds.), *Middle English Dictionary*, discret(e, adj., 1(a).

French term discré, or discret derive from Latin discretus, meaning prudent.[144] It is argued

here that it is in this sense that 'discreet' was used in York's civic writing, and that its usage

occurred as part of a wider discourse of wisdom. It should be noted at this juncture that

what was being conveyed was not an impression of philosophical wisdom, but rather the

qualities of wisdom, discernment or prudence associated with the administration of justice:

namely, the ability to listen to and to judge a case fairly and wisely.[145] At first sight this

understanding of the term might seem strange in the context of describing city waits.

However, if we look again at the context of this example, it becomes apparent that what is

being described here is not the musical ability of the four men in question *per se*, but their

ability to judge the standard of others. In other words, the civic élite was concerned that

these men should be discerning.[146]

In addition to the term 'discreet', the discourse of wisdom and judgement contained

in York's House Books also encompassed terms such as the Latin 'sapiens', the Anglo-

Norman 'sage' and the English 'wise'. For example, William Fairfax was described upon

his admittance to the post of recorder of York in 1490 as uttering "so many wise and goode

words".[147] Similarly, the French word 'sage' is briefly evident at the end of the fifteenth

century, although it was never used extensively. Thus, we are informed in 1491 that the

"sagez & discret homes John Stokdale, merchant & John Huton, potter" were elected to the

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[144] 'Discreet' came into English from Latin via Anglo-Norman French. Kurath, Kuhn and Lewis (eds.), *Middle English Dictionary*, discret(e, adj.; R.E. Latham (ed.), *Revised Medieval Latin Word-List From British and Irish Sources with Supplement* (Published for the British Academy by the Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1980), discret/io, pp. 149-50.

[145] The use of a language of justice in the House Books is discussed below.

[146] For examples of a similar use of discreet elsewhere, see Kurath, Kuhn and Lewis (eds.), *Middle English Dictionary*, discret(e, adj., 1(a); for example, "His reward ..may be put in discrecion and iugement of iiij or ij indeferent and discreet persones..therupon chosen to arbitre and deme", (1439) document in Collect. Topogr. 5:15.

[147] YCA, House Book 7, fol. 4r.

post of sheriff.[148]

A discourse of wisdom is also evident in other sources emanating from members of the civic élite of later-medieval York. For example, the lost sepulchral memorial of John Gilyot, mayor of York in 1464, and again in 1474, stated that he was a 'sapiens' and 'venerabilis' man who twice bore the burden of the honour of the mayoralty of the city.[149] Similarly, a discourse of wisdom is also evident in the records of the York Mercers' Guild. As part of the master's oath (copied into the records in 1495 in Middle English) an initiand had to swear to rule "right wisely and truly".[150] It could be argued that in this example the combination of 'wisely' and 'truly' (meaning fairly, or justly) again underlines the judicial context of the discourse.

While no explicit connection is made in the York records between age and wisdom, there is evidence to suggest that age or experience was viewed as a positive characteristic in civic officials. For example, in 1523, those responsible for naming the candidates for the post of sheriff were to be "the common counsaill & the eldest sersors...of (the)...crafts".[151] Furthermore, in 1519, Anthony Middleton was excused any further civic office for six years "for so muche as he is bot a yongman in age".[152] Thomas Hardsange was also excused from civic office in 1495 on the grounds that he was "nether able in havour off goods ne in discreccon or demeanour", while a year earlier Alan Stavely had been exempted from the office of sheriff until "he be able & sufficed as well in Reson & discrecon & as in havour of

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[148] *Ibid.*, fol. 48r. For an identical wording see also fol. 85v.

[149] C.M. Barnett, 'Memorials and Commemoration in the Parish Churches of Late-Medieval York' DPhil thesis, department of History, University of York (1997), pp. 257-8. This memorial and the issue of personal identity is more fully explored in the final part of this thesis.

[150] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

[151] YCA, House Book 9, fol. 70r.

[152] *Ibid.*, fol. 97r.

his gudes...to occupy & take uppon charge of the same".[153] Here we can see clearly the

conflation of wealth and worthiness that has been discussed above. However, Hardsang and

Stavely's alleged lack of reason, discretion and demeanour may well have been related to

their respective ages. It certainly seems probable that both men were relatively young. Alan

Stavely was promoted to the post of chamberlain just five years after being admitted to the

freedom of the city, whereas most men who skipped the post of bridge master took an

average of twelve years to reach this post.[154] Similarly, Thomas Hardsang also had a faster

than average promotion up the civic hierarchy. The relative youth of the two men is also

suggested by the fact that neither man seemed to have amassed much wealth at this point

in their careers. The wider context of this suggested attitude towards age is to be found in

medieval literary, philosophic and artistic depictions of life cycle.[155] Within such schema late

middle age or old age were often associated with the virtues of wisdom or prudence.[156]

Indeed, old age was sometimes referred to in relation to the virtue that it was supposed to

represent, namely 'siagesse', meaning sagacity or wisdom.[157] Furthermore, this wisdom was

often related to the ability to pass sound judgement.[158]

Unlike a term such as 'honest', the use of the terms 'sage', 'discreet' and 'wise' in

sources emanating from the civic élite of York seem to have been restricted almost entirely

to the civic officials of the city. Moreover, these terms were applied to the holders of the

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[153] YCA, House Book 7, fols. 109 & 138v.

[154] See Appendix 1.

[155] For a discussion of medieval attitudes towards life cycle, see J.A. Burrow, *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1986); E. Sears, *The Ages of Man: Medieval Interpretations of the Life Cycle* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1986); M. Dove, *The Perfect Age of a Man's Life* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1986).

[156] Sears, *The Ages of Man*, pp. 101-2, 116, 129 & 199 n.42; Dove, *The Perfect Age*, pp. 48, 53 & 92.

[157] Sears, *Medieval Interpretations of the Life Cycle*, p. 118.

[158] Dove, *The Perfect Age*, pp. 53 & 92.

highest offices of sheriff, mayor and alderman. It was suggested at the beginning of this section that the discourse of wisdom which runs throughout the House Books and other texts emanating from the civic élite of later-medieval York related not to philosophical wisdom but to the wisdom required for the sound administration of justice.

Interestingly, the House Books also see the use of other terms such as 'indifferent' and 'impartial' to describe mayors and other nominees chosen to act as arbitrators or to perform some other judicial function within the city. For example, in 1487, the commons were asked to name "ij indifferent auditours" to examine and audit the chamberlains' books.[159] The importance of impartiality among urban officials is also reflected in the wording of a letter to the king from the mercers of York, Hull, Beverley and other northern towns which states that: "governeres hath been fro tyme to tyme indifferently elect, the which governours full welle and indifferently hath occupied their said auctorities".[160] The Mercers go on to complain that John Pickering, the overseas governor of England's Mercers' Company, was a bad governor as he was prejudicial rather than impartial in his dealings with merchants of the north of England.

II) Context

This section has argued that a discourse of wisdom associated both with age and the administration of justice is evident within texts emanating from the civic élite of later-medieval York. The use of language within these discourses is by no means unique to York and needs to be placed within the wider context of contemporary ideologies concerning

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[159] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 566. See also pp. 114, 127, 258 & 405. 'Indifferent' meant impartial, fair or just during the medieval period. See Kurath, Kuhn and Lewis (eds.), *Middle English Dictionary*, indifferent, adj., (a).

[160] Sellers (ed.), *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, p. 75.

governance.[161] Terms such as 'discreet', 'sage', 'wise' and 'venerable' were all popular with

the civic élites of other towns. For example, the twenty-four of Coventry were described

in 1423 as "wyse men & discrett".[162] Similarly, throughout the late-medieval period the

aldermen of London and those who chose them were also required to be 'discreet'.[163]

Meanwhile, in 1437, the rulers of the city of Wells described previous burgesses as having

made "by theyre sage and wyse descrecons diverse convenyent ordinances".[164] That notions

concerning the importance of wisdom in civic leaders were circulating in the urban

administrative sphere from at least the early fourteenth century is also demonstrated by the

incorporation of Latini's requirements for a good ruler into London's *Liber Custumarum*.

Among these requirements the importance of wisdom in a leader is particularly stressed: the

ideal leader being described as 'sage'.[165] Latini also expresses the merits of age and

experience in relation to wisdom.[166] It should be noted, though, that the use of similar terms

is not evident in other texts local to York such as the Mystery Plays, a fact which perhaps

further emphasises the peculiarly governmental application of these terms.[167]

To what extent does this use of language overlap with aristocratic discourses? While

there seems little emphasis in chivalric literature on the importance of discretion and

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[161] No attempt will be made to uncover the provenance of the revealed discourse. Rather the intention is to illustrate the wider context for the circulation of such ideas.

[162] M.D. Harris (ed.), *The Coventry Leet Book or Mayor's Register*, Early English Text Society, original series 134-5 (1907-8), 1: 44.

[163] See, for example, *Ibid*, 1: xix & xx.

[164] As cited in Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, pp. 180-81. See also King, 'Merchant Class and Borough Finances in Later-Medieval Norwich', p. 242.

[165] Riley (ed.), *Munimenta Gildhallae Londoniensis*, 2: 17.

[166] Brunetto Latini, *Li Livres dou Tresor*, pp. 352-4.

[167] F. McSparran (ed.), "Corpus of Middle English Works: The York Plays", *Middle English Compendium*, Michigan University November 1997, <http://www.hti.umich.edu/dict/med/> (9/12/98).

wisdom, such ideals were clearly circulating at the parliamentary and royal level.[168] Ideas concerning the importance of a ruler's role in the provision of justice were well-established.[169] Though much of the debate during the late-medieval period centred around the relationship between the king and the law, there was also concern over the king's role as an administrator of justice.[170] Wisdom was also greatly esteemed as a dimension of kingly rule.[171] In particular, the importance of wisdom and the associated qualities of age or experience were often stressed with regard to the king's councillors and advisors.[172] This is reflected in the language of the parliamentary sources of this period. 'Discreet commons' or 'discreet councell' were common forms with which to describe or address the commons. Thus, in 1430-1, the parliamentary rolls make reference to "the ful wyse and discret Syrys, the Comyns of this present Parlement".[173] Indeed, ('discret' or) 'discreet' and 'wyse' were standard phrases in Chancery English at least as early as the late-fourteenth century.[174] The Middle English Dictionary shows that 'discreet' and 'wise' regularly collocate from the 1380s.[175] It seems likely, though, that the concept of the importance of discretion, wisdom

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[168] For example, the words 'discreet' and 'honest' hardly occur in the work of Thomas Malory. See T. Kato (ed.), *A Concordance of the Works of Sir Thomas Malory* (Tokyo University Press: Tokyo, 1974).

[169] On the importance of this issue during the medieval period see A. Black, *Political Thought in Europe 1250-1450* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1992), pp. 34-41 & 152-55; G.L. Harriss, 'Introduction' in idem (ed.), *Henry V: The Practice of Kingship* (Alan Sutton: Stroud, 1985), pp. 11-13; W.M. Ormrod, *Political Life in Medieval England 1300-1450* (Macmillan Press: Bassingstoke, 1995), pp. 109-29.

[170] J. Watts, *Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1996), p. 21.

[171] Harriss, 'Introduction', p. 13.

[172] For example, Hoccleve advised that the wise king should: "Cheisith men eke of olde experience; Hir wit and intellect is gloriouse; þe olde mannes rede [advice] is fructuouse; Ware of yong conseil, it is perilouse" cited in Hoccleve, 'The Regiment of Princes', ed., F.J. Furnivall, *Early English Text Society, extra series* 72 (1897), lines 4943-7. The importance of counsel for the élite of later medieval York is discussed in the final chapter.

[173] Kurath, Kuhn and Lewis (eds.), *Middle English Dictionary*, discret(e, adj., 1(a).

[174] J.H. Fisher, M. Richardson, J.L. Fisher (eds.), *An Anthology of Chancery English* (University of Tennessee Press: Knoxville, 1984). For a summary of the use of forms of 'discreet' and 'wise' in Chancery English see the glossary p. 330 & p. 400.

[175] Kurath, Kuhn and Lewis (eds.), *Middle English Dictionary*, discret(e, adj., 1(a).

and honesty in civic officials was circulating at the civic and Parliamentary level prior to the widespread adoption of Middle English. Anglo-Norman statutes from the reign of Edward I which deal with the appointment of local officials (coroners) stipulate that they should not be mean or indiscreet, but instead should be honest, lawful and wise.[176]

Given this wider context it is not surprising that in letters to the civic élite of York the king frequently described the ideal qualities of a civic official in terms of wisdom and justice. For example, in 1476, he instructed the city that they should "chese and accept unto you suche a discreet personne for the office of your saide commen clerk...".[177] Similarly, in response to what he viewed as an unsuitable election in 1527, the king ordered that "two of the most substanciall and discret persons of the Cytye to be Aldermen".[178] As has been suggested, such examples can also be found for other towns. For example, a parliamentary bill of 1484 recorded in the records of the borough of Northampton makes reference to men of no "...discrecion wisdome ne reason which oft in nombre exced in theire Assembles other that been approved discrete...".[179]

Significantly, the extracts cited perhaps suggest that an ideology of civic government which stressed the ability of civic officials to rule in a wise and impartial manner, may be connected in part to the position occupied by the mayor as the king's minister of peace and justice within the late-medieval city. As John Watts has noted, the king's office during the fifteenth century was thought to comprise two main functions: the defence of the realm and

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[176] A. Luders (ed.), *Statutes of the Realm*, 11 volumes, Royal Commission (1810-), 1(1235-1377): 27.

[177] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 75.

[178] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 3: 57. For the use of 'wisdomes' and 'wise' see also 2: 81.

[179] C.A. Markham (ed.), *The Records of the Borough of Northampton* (Birdsall and Son: Northampton, 1898), pp. 101-2. Francis Hill has noted that in 1438, royal letters patent were directed to the élite of Lincoln in which Hill has translated the king stated that the liberties and franchises granted by him to the city allowed "the...more good and true, more discreet..." to occupy civic office. Hill, *Medieval Lincoln*, pp. 277-8.

the provision of justice.[180] It could be argued that these same two main functions of government applied to late-medieval mayors: the defence of the civic realm (as reflected for example in the defence of the city's franchises) and the provision of justice. This relationship between civic and royal government is indicated not only in the language of the civic records and of letters sent by the king, but also in the mayoral oaths of the period. For example, the oath of office sworn by the mayor of York not only required him to be true to the king, it also obliged him to act on the behalf of the king in preserving the city's franchises, liberties, laws and customs. Furthermore, the mayor also promised to "doo Right to Riche and to poore".[181] In this context it is also interesting to look at a speech delivered by the king to the citizens of York in 1495 following riots on the day of the mayoral election. In his speech the king stated that the city had previously flourished when "the maier for the tyme and his brethern by advice of the said counseill executed the lawez within the said citie and libertes of the same accordng to the auncient customs and lawez of the said Citie without favour or dred of any person....Sir, ye that be rewler of my Citie ther ordre it wiscely...and accordyng to due justice".[182]

In summary, words such as 'discreet' and 'wise' can be located within a wider discourse of wisdom in writing and memorialisation, which emanating from the civic élite of later-medieval York. In Part, this discourse was associated with ideas concerning the benefits of age in civic office-holders. Furthermore, it was particularly concerned with the fair administration of justice among the highest members of the civic élite. The existence of similar ideological perspectives elsewhere during this period is evident from royal and

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[180] Watts, *Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship*, p. 21.

[181] YCA, D1, fol. 1v; This oath was standard to several late-medieval cities. See for example the oath in Wells, cited in Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, p. 190.

[182] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 2: 115.

parliamentary sources. However, as the final section will argue, while the language used to express the ideological importance of wisdom and justice in civic officials was similar to that used at the national level, the élite of York seems to have supplemented more generic terms with a second layer of vocabulary that was more specific to the urban context.

III) 'Honesty', Morality and Decorum

As we have seen, by the end of the fifteenth century the collocation of 'honest' and 'discreet' had become the standard way of describing men who were elected to the higher posts of civic office, and this collocation continued to be used throughout the rest of the period of this study. While only the highest civic officials were considered to be both 'honest' and 'discreet', the term 'honest' was frequently used singly in the House and Memorandum Books to describe men lower down the social hierarchy who were chosen to serve in some minor form of office. For example, special powers were given to the "serchiours and the honest personnes of the craft of coupers".[183] Similarly, one or two of "the most onest comeners" or "honest personez of the communaltye" were often chosen to act as financial auditors or as arbitrators in disputes over land boundaries.[184]

During the medieval period the principal meaning of the adjective 'honest' was not 'truthful', 'ethically sound' or 'trustworthy', as it is today. In the medieval context the meaning of the term translated more accurately as 'respectable', 'seemly', 'virtuous' or 'upright' and it was usually used to refer to someone's general reputation or standing. An honest person was someone worthy of honourable or respectable status.[185] However, to some extent status and honour also rested on qualities of trustworthiness. For example,

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[183] Likewise for the craft of cutlers. Sellers (ed.), *York Memorandum Book, Part I*, pp. 69 & 133.

[184] See for example, Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 280 & 566.

[185] Kurath, Kuhn and Lewis (eds.), *Middle English Dictionary*, honest(e, adj., 1(a) & (b), 2(b) & 4(a).

Marjorie McIntosh has demonstrated that the accusation levied against William Eyre of Salisbury that he had stolen some books resulted in him no-longer being regarded as a person "of honest conversation"; the accusation damaged both his economic livelihood and his "good name and fame".[186] Financial probity was similarly important for the reputation of the civic élite of late-medieval York. That medieval communities were concerned about the financial discretion of their councillors is hardly surprising and has been commented on before by urban historians.[187] Rigby, amongst others, has noted that protests against civic governments often involved charges of financial mismanagement or misconduct.[188] Indeed, nominees to the town council in late-medieval Wells were required to be "sworne not corrupte".[189] Such concerns are clearly evident in the records of late-medieval York. Clear examples survive of men who are recorded as having been dismissed from various civic posts because of financial impropriety. For instance, John Spooner was dismissed from the office of mayor's mace-bearer in 1477 for pocketing money that he had collected in his official capacity.[190] As a result of this incident the council issued an ordinance stating that any officers (and in particular, serjeants of the mace and chamberlains) who were found to have reserved money that they had collected publicly were to be called before the mayor and asked to pay it back.[191] In another example, the city's common clerk, Thomas Yotton, was dismissed in 1476 for "Diverse and many offences, excessive takynges of money,

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[186] McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior*, p. 120.

[187] See for example, Reynolds, 'Medieval Urban History', pp. 15 & 21.

[188] Rigby, 'Urban Oligarchy', p. 68.

[189] As cited in Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, p. 189.

[190] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 122-3.

[191] *Ibid.*

misguideing of our bookes, accompts and other evidences of (the) citie of Yorke".[192]

Clearly the issue of financial probity among officials was not unique to late-medieval York.

Indeed, this issue can be said to constitute part of an established discourse of government

as is evident, for example, in the Quo Warranto proceedings of the late thirteenth century.[193]

What was distinct about concerns over financial probity in the urban context was the

fact that they were not simply about the misappropriation of money. Two other issues also

appear to have been at stake. The first concerns the role of the civic officials as agents of

the wider civic community: as such they were expected to act in the interests of the city.[194]

For example, John Beseby was thought to be "not worthy to bere any office" within the city

of York on account of: "Dyvers gret offencez and mysbehavourz by John Beseby

commyttyd and doyn before tyme to the grett hurte and dyspleasour of the Commons of this

Citie".[195] Beseby had gone to London at the common cost on the pretence of speaking on

the behalf of the commons, whereas he had in fact spoken against them. Similarly, in a letter

to the king explaining the dismissal of Thomas Yotten, the city argued that his actions had

been "ayenste the pleaser of God, your lawes and our common wele and proffit", and that

therefore Yotton was "...not able to occupie amonges us for our wele and proffit".[196]

Clearly, in both of these cases offence was caused not only by the misuse of common funds,

but also by the fact that the men had acted against the interests of the commonalty.[197]

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[192] *Ibid.*, pp. 46-8.

[193] D.W. Sutherland, *Quo Warranto Proceedings of in the Reign of Edward I 1278-1294* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1963).

[194] This notion is perhaps best embodied through the concept of the 'common wele'. This will be discussed in the final part of the thesis.

[195] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 2: 34.

[196] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 47.

[197] Obviously, this raises the whole issue of who decided what the common interests of the city were. This area is explored in Part Four, pp. 205-247 below.

The second issue was that the dishonesty involved in the misappropriation of money was clearly seen to affect in a negative way the status or 'honourableness' of the malefactor. Again to use John Beseby as an example, the House Books suggest that his actions were "to the dyshonesty and slandre of the said John Beseby...".[198] In other words the 'dishonesty' (ie lack of honour) which Beseby brought upon himself was considered to have a detrimental effect on the wider status and authority enjoyed by the civic élite as a whole.[199] The relationship between financial probity or trustworthiness and honour is also evident from examples of slander accusations. In 1483 it was suggested that it was "openly known" in the city that Thomas Wrangwish (then mayor of York) should be called "a thief".[200] This outburst was the result of a disagreement between Wrangwish and Thomas Watson (a dyer), over a horse. Needless to say, the original cause of the dispute appears as almost irrelevant in the civic records when compared with the attention devoted to Watson's slander of the city's highest ranking civic official as being dishonest. Similarly, the civic élite were equally outraged when on another occasion it was suggested that the mayor, Miles Newton, had been called a "fals harlott".[201]

As we have seen, York's civic officials were required to be honest, that is to say virtuous or upright, and therefore worthy of honourable or respectable status. An important element of this respectability was financial trustworthiness or probity. Historians of other towns have also argued that civic élites were concerned about wider issues of morality in

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[198] *Ibid.*

[199] On the crimes and misdemeanors of individuals being injurious to the image of the wider community (in this case in the context of gilds), see B. McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Regulation of Behaviour', in J.T. Rosenthal, and C. Richmond (eds.), *People, Politics and Community in the Later Middle Ages* (Sutton Publishing: Gloucester, 1987), p. 114.

[200] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 278. For similar charges of financial impropriety levied against civic officials see Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 3: 38 & 109.

[201] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 305. 'Harlot' meant knave, rogue, reprobate, false fellow or coward; Kurath, Kuhn and Lewis (eds.), *Middle English Dictionary*, harlot, n., 1(b).

relation to the civic officials of the city.[202] To what extent was this true of the civic élite of

later-medieval York? The Middle English adjective, 'honest', carried the common meaning

of morally pure and, in relation to women, sexually pure.[203] The use of 'honest' in certain

contexts, particularly those associated with sexual purity, was clearly gendered in York as

it was in language generally.[204] For example, Elizabeth Ricardby, a citizen of York, was

said in 1487 to have been "reputed an honest madyn, clene of body, true of hands and

tong...".[205] There are no examples in texts emanating from the civic élite of later-medieval

York of 'honest' being used to refer to sexual purity in men. Indeed, York's civic records

contain little evidence that male civic status was dependant upon sexual discretion. Several

of the city's most prestigious civic officials, including John Stockdale (mayor in 1501) and

Sir Richard York (mayor 1469 & 1482), are known to have had illegitimate children, and

there is no evidence that this harmed their civic careers or reputations.[206] Nevertheless, since

the date of the birth of these children is unknown, it is not possible to say for certain whether

they were conceived prior to the men in question bearing civic office.

It is possible that sexual indiscretion was tolerated in younger men who were yet to

become masters or gain positions of responsibility. However, it is interesting that the York

House and Memorandum Books contain no ordinances or actions taken against men, civic

officials or otherwise, for sexual misconduct. In contrast, the civic authorities of other

towns seem to have been concerned to regulate the sexual morality of their officers. In 1429

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[202] See Kermode who demonstrates that Chester rulers were expected to keep the rules of God as well as those of the king: J. Kermode, 'New Brooms in Early Tudor Chester?', in J.C. Appleby and P. Dalton (eds.), *Government, Religion and Society in Northern England 1000-1700* (Sutton Publishing: Stroud, 1997), pp. 144-58.

[203] Kurath, Kuhn and Lewis (eds.), *Middle English Dictionary*, honest(e, adj., 4(b-c).

[204] See, for example, *Ibid.*, honest(e, adj., 4(c).

[205] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 2: 3.

[206] York, Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, Probate Register 6, fol. 185r & Probate Register 11, fol. 36r.

it was ordained in Coventry that "no seriaunt ne oder officer taken in avowtrey be no more

officer, but that he be put out of her offices at what tyme they or ony of hem ben founden

in suche defaute".[207] This was again revised in 1492 when it was written that anyone found

guilty of the "synnes of avowtre, ffornicacion or vsure" was to be "vtterly to be estraunged

from all goode company".[208]

That the civic élite of York were clearly concerned with sexual morality in general is

demonstrated through the reporting of the punishment of disreputable women such as the

(notorious) Marjorie 'Cherrylips' in 1483 and the punishment of sexual offences at the

Wardmote Courts.[209] However, there is nothing to suggest that they were equally

concerned with the sexual morality of civic officials.[210] Perhaps this was so established a

notion that it was not regarded as worthy of mention, but this cannot be known for certain.

While there is little evidence to suggest that the requirement of civic officials to be

'honest' conferred on them the expectation of sexual morality, it could be argued that it did

commit them to a behavioural code which regulated their speech and manners. As has

already been noted, the adjective 'honest' sometimes referred to respectable or seemly

behaviour.[211] The civic élite was clearly concerned to preserve the decorum of its officials.

This was particularly the case in the context of bad or inappropriate language, violence or

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[207] Harris (ed.), *The Coventry Leet Book*, 1: 118.

[208] *Ibid.*, p. 544; see also the example made of a capper and his paramour who were to be "carried and lad thorowe þe towne in a Carre in exaumpull off punnyshment off syne", *Ibid.*, p. 192.

[209] See for example Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 261, 708 & 723; Andrew, 'The Fifteenth-Century Wardmote Court Returns for York', 40-1.

[210] Presentments in the York Wardmote courts of sexual offences among men were few. The only case concerning a man of significant status (although never a civic official) related not to his own sexual misconduct but to the prostitution of his servant to the servants of the alderman Thomas Gray. Andrew,'The Fifteenth-Century Wardmote Court Returns', p. 41. It is likely, though, that in heading the wardmote courts, the civic elite was more concerned with controlling certain sections of society than with punishing sin, which was dealt with in the ecclesiastic courts.

[211] Kurath, Kuhn and Lewis (eds.), *Middle English Dictionary*, honest(e, adj., 1(a-b) & 2(b-c).

slander.[212] The House Books contain numerous mentions of such acts of bad language on the part of both members of the civic élite and those who never held civic office in York.[213] No doubt a large reason for the reporting of such acts in the civic registers was that they posed a direct threat to the authority of the civic élite.[214] Slander, violence or insulting language used against members of the civic élite was obviously not tolerated on several grounds. Verbal or physical attacks were taken seriously because they posed a threat to the authority and dignity of the civic body as a whole. Furthermore, violence and bad or insulting language was often viewed as seditious or as likely to incite unrest. For example, the miller, John Andrew, was imprisoned as a result of his actions on the day of a mayoral election. It was felt that because of his "unsittyng langage and mysbyhavour with other adherents he was likely to have maid a gret and inconvenient discord at the assemble in the said Hall".[215] Such verbal attacks against members of the civic élite by commoners could also be regarded as 'upstart language' which symbolised a transgression of the perceived civic order.

David Shaw has suggested that incidents of bad or violent language were viewed in an especially bad light not only because they threatened the authority of the élite, but also because they embodied the antithesis of ideal qualities desired in leaders; namely the ability

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[212] Bad language and insults were generally referred to as 'unsitting(e' language in the House Books. In Middle English this term was used to refer to acts or types of language which were deemed inappropriate, unsuitable or unseemly. Kurath, Kuhn and Lewis (eds.), *Middle English Dictionary*, unsitting(e, ppl., (a).

[213] For example, for bad or insulting language see YCA, House Book 7, fol.115v, House Book 8, fols. 25v & 92v, House Book 9, fols. 37v-38r; for physical violence see House Book 9, fol. 1r; Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records* 2: 44-5 & 77; for slander see House Book 9, fol. 63v; Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records* 2: 34-5 & 126-7.

[214] Although, it could be argued that the control of sexual impropriety, particularly among single women, was linked to the threat that their social and economic independence may have posed to the established social order. See, for example, McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior*, pp. 71 & 110-11.

[215] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records* 2: 123; The use of the word 'inconvenient' is interesting here. Convenient in Middle English was used to mean appropriate, fitting, apt or socially or conventionally appropriate; Kurath, Kuhn and Lewis (eds.), *Middle English Dictionary*, convenient, adj., 1, 2 & 3(a). It is therefore interesting to consider whether part of what was being argued by the civic élite was that discordant actions were not fitting or suitable for the dignity or sanctity of either the occasion or the place.

to control oneself and to act decorously.[216] Indeed, the House Books suggest that bad

language and violent or hasty actions were viewed as especially inappropriate for members

of the civic élite. For example, in September 1497, Hugh North was banned from bearing

either the office of Sergeant or any other office within York or the Ainsty on account of his

"unsittyng langage agayn my lord maier Thalderman and þe xxiiij".[217] Similarly, in 1503,

Thomas Appilby was barred from being one of the city's porters until he had apologised for

hitting a man and using 'unsitting' language.[218] In both of these examples the perceived

seriousness of the actions of the two men was such that they were barred from office. While

it is possible that the dismissal of these two men resulted from their defiance of authority,

it is also very likely that North and Appilby's physical and linguistic abuses were held to

represent a violation of an ideal code of conduct for men of a certain status. Decorous

language was linked to status during this period, hence Hoccleve's comment that "Vn-to

hygh degre Vnsittynge is to swere in any wise".[219]

A feature of criticism of bad language was that it involved the failure to think before

acting. On several occasions in the House Books, officials are reported as having been

reprimanded for having spoken or acted in a 'hasty' manner. For example, Roger Laton was

pardoned in 1485 for having struck one of the sheriffs and for using "hasty language".[220]

Similarly, one of the accusations levied against the alderman William Nelson was that he

"came in hasty wyse" to a gathering of senior councillors.[221] While 'hasty' was often used

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[216] Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, p. 192.

[217] YCA, House Book 8, fol. 25v.

[218] YCA, House Book 9, fol. 1.

[219] T. Hoccleve, *The Regiment of Princes*, ed. F.J. Furnivall, Early English Text Society, extra series 72 (1975), line 2361.

[220] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 193.

[221] YCA, House Book 9, fol. 2v.

to refer to violent or vehement words or deeds, it also encompassed a speed or rashness of action.[222] Particularly interesting in this respect is the submission speech of John Spooner, one of the mayor's mace bearers, who was charged among other matters with using 'unsittyng' language to the mayor. Spooner's apology begins as follows: "My lorde the maire, it is so that I uppon [f. 69] Friday last past was tefore your lordship and ther of my greit negligence and oversight wordes unsittyng escapet me to the greit displesour of the said lordship....".[223] Here the use of 'negligence', 'oversight' and 'escape' are telling. All convey a sense of having acted hastily and imply an inability to control one's actions. It is interesting to compare this example with the early fifteenth-century advice in a 'courtesy' text that one should "Be not to hasti, no to sodeyn veniable [vengeable]; To poore folk do þou no violence; Be gentil of langage...".[224]

As the discussed evidence demonstrates, civic officials were expected to display a certain amount of decorum and, in particular, to refrain from using bad or inappropriate language, or from acting in a hasty or violent manner. It is also evident that slander and speaking against other men were viewed in a similar light. Among the ordinances of the council was one which forbade officials to slander or go to court against other members of the civic élite on pain of expulsion from civic office.[225] Rules forbidding litigation among members of guilds or civic councils were common during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[226] No doubt such legislation stemmed at least partly from the desire to maintain the unity and solidarity of the group. Furthermore, these rules could also be viewed as part

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[222] Kurath, Kuhn and Lewis (eds.), *Middle English Dictionary*, hasti(e, adj., 2(a-d).

[223] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 122.

[224] Furnival (ed.), *The Babees Book & c*, p. 56, lines 33-6.

[225] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 305 & 339.

[226] See for example, McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior*, p. 189; McRee, 'Religious Gilds and the Regulation of Behavior', pp. 112-14. This is explored in greater depth below, see pp. 170-200.

of the wider discourse which enshrined the importance of civic or guild harmony.[227] Perhaps

most importantly, though, it seems likely that slander and backbiting were again linked to

notions of seemly behaviour or decorum.

The House Books instruct that any civic official who had "unsyttyng words, langage,

or wordez callyng another fals, untrewe" was to be fined.[228] Particularly interesting in this

context is the case of Thomas Scotton, one of the councillors of the city. When Thomas

was accused of having "wrongfully defame[d] and slaunder[ed] oon Richard Beryman", he

was quick to rebut this claim arguing that "he had mervell how that eny such sugestion or

compleynt shold be shewed or layd ayanest hym" and that, if anyone else were to say

anything against the said Richard, Thomas would be "the first man to depose on a buke for

hym".[229] As Thomas's eagerness to dissociate himself from accusations of slander

demonstrates, the act of slandering or backbiting was considered to be as shaming as being

the recipient of false accusations. Slander was held not only to represent envy, it also

violated ideals relating to the importance of neighbourliness as a Christian ethic.[230]

Furthermore, like swearing or violence, it could also be said to stem from anger or malice

and represented rashness of action. That the civic élite of later medieval York viewed

neighbourliness as an aspect of respectability or honour during the sixteenth century is

represented through their instruction to two citizens that they should act "with gentle words,

one another after, as honest neighbors should do".[231]

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[227] See for example, McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior*, pp. 60-1.

[228] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records* 2:34

[229] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records* 2: 34-5.

[230] McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior*, pp. 109-10 & 188. Concepts of neighbourliness and love in the context of group unity will be discussed in greater depth in the next chapter.

[231] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records* 4: 94. See advice in courtesy literature to "God & þi neybores lufe all way"; Furnival (ed.), *The Babees Book*, p. 51.

The underlying motivation for the condemnation of violent, uncouth or 'hasty' actions on the part of civic officials as distinct from the commonalty is likely to have been two-fold. First, decorous behaviour (or the illusion of it) seems to have been one of the means through which the civic élite could distance itself from, or create its identity in opposition to, the rest of the population. This is particularly demonstrated through the juxtaposition of good and bad conduct. For example, the attempted arrest of a cordwainer John Barrewdale by Roland Armourer, one of the mayor's sergeants of the mace, is described as follows:

> the same Roland fulfilled the Maiours commaundement and cam to the same Barrewdale...saing unto hym my lord Maiour is at the tavern dore and woll that ye shal com to speke with hym and he shortlie answerd and said he wold not and opon that drugh his dagger and wold aben opon the said officer; he seing that stirt bak and for his suretie drugh his knyfe and so arrested the same Barrewdale...[232]

Here Barrewdale is depicted as having acted 'shortlie', in other words, hastily, defiantly and in a threatening manner. By contrast, we are told that Armourer (the civic official), far from rising to the bait, 'stirt back', and drew his knife not in anger but 'for his suretie'.[233]

Second, violent or hasty actions and language could be said to embody the antithesis of the qualities required in an ideal leader. For example, the magnanimity and justice of the mayor is frequently juxtaposed in the House Books with the hasty, violent and uncouth actions of the commonalty, particularly in accounts of the ritualised submission of an

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[232] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 2: 45.

[233] A more striking account of the juxtaposition of violent or angry actions with the calm and controlled demeanour of a civic official is offered by Shaw for early sixteenth-century Wells. Here the qualities displayed by the offender are similar to those that have been outlined in the above examples from York, namely, disobedience, anger and hasty language, while the master of the city is almost idealised in his role of the patient, even tempered and just handler of the situation. See Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, pp. 194-7.

offender, at the end of which the mayor would agree to pardon and forgive him. In these cases the language used to describe the actions of the 'cleansed' sinner is in striking contrast to the language used previously, thus thereby reinforcing an approved standard of conduct. For example, when Thomas Strangewische, a servant of the Abbot of Whitby intervened in the arbitration of a land dispute between the abbot and the prior of St. Andrew's church:

> (the) Maier said he wold not suffre hym ne any other be of suche demeanours within hym. And the said Thos asked- Who shuld let me? And the Maier answerd and said that he wold lett hym. And he said- Maister Maier I will not let for you. And therwith he laid his hand upon his dagger. And the Maier said- Thomas, thou shall not eschuse and commaunded to have hym to ward...

Thomas remained in ward until he was sent for, when he:

> lowly submytted hym unto the Maier sayng wher he hade mysdemeaned hym in word and dede anenst my said lord Maier he was right sory and besought hym to pardon and forgiffe hym. And After þt humbly profered þe maier his hand faithfully promysyng for ever here after to be of good demeanour and byhavyng.[234]

At the beginning of the section on character it was suggested that among the qualities represented as necessary in a civic official were wisdom, prudence and the ability to administer justice. By contrast, anger (which motivated violent or hasty language or actions) was held to cloud good judgement. It is for this reason that Latini advises that a

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[234] ﬦﬦﬦ (ed.), *York Civic Records* 3: 20; YCA, House Book 9, fol. 32.

ruler must not be too prone to anger or the holding of grudges .[235] Indeed, the lack of

thought involved in hasty or violent actions could be held to be the opposite of calm,

measured thinking as embodied by concepts of wisdom and discretion.[236] Furthermore,

discord, the outcome of such actions, was in direct opposition to the goal of all discreet and

wise government; namely, civil peace and harmony.

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[235] Latini, *Li Livres dou Tresor*, p. 354.

[236] Note for example, "If thou be subiecte/ and to anger thrall,/And reason thee rule not,/ nedes must thou fall./ Conquer thy wyll/ and subdue thy luste,/ Thy fansy not folowing,/ thy cause though be iuste;/ For anger and furie/ wyll thee so chaunge/ That thy doynges to wise men/ wyll appeare strange./ For wrath, said Plato,/ Leades shame in a leace/ The hastie man/ wastes neuer trouble,/His mad moody mynde/ his care doth double"; Furnival (ed.), *The Babees Book*, pp. 348-9, lines 764-81.

C) Conclusion

Prosopographical evidence clearly suggests that contrary to the established historiography, civic office-holding in late medieval York was not dominated by merchants. There is little evidence of exclusionary closure on the grounds of occupation below the post of mayor. Meanwhile, in terms of civic office-holding in general, the role of occupation in this system of stratification has been overemphasised. In turn, this finding itself throws doubt on the extent to which late-medieval urban society should automatically be viewed in terms of social polarisation between merchants and artisans. Although such polarisation is evident at the level of the office of mayor, the same is not true of the lower posts, even that of sheriff. This suggests that rather than concentrating on a dichotomous division between office holders and the politically disenfranchised, historians should pay more attention to divisions and hierarchies within the civic élite. Indeed, the extent to which there may have been an élite within the civic élite is explored in the next section of the thesis.

While there is little evidence of widespread exclusionary closure on the grounds of occupation, exclusionary closure on the grounds of wealth is clearly evident among the civic élite of later-medieval York. This exclusion was individualist and not collectivist. That is to say, access to the élite was restricted on the grounds of personally acquired characteristics, or a personal commitment to a specific set of values or ideas. Here the perpetuation of social groups was achieved through the nomination of suitable replacements. Under this mechanism, access to the élite was relatively open to newcomers. The perpetuation of the values and ideologies (and thus the sanctity and stability) of the group was maintained through the 'vetting' of suitable candidates.

As was outlined in the thesis introduction, central to Pareto and Mosca's theories of élites is the notion of 'circulation', that is to say, the view that the make up of élites will change over a period of time through the introduction of new members and the assimilation

of new interests. Mosca argued that in order to prevent stagnation, it was vital for élites to be open to members whose interests or skills best represented other important or influential groups within society. As we have seen, the fifteenth century saw the increasing erosion of the economic status of merchants both in York and in other towns. By the late fifteenth century the unquestionable economic and social dominance of York merchants was no longer assured. As a result of this, there appears to have been an ideological shift in terms of the types of trades that were deemed suitable for civic officials. Access to the élite was widened in terms of occupation. It is likely that such a shift would have held profound implications for the status, perpetuation and integration of the group. Sociologists have argued that élites should have a generalised recognition of their own superiority and should possess attributes which are highly esteemed by their society. By drawing in men from a much more diverse set of trades and occupations, the exclusivity and social cachet of the group could well have been undermined. It might be argued however, that one of the means through which the élite attempted to maintain controlled access to its ranks and preserve the status of the group was through the deployment of moral vocabularies that were used to justify authority. These stressed the importance of personal characteristics for civic leaders; characteristics which reflected contemporary urban ideals of wisdom, behaviour and decorum.

My analysis of the qualities which were portrayed as being necessary or desirable for civic office, and the values or ideologies which underpinned these, suggests that the civic élite of later-medieval York did just this. The House Books can be seen to contain a variety of discourses concerning good governance. First, the importance of the qualities of wisdom and discretion as they related to the ability to administer justice fairly were stressed. Second, there is an emphasis in texts emanating from the civic élite of York on 'honesty' (honourableness). Here, honour seems to relate not to contemporary concepts embodied

in a chivalric code, but rather to more pragmatic qualities concerning financial probity and trustworthiness. Finally, there is evidence to suggest that the civic élite were also concerned that its members should conform to a certain level of decorum. This involved not swearing, acting hastily or violently, and not slandering others. In part this ideology stemmed from contemporary views concerning the importance of neighbourliness. Perhaps more importantly though, anger, grudges and associated acts of violence were held to embody the antithesis of the qualities required in an ideal leader; namely, the ability to administer justice fairly and prudently in order to maintain peace and harmony within the city.

The final section of the thesis will discuss, the extent to which civic officials in York lived up to the ideals, particularly with regard to financial probity. Whether or not discourses of office-holding constituted mere rhetoric, or sincerely held ideals, it remains clear that personality or character played an important role in determining access to civic office. For example, both Alan Stavely and Thomas Hardsang were temporarily exempted from civic office due to their respective lack of "discreccon or demeanour" and "Reson & discrecon".[237] Meanwhile, other men were permanently barred from office for violating some of the discussed codes. The importance of ideologies concerning the personal character of civic officials is therefore two-fold. First, they offered a mechanism through which unsuitable men could be denied access to civic office or could be expelled from office. Second, discourses concerning ideal personal qualities were vital in the creation or perpetuation of an ideology of civic authority. Such discourses not only served to construct the identity of the civic élite of later-medieval York, they also legitimised the power of those in office.

Any stress on the character of civic officials within the York House Books tends to create an impression of an homogeneous élite, united and distinguished by virtue of the

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[237] YCA, House Book 7, fols., 109 & 138v.

exemplary personal characteristics of its members. However, as has been demonstrated, the civic élite was far from a homogeneous or coherent group in terms of occupation. Moreover, although all members of the examined group were of above average wealth, there were large wealth variations within the élite.

Clearly it is important to consider other mechanisms and processes through which the inter- and intra-generational, social and ideological integration of the civic élite of York might have been achieved. It seems likely that shared values might have been a principal unifying means. Here then is an interesting tension: whereas social exclusion was 'individualist', social theory was corporate or commensal. In turn, this raises the question of how the corporate and commensal values revealed in this section, and those which the thesis will go on to discuss in Part Four of the thesis, were passed on or inculcated in future generations of the civic élite. Although this section has demonstrated the qualities necessary or desirable for civic office, it has not examined in depth the channels of recruitment. Clearly, such an exploration is necessary in order fully to understand processes of social stratification and social mobility. In particular, it is necessary to consider how, in the face of a diverse and constantly changing personnel, the civic élite managed to secure its ideological as well as its actual perpetuation. The importance of personal qualities and commitment to a specific set of values have been highlighted, but these qualities would probably have needed to have been learned. Therefore, through what means were future civic officials identified, trained and socialised for civic office? The next section will explore these areas within the context of an exploration of the importance of family and social networks as forms of social stratification and consolidation.

Part Three:
Structure: Integration and Perpetuation

In January 1506 the York House Books record that:

> þe said Maier & presence by an hole assent & consent awarded & demed þat þe said
>
> Richard & Alan tofore theym ather take other by ye hand & to be good &
>
> frendly....togeder & þer upon of both theyr cost....dranke a potell of ele wyne & a
>
> potell of malmesay.[1]

And so a dispute between Richard Thorneton (mayor 1502) and Alan Stavely (mayor 1506 & 1519), both then aldermen of the city, was settled over a glass of wine. However, to what extent was the élite of later-medieval York truly unified or integrated? Anthony Giddens has suggested in his work on modern British élites that sociologists should explore levels of social integration within élites, that is to say, the "frequency and nature of social contacts and relationships".[2]

Part Three uses prosopographical and genealogical information, discourse analysis and an examination of ritualised actions and language to explore the social and ritual integration and perpetuation of York's civic élite. The main questions addressed are: how unified was the group in terms of blood, marriage and friendship ties (social unity)? To what extent and through what means was the group constructed as an integrated and unified body (ritual unity)? And how was the real and ideological perpetuation of the élite secured?

Part Three is divided into two sections. The first section is primarily concerned with

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[1] YCA, York House Book 9, fol. 28v.

[2] Giddens, 'Élites in the British Class Structure', p. 5.

the social integration of the civic élite. It examines the extent to which patrilineal, marriage, apprenticeship and friendship ties existed between members of the group. The section looks both at contemporaneous integration between members of the civic élite and integration over time. It is argued that in the absence of patrilineal ties, marriage played an important role in facilitating the integration of the officials, and that this serves to highlight the role of women in the consolidation and perpetuation of élite groups. Further, this section also argues that the real and ideological perpetuation of the civic élite was secured through the nomination and patronage of 'surrogate heirs'. In particular, apprenticeship was an important means through which potential civic officials could be trained and socialised.

The second section looks at the ways in which the élite sought to present itself as a unified entity, and the means through which it attempted to dissipate and overcome discord and disunity within the group. This section begins by exploring diversity and conflict among members of the élite.[3] It then examines the ritualised integration of the civic officials. It is argued that despite a relatively low level of social unity and a high level of discord and factionalism between civic officials, the élite constructed or consolidated itself as a unified group through defensive and pro-active ritual actions. In turn, these ritual actions constituted a discourse of unanimity which reflected contemporary civil thought. This section also explores rituals designed to allow the re-assimilation of rogue civic officials.

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[3] *Ibid.*, p. 5. It should be noted that I am not interested in the source of conflict *per se* but how such conflict related to the integration of the élite.

A) Social Integration

I) Introduction

As the Introductory Chapter argued, it is a commonplace that medieval cities on the continent were governed by patriarchies or family dynasties, while English towns were not.[4] Despite this view, English élites (like those on the continent) have often been regarded as coherent social entities, bound by ties of marriage, neighbourhood or guild. This prevailing historiography has serious lacunae. First, the extent to which marriage connections might have served to create élite dynasties in English towns has not been considered. Although English historians have highlighted marriage links between élite mercantile and aldermanic families, they have concentrated on patrilineal descent.[5] Little research has been carried out on the perpetuation of élite families through the female line. Clearly, the role of women in the formation and perpetuation of élite groups deserves further consideration.

Further, historians have concentrated their analysis on the families of aldermen and merchants. It is not clear how kinship and socialisation patterns may have differed between different social groups. For example, for York, Jennifer Kermode has shown strong marriage and friendship links between wealthy mercantile (and often aldermanic) families.[6] However, it remains unclear whether this pattern of social ties was the same lower down the civic hierarchy or among men of different occupations.

Lastly, social links have been used as evidence of embryonic class formation.[7]

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[4] For a fuller consideration of the historiography of medieval urban family, neighbourhood and guild, see Part One above, pp. 12-22.

[5] Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 28-9, 191-204, 222-33; Frost 'The Aldermen of Norwich 1461-1509', chapter 5; Kermode, 'Sentiment and Survival', pp. 6-10; idem, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 77-90; idem, 'The Merchants of Three Northern English Towns', pp. 16-19.

[6] Kermode, 'Sentiment and Survival', pp. 6-10; idem, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 77-90; idem, 'The Merchants of Three Northern English Towns', pp. 16-19.

[7] This is explicit in the work of Kermode, 'Sentiment and Survival', pp. 5 & 12. See also Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 3-5; and Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, *passim*.

However, research has concentrated on links between members of (arguably) discrete social groups, and historians have not fully considered the possible negative or divisive effect family or marriage links could have had on the unity of social groups.

This first part of the section on integration explores some of the aforementioned lacunae and assumptions in relation to late-medieval York. At the most basic level it examines the extent to which the élite of late-medieval York was integrated through common patrilineal or marriage ties. To what extent were members of the civic élite related to other civic officials by blood or marriage? However, this section also considers some wider issues. These include the role of women in the integration of the civic élite, differences in social networks between men of different civic status, and the role of family in social stratification and integration. Although the main subject under consideration is the structure and integration of the élite, the evidence examined occasionally has implications for my earlier discussion of access to civic office. In such cases the evidence is related to social closure theories as in the previous chapter.

Determining family trees and genealogies for the medieval period is never easy owing to the absence of registers of births, marriages and deaths. Urban and rural historians have successfully used rental and property records to this end.[8] Unfortunately, property records do not survive in sufficient quantities for York in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries for them to be utilized to great effect.[9] However, York is fortunate in having an almost complete series of registered wills for the medieval period.[10] Wills are particularly useful for

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[8] See the work of Raftis, Keene and Kowaleski cited in Kowaleski, 'The History of Urban Families', pp. 51-2.

[9] For the nature and extent of Medieval York's surviving property deeds see S.R. Rees Jones, 'Property, Tenure and Rents: Some Aspects of the Topography and Economy of Medieval York', DPhil thesis, department of History, University of York (1987), pp. 1-41.

[10] The two main series are the Registers of the Exchequer and Prerogative Court of the Archbishops of York (BIHR) and the Registers of the Peculiar Jurisdiction of the Dean and Chapter (York Minster Archives). The main sources used to establish genealogies were: York, BIHR, Probate Registers of the Exchequer and Prerogative Court of the Archbishop, regs. 3, 5-11, 13-14; York Consistory Court Act Books AB 2 & 4; York

reconstructing family trees since, as Phythian-Adams has argued, they are the only sources which allow access to 'nominated kin'.[11] They enable the study of socially significant relationships, that is to say relationships which convey "social roles, rights, privileges or obligations" in other words kinship ties as opposed to physical or biological ties.[12] This study makes substantial use of such testamentary material, although additional information has occasionally been gleaned from sources such as the House Books and the Freemen's Register.[13]

Where possible the will or act of administration of each civic official, along with those of his parents, siblings, wife and children have been consulted. Genealogical information contained in wills is limited. Testators sometimes did not even include the names of wives and children. They mentioned parents, siblings, in-laws and more distant relatives infrequently, and even then the testators often failed to state the details of the relationship between themselves and the legate. Most frustrating in this respect is the absence of any mention of the maiden names of wives or the married names of daughters, making it

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Minster Archives Dean and Chapter Probate Registers 1-3. Indices for both series exist and were extensively used: F. Collins (ed.), *The Register of the Freemen of the City of York*, Surtees Society 96 (1897). F. Collins (ed.), *Index of Wills etc from the Dean and Chapter at York, 1321-1636*, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series 38 (1907); *Idem* (ed.), *Index of Wills in the York Registry, vol. 1, 1389-1514 & vol. 2, 1514-1553*, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series 6 & 11 (1891 & 1899). Additional sources used were: York City Archives, Freemen's Register D1; House Books 7-11

[11] Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, p. 148.

[12] A. Plakans cited in D. Cressy, 'Kinship and Kin Interaction in Early Modern England', *Past and Present* 113 (1986): 39. The term 'kinship' is used throughout this thesis to refer to biological or marriage relationships which also conveyed social relationships. For a discussion of the concept of kinship and the relationship between the physical and the social categories of kinship see C.C. Harris, *Concepts in the Social Sciences: Kinship* (Open University Press: Milton Keynes, 1990), pp. 27-46. To date the study of kinship in medieval England has largely been dominated by historical demography exemplified in P. Laslett (ed.), *Household and Family in Past Time* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1972). More recently, though, historians of rural society have also examined kinship through anthropological approaches such as network analysis. See for example, J.M. Bennett, 'The Tie that Binds: Peasant Marriages and Families in Late Medieval England', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 15 (1984): 111-29; R. Smith, *Land, Kinship and Life Cycle*, Cambridge Studies in Population, Economy and Society in Past Time: 1 (1984), *passim*.

[13] To address existing historical debates, the prevalence of similar surnames among the officials of late medieval York has also been examined.

particularly hard to establish marriage networks. Because of these problems, it has

occasionally been necessary to consult the wills of more distant relations such as

grandparents or in-laws in order to verify relationships.[14]

Besides the problem of correct identification inherent in any prosopographical study,

testamentary sources are also limited in several other respects.[15] Not all of the civic officials

possessed the wealth or the inclination to have their wills registered. Thus, those men for

whom we have probate evidence cannot be considered representative of the civic élite as a

whole. Table 3:1 below summarises the biases.

Table 3:1
The Percentage of Men who held Civic Office 1476-1525 for whom Probate Evidence Survives.
By Highest Civic Post Attained[16]

Highest Civic Post Attained	Number of men who attained each post	For whom probate evidence survives	% of men who attained each post for whom probate evidence survives.
Bridge Master	89	52	58
Chamberlain	100	64	64
Sheriff	70	57	81
Mayor	56	50	89
Total	315	223	71

Source: Appendices 1 and 3.

As Table 3:1 above shows, the higher a man progressed in the civic hierarchy the more

likely he was to have had his will or act of administration recorded.[17] This bias means that

family links are more discernible among the higher civic officials than those who only

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[14] For the methodology involved in successfully identifying individuals see the Appendices.

[15] For a summary of these problems see Kermode, 'The Merchants of York, Beverley and Hull', pp. 30-8.

[16] This refers to civic officials for whom a will or act of administration survives. Although administrations are limited in the information they contain many make reference to at least one living relative.

[17] This phenomenon is likely to be due to the greater wealth of the men who reached the more senior civic posts. However, it is also possible that the registering of wills carried a status connotation which higher civic officials were more inclined to endorse.

reached lower levels of civic office. In order to minimise such bias, discernible kin, marriage or social links have been expressed as a percentage of the number of men who reached each of the civic offices for whom testamentary evidence survives. As a result of this extensive research it has been possible to reconstruct quite detailed kin, marriage or social relationships for most of the civic officials for whom probate evidence survives. Much of this information is summarised in Appendices 2a, 2b, 2c and 3.

II) Patrilineage, Marriage & Surrogate Heirs

Patrilineal Relationships

In the absence of registers of births and deaths, one of the most reliable ways of gauging the extent that civic officials were related to each other patrileneally is through examining the range of surnames held. For York, Edward Miller has noted the dominance of the surnames Selby, Langton and Graa among the city's thirteenth and fourteenth-century mayors.[18] Even allowing for the fact that it was common until 1393 for men to hold the post of mayor for many years in succession, it is clear that York was dominated by several successful dynasties.[19] York was not unusual in this respect. Colin Platt has argued that long-lasting burgess dynasties were "characteristic of English borough society" during the thirteenth century.[20] However, he also echoes the belief that by the end of the medieval period urban dynasties rarely lasted for more than three generations.[21] It seems likely that throughout England the incidence of urban dynasties was highest before the Black Death.[22]

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[18] Miller, 'Medieval York', pp. 71 & 79.

[19] In 1393 it was ruled that no man was to re-occupy the office of mayor until all of the other aldermen had held the post. Rees Jones, 'York's Civic Administration', pp. 133-4.

[20] C. Platt, *The English Medieval Town* (Secker and Warburg: London, 1976), pp. 104-5.

[21] *Ibid.*, pp. 98-105.

[22] Kowaleski, 'The History of Urban Families', p. 57.

Certainly, late fifteenth and early sixteenth-century York did not witness the monopolisation of civic office by single patrilineal families evident before 1400. During the period 1476 to 1525 there were no patrilineal dynasties comparable to the Graas, Langtons or the Selbys of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[23] This is immediately apparent from the large range of surnames held. Two hundred and twenty-nine (73%) of the 315 civic officials of this period had unique surnames.[24] It is possible to be even more precise about the fifty-six civic officials who reached the post of mayor during this period. A total of fifty (89%) of these men had unique surnames.[25] Further, of the six men who shared their surname with another mayor, two do not appear to have been patrileneally linked. The two dyers, William White (mayor 1491 & 1505) and Michael White (1494 &1505) were both members of the complicated web of marriage networks encompassing the Thorntons.[26] Nevertheless, despite the existence of both men's wills there is no evidence to suggest that they were patrileneally related.[27] Of the other two sets of mayors with a shared surname, John Thorneton (mayor 1514) was the son of Richard Thorneton (mayor 1502).[28] The two merchants named John Shaw (one was mayor in 1510 and the other in 1538) appear to have been related, but the nature of their relationship is unknown.[29]

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[23] Miller, 'Medieval York', pp. 71 & 79.

[24] See Palliser's findings that at least 167 (76%) of the 221 sixteenth-century councillors of York had unique surnames; Palliser, 'York in the Sixteenth Century', p. 167.

[25] Appendix 1.

[26] See p. 138 below.

[27] BIHR, Probate Register 6, fol. 127r, 8, fol. 61r. Neither man mentions the other or the other's families in their wills, and no mention of a relationship between the two men is mentioned in the York House Books, even on the occasion of Michael White taking over the office of mayor from William following his death in 1505. Raine, (ed.), York Civic Records 3:11-2.

[28] Appendix 2a.

[29] John Shaw junior was the apprentice of John Shaw senior. For evidence of links between the two men see Appendix 2a.

Genealogical information derived from wills confirms the suggestion that patrilineal

links were rare among the late-medieval civic officials of York. Table 3:2 below summarises

the information contained in Appendix 2a concerning verifiable patrilineal relationships

between men who held civic office in York during the period 1476 to 1525.

Table 3:2
Patrilineal Relationships Between Civic Officials for whom Testamentary Evidence Survives and Other
Members of the Civic Élite of York 1476 to 1525

Nature of relationship	Number of men	As a % of civic officials for whom testamentary evidence survives
Father/ son	28	13
Brother	8	4
Other	10	4
Any blood relationship*	**42**	**19**

*This is less than the sum of the above numbers as several civic officials were patrileneally related to more than
one other civic official.
Source: Appendix 2a

As Table 3:2 shows, of the 223 men for whom some form of testamentary evidence

survives, a total of forty-two (19%) were clearly patrileneally related to other officials from

the period in question.[30] Included among these forty-two men are two instances where three

generations of the same family held civic office within the period 1476 to 1525. The mercer

and draper, John Marshall (mayor 1467 & 80) was the father of William (chamberlain 1490)

who, in turn, was the father of John (sheriff 1522).[31] Likewise, the yeoman and tile maker

William North, (chamberlain 1497) was the father of the tanner Richard (sheriff 1513) and

the grandfather (through Richard) of John (mayor 1538 & 54), also a tanner. Indeed, the

success of the North family did not stop here as John's son, Richard (chamberlain 1561) also

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[30] In addition to these forty-eight men, non-testamentary sources identify a further six men as having been related
to other civic officials of the period; Appendix 2a.

[31] Appendices 1 and 2a.

held civic office in the city.[32]

A number of civic officials from the period 1476 to 1525 were patrileneally related to men who held civic office in the city outside the dates in question. In some cases these men also belonged to families which generated more than three generations of civic officials, for instance, the Grenebanks, the Knolles and the Yorks.[33] However, the most notable family in this respect was the prolific Thorneton family.[34] The draper, John Thorneton (bailiff 1385), was the first of the family to hold civic office in the city. Later, Richard Thorneton reached the post of sheriff in 1446, while his grandson and namesake became mayor in 1502. Finally, John Thorneton, son of Richard Thorneton jnr, reached the post of mayor in 1514.[35]

Families such as the Thornetons were highly unusual. Taking all 315 men who held civic office between 1476 and 1525, only 66 (30%) can be demonstrated to have been patrileneally related to men who held civic office at any date.[36] Even allowing for omissions caused by problems in genealogical reconstruction, this proportion of around a third is extraordinary low. However, this low figure is borne out by a study of the number of civic officials from the period 1476 to 1525 who were sons of former officials. Table 3:3 below summarises the patrimony of the men who held civic office in York between 1476 and 1525. The men are divided into three groups: men for whom there is proof that their father was a civic official; men for whom there is proof that their father was not a civic official; and men whose parentage is uncertain.[37] The third group includes men of uncertain parentage

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[32] Appendices 1, 2a and 2b.

[33] See Appendix 2b for these and other examples.

[34] This family network is discussed in greater depth below, see p. 138.

[35] Appendix 2b.

[36] Appendices 2a and 2b.

[37] The second group contains many men whose parentage is uncertain. However, either there was not a civic official who shared the same surname as the man in question, or such a civic official can be ruled out on the basis of other information.

who shared their surname with another civic official who *could have been* their father.

Table 3:3
Proportion of All Men Who Held Civic Office 1476-1525 Who Were Sons of Civic Officials

	Number of men	As a percentage of all civic officials 1476-1525
Son of Civic Official	26	8
Not Son of Civic Official	239	76
Uncertain	50	16
Total	**315**	**100**

Sources: Appendices 2a and 2b; Collins (ed.), *Freemen's Register.*

As Table 3:3 shows, at least three-quarters of the men who held civic office during the period in question were not sons of former civic officials. Indeed, only 8% of civic officials can be proved to have been sons of former civic officials. Similarly, Palliser has also concluded that few of the sixteenth-century York councillors were sons of previous councillors.[38] The civic élite of later-medieval York was not unusual in having relatively few patrilineal ties between its members. The proportions of interrelated officials in early sixteenth-century Coventry and Oxford were also low.[39] Indeed, in Oxford, patrilineal ties within the civic élite appear to have been gradually loosening over the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[40]

To a large extent the lack of patrilineal dynasties among civic officials reflects the experiences of urban élite families in general. As early as the fifteenth century William Caxton noted that "one name and lygnage...in this noble cyte of london/ it can unnethe

[38] Palliser, 'York in the Sixteenth Century', p. 168. See also Kermode, 'The Merchants of York, Beverley and Hull in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries', p. 313.

[39] See Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 146-7; Hammar, 'Anatomy of an Oligarchy', pp. 19-20.

[40] Hammar, 'Anatomy of an Oligarchy', p. 19.

contynue unto the thyrd heyre or scarcely to the second...".[41] These sentiments have been since echoed by historians of other English medieval towns. Several reasons have been offered for this failure: high mortality rates or reproductive weakness; declining business fortunes; the departure of successful families to the country; and the failure of heirs to follow their fathers into business or civic office.[42] It is likely that a combination of these factors led to the absence of York dynasties.

A study of the fortunes of children of officials from the period 1476 to 1525 reveals some reasons for their apparent failure to follow their fathers into civic office. Again, wills provide the most reliable form of evidence for the existence of sons of civic officials. However, wills cannot be taken as a complete record of all surviving sons. In particular, eldest sons were sometimes omitted from their father's wills because as the family heirs they were often provided for during their father's lifetime.[43] Nevertheless, economic provision was not the only motive for leaving a will. Many testators also passed on sentimental gifts to their children and, particularly in the case of sons, named them as executor or supervisor of their will. Yet of the 223 civic officials for whom testamentary evidence survives, only 121 (54%) mentioned the existence of a son in their will.[44] Of the remaining 102 officials for whom testamentary evidence survives, non-testamentary sources suggest that a further

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[41] William Caxton, _The Prologues and Epilogues of William Caxton_ ed., W.J.B. Crouch, EETS, original series, 176 (1928), pp. 77-8.

[42] See for example, Kermode, _Medieval Merchants_, pp. 305-12; Thrupp, _Merchant Class_, pp. 191-233; Platt, _The English Medieval Town_, p. 98-103; Phythian Adams, _Desolation of a City_, pp. 221-37; Gottfried, _Bury St Edmunds_, pp. 56-60.

[43] W. Coster, _Kinship and Inheritance in Early Modern England: Three Yorkshire Parishes_, Borthwick Paper 83 (1993), pp. 10-11; Kermode, _Medieval Merchants_, pp. 72 & 279.

[44] Appendix 3. An additional seven men (3%) mentioned unnamed children in their wills, but failed to indicate whether these were sons or daughters. At 46%, the percentage of York civic officials failing to mention sons in their wills is higher than that found by Thrupp for merchant testators in London during the period 1468 to 1527. In this group 35% of testators appear to have been lacking male heirs.

45% of these men failed even to become freemen of the city.

Before exploring further some of the implications of this failure of civic families to perpetuate themselves within the ranks of the civic élite, it is first necessary to consider briefly some of the reasons why so few sons of civic officials failed even to become freemen of the city.[48] One possible explanation here is that many sons mentioned in wills did not reach adulthood. This is particularly likely to have been the case where sons were minors at the time of their father's death. Unfortunately, there is scant evidence with which to test this hypothesis for York, although it was certainly the case that many civic officials prepared for the eventuality of all their children dying without issue. For example, Robert Symson (sheriff 1504) left tenements to his children with the proviso that if all died without heirs his properties were to pass to his relation John Thorneton (mayor 1514).[49] Other testators including Michael White (mayor 1494 and 1505) preferred that their property should pass to their local church or to "poor and needy folk" in such an eventuality.[50]

Clearly, wills tend to assume a worst case scenario and therefore cannot be taken in isolation as evidence of high childhood or adolescent mortality rates. Nevertheless, just such a view is backed by evidence of infant mortality rates for other urban centres during the same period. For example, Thrupp's work on London orphans has shown that, 49% of orphans during the period 1468 to 1497 were less than twenty-one at the time of their father's death. Furthermore, Thrupp estimates that 41% of these minors died before reaching their majority.[51] Similarly, other historians have also argued for the importance of high infant mortality rates (often combined with low replacement rates) in preventing the

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[48] These suggestions are included as indicators for future research rather than as evidence of conclusive findings.

[49] BIHR, Probate Register 6, fols. 196r-v.

[50] BIHR, Probate Register 8, fol. 61r.

[51] Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p. 204, but see also pp. 199-204.

formation of élite dynasties in other late-medieval cities.[52] That general mortality rates were high in York during this period has been demonstrated by Jeremy Goldberg.[53] In particular, Goldberg has shown that the years 1479, 1483, 1504, 1505-6 and 1508-09 were all ones characterised by exceptionally high levels of mortality.[54] Further, Goldberg has suggested that endemic plague may have accounted for the high death rates during many of these years.[55] He has also noted that evidence from elsewhere suggests that the young were particularly vulnerable to the early phases of endemic plague, although whether that would have been true for York during a slightly later period is unclear.[56]

It could be argued that family structure in late-medieval English towns also had a direct bearing on the absence of urban dynasties in England. In many southern European cities kinship was strongly patrilineal. The structure, wealth and emotional ties of the family revolved around the male stem line. Testators did not divide their inheritance among all the children, but instead excluded female descendants and often favoured the interests of their eldest son.[57] Martha Howell has argued that such was the determination to preserve the inheritance rights of children in late-medieval Flanders that the marital property rights of

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[52] Platt, *The English Medieval Town*, pp. 99-100; Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 143 & 221-37; Dyer, *Worcester in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 180; Gottfried, *Bury St Edmunds*, pp. 46-72. For this phenomenon in Yorkshire generally during a slightly earlier period, see J.T. Rosenthal, 'Heirs, Ages and Family Succession in Yorkshire, 1399-1422', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 56 (1984): 87-94

[53] P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Mortality and Economic Change in the Diocese of York, 1390-1514', *Northern History* 24 (1988): 41.

[54] *Ibid*, p. 41.

[55] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

[56] *Ibid.*, p. 49.

[57] For the development of this system in southern Europe, see D. Herlihy, 'The Making of the Medieval Family: Symmetry, Structure and Sentiment', in D. Herlihy, (ed.), *Women, Family and Society in Medieval Europe: Historical Essays, 1978-1991* (Berghahn Books: Providence and Oxford, 1995), pp. 135-53; *idem*, and Klapisch-Zuber (eds.), *Tuscans and Their Families*, pp. 342-54.

wives were gradually eroded.[58] In contrast, kinship in York (as in most English cities) was

bilateral and not patrilineal: relationships traced through women were as important as those

traced through men.[59] Consequently, wealth and property were usually split among all sons,

daughters and wives.[60] Alan Dyer suggests that the rarity of primogeniture and the

consequent failure to preserve a substantial body of capital for re-investment contributed to

the lack of sixteenth-century urban dynasties in England.[61]

Further, it was relatively common for civic officials to fall on bad luck during their

lifetimes. For example, in 1503 the civic corporation awarded Miles Greenbank (sheriff

1482) an annuity as he had "fallen in gret povertie and feblenes of his body".[62] As will be

explored in the final part of the thesis, it was not unusual for former civic officials to be

granted annuities by the corporation. Sometimes, such financial breaks were not entirely

justifiable- indeed, the extent to which Greenbank had truly fallen into "gret povertie and

feblenes" might be open to question. However, while the justifications for annuities should

perhaps not always be taken at their face value, they do at least suggest a relative decline

in the financial prosperity of the recipient. Moreover, even in cases where children were

well provided for, this did not necessarily guarantee continued wealth throughout the

childrens' lifetimes. Sons' businesses could fail and daughters could be unlucky in their

choice of marriage partners. York sources attest the poverty of some children of former

civic officials. For example, in 1582 the House Books recorded that "two of Mr Paull

[58] M.C. Howell, *The Marriage Exchange: Property, Social Place and Gender in Cities of the Low Countries, 1300-1550* (The University of Chicago Press: London, 1998), *passim*.

[59] Kermode, 'Sentiment and Survival', p. 6; Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, p. 95.

[60] York wills followed the custom of legitim. The estate was divided into three parts: one third going to the widow; one third divided between the children, and one third going to the church. T.F.T. Plucknett, *A Concise History of the Common Law*, 5th edn. (Butterworth: London, 1956), pp. 743-5.

[61] Dyer, *Worcester in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 180.

[62] YCA, House Book 8, fol. 137v.

Gilloth daughters called Isabell Hoyser and Agnes Blaydes shall have, either of them, ijd

wekly towardes ther relief".[63]

So far, this section has considered why many sons of civic officials may have been

prevented from entering civic office themselves. Clearly, though, it is likely that some sons

deliberately chose not to follow their fathers into civic office, or even to take out the

freedom of the city. For example, William Holbeck, the son and heir of William Holbeck

senior (mayor 1449, 1458 & 1470-72) did not gain the freedom of the city or hold civic

office. This was despite the fact that Holbeck junior was involved in the distribution of lead

through the city and was required to pay a fee to carry out such trade as an alien.[64]

While Holbeck clearly did follow his father in practising a mercantile trade, the same was

not true of many sons of civic officials. Indeed, historians of other towns have followed

Thrupp in suggesting that the children of successful urban families would often spurn trade

in order to set themselves up in the country as gentry.[65] Rosemary Horrox has challenged

this thesis by arguing that the rural-urban divide was not as clearly drawn as is sometimes

suggested.[66] The York élite certainly boasted several sons of local gentry families among

its numbers.[67] However, these men appeared most commonly as common clerks, recorders

or sergeants of the mace or sword, rather than as civic officials.[68] Included among the city's

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[63] A. Raine (ed.), *Testamenta Eboracensia*, 6 vols, Surtees Society 4, 30, 45, 53, 79 & 106 (1836-1902), 5: 150. Paul Gillow was mayor in 1522. It is interesting that these two married women should be referred to as their father's daughters. As with the annuities, this suggests some form of financial obligation felt by the civic élite to former members and their kin. This topic is discussed in greater depth in Part Four.

[64] YCA, House Book 9, fol. 41v.

[65] Gottfried, *Bury St Edmunds*, pp. 153-65.

[66] R. Horrox, 'The Urban Gentry in the Fifteenth Century', in J.A.F. Thomson (ed.), *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century* (Sutton Publishing: Gloucester, 1988), pp. 22-44.

[67] Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 110.

[68] Horrox notes with regard to the posts of esquires of the sword and mace that the holders of these offices often cannot be linked conclusively to the gentry families whose names they sported. Horrox, 'Urban Gentry', p. 40, note 31.

common clerks during this period was Robert Plumpton, illegitimate son of Sir William Plumpton.[69] The post of recorder seams to have been particularly well-endowed in this respect, being filled by members of such local gentry families as the Vavasours, Palmes, Rokebys, and Fairfaxes.[70]

It is certainly the case that a number of members of the most successful civic families in York enjoyed close social or marriage links with gentry families.[71] However, Kermode has argued that despite such links "there was not the same degree of close interplay between town and country families as perhaps there was in some other English towns in the sixteenth century", and that "few urban merchants acquired sufficient rural property to remove themselves from urban life".[72] While marriage into gentry families may account for some of the sons of civic officials failing to enter the city's freedom or to hold civic office, the evidence suggests that this scenario was rare. Even in cases where successful merchant or civic families married into the ranks of the local gentry, a new gentry connection did not necessarily result in a withdrawal from urban life. For example, Richard York's first wife was Joan, daughter of Richard Mauleverer Esq. of Allerton. Yet York chose to remain in the city acting as a merchant and a civic official, and on the death of his wife he re-married to Joan Whitfield, the widow of John Whitfield, mayor of Hull.[73] Similarly, while Richard York's daughters married into the families of Mallory of Studdley and the Barton of Kilnsey, and his son Richard apparently married the daughter of Thomas, Lord Darcy, a second son

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[69] *Test Ebor*, 4: 258-60.

[70] Miller, 'Medieval York', pp. 74-5; Collins (ed.), *Freemen's Register*, pp. 215, 221; BIHR, 9, fol. 90v (Palmes); 6, fol. 181v (Vavasour).

[71] See below and Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 111 for such examples.

[72] *Ibid.*, p. 110.

[73] *Ibid.*, p. 111.

Thomas (chamberlain 1502) remained in York and held civic office.[74] Meanwhile, Thomas

York's son, Bartholemew (chamberlain 1534), married the daughter of John Thorneton

(mayor 1514) of York's prolific and successful Thorneton dynasty.[75] Another example is

the family of John Pullen who in 1461 married Alice Gasgoigne, daughter of Henry

Gasgoigne gentleman of Harewood and member of the Gascoigne of Gawthorpe family.

Despite their gentry connections Pullan's son Ralph (mayor 1537) and his grandson Anthony

(chamberlain 1571) remained within the city and held civic office.[76]

It is more perhaps more likely that movement into professions such as the church or

the law accounted for the failure of some sons to follow their fathers into civic office.

Indeed, it is possible that too much emphasis has been placed upon merchants and civic

rulers at the expense of other élite groups within English medieval towns and cities.[77]

Continental historians have increasingly stressed the growing social and political roles of

professional groups such as bureaucrats and lawyers in medieval urban communities.[78]

Indeed, it has been suggested that the late middle ages in Europe witnessed an increase in

the importance of clerks, scribes and jurists, to the extent that by 1600 they had, in many

places, become "the virtual masters of their own communities".[79] It seems unlikely that the

same could be said of these types of men in most medieval English towns- though more

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[74] *Ibid,* p. 111.

[75] See appendices 2a, b and c.

[76] *Test Ebor* 4: 336; York, BIHR, Probate Register 11, fol. 562r (Pullan').

[77] A criticism which could also be levelled at this study.

[78] W. Prevenier, 'Officials in Town and Countryside in the Low Countries: Social and Professional Developments from the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth-Century', *Acta Historiae Neerlandicae* (1974): 1-17; van Kan 'Élite and Government in Medieval Leiden', pp. 51-75.

[79] Rowan, 'Urban Communities: The Rulers and the Ruled', p. 206; L. Martines, *Lawyers and Statecraft in Renaissance Florence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), esp. chapter 9.

research needs to be undertaken in this area.[80] While it has not been feasible for this thesis

to undertake such a study, it is worth noting that of the fifty-five sons of civic officials who

were mentioned in their father's wills and also went on to become freemen of the city, at

least nine men (16%) became clerics, scribes or notaries.[81] This figure is surprisingly high

given that it was relatively uncommon for men of these occupations to enter the city's

franchise.[82] This finding may itself point to another explanation for the failure of sons of

civic officials to follow their fathers into civic office or into the freedom of the city.

In his study of the urban élite of medieval Leiden, van Kan stressed the existence of

other élites besides the civic élite.[83] He argued that these various élite groups were

interconnected through common personnel and through marriage and kinship ties. Similarly,

it is possible that sons of York civic officials may have gone on to constitute members of

urban élites besides the civic élite. For example, William Barker's (sheriff 1483) son John

entered the freedom of the city as a 'litteratus' and a notary the same year as his father's

death in 1511. However, the son also appears in York's Consistory Court books because

he was admitted to the ecclesiastical court as a proctor in 1503.[84] Interestingly, this type of

movement might also occur in the opposite direction. William Wright (mayor 1535) was

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[80] Horrox, 'The Urban Gentry', pp. 22-44; R.L. Storey, 'Gentlemen-Bureaucrats', in Clough (ed.), *Profession, Vocation and Culture*, p. 90-125; M. McKisack, *The Parliamentary Representation of the English Boroughs during the Middle Ages*, (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1930), pp. 106-17; P. Jalland, 'The "Revolution" in Northern Borough Representation in Mid Fifteenth-Century England', *Northern History* 11 (1976): 27-51.

[81] Thomas Bankehouse, son of Thomas Bankehouse senior (mayor 1521) became free as a priest in 1505; John Barker, son of William Barker (sheriff 1483) became free as a litteratus and notary in 1511; Thomas Baynes, son of John Baynes (bridge master 1494) became free as a litteratus in 1504 (another son named John who was not mentioned in his father's will also became free as such in 1503); Thomas Catour, son of John Catour (chamberlain 1487) became free as a litteratus in 1517; William Cokay, son of Simon Cokay (bridge master 1477) became free as a priest in 1500; Thomas Dale, son of Robert Dale (chamberlain 1493) became free as a parish clerk in 1490; John Elys, son of John Elys (sheriff 1503) became free as a litteratus in 1511; William Feron, son of Christopher Feron (bridge master 1506) became free as a priest in 1511; William Wells, son of William Wells (mayor 1479) became free as a priest in 1479.

[82] These men may have been entering the freedom of the city precisely because of their father's civic status.

[83] Van Kan, 'Élite and Government in Medieval Leiden', *passim*.

[84] York BIHR, [Cons]istory Court [A]act [B]ook 5 (1497-1508), fol. 42v.

both a merchant and a notary, and he acted as a proctor in York's Consistory Court.[85] In

so doing, Wright was following in the footsteps of his father, William Wright senior, who

was also both a notary and a proctor.[86] In turn, Wright senior's father was one John Wright,

a weaver and bridge master of Ouse bridge in 1464.[87] Similarly, the civic official John

Robinson (bridge master 1511) was also a public notary in the consistory courts.[88] These

examples are particularly interesting as they support Horrox's thesis that legal training did

not necessarily act as a prelude to an individual or family's withdrawal from urban life, but

instead "could be a way of broadening a family's horizons within a continuing urban

context".[89] As this research has indicated, far more work deserves to be undertaken on

professional élites within late-medieval English towns.

At the beginning of this section it was argued that the élite of late-medieval York was

not particularly integrated through patrilineage. Only a small minority of civic officials were

related through the male line to other officials of the same period. While the reasons for this

situation cannot be proved, it seems likely a variety of factors including high mortality rates,

problems with capital accumulation and transferal, movements between different spheres of

urban life and, to a lesser extent, movement out of the city all contributed to a weakening

in patrilineal patterns. As a consequence of these factors, access to the civic élite remained

relatively open in terms of family background, even if the sons of former civic officials were

advantaged in their civic careers.

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[85] See for example, York BIHR, Cons AB5 (1497-1508), fols. 24r, 53v, 98v; Cons AB6 (1509-12), fol. 6r; Cons AB9 (1521-1525), fol. 190r. See Appendix 1 for his civic career.

[86] For the relationship between William Wright senior and junior see York City Archives, York Memorandum Book AY, fol. 132r. For Wright senior's activities as a proctor see, for example, Cons AB5 (1497-1508), fols. 15r, 24r, 52v, 98v.

[87] Appendix 2b.

[88] Appendix 1; York BIHR, Cons AB4 (1484-1489), fol. 75v.

[89] Horrox, 'The Urban Gentry', p. 31.

On average, men who held office in York between 1476 and 1525 reached their first civic post fifteen years after gaining the freedom of the city. In contrast, sons of men who had held office took an average of only nine years.[90] The possible reasons for such accelerated promotion are diverse. Briefly, the most likely explanation is that the sons of civic officials inherited attributes that were likely to aid civic success. The ability to govern was not necessarily one of these inherited attributes (although inevitably there were fathers and sons whose civic success rested at least in part on mutual talent and business acumen): perhaps more important were inherited wealth or contacts. Of course, it is also likely that in some instances the civic élite deliberately favoured sons of previous civic officials. Nepotism certainly seems to have motivated some civic appointments in York. For example, in 1500 on the death of John Spooner, mace-bearer of the city, the corporation decided that they should give William Wrangwish the post. It made the award "in consideracion that Thomas Wrangwish father of the said William had been twice mayor of þis wurshipfull citie".[91]

Despite such cases, patrilineal links between civic officials were uncommon. This situation has several implications for understanding the civic élite of late-medieval York. The first is that the absence of such links denied one possible means of integrating or solidifying a diverse group of men. Few patrilineal links existed between the members of the élite at any one time. The lack of common genealogies also denied the élite the possibility of a ready-made communal memory based on shared lineages.[92] Second, the élite

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[90] Appendices 1 & 2a.

[91] YCA, House Book 8, fol. 79r.

[92] By contrast, the government of late-medieval Florence derived its legitimacy at least in part from the status and reputation of numerous ancient family names. See for example, G.A. Brucker, *Renaissance Florence* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.: London, 1969), especially pp. 89-127 & 137-51.

was unable to guarantee its real or ideological perpetuation through patrimony.[93] Bearing

these problems of integration, communal memory and perpetuation in mind, the next section

will explore marriage relationships and strategies within the élite of late-medieval York.

Marriage

In his book on elementary kinship structures, Claude Lévi-Strauss suggests that marriage

should be viewed as the most basic form of gift exchange.[94] Though much criticised, this

seminal work spawned the study of 'alliance systems' which examine the role of marriage

in forging kinship and social affiliations.[95] The gift or exchange of marriage partners has

been seen, both in elementary and complex kinship systems as playing an important or vital

role in the establishment of permanent relationships of solidarity and reciprocity.[96] It could

be argued in the absence of strong patrilineal links in later-medieval York and other

medieval towns, that marriage performed the function of increasing solidarity among an

otherwise diverse group of men.

It is certainly the case that marriage ties appear to have been common among members

of medieval urban élites. Additionally, unlike patrilineal relationships, marriage links also

appear to have been common among urban élites during the two centuries following the

Black Death. Ruth Frost, working on late fifteenth and early sixteenth-century Norwich,

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[93] Indeed, it was perhaps the desire to perpetuate which prompted the speedy promotion of the sons of former officials.

[94] C. Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, revised edn., trans. J.H. Bell, J.R. von Sturmer and R. Needham (Eyre and Spottiswoode: London, 1969), *passim*, but see especially pp. 52-68. For an exploration of marriage as a form of gift exchange (with the woman as the gift) in relation to gender and the social subordination of women see Gayle Rubin's exegetical reading of Lévi-Strauss: G. Rubin, 'The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex' in J.W. Scott (ed.), *Feminism and History* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1996), pp. 105-51, especially pp. 115-25.

[95] R.M. Keesing, *Kin Groups and Social Structure* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.: New York, 1975), pp. 78-90; Harris, *Kinship*, pp. 24-6.

[96] Keesing, *Kin Groups and Social Structure*, pp. 78-90; Rubin, 'Traffic in Women', pp. 116-7.

has estimated that 50% of the aldermen were interrelated.[97] Likewise, Maryanne Kowaleski has noticed a high degree of intermarriage among the élite of fourteenth and fifteenth-century Exeter.[98] York seems to have followed this trend. David Palliser has commented on the prevalence of marriage links between sixteenth-century councillors of the city.[99] Similarly, Jennifer Kermode has studied intermarriage among the mercantile élite of York, and has concluded that it was common.[100] It therefore comes as no surprise to find that the civic élite of York from the period 1476 to 1525 followed this pattern.

Although marriage ties are often hard to uncover, a number of these ties are evident from the surviving wills of the civic élite of late-medieval York.[101] Table 3:5 below summarises both patrilineal and marriage ties among civic officials from the period 1476 to 1525 as they are revealed in the testamentary evidence.[102]

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[97] Frost 'The Aldermen of Norwich', p.139.

[98] Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, p. 106.

[99] Palliser, 'York in the Sixteenth Century', pp. 183-8.

[100] Kermode, 'The Merchants of York, Beverly and Hull in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries', pp. 17-19; Kermode, 'Sentiment and Survival', p. 7.

[101] Marriage relationships are listed in Appendix 2c of the thesis.

[102] Patrilineal ties have been included to enable comparisons to be drawn between the prevalence of the two types of relationships.

Table 3:5
Cited Patrilineal and Marriage Relationships Between Civic Officials for whom Testamentary Evidence
Survives and Other Members of the Civic Élite of York 1476 to 1525: By Highest Civic Post Attained
(Numbers expressed as a percentage of all those who reached that post and for whom testamentary evidence
survives)

Highest Civic Post Attained	Patrilineal Relationships	Marriage Relationships	Patrilineal or Marriage Relationship*
Bridge Master	8	13	19
Chamberlain	25	23	41
Sheriff	21	39	46
Mayor	· 32	68	76
All Officials	**22**	**35**	**45**

*This is less than the sum of the previous two columns as several civic officials had both blood and marriage
relationships. Source: Appendices 2a and c.

Table 3:5 above shows, at least 45% of the men who held civic office between 1476

and 1525 for whom wills survive were related to other civic officials in this period either

through patrilineage or marriage. The fact that a minimum of almost half of the men who

held office between 1476 and 1525 were interrelated must have added cohesion to the élite.

This is particularly the case given the striking breakdown of relationships by civic office.

Table 3:5 suggests that the higher a man progressed up the civic hierarchy, the more likely

it was that he would be related to other civic officials either patrileneally or by marriage.

Of civic officials from the period 1476 to 1525 for whom wills survive, at least 76% of

mayors had family links with contemporaneous office holders, compared with 19% of bridge

masters.

Furthermore, Table 3:5 also suggests that marriage ties were far more prevalent than

ties of patrilineage. Whereas 22% of all will-leaving civic officials were patrileneally related,

35% were interlinked through marriage. Again this difference is particularly striking among

the highest civic officials: 68% of those who reached the post of mayor were linked by

marriage to other civic officials of the same period, whereas only 32% of mayors were

linked to other civic officials by patrilineal ties.[103]

The relationship networks revealed among the civic élite are often highly complex, with families appearing to have been linked through more than one relationship. The most striking of these networks was that involving the Thorneton family. At least twenty-one civic officials from the period 1476 to 1525, were part of a network of people linked by blood and marriage, at the centre of which was the Thorneton family.[104] Still more complicated was the smaller family network encompassing Ellen Stockdale and Isobel Wilde. Here, the multiple marriages of Ellen and her stepdaughter Isobel were the key factors behind the interlinking of so many civic officials.[105] The potential complexity of medieval families is well illustrated by the relationships between these two women. As well as being stepmother and stepdaughter, they were also linked through Ellen's first husband, William Hancock. William's brother (Robert) was married to the sister (Maude) of Isobel's first husband Robert Dicconson. As the wills of the members of these families illustrate, the bonds of affection and trust between élite families linked through marriage were often strong. For example, John Stockdale (mayor 1501) left gold rings to Robert Hancock's

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[103] This phenomenon is explored in greater depth below.

[104] James Blades (sheriff 1523), William Barker (sheriff 1489), John Beisby Senior (sheriff 1486), John Catour (chamberlain 1487), Robert Denton (bridge master 1491), Richard Hardsange (sheriff 1483), John Harper (mayor 1489), John Norman (sheriff 1490), John Norman (mayor 1524), John Rasen (sheriff 1515), Ralph Symson (sheriff 1529), Thomas Tailour (bridge master 1475), John Thorneton (mayor 1514), Richard Thorneton (mayor 1502), John Tong (mayor 1477), John White (sheriff 1510), Michael White (mayor 1494 & 1505), William White (mayor 1505),William Wilson (mayor 1513), Thomas York(chamberlain 1502), Richard York (mayor 1469 & 1482). A number of men who held civic office outside the period in question werer also members of this family network, for example: Thomas Brounflete (sheriff 1457-8), Thomas Catour (sheriff 1465), Robert Hall (mayor 1557), John Shadlocke (mayor 1542), William Stockton (mayor 1446 & 1461), Richard Thorneton (sheriff 1446), Bertram York (chamberlain 1534). See Appendices 2a, 2b and 2c. A smaller version of this network has been identified independently by Jennifer Kermode see Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 85.

[105] This family network encompassed Thomas Burton (mayor 1522), Robert Dikonson (chamberlain 1510), Robert Hancok (mayor 1488), William Hancok (chamberlain 1484), Robrt Johnson (mayor 1496), Henry Marshall (chamberlain 1501), John Stokdale (mayor 1501), Nicholas Vicars (sheriff 1486) and Robert Wilde (mayor 1527), Appendices 2a and 2c.

(mayor 1488) widow and George Kirk's (mayor 1495 & 1512) wife, Maud.[106] More striking, though, are the friendship and relationship networks revealed in the wills of the wives of civic officials themselves. For example, Maude Hancock, widow of Robert Hancock (mayor 1488) left bequests to: George Kirk (mayor 1495 & 1512) and his wife and his children; Agnes Jameson, wife of Thomas Jameson junior (chamberlain 1519); Robert Dicconson (chamberlain 1510) and his wife and children; Janet Johnson, daughter of Robert Johnson (mayor 1496); and Roger Gegges's (sheriff 1521) wife.[107]

It is interesting that Maude Hancock's will mentions more civic officials and their family members than the will of her husband Robert (this phenomenon will be explored in greater depth below).[108] Clearly, women played a vital role in the integration of the élite of late-medieval York. Marital relationships of particular importance appear to have been the marriages of daughters of existing civic officials to the sons of existing officials and the remarriages of widows of former officials. Both types of marriages were significant because they forged or developed links between existing civic families.[109] It could be argued that these two types of marriage were deliberately cultivated by the élite in order to maximise political and financial affiliations, and to increase group solidarity along the lines suggested in studies of 'alliance systems'.[110]

Phythian-Adams has demonstrated that marriages were used to cement existing friendships in late-medieval Coventry.[111] The same seems to have been true of the civic élite

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[106] BIHR, Probate Register 6, fol. 185r.

[107] BIHR, Probate Register 7, fols. 52r-53v.

[108] See p. 166.

[109] It is demonstrated below that most men married prior to holding civic office. For this reason, the majority of marriages included in Table 3:5 cannot be viewed as unions between *existing* civic families.

[110] Keesing, *Kin Groups and Social Structure*, pp. 78-90; Harris, *Kinship*, pp. 24-6.

[111] Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 150-1.

of York where it was not unusual for the children of officials to intermarry. At least six

York civic officials from the period in question who were sons of previous officials also

married the daughter of another official.[112] For example, Katherine, one of the two

daughters of the bower John Gegges (sheriff 1509), married Thomas Dawson (sheriff 1517),

son of the tailor Bartram Dawson (mayor 1511).[113] Similarly, in 1483, John Beverley

(sheriff 1485), the son of Thomas Beverley (mayor 1460 and elected mayor 1472), married

Anne Ferriby, daughter of John Ferriby (mayor 1478 and 1491).[114] It is likely that such

marriages grew out of existing friendships (possibly, although not necessarily, forged

through civic office). It is clear, for instance, that Beverley and Ferriby were close prior to

the marriage of their children. As early as 1472, Thomas Beverley's son and namesake left

a bequest of ten marks to John Ferriby.[115] Eight years later in 1480 Thomas Beverley senior

named John Ferriby an executor of his will.[116] Such alliances served to strengthen the

relationship between civic families. For example, on the death of Thomas Beverley senior

in 1491, John Ferriby arranged trentals and obits for the soul of Beverley, his wife and his

children.[117] That such connections may have held political as well as social significance is

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[112] John Beverley (sheriff 1485), son of Thomas Beverley (mayor 1460 & 1472) married Anne, daughter of John Fereby (mayor 1478 & 1491); John Catour (chamberlain 1487), son of Thomas Catour (sheriff 1465) married Agnes, daughter of John Tong (mayor 1477); Thomas Dawson (sheriff 1517), son of Bertram Dawson (mayor 1511) married Katherine, daughter of John Gegges (sheriff 1509); Peter Gilyot (chamberlain 1523), son of John Gilyot (mayor 1503) married Alice, step-daughter of Peter Jackson (mayor 1526); John White (sheriff 1516), son of William White (mayor 1505) married Joan, daughter of Richard Thorneton (mayor 1502); and John North (bridge master 1523), son of Richard North (sheriff 1513) married Agnes, daughter of Richard Roger (sheriff 1524); see Appendices 2a, b and c

[113] Appendices 1, 2a, and c. In addition, John's brother Roger Gegges (sheriff 1521) was also a civic official.

[114] Appendices 2b and c; Raine (ed.), *Testamenta Eboracensia*, IV: 347. The 1472 election was disputed and William Holbeck was returned to the mayoralty for the third successive year. Dobson (ed.), *Chamberlains Account Rolls*, Appendix 1, p. 211, note 9.

[115] BIHR, Probate Register 4, fol. 176r.

[116] BIHR, Probate Register 5, fol. 184r-v.

[117] BIHR, Probate Register 5, fols. 417v-18v. More examples of the effects of intermarriage on alliances within the élite are given below.

suggested by the assertion that the alderman, Peter Jackson (mayor 1526) was "greatly alyed" in York "by marriage of hys wifes daughters".[118]

Another benefit of inter-marriage within the civic élite was that it helped to keep the legacies of officials without male heirs within the existing élite. For example, since John Fereby had no surviving sons he left his land and property to his daughters and their husbands. Anne's sister Ellen was presumably the elder of the two daughters as it was she and her husband who received the lion's share of Fereby's estate. Ellen was herself married to a civic official, John Metcalf (mayor 1498).[119]

The York evidence suggests that the remarriage of widows was equally important in terms of the integration and consolidation of the civic élite. Interestingly, it does not appear to have been standard practice for widows to remarry during the medieval period, although evidence suggests that remarriage may have been more common among more wealthy widows.[120] The York evidence does not allow an estimation to be made of the proportion of widows of civic officials who remarried. However, it is clear that the families of at least fifteen civic officials from the period 1476 to 1525 were linked through the remarriage of a widow. These relationships are detailed in Table 3:6 below along with the occupation and highest civic office attained by the men.

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[118] Star Chamber Proceedings 1: 31-2. Peter Gilyot (chamberlain 1523), son of John Gilyot (mayor 1503) married Alice, step-daughter of Peter Jackson (mayor 1526) see Appendices 2a and c.

[119] BIHR, Probate Register 5, fol. 417v-18v.

[120] Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, p. 273; Barron and Sutton (eds.), *Medieval London Widows*, pp. xxiv-xxvi; Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p. 197; Kowaleski, 'The History of Urban Families', p. 56. For the remarriage of widows in general see B. Hanawalt, 'Remarriage as an Option for Urban and Rural Widows in Late Medieval England', in S. Walker (ed.), *Wife and Widow in Medieval England* (University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbour, 1993), pp. 147-57.

Table 3:6
Women Who Married More than One Man Who Held Civic Office During the Period 1476 to 1525.

Widow	Married	Husband's Occupation	Date of 2nd Marriage	Second Husband's Highest Civic Office At Marriage	Ever Attained
Dionesse Arrowme	1-Alex Dauson 2-Miles Arrowme	Mercer Vestmentmaker	NA 1498	NA Sheriff	Sheriff 1489 Sheriff 1496
Agnes Clifford	1-John Elwald 2-Edward Clifford	Merchant Merchant	NA 1506	NA None held	Mayor 1499 Chamberlain 1507
Alice Dayson	1-Robert Petty 2-Henry Dayson	Tapiter Dyer	NA 1528+	NA Sheriff	Sheriff 1499 Mayor 1531
Margaret Foltneby	1-Thomas Bugwith 2-Thomas Foltneby	Spicer/ Grocer Merchant	NA 1500+	NA Sheriff	Chamberlain 1497 Sheriff 1488
Ellen Stockdale	1-William Hancock 2-Robert Johnson 3-John Stockdale	Apothecary Grocer/ Spicer Mercer	NA 1484+ 1498+	NA Chamberlain Sheriff	Chamberlain 1484 Mayor 1496 Mayor 1501
Agnes White	1-William Barker 2-William White	Merchant Dyer	NA 1503+	NA Sheriff	Sheriff 1489 Mayor 1505
Isobel Wilde	1-Robert Dicconson 2-Robert Wilde	Merchant Merchant	NA 1521	NA Sheriff	Chamberlain 1510 Mayor 1527

Source: Appendices 1 and 2c.

As indicated in Table 3:6, the most striking example of a widow of a civic official subsequently remarrying another member of the political élite is that of Ellen Stockdale, who consecutively married three officials: two mayors and a chamberlain. Historians have suggested that such widows represented a 'good catch' for ambitious husbands because of the capital, contacts and social prestige they could bring to a marriage.[121] Indeed, marriage to a widow could in principle provide the prerequisite wealth and contacts necessary for obtaining civic office.[122] However, what is noticeable about the remarriages of the widows listed in Table 3:6 is that all bar one of the women remarried men who had already held civic office. Moreover, all bar two of the women remarried men who had at least attained the

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[121] Kowaleski, 'The History of Urban Families', pp. 55-6.

[122] For example, Thomas Harvey of Coventry was elected to civic office (against his will) apparently on account of his recent marriage to the widow of one of the city's aldermen; Phythian Adams, *Desolation of a City*, p. 250.

office of sheriff, and were of an equal or higher status than their previous husbands.[123]

These men were already well established civic officials and, as such, were likely to have been

both wealthy and well-connected. With the possible exception of Edward Clifford

(chamberlain 1507), there is no evidence to suggest that they were in need of a shortcut to

fame and fortune.[124] Unfortunately, it is not possible to say how representative these

discussed second marriages were of remarriage in general. Nonetheless, this evidence does

suggest that in many cases it was the status of widows which increased as a result of

remarriage, rather than as historians have tended to argue, the status of their second

husbands.

Historians have also argued that the remarriages of wealthy widows were often

controlled or supervised by friends and relations anxious to capitalise on the contacts and

alliances that such marriages could provide.[125] For example, Carole Rawcliffe has suggested

that Nicholas Brembre arranged the second and third marriages of his sister-in-law,

Margaret Stodeye, in order to consolidate his power base in fourteenth-century London.[126]

There is no evidence to suggest that the York widows were similarly used by men to form

or consolidate political alliances in medieval York, although this possibility cannot be ruled

out. What is clear, is that York widows did not always have full autonomy over subsequent

marriages. It was not unusual for widowers to bequeath goods, land or money to their

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[123] Since the dates of neither of Ellen Stockdale's subsequent marriages are known, it is possible that she married Robert Johnson and John Stockdale after they respectively became sheriff and mayor.

[124] Although it is possible that their subsequent promotions were due in part to wealth or contacts acquired or strengthened as a result of these marriages.

[125] Barron and Sutton (eds.), *Medieval London Widows*, p. xxv.

[126] C. Rawcliffe, 'Margaret Stodeye, Lady Philipot (d.1431)', in Barron and Sutton (eds.), *Medieval London Widows*, pp. 85-98.

wives on the condition that they did not remarry.[127] It is likely that instructions such as these were, at least in part, designed to protect the interests of the deceased's children in the event of his widow remarrying.[128] As Elaine Clark has demonstrated in her research on the court of orphans in late-medieval Bristol and London, when they came to remarry many widows renegotiated the legal terms of the custody of their young.[129] As wills also reveal, it was not uncommon for widowers to request that any subsequent marriage be 'vetted'. In such circumstances the job of vetting the widow's choice of a future marriage partner often fell to someone who was not immediate kin. For example, John Custance's (sheriff 1493) son, Thomas, instructed that his widow was not to have any of his land in Acomb unless his son and his daughter's father-in-law 'be content with' his widow's remarriage.[130]

The remarriage of wealthy widows was an important enough issue to effect the wider élite community. Nicholas has demonstrated that in medieval Ghent "the widow of a prominent man was...a desirable commodity on the marriage market, and her late husband's relatives could be threatened if she married the 'wrong' man".[131] It has been argued above that one advantage of civic heiresses marrying into other civic families was that an official's wealth and contacts were preserved within the civic élite. The same argument might apply to most of the marriages of widows of civic officials listed in Table 3:6. Indeed, it is possible that it was in order to consolidate resources within certain social groups that

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[127] See for examples the wills of John Elwald, Thomas Lewelyn and James Loundesdale; York Minster Archives, Dean and Chapter Probate Register 2, fol. 43r-v; BIHR, Probate Registers 3, fol. 315r-v & 5, fols. 463v-4r.

[128] Kowaleski, 'The History of Urban Families', p. 49; For an in-depth exploration of this topic as it related to the Low Countries in the medieval period, see Howell, *The Marriage Exchange, passim*.

[129] E. Clark, 'City Orphans and Custody Laws in Medieval England', *American Journal of Legal History* 34 (1990): 178.

[130] BIHR, Probate Register 9, fol. 394r-v.

[131] D. Nicholas, *The Domestic Life of a Medieval City: Women Children and the Family in Fourteenth-Century Ghent* (University of Nebraska Press: New Haven, 1985), p. 28.

widows often chose to remarry men of similar social backgrounds to their previous

husbands. As already indicated, other historians have suggested that merchants' widows

tended to remarry other merchants.[132] Similarly, Derek Keene has shown that tanners'

widows in London tended to remarry tanners.[133] The remarriage of widows to men of a

similar occupation has been ascribed to practical considerations. It is argued that since

widows often inherited their husbands' businesses, it made good business sense for them to

remarry a man in the same line of work.[134] However, this situation was often brought about

by the actions of civic or guild authorities. In many towns during the late-medieval period,

pressure was placed on widows to remarry through the use of ordinances forbidding them

to continue in their husbands' occupation or to train apprentices.[135] Moreover, in

fourteenth-century Bristol the civic ordinances actively discouraged widows from marrying

out of the community. Any widow or daughter of a burgess who married a stranger who

was not free, respectable and of upright conduct was to be entirely cast out of the liberty of

the city, and to be considered as a stranger herself for the duration of her marriage,

regardless of her previous rights and status.[136]

Surrogate Heirs

It has been argued that marriages between the children of existing civic officials and the

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[132] Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p. 28; Kermode, 'Sentiment and Survival', pp. 6-7.

[133] Keene, 'Tanners' Widows', pp. 23-5.

[134] Barron and Sutton (eds.), *Medieval London Widows*, pp. xxv-vi.

[135] For example, the weavers' guild in Coventry forbade widows from taking apprentices. Cited in Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 91-2. Fourteenth and fifteenth-century ordinances from other towns were even more strict, forbidding widows to practise their husband's craft for more than several months or a year after their husband's death. See, for example, Sellers (ed.), *York Memorandum Book, part 2*, p. lvii; P.J.P. Goldberg (ed.), *Women in Medieval English Society* (Sutton Publishing: Stroud, 1997), pp. 203 & 204. Goldberg argues that such regulations were motivated by an attempt to protect jobs for men during periods of economic recession; Goldberg, *Women, Work, and Life Cycle*, especially pp. 333-61.

[136] Goldberg, *Women in England*, p. 209.

remarriage of widows of officials played a vital role in increasing integration among the élite of late-medieval York. Such alliances may have been deliberately forged in order to increase solidarity within the élite. Furthermore, the élite protected and consolidated its collective resources through encouraging widows of wealthy men to remarry other men within the group. Although these strategies increased integration among the élite, they did not contribute to its real or ideological perpetuation in the long term. In considering how the latter may have been achieved, it is useful to look at the strategies of élites from elsewhere.

Laurence Stone and Jeanne Fawtier-Stone have argued that a demographic crisis among the late seventeenth and early-eighteenth century English landed élite was solved through various strategies of indirect inheritance.[137] Included among these strategies was the adoption by nobles who lacked patrilineal heirs of a 'surrogate' heir, commonly a son-in-law.[138] The role of this heir was primarily to preserve the lineage of the family. Indeed, it was not uncommon for this man to change his surname to that of his wife to ensure that the family name was preserved.[139]

Stone and Fawtier Stone have also suggested that the 'inheritor' élites shared the political, financial and social aspirations of the established élite.[140] Therefore, it could be argued that the use of surrogate heirs also served to guarantee the ideological perpetuation of the entire social group. The idea of the use of 'surrogate heirs' is an interesting one which, it might be argued, was similar to the strategy adopted by the élite of later-medieval York. Clearly, the élite of late-medieval York did not face the same pressures to preserve their family name or lineage as the early modern aristocracy. Nevertheless, it will be argued,

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[137] L. Stone and J.C. Fawtier-Stone, *An Open Élite? England 1540-1880* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1984), p. 160.

[138] *Ibid.*, pp. 118-26.

[139] *Ibid.*, pp. 126-42.

[140] *Ibid.*, p. 184.

below that in the absence of sufficient sons, the sons-in-law and apprentices of York officials played the role of 'surrogate heirs' in ensuring the perpetuation both of civic families and the wider civic élite.

Marriage has been viewed by English and continental medievalists as a common method of social advancement for ambitious men.[141] It also appears to have performed this function in later-medieval York. Only limited evidence exists concerning male age of first marriage in late-medieval York. However, it is very unlikely given what is known about marriage patterns that the average age was above thirty years.[142] Rappaport has suggested that in sixteenth-century London marriage was often undertaken around the time of entry into the city's franchise. There is no reason to suggest that this would not also have been the case in late-medieval York. Most civic officials who joined York's Corpus Christi Guild did so prior to holding civic office in the city. Furthermore, of those civic officials whose date of entry into the guild can be ascertained, the majority (68%) joined the guild with their wives, thus indicating that, if not the norm, marriage prior to entry into civic office would have been common.[143] By contrast, the average age at which men held their first civic office cannot have been below thirty-five. Twenty-one seems to have been the youngest age at which men entered the franchise of medieval cities and Jennifer Kermode has suggested that in York the average is likely to have been around twenty-two.[144] York men then took an average of just over fifteen years to reach their first civic office, giving them an average age

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[141] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans and their Families*, pp. 226-7; Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 28-9, 105-6; Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 85-6; Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, p. 213.

[142] Goldberg's evidence suggests that men in medieval Yorkshire tended to be married by the age of 26; Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, pp. 225-32; See also Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 192-3.

[143] Appendix 1.

[144] Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 86; See also Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p. 193. It is possible that many men entered the freedom during their late-twenties. Rappaport estimates that the average age for entry in early-modern London was 26. Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, p. 49.

of entry into office of no younger than thirty-six.[145] Clearly, in view of this evidence, most

of the discernible marriage links between York civic officials are likely to have been

established before office holding was undertaken. It is likely that these marriages were often

instrumental in men subsequently attaining civic office.

An advantageous marriage could be important in several respects. Financially, the

dowry could offer the large capital sum necessary to enable a young man to set up in

independent business.[146] For example, Elizabeth Beverley, the sister of John Beverley

(sheriff 1485), was left a dowry of £100 by her other brother Thomas.[147] Besides the dowry,

the wills of the civic élite of late-medieval York suggest that a father-in-law could also be

a good source of credit. John Wright (bridge master 1509) was far from unusual in

mentioning in his will money that his sons-in-law owed him.[148] Indeed, Phythian-Adams has

argued that a major function of the extended family (including affines) at this level of society

was the solution of liquidity difficulties.[149] As Part One of the thesis demonstrated, wealth

was a necessary prerequisite for civic office holding in York as it was in other medieval

towns. Furthermore, the connection between marriage and the procurement of wealth

sufficient to qualify someone for civic office was noted by contemporaries. For example,

[145] Phythian-Adams suggests that around forty might have been the usual age at which to acquire one's first civic office in late-medieval Coventry; Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, p. 126.

[146] In some quarters at least, character was rated over wealth. The Wise Man taught his Son that "...if þou wolt haue a wijf,/ Take hir not for coueitise, /But wijseli enqweere of al hir lijf, /And take good hede, bi myn avice, /Þat sche be meeke, curteis, and wijs..". Furnival (ed.), *The Babees Book*, p. 50, lines 73-6. In other words, the Son should seek a wife who was meek, courteous and wise rather than merely wealthy. For the qualities and duties expected of husbands and wives see P.P.A. Biller, 'Marriage Patterns and Women's Lives: A Sketch of Pastoral Geography', in P.J.P. Goldberg (ed.), *Women in Medieval English Society* (Sutton Publishing: Stroud, 1997), pp. 66, 83-85.

[147] BIHR, Probate Register 4, fol. 176; See also Richard Cely junior who received a marriage dowry of 500 marks (£333) from his wife, while the Stonor daughters brought 200 marks (£120) to their marriages; Hanham, *The Celys and Their World*, p. 310. James Murray has suggested that the marriage dowry under Flemish law during the medieval period created "a type of limited partnership" between the couple: J.M. Murray, 'Family, Marriage and Moneychangers in Medieval Brugge', *Journal of Medieval History* 14 (1988): 117.

[148] BIHR, Probate Register 13, fol. 393r.

[149] Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, p. 150.

the Coventry civic authorities doubted Roger Lee's excuse that he was unable to afford the office of chamberlain on account of the fact that it was known that Roger:

> had with his wif, oon John Pachette's doughter, in redy money & plate xxxli., and also it was right well knowen that he hadde right largely of his owne, or els the seid John Pachet wold not haue maried his doughter to hym.[150]

Just as important as financial considerations would have been the family connections that marriage could bring. On a practical level, an advantageous marriage could bring with it goodwill, as well as business contacts.[151] It could also provide an entrée into the civic élite; indeed, the importance of this aspect of marriage in Renaissance Florence was implicit in the stress laid on the importance of the social and political standing of the families of prospective marriage partners.[152] In fact, in late-medieval Venice, such was the importance of marriage relations to the fortunes of patrician families that the value of daughters' dowries often exceeded the sums left to sons.[153]

All of these factors seem to have enhanced considerably the promotion prospects of civic officials in late-medieval York. As previously stated, civic officials as a whole took an average of almost fifteen years to reach their first civic post after becoming free. In contrast, sons-in-law of former civic officials on average took less than ten years to reach office; a

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[150] Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, p. 85.

[151] Kermode, 'Sentiment and Survival', p. 7.

[152] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans and their Families*, pp. 343-4. See for Ghent: P. Clark, 'The Civic Leaders of Ghent 1580-1800', in P. Clark (ed.), *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns 1600-1800* (Hutchonson: London, 1984), pp. 316-7.

[153] S. Chojnacki, "The Power of Love: Wives and Husbands in Late Medieval Venice", in M. Erler and M. Kowaleski (eds.), *Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (University of Georgia Press: London, 1988), pp. 126-48.

similar amount of time as it took the average office-holding son of a civic official.[154] Men

marrying into successful families and utilizing their wealth and contacts to achieve success

for themselves, may well account for the preponderance of discernible marriage links within

the élite. Nevertheless, it might also be argued that the men who married into civic families

were not the only ones advantaged by their own rapid promotion. As we have seen, the

civic élite of later-medieval York was unable to rely on patrilineal links to foster integration

or to guarantee its perpetuation. It is therefore quite possible that established civic officials

were anxious to promote 'suitable' new men into their own ranks.

In terms of integration, it is clear that relationships between civic officials and sons-in-

law who went on to hold civic office were often close. Sons-in-law frequently performed

the function of supervisors or executors of wills, a role also often fulfilled by sons. For

example, Robert Denton (bridge master 1471) chose his daughter Alice and her husband

William Wilson (mayor 1513) to be his executors.[155] Similarly, Thomas Scotton (mayor

1492) nominated his son-in-law John Doggeson (mayor 1508 & 1517) as his executor, and

referred to him in his will as his son.[156] Further, it was not unusual for civic officials to

bequeath sentimental gifts to their sons-in-law. These gifts often took the form of clothing

or silver although they sometimes had a more masculine character.[157] For example, John

Stockdale (mayor 1501) bequeathed his son-in-law, Robert Dicconson (chamberlain 1510),

six of his best bows and his quiver with its shaft.[158] Likewise, John Petty (mayor 1508)

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[154] Appendices 1 and 2c. Similarly, Peter Clark has argued that kinship ties enhanced promotion prospects in early-modern Ghent; Clark, 'The Civic Leaders of Ghent', p. 318.

[155] BIHR, Probate Register 5, fol. 405v.

[156] BIHR, Probate Register 6, fol. 60v-61r.

[157] For example, George Essex (mayor 1509) bequeathed his son-in-law, John Chapman (sheriff 1512), a violet gown lined with Cyprus satin, a doublet and a silver piece; BIHR, Probate Register 7, fol. 51r.

[158] BIHR, Probate Register 6, fol. 185r.

bequeathed his son-in-law, Miles Skipton (bridge master 1514), a breast plate, chainmail sleeves, a standard of mail, a battleaxe and a sallet (helmet).[159]

In addition to increasing integration among the élite, sons-in-law of civic officials could be viewed as 'surrogate heirs' responsible for the perpetuation both of élite families and their wider social group. Maryanne Kowaleski has argued that marriage was important in medieval Exeter not only as a means of achieving individual success, but also for ensuring a constant supply of new oligarchs.[160] As with aristocratic inheritor élites, ambitious men who sought out the daughters of wealthy or politically successful civic officials were likely to have shared similar aspirations to those of the already established élite. The rapid promotion of men who were sons-in-law of established officials may therefore have been deliberate. In many ways these men represented 'safe bets' for the real and ideological perpetuation of the civic élite. Moreover, it is interesting to consider whether, like Stone and Fawtier Stones' landed élites, the heirless civic officials of York deliberately sought out 'surrogate heirs' who would make good husbands for their daughters and perpetuate their wealth, name and network of contacts. The York evidence certainly suggests that civic officials took an active interest in whom their daughters married.

Although there is a general consensus among historians that English couples married late compared with their southern European counterparts, there is little agreement on the extent to which English urban élite marriages were arranged.[161] Some historians have suggested that while arranged marriages were not the norm in English urban society as a

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[159] YMA, Dean and Chapter Probate Register, 2, L2/5a, 76v-78r.

[160] Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, pp. 115-6.

[161] Goldberg, *Women Work and Life Cycle*, pp. 204-32 & 274-5; M.E. Mate, *Daughters, Wives and Widows After the Black Death: Women in Sussex, 1350-1535* (The Boydell Press: Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 21-3; S. McSheffrey, "'I Will Never Have None Against My Father's Will": Consent and the Making of Marriage in the late-Medieval Diocese of London', in J.T. Rosenthal and C.M. Rousseau (eds.), *Women, Marriage and Family in Medieval Christendom: Essays in Memory of Michael M. Sheehan* (Medieval Institute Press: Kalamazoo, 1998), pp. 153-74.

whole, they were much more common among the offspring of wealthy parents.[162] Moreover, Shannon McSheffrey has argued in her exploration of masculinity and late-medieval civic culture that it was the duty of civic patriarchs to govern social relations within the town.[163] In particular, she argues that "it was the duty and privilege of senior men to ensure that suitable marriages were made, and unsuitable unions prevented or stopped".[164] For McSheffrey, this duty was an extension of the civic élite's wider role as a moral regulator within towns, as articulated through official structures such as the wardmote courts.

Evidence for arranged marriages among the élite of late-medieval York is scarce. However, the wills of members of the civic élite do witness to concerns over who their daughters married. For example, Margaret North, widow of John North (chamberlain 1497) and mother of Richard North (sheriff 1513), left goods to her niece Margaret provided "she marries after the mind and will of my son...".[165] Similarly, Ellen Stockdale, widow of John Stockdale (mayor 1501) was concerned about the marriage of her two daughters by her second husband Robert Johnson (mayor 1496). She stated that if her daughters accepted the guiding of her supervisors concerning their marriage then they were to have all the goods that remained of her husband Robert Johnson's portion, together with her own portion to total 100li. However, if either of them would not marry according to this advice they were to have only their child's portions and neither her portion nor the remainder of

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[162] Goldberg, *Women Work and Life Cycle*, pp. 231-4 & 274-5; Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 28-9.

[163] S. McSheffrey, 'Men and Masculinity in Late Medieval London Civic Culture: Governance, Patriarchy and Reputation', in J. Murray (ed.), *Conflicted Identities and Multiple Masculinities: Men in the Medieval West* (Garland Publishing: London, 1999), pp. 243-278.

[164] *Ibid.*, p. 245. It should be noted that McSheffrey argues that occasionally women in positions of authority or responsibility were occasionally involved in the making of marriages, although their role was generally more informal than that of men.

[165] BIHR, Probate Register 6, fols. 202v-203r.

their father Robert Johnsons goods'.[166] Besides her three executors, Ellen also appointed

two further supervisors saying they were to "gyff ther faythfull conseall to my forseid

executors and daughters Malde and Jennet for ther maryegge".[167] As will be argued later,

members of the civic élite often appointed other civic officials as guardians or supervisors

of their wills. As such, even upon the death of a civic official, the identification of a suitable

marriage partner remained in the hands of the civic élite, as was the case for the Johnson

sisters. Indeed, Clark has demonstrated that while the courts of the municipal authorities

of Bristol and London were unconcerned with the welfare of orphans of the poor or the

unendowed, they "represented the interests of the deceased no less than the concerns of the

orphans" when they regulated the wardship of heirs.[168] In particular, the courts were

concerned to protect the child's property and wealth. One aspect of this concern was the

regulation that orphans under the age of twenty-one were not allowed to marry without the

mayor's approval.[169] Interestingly, there is evidence to suggest that York's civic élite

jealously guarded their right to oversee the wardship and marriage of the heirs of civic

officials. For example, following the death intestate of the alderman John Metcalf (mayor

1498) in 1502, the king sent a letter to the corporation complaining that whereas:

the warde and mariage of his heire...justely belongeth unto us...ye by vertue of your

office lately impaneled certain insufficient persons to have passed opon this matere to

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[166] BIHR, Probate Register 6, fols. 227-8.

[167] These two men were Brian Palmer, recorder of the city, and Robert Cheston, a notary in York's ecclesiastical courts. Unfortunately it is not known who Maud and Janet married, or even whether they lived long enough to reach marriageable age. See also Sussex merchants cited in Mate, *Daughters, Wives and Widows*, pp. 31-2. Phythian-Adams has also noted the obligation placed on relict daughters to take advice on whom they should marry from kin, including brothers-in-law; Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 150-1.

[168] Clark, 'Orphans and Custody Laws in Medieval England', p. 170.

[169] *Ibid.*, p. 172.

the hinderance of our right and interesse...[170]

As has been demonstrated, the marriage of heirs of civic officials was often closely supervised by parents or other members of the civic élite. In part, this supervision no doubt stemmed from a desire that offspring should not marry unscrupulous partners. However, it is also likely, that, as with the remarriage of widows, there existed as additional concern to protect the wealth and network of contacts of the deceased. It was important to the élite as a whole that such resources should remain within the community. Given this situation, the accelerated promotion of surrogate heirs was perhaps not surprising. Marriage to the daughters of wealthy and well-connected civic officials provided these men with a spring-board to civic prominence and success. Yet it is equally likely that civic officials actively encouraged such men to follow in their footsteps. The ensuing close relationships which often developed between civic officials and their sons-in-law no doubt served to increase the degree of integration among the élite.

Fictive kinships and apprenticeship were also important, in the selection, training and encouragement of suitable men for civic office. Fictive kinship, meaning relations modelled on kinship, are important in many societies because they perform the function of extending genealogical ties.[171] Godparentage was the most obvious form of fictive kinship in medieval society, and it appears to have played an important role in broadening an individual's social circle. Certificates of birth contained within the York House Books are one of the few sources which list godparents during the medieval period.[172] Although wills often make

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[170] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 2: 176.

[171] Keesing, *Kin Groups and Social Structure*, p. 129.

[172] The certificates are included in the York House Books as they testify to the fact that York freemen born in the north of the country were not Scottish by birth. Claiming someone was a Scot was a popular form of slander in York during the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries. All seventeen certificates are published together in J. Raine (ed.), *A Volume of English Miscellany Illustrating the History and Language of the Northern*

reference to godparents or children, they are rarely named, making it difficult to generalise

about the types of people chosen in this role. The only godparent relationships involving

civic officials which it has been possible to trace are those of William Robinson (chamberlain

1503), John Nelson (sheriff 1514), Ralph Neleson (bridge master 1513) and Bartram

Dawson (mayor 1511). Although all four of these men were craftsmen, the status of their

godparents (where known) was of gentle or yeoman rank.[173] As Barbara Hanawalt notes,

this finding suggests that in selecting godparents, the parents of a townsman may have

hoped that they would "help the young man when he was looking for places and

preferment".[174] The certificate of William Robinson supports this interpretation. While the

reason for Robinson's move from Boulton in Westmoreland to York is unknown, it is

interesting to note that York residents who were connected with Robinson's godparents are

named in the certificate. Testifying to Robinson's birth were Sir William Darnwater, a York

chantry priest who was the son of Robinson's godmother Johanna Darnwater, and also Janet

Bell, a resident of York who had been born in Boulton and who was described in the

certificate as Robinson's "god sustser".[175] Clearly, it is quite possible that Robinson's move

to York was influenced by connections he already enjoyed with the city through his

godparents.

Unfortunately, as indicated, spiritual kinship links cannot be reconstructed for any

other York civic officials. Therefore it is impossible to know with any certainty whether

aspirant York parents sought wealthy or influential townsmen as the godparents of their

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Counties of England, Surtees Society 85 (1890 for 1888), pp. 35-52. The social background of the godparents listed in these certificates are summarised in B. Hanawalt, *The Ties that Bound: Peasant Families in Medieval England* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1986), pp. 247-8.

[173] Raine (ed.), *English Miscellany*, pp. 49-52; cf also Hanawalt, *The Ties that Bound*, p. 247.

[174] Hanawalt, *The Ties that Bound*, p. 176.

[175] Raine (ed.), *English Miscellany*, pp. 49-50. 'God suster' presumably refers to the fact that the two had a common godparent.

children, or whether links within the civic élite were strengthened through godparent ties. Nevertheless, Phythian Adams has suggested that the aldermen of medieval Coventry were interlinked by just these means.[176] Whether these ties played a role in the selection or integration of civic officials is unclear, although this does at least seem feasible.

The study of apprenticeship is more revealing. Although apprenticeship relations are not generally regarded as a type of fictive kinship, it could be argued that masters acted *in loco parentis*. They were responsible for clothing, feeding and housing apprentices under their care and, as will be argued, the relationships between masters and apprentices were often very close.[177] Moreover, Barbara Hanawalt has argued that in the widespread absence of father-to-son succession, apprenticeship was of paramount importance for the perpetuation and survival of urban society. In particular, she argues that in cities such as London apprenticeship played a vital role in the socialisation of future citizens, providing a "training ground...for those who would lend continuity to the social and political ethos of (the city)".[178] So to what extent can apprenticeship be considered to have been a desirable training or socialisation for citizenship and civic office-holding in York?

Unfortunately, evidence for apprenticeship in York is limited. Besides occasional mentions of masters and apprentices in wills and cause papers, the only substantial sources of evidence for apprenticeship in medieval York are a list of apprentice and master weavers for the period c.1450 to 1505, and records of admission to the freedom of the city by

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[176] Phythian Adams, *Desolation of a City*, p. 144.

[177] P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Masters and Men in later Medieval England', in Hadley (ed.), *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, (Longman: London, 1999), pp. 56-70, but see especially pp. 61-2.

[178] B.A. Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London: the Experience of Childhood in History* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1993), p. 171; C.F. Friedrichs, *The Early Modern City 1450-1750* (Longman, London, 1995), p. 168. For a thorough exploration of the socialising role of apprenticeship, see B.A. Hanawalt, '"The Childe of Bristowe" and the Making of Middle-Class Adolescence' in Hanawalt and Wallace (eds.), *Bodies and Disciplines*, pp. 155-78.

apprenticeship for the years 1482 to 1487.[179] For this reason, no estimate can be made of

the percentage of civic officials who may have been linked through apprenticeship

relationships. However, enough evidence survives to enable some valuable conclusions to

be drawn concerning the role of apprenticeship in the perpetuation of the civic élite. Table

3:7 below summarises the method of entry into the York franchise for the period 1482 to

1487. It also shows the percentage of men from each method of entry who went on to

become civic officials.

Table 3:7
Men Who Entered the Freedom of York 1482-87: By Method of Entry.

	Number in Each Group	Of Whom Became Civic Officials	
By Purchase	290	15	(5%)
By Patrimony	64	5	(8%)
By Apprenticeship	139	19	(14%)
All Freemen	493	39	(8%)

Sources: Collins, *York Freemen's Register*, pp. 203-12; Appendix 1.

As Table 3:7 above shows, only 8% of all men who gained the freedom of the city

between 1482 and 1486 went on to hold civic office. Whereas only 5% of freemen by

purchase and 8% of freemen by patrimony became civic officials, 14% of men admitted by

apprenticeship became civic officials. It could be argued that these statistics reflect a wider

tendency to favour apprenticeship over patrimony or purchase. For example, a York

ordinance of 1484 gave apprentices a preferential entry fee.[180] This was also the case

elsewhere. Apprentices in medieval Wells, together with sons of burgesses, were given free

entry to the city's franchise. Meanwhile, in London apprenticeship had become the main

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[179] YCA, Register of Apprentices, D11; Collins (ed.), *York Freemen's Register*, pp. 204-12.

[180] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 303-4.

method of entry into the city's franchise by the fifteenth century.[181]

As Part Two of the thesis argued, certain qualities were deemed desirable in civic officials, including wisdom, honesty and decorum.[182] There is strong evidence to suggest that one of the means through which these values may have been inculcated in younger generations was through apprenticeship. Even before being accepted as an apprentice, a boy had to conform to certain specifications. Included among these was an insistence that he should be 'honest et able' and loyal, and 'sober, pious, honourable and faithful'.[183] Apprentices were often expected to be wise, a quality that together with wisdom and ability was also expected of civic officials.[184] Moreover, as apprentices, boys were expected to conform to a set of behavioural norms similar to those encouraged among civic officials. They were not allowed to gamble, frequent inns or brothels, insult members of their master's household or gossip about trade secrets.[185] The role of masters as moral and spiritual tutors or mentors is nicely reflected in the will of William Garnet (sheriff 1510), who bequeathed his apprentice 5s and his workday gown on the condition that he was to be "curtyas and gentill to his maystress".[186] Apprentices were also expected to show respect and obedience towards their masters.[187] Indeed, it could be argued that one of the main functions of

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[181] Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, p. 151; R.R. Sharpe (ed.), *Calendar of Letter-Books of the City of London: A-L (1275-1497)*, 11 vols, (Corporation: London, 1899-1912), *I (1400-1422)*, p. 63; Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp. 23-60, especially p. 24.

[182] See above pp. 84-108.

[183] See for example a fourteenth-century York indenture for apprentices of the craft of bowers. Sellers (ed.), *York Memorandum Book, part 1*, pp. 61-2; partly translated in pp. xlvii-iii. See also C.M. Clode, *The Early History of the Guild of Merchant Taylors of the Fraternity of St. John the Baptist, London*, 2 vols. (Harrison: London, 1888), p. 344.

[184] Hanawalt, "'Childe of Bristowe'", p. 158.

[185] Sellers (ed.), *York Memorandum Book, part 1*, pp. 54-5 & xlvii-iii. Sharpe (ed.), *London Letter-Books: K (1422-61)*, p. 208; *L (1461-1497)*, pp. 163-4; Hanawalt, "'Childe of Bristowe'", pp. 158-9.

[186] BIHR, Probate Register 8, fol. 102r.

[187] Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p. 29.

apprenticeship was to inculcate a reverence for hierarchy and authority in the apprentice.[188]

In view of this social and moral training, it is likely that apprenticeship was particularly encouraged as a route to citizenship because it ensured the socialisation of young men in the expected behavioural norms of 'respectable' citizens. Moreover, men gaining the freedom of the city through apprenticeship presumably carried with them a guarantee of 'respectability' which was not necessarily true of men who had purchased their freedom. It may be partly for this reason that apprentices were more likely to go on to hold civic office later in their careers.

Social networks provide a further likely reason for the enhanced political prospects experienced by apprentices. Pamela Nightingale has argued that London Grocers may have aided the civic careers of their apprentices by leaving them large financial or material bequests.[189] Similarly, it was not unusual for York apprentices to be remembered in their master's wills, and though most apprentices only received small bequests, in some cases the legacies were quite substantial.[190] For example, Robert Preston (chamberlain 1496) bequeathed his apprentice, Robert Bogge, all of his books that were "fit for one prentice of his craft to learn by" as well as his work tools.[191] Similarly, the goldsmith Robert Huchonson (chamberlain 1498) bequeathed his apprentice, John Marshall, all the tools of his shop.[192]

Perhaps more useful than financial bequests were the connections and kudos that a

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[188] Hanawalt argues that this was one of the main functions of guides, books of advice and courtesy texts; Hanawalt, "'Childe of Bristowe'", pp. 160-1. See also Thrupp, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 29.

[189] Nightingale, *A Medieval Mercantile Community*, p. 186.

[190] See for example, BIHR, Probate Register 5, fols. 405v. (Denton) & 463v-464r. (Lounesdale); 7, fols. 51r (Essex) & 52r-53v (Hancock); 9, fol. 204r (Cure). See also Goldberg, 'Masters and Men', p. 62.

[191] BIHR, Probate Register 6, fol. 71r-v.

[192] BIHR, Probate Register 6, fol. 190r.

high-status master might bequeath his apprentice. The York evidence suggests that with

men who gained the freedom of the city through apprenticeship, there existed a sharp

distinction between those whose masters were civic officials, and those whose masters were

not. As has been mentioned already, one hundred and thirty-nine men are listed in the York

House Books as having become free by apprenticeship between the years 1482 to 1487.

Details of these men are summarised in Table 3:8 below.

Table 3:8
Men Who Entered the Freedom of York By Apprenticeship 1482-87

	Number of men		Of Whom Became Civic Officials	
Apprentices of civic officials	51	(37%)	14	(27%)
Apprentices of non civic officials	88	(63%)	5	(6%)
All Apprentices	139	(100%)	19	(14%)

Source: Collins, (ed.), York Freemen's Register, pp. 204-12; Appendix 1.

As Table 3:8 above shows, only nineteen (14%) of the 139 men who were free by

apprenticeship during the period 1482 to 1487 went on to hold civic office. However, men

who were the apprentices of civic officials were over four times more likely to hold civic

office in later years than those who were apprentices of ordinary burgesses. Put another

way, fourteen (74%) of the nineteen apprentices who became civic officials had been

apprenticed to civic officials themselves.

Obviously, the evidence discussed relates only to a period of six years, making it

impossible to gauge how representative these findings are for the whole period 1476 to

1525. However, as the evidence stands it strongly suggests that the status of the master

affected his apprentice's promotion prospects later on in life. We can only hypothesise as

to the reasons behind this phenomenon. Apprentices of civic officials would have been

particularly well placed to capitalise on the political and trading connections of their important and wealthy masters. Equally, however, it is likely a form of nepotism on the part of the élite may have enhanced the promotion prospects of well-placed apprentices. It has already been demonstrated that sons and sons-in-law of former civic officials tended to experience accelerated promotion, and it has also been suggested that this may have been on account of attempts by the élite to safeguard its real and ideological perpetuation through the nomination or encouragement of sons or 'surrogate heirs'. There is no reason why the same would not have been true of the élite's attitude towards apprentices under their care. As has been argued, the process of apprenticeship seems in general to have served the twin purposes of socialising young men towards becoming masters, and inculcating in them the values and qualities sought in citizens and civic officials. It could be argued that as more 'honest and discrete' members of the urban community, masters who were civic officials were particularly well placed to administer such 'training'. Moreover, it is likely that masters who were civic officials also directly or indirectly encouraged their charges to take up civic office simply by acting as mentors.

It is clear that relationships between masters and apprentices were often close. For example, several York officials asked to be buried next to their masters, while others requested prayers for them in their wills.[193] Apprentices were sometimes also named as executors or supervisors of wills, a role traditionally reserved for close family members, especially sons and sons-in-law.[194] Among the York officials the fishmonger Thomas Wright (bridge master 1499) nominated his apprentice John Roger (sheriff 1524) as one of the trustees of his daughter's portion, a role which demonstrates the degree of trust between the

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[193] See, for example, BIHR, Probate Register 5, fol. 434v (Beisby) & 473v (Hancock); 9, fol. 204r (Cure).

[194] Goldberg, 'Masters and Men', p. 62.

two men.[195] In some cases, apprentices took on a role approaching that of a 'surrogate' son, occasionally even marrying the daughter of their master or becoming their master's chief heir.[196] Far from being frowned on, such actions seem to have been viewed as an ideal consummation of the quasi-paternal master-apprentice relationship. Indeed, as Hanawalt has demonstrated, this was the fate of the apprentice in the poem "The Merchant and His Son".[197] Here, as a result of marriage, the apprentice not only became his master's son-in-law but also his heir.[198]

In York, Agnes Shaw, widow of John Shaw (mayor 1538), was anxious that her apprentice, William Cowper, should marry her wealthy ward. Following the death of her father, Agnes Harbottle had been placed under John Shaw's wardship. At his death in 1538, Shaw placed Agnes Harbottle under the "discretion and order" of Agnes his wife. Meanwhile, on her own death, Agnes Shaw instructed that "It is agreed the yere and day above written that William Cowper my servant of his mere mynde contrarie shall marie Agnes Harbottell and unto the said Agnes I bequeath and give all my copieholde lands...".[199] William, an apprentice of John and Agnes Shaw, had gained the freedom of the city the previous year. Whether Agnes Shaw actually arranged this marriage or merely gave consent to a relationship that had already arisen through the proximity of William and her ward cannot be known. Nevertheless, it is interesting to observe that Agnes Shaw's bequest of land appears connected to her request that Agnes Harbottle marry William Cowper, suggesting that it reflected her view of William as a 'suitable' husband. In view of Cowper's

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[195] BIHR, Probate Register, 8, fol. 3r.

[196] Hanawalt, "'Childe of Bristowe'", pp. 163-4.

[197] *Ibid.*, p. 163.

[198] In "The Childe of Bristowe" the apprentice does not marry his master's daughter, yet still becomes his heir; *Ibid.*, p. 163.

[199] BIHR, Probate Register 11, fol. 574r-v.

connections to the Shawes, coupled with the wealth and land bestowed on his new wife

Agnes, it is perhaps not surprising that he went on to become a chamberlain of the city in

1546.[200]

In conclusion, apprenticeship seems to have been important to the civic élite of York.

As with family and marriage ties, it seems to have fostered integration among the élite

group. More importantly, though, it played an important role in the perpetuation of the civic

élite. Apprenticeship was a reliable means through which civic officials could train and

socialise 'suitable' young men for civic office. Through such means the real and ideological

perpetuation of the élite was secured.

III) Social Unity?

It has been argued that in the absence of patrilineal ties, the civic élite had to find other

methods to ensure the integration and perpetuation of the group. Apprenticeship, the

remarriage of widows, and the marriages of children of the civic élite all served this end.

Additionally, the perpetuation of the élite was secured through the nomination and

encouragement of 'surrogate heirs'. So far this section has largely concentrated on

integration within the élite over time. In particular, it has concentrated on the role of family

in the integration of the group. Clearly, however, if any conclusion concerning the social

integration of the élite is to be reached, then it is also necessary, to consider the extent to

which other bonds of affection or trust linked civic officials.

Wills provide a useful source of evidence for bonds of affection or trust. As Kermode

has pointed out, while some historians have regarded wills primarily as religious documents,

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[200] BIHR, Probate Register 11, fol. 276r; Collins, *York Freemen's Register*, pp. 259 & 265.

they in fact also served to "settle a number of personal matters".[201] Kermode has argued

that wills can be used to "suggest some of the networks of responsibility and of friendship

that augmented and sometimes replaced families, and which together extended the influence

of merchants throughout urban society".[202] A similar methodology has been used here to

consider the social networks and bonds of trust which may have linked civic officials. To

this end, Table 3:9 below summarises the proportion of civic officials from the period 1476

to 1525 who cited other civic officials from this period in their wills.[203]

Table 3:9
Civic Officials 1476 to 1525 Who Cited Other Officials from this Period in their Will.

Highest Office Attained	Number Men in Each Group Leaving Wills	Of Whom Cited Other Officials in Their Will	
		no.	(%)
Bridge master	47	26	(55)
Chamberlain	58	30	(52)
Sheriff	50	26	(52)
Mayor	45	36	(80)
All Officials	200	118	(59)

Source: Appendix 3.

As Table 3:9 shows, 59% of the officials for whom wills survive cited other civic

officials from the same period in their wills. Given that many wills were extremely brief and

excluded all but intimate family members, this figure suggests a strong degree of integration

in terms of social relations. It is clear that real affection lay behind the decision of many

[201] Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 72 (although see also pp. 70-3). However, P. Cullum and P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Charitable Provision in Late Medieval York: "To the Praise of God and the Use of the Poor", *Northern History* 29 (1993): 24-39, see wills primarily as religious documents.

[202] Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 72.

[203] Civic officials who were close blood relations of the testators (ie father, son or brother) are excluded. It was common practice for testators to include sons or brothers in their wills as legatees and sometimes also as executors or supervisors. Such cases were excluded from calculations as they could be held primarily to represent family ties as opposed to friendship links within the civic élite.

civic officials to cite other officials. This is evident both from the language used and the types of bequests made. For example, Thomas Burton (mayor 1522) described Robert Wilde (mayor 1527), who was supervisor, legatee and one of the witnesses to Burton's will, as "my welbeloved brother".[204] That a bond should develop between these two men was perhaps not surprising. The two men appear to have been related, possibly as brothers-in-law, and both men were wealthy merchants and members of the merchants' company (of which they were both masters during the 1520's). Furthermore, they enjoyed parallel civic careers, holding the same posts within a couple of years of each other. Both men had been members of the council of twenty-four and had joined the council of aldermen in consecutive years (Burton in 1521 and Wilde in 1522).

Legacies, many of which clearly held symbolic or sentimental value, also show the strong friendship links that existed between civic officials. For example, Robert Johnson (mayor 1496) left alderman William White (mayor 1491 & 1505) his "hupe rynge of golde whiche that John Haister made in the yere that I was maire".[205] He also left alderman John Metcalf (mayor 1498) his "cremesyn gowne furred with blakeshanke". It is possible that the latter gift has a symbolic value since one of the colours used for aldermanic robes during this period was "cremysyn".[206] Except for their all holding civic office, there does not appear to have been much common between Johnson, Metcalf, and White: whereas Johnson was

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[204] BIHR, Probate Register 9, fol. 326r. The nature of the relationship between Wilde and Burton is unknown, although it is possible that Burton's wife Maude was the sister of Wilde. It is also possible, though, that 'brother' is used by Burton in a looser sense, namely to denote common membership of the council or aldermen. The use of kinship terms and metaphors in this context is discussed below.

[205] BIHR, Probate Register 5, fols. 510v-11v. John Haister was free as a goldsmith in 1492; Raine, *Freemen's Register*, p. 216.

[206] Violet, murray and scarlet were also used. YCA, House Book 9, fol. 49v; House Book 8, fol. 70v; Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 691. The only other civic officials (or their relations) from the period 1476 to 1525 to leave crimson or scarlet gowns in their wills were John Elwald (sheriff 1499 & alderman), Roger Gegges (sheriff 1522), Richard Thorneton (mayor 1502), and Anne, wife of Michael White (mayor 1494 & 1505).

a grocer or spicer, Metcalf was a merchant and White a dyer.[207] Each man lived in a

different parish and there is no evidence to suggest that any of them were related. However,

all were aldermen of the city, former mayors and members of the council of twenty-four.

Testamentary sources reveal social networks and bonds which encompassed and

linked not only civic officials themselves, but also their wives. For example, John Harper

(mayor 1489) left gifts to his executors Richard Thorneton (mayor 1502) and Alan Stavely

(mayor 1506 & 1519). His widow Joanne likewise cited Alan Stavely as her executor, and

also appointed the aldermen William Nelson (mayor 1500) and George Kirk (mayor 1495

and 1512) as her supervisors.[208] There is no evidence to suggest that either Joanne or her

husband were related to Stavely, Neleson or Kirk. The York wills support the suggestion

made by other historians that women's wills were often far more "detailed and diffuse" than

mens' wills , in terms of relatives, friends and acquaintances remembered.[209] It is unclear

whether this reflects differing testamentary practices, differing attitudes towards family and

social networks, or actual differences in the range and type of male and female social

networks. It has already been argued that the marriages of widows and daughters of the

civic élite played a vital role in the creation or cementing of links between civic families, as

well as in the perpetuation of the wider group. The cited examples of social networks

revealed in women's wills also suggest that friendship networks among the wives of civic

officials might have been important in further strengthening or maintaining the integration

of the civic élite. The next section will explore this area in more depth by considering the

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[207] That all of them may have had trading interests is suggested by their common membership of theMercers' Guild.

[208] BIHR, Probate Register 8, fols. 98v-99r. See also, for example, the wills of Agnes Shaw, widow of John Shaw (mayor 1538), 11, fol. 574r-v; Anne Beverley, widow of John Beverley (sheriff 1485), 5, fol. 419-v; and Ellen Marshall, widow of Henry Marshall (chamberlain 1501), 6, fol. 226r.

[209] Barron and Sutton (eds.), *Medieval London Widows*, p. xvi. See P.H. Cullum, "'And Hir Name Was Charite": Charitable Giving by and for Women in Late Medieval Yorkshire', in Goldberg (ed.), *Women in Medieval English Society*, pp. 183-5.

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formalised social links between the wives of councillors.

A further issue raised by Table 3:9 above is the differing degree of integration among men of different civic status. It has already been argued that men who reached the post of mayor were far more likely to be related, either patrileneally or by marriage to other civic officials. Table 3:9 also suggests that they were more likely to cite other civic officials (to whom they were not related) in their wills. Whereas between 52 and 55 percent of the men who reached the lower posts of bridge master, chamberlain or sheriff cited other civic officials in their will, 80% of mayors did so. This would suggest that social integration among men who held the post of mayor was much more pronounced than among other members of the civic élite. Table 3:10 below shows the percentage of office-holders leaving wills who can be shown to have been related to other civic officials from the same period, or who cited other officials from the same period in their will.

Table 3:10
Percentage of Men Leaving Wills Who Reached Each Office, Who Were Related To, or Who Cited, Other Officials From the Period 1476 to 1525 in Their Wills
Expressed by highest office attained.

Highest Office Attained	% of men leaving wills in each group who were related to, or who cited, other officials from the period 1476 to 1525 in their wills.
Bridge master	57
Chamberlain	64
Sheriff	68
Mayor	93
All Officials	70

Source: Appendix 2a, b, c and 3.

It is noticeable that the higher a man progressed up the civic hierarchy the more likely he was to emphasize his social ties with other civic officials. Whereas 57% of men who reached the post of bridge master displayed social links with other officials of the same

period, 93% of mayors did so. Of the thirty-six mayors who cited contemporary civic

officials in their wills, Robert Wilde (mayor 1527), John Shaw (mayor 1510) and John Petty

(mayor 1508) were the only officials not to make reference to existing office holders.[210] In

other words, thirty-three (73%) of the forty-five mayors for whom a will survives also cited

officials from the same period (1476-1525) who had already held civic office. Further, most

of the mayors cited men who had reached a senior position within the civic hierarchy.

Twenty-five (56%) of the forty-five mayors cited civic officials from the period 1476 to

1525 who had at least reached the post of sheriff. Indeed, many of these men were actually

serving aldermen. It is possible that herein lies the crux of the issue. Whereas men held the

posts of bridge master through to mayor for a period of only one year, membership of the

council of aldermen (composed of former sheriffs) was generally for life. Moreover, most

aldermen had previously served in the council of twenty-four (which was composed of men

who had served as chamberlain or sheriff).[211] While official interaction among post holders

was limited to the year in which they held civic office, official interaction between

councillors was sustained over many years.

Their two councils of aldermen and the twenty-four met regularly: at least two or

three times each a month. These frequent meetings must have increased the potential for

friendships (and animosities!) to flourish within the group. Further, it is likely that social

interaction in other spheres of life was greatest among this group of men. As Part Two of

the thesis has argued, in contrast to the élite as a whole, men who held the office of mayor

were predominantly wealthy merchants: a group that Jenny Kermode has argued displayed

a high degree of social integration.[212] It is therefore perhaps not surprising that men who

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[210] Appendices 1 and 3.

[211] Rees Jones, 'York's Civic Administration', table 1, p. 128.

[212] Kermode, 'Sentiment and Survival', especially pp. 12-3.

reached the post of mayor displayed a much higher degree of social integration in terms of marriage and friendship links. Further, as a wider point, these findings further support those expressed in Part Two concerning the existence of hierarchies within élites.

Evidence from other towns suggests that there may also have been more fundamental differences in the socialisation patterns among people of differing wealth and social status. For example, Phythian Adams has suggested that patterns of socialisation among kin and affines in late-medieval Coventry differed for different social groups. Élite families were more likely to have enjoyed extended networks of family and friends, whereas among those lower down the social scale networks seem to have been more limited and localised.[213] As has been mentioned, most of the work which has been carried out on family and marriage in late-medieval towns has concentrated on élites. These findings therefore clearly highlight the need for more research to be carried out on family and social networks among different social groups within medieval towns. Further, evidence suggesting the existence of pronounced differences even within the civic élite warn historians against making generalised conclusions about civic élites based only on analysis of the highest office holders.

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[213] Phythian Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 148-57. Parish and neighbourhood seem to have been more important in terms of social networks among people lower down the social hierarchy than for members of urban élites Burgess, 'Shaping the Parish', pp. 271-3; Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, pp. 34-7.

(B) Discord & Ritual Unity

I) Introduction

Contrary to the views of urban historians such as Kermode, or Swanson, there is little evidence to suggest class formation, embryonic or otherwise, among the civic élite of later-medieval York.[214] Although all of the élite enjoyed above average wealth, the group was nonetheless diverse in terms of occupational makeup, and with the exception of the highest-ranking civic officials, it lacked sufficient ties of family, marriage or friendship to be considered fully unified, coherent and homogeneous social group. Further, historians who have concentrated on divisions between ruling élites and the 'masses' have often overlooked evidence of disputes and factionalism within élites themselves.

This section challenges some of these assumptions and examines the ways in which York's élite sought to present itself as a unified entity and the means through which it attempted to dissipate and overcome discord and disunity within the group. It is argued that in the absence of any innate integration and unity it was necessary for the civic élite of later-medieval York to construct itself as a unified and integrated group through the use of ritualised language and actions. This section begins by exploring diversity and conflict among members of the élite.[215] It then examines the ritualised integration of the civic officials. It is argued that despite a relatively low level of social unity and a high level of discord and factionalism between civic officials, the élite constructed or consolidated itself as a unified group through defensive and pro-active ritual actions. In turn, these ritual actions constituted a discourse of unanimity which corresponded to patterns in

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[214] Kermode, 'Sentiment and Survival', pp. 5 & 12; idem, Medieval Merchants, pp. 77-90; idem, 'The Merchants of Three Northern English Towns', pp. 16-19. See Swanson, Medieval Artisans, pp. 2-4; Thrupp, Merchant Class, especially pp. 27-41.

[215] I am not primarily interested here in the source of conflict, but in how such conflict related to the integration of the élite.

contemporary civil thought.

II) Discord and Factionalism

Much attention has been given to violence, discord and unrest in late-medieval towns and cities.[216] However, most of this interest has been directed towards large-scale disturbances, or has focussed around disturbances between different factions and interest groups within medieval towns. Such outbreaks of discord and violence are explored in the final section of the thesis. Here, the focus is on squabbles and unrest within the civic élite and the implications of such fracas for the real and perceived unity of the group.

Unsurprisingly, the period 1476 to 1525 witnessed numerous isolated disputes between members of York's civic élite, as it did between people at all levels of society. Interestingly, though, structures such as family, neighbourhood and guild, which have often been viewed by historians as important in promoting social harmony or unity, were themselves often the cause of disputes. For example, in 1484, John Tonge (mayor 1477) issued a king's writ against Richard Thorneton (mayor 1502) who was his nephew by marriage. The dispute was over a property in Walmgate which had been bequeathed in the will of Richard Thorneton senior (sheriff 1447), the father-in-law of Tong and the grandfather of Richard Thorneton junior.[217] As a result of this action the two men submitted to arbitration and the disagreement seems to have been relatively successfully contained. In other cases, however, disagreements might encompass wider family members.

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[216] See, for example, Nightingale, 'Capitalists, Crafts and Constitutional Change', pp. 3-35; Barron, 'Ralph Holland and the London Radicals', pp. 160-83; McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Civic Order', pp. 69-97; R.B. Dobson, 'The Risings in York, Beverley and Scarborough', pp. 112-42; A.F. Butcher, 'English Urban Society and the Revolt of 1381', in Hilton (ed.), The English Rising of 1381, pp. 84-111; C. Dyer, 'Small Town Conflict in the Later-Middle Ages: Events at Shipston-on-Stour', Urban History 19 (1992): 183-210.

[217] Attreed (ed.), York House Books, p. 320; Sellers (ed.), York Memorandum Book, part 2, pp. 296-7. It should be noted that some legal disputes over property were 'collusive' or fictional and acted as a means of establishing secure legal titles or final concords which had already been agreed between the two parties. There is no evidence to suggest the disagreement between Tong and Thorneton was such a case.

In 1506, Richard Thorneton (by then an alderman) was again involved in a dispute with Alan Stavely (mayor 1506 and 1519, and also an alderman). Although the cause of the dispute is unclear, it seems that Thornton's son John, his daughter-in-law Agnes, and Agnes's brother James Blades (sheriff 1523) all became involved, as did Stavely's brothers (including William Stavely, chamberlain 1498). Similarly, the role of family members in disputes involving the élite is also signalled by a case from 1505. According to the House Books an "affray" occurred at the house of Lady Hancock, widow of Robert Hancock (mayor 1488), which involved William Wilson (mayor 1513), John White (possibly sheriff in 1510), William Nettleton (bridge master 1504) and Simon Vicars (mayor 1521).[218] As a result of this dispute Wilson had to spend the night at the mayor's house, while White and others were committed to the ward of the sheriff John Hall (mayor 1516), and the remaining men were required to spend the night with the other sheriff, Oliver Middleton (sheriff 1504).[219] Interestingly, the House Books specifically state that while the men were in ward they were not to be visited by their wives or children.[220] Presumably, this was because the authorities were anxious to prevent the dispute from escalating even further.

Unfortunately, the exact causes and outcomes of the disputes cited are unknown. However, the House Books are more specific about a dispute between William White (mayor 1491 & 1505) and the seemingly troublesome Richard Thorneton (mayor 1502) who were both aldermen and neighbours.[221] The dispute concerned some tenements that were built and extended by Thorneton, but which adjoined other tenements owned by White. In particular, Thorneton was accused by White of having allowed his tenement to encroach

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[218] YCA, House Book 9, fol. 21r.

[219] *Ibid.*

[220] *Ibid.*

[221] YCA, House Book 8, fols. 121v, 113r, 123v.

onto the street by a foot. Eventually the dispute was settled by the searchers from the crafts of tailors and carpenters who somewhat unsurprisingly found in favour of Thorneton who had recently been elected as the city's mayor for the forthcoming year. Perhaps tactlessly, the corporation also decided that Thorneton should have these tenements rent free for the forthcoming year in view of the fact that he was "to bear the charge of Mayoralty".[222] As well as family and neighbourhood, trade could also be a cause of squabbles among the élite. For example, in 1482 the alderman William Wells (mayor 1479) proposed to commence an action of debt against his fellow alderman, William Todd (mayor 1487), over the sale of a ship.[223] Similarly, in 1489 the mayor, John Harper, was involved in a dispute against John Metcalf (mayor 1498) over the sale of a pipe of red Gascony wine.[224]

Although all of these disputes remained relatively contained, splits within the élites had the potential to spark more serious and wide-ranging disturbances. On at least four occasions between 1476 and 1525, disputes which began within the civic élite threatened the wider peace and stability of the entire city.[225] The first such dispute took place in 1482 and seems to have derived from a personal rivalry between Richard York (mayor 1469 & 1482) and Thomas Wrangwish (mayor 1476 and 1484). The origins of this dispute are unclear but it appears that there was a rivalry between these two men and their supporters over which of them should be elected to the post of Mayor. The dispute culminated in widespread rioting during which the Common Bell on Ouse bridge was rung. As a result, the King intervened ordering the existing mayor to remain in his post for the time being and

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[222] YCA, House Book 8, fol. 123v. The abuse of power by the élite is examined in greater depth in the final section on power and authority.

[223] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 253.

[224] *Ibid.*, p. 657.

[225] Each of these disputes is examined in greater detail in Part Four of the thesis below, pp. 205-247.

York and Wrangwish to relinquish their claims to the post.[226] Four years later, in 1486, the

aldermen John Harper (mayor 1489), William Todd (mayor 1487) and John Fereby (mayor

1478 & 1491) were involved in a dispute over seniority and order of precedence in civic

processions, an incident which supports McRee's suggestion that civic ceremonies could

serve to foster division as well as unity amongst their participants.[227] Although this squabble

seems to have been contained within the civic élite, it clearly disturbed the internal harmony

of the group and eventually resulted in the Earl of Northumberland becoming involved.[228]

The next dispute comprised an ongoing conflict over the misuse of official power during the

period 1498 to 1516, which involved Alan Stavely (mayor 1506 & 1519), William Stavely

(chamberlain 1498) and various other members of the élite including William Barker (sheriff

1483), John Gilyot (mayor 1490 & 1503) and John Birkhede (mayor 1507).[229] As will be

explored in the final section of the thesis, there are indications that this dispute at times

became tied up with battles over access to power within the wider enfranchised

community.[230] The final dispute in 1516 involved the entire council of aldermen when it

became divided over the election of a new alderman.[231] As will be shown below, this dispute

led to widespread rioting within the city and again required the intervention of the king to

restore peace.

Such disputes were clearly problematic as they held the potential to undermine the

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[226] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 247-8 & 701-2. As is discussed in Part Four below, Wrangwish was a colourful and controversial figure within the city. It is possible that these two men supported opposing sides in the Wars of the Roses.

[227] McRee, 'Unity or Division?', p. 189.

[228] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 476, 479, 481, 512, 529 & 531.

[229] YCA, House Book 8, fols. 40v, 74r-v, 75r, 95r, 97r, 102r & 109v; 9, fols. 2v, 28v, 38v, 39r, 40v-41v & 44r; Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 2: 144; Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records* 3: 51.

[230] See Part Four, pp. 205-247 below.

[231] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 3:51-2, 54 & 55-9.

status and authority of the civic élite. First, a disgruntled populace could easily capitalise on disputes within the corporation as a means of airing their own grievances, thus threatening the peace and established order of the city. Second, the image of integration provided an important buttress to the city's jealously guarded autonomy. As McRee has demonstrated for medieval Norwich, disorder was apt to lend a city a reputation for "lak of good and vertuous gouernaunce", thereby prompting the crown to revoke the city's liberties and impose an external governor.[232] Consequently, historians have viewed unity before the crown as particularly important.[233]

Both dangers are well illustrated for York in a dispute over the election of a new alderman following the death of John Shaw (mayor 1510) in 1516.[234] Whereas five of the existing aldermen (including the mayor, who claimed a double vote) wanted John Norman (mayor 1524), six others voted for William Cure (sheriff 1511), and one voted for Simon Vicars (mayor 1521). There ensued a "gret debate and devysion ...not only emonges them self bot also amonges many other cytyzyns of the Citie" over whether Norman or Cure should be elected.[235] As the House Books noted, a dispute that had begun within the aldermanic circle soon escalated into "dyvers grett riotts and affrayez to the gret disterbaunce and the brech of the king's peace", which was clearly detrimental to the stability of the city.[236] That the divisions within the council of aldermen created or intensified problems within the civic élite at large is further suggested by a dispute over the

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[232] B. McRee, 'Peacemaking and its Limits in Late Medieval Norwich', *English Historical Review* 109 (1994): 831-2. See also C. Barron, 'The Quarrel of Richard II with London, 1392-7', in F.R.H. Du Boulay and C.M. Barron (eds.), *The Reign of Richard II. Essays in Honour of May McKisack* (London University Press: London, 1971), pp. 173-201; Hill, *Medieval Lincoln*, p. 290.

[233] Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p. 99; Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, p. 187.

[234] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 3: 51-3.

[235] *Ibid.*, 3: 52.

[236] *Ibid.*

sheriff's feast soon afterwards. In December, William Barker (mayor 1525 & 32), one of the sheriffs of York, announced that he would not fund a dinner for the city council as was customary. Instead, the other sheriff John Wederall (sheriff 1516) was called upon to do so, whereupon he declared that he "utterly deneyed to make dynar bot oonly within his own housse and that he wold not byd none to dynar with hym bot a certan of the Aldermen and othure frends".[237] Presumably, Wederall supported one faction within the aldermanic circle and was only willing to play host to this group of men.

As well as threatening the unity of the wider civic élite and the peace and stability of the city, the aldermanic dispute also had ramifications for York's autonomy. On hearing of the disturbances the king sent an investigative commission to York headed by the archbishop of York. The commission perceiving "the gret dyvysion and part takyng between the forsaid Aldermen likely to be the subversion of the said Citie", declared the election void and banned Norman and Cure from standing for the post.[238] Instead, the archbishop was appointed to choose someone who he "thynke able and most convenyent for that rome", and the aldermen were required to promise "to be alway from hensforth in oon unite and concord".[239] Further, those aldermen leading the two factions were imprisoned in the Fleet prison.[240]

By January 1517, any appearance of division among the aldermen had largely vanished. Indeed, it is possible to speculate that the group had actually become more united in the face of a new common enemy: the king. Another alderman, Bertram Dawson (mayor

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[237]*Ibid.*, 3:53-4. As a result, the archbishop who had been acting on behalf of the king throughout the aldermanic dispute, ruled that no sheriff's feast should be held that year.

[238] *Ibid.*

[239]*Ibid.*, 3: 53.

[240]*Ibid.*, 3: 56-7.

1511) died before the archbishop had time to appoint Shaw's successor.[241] The corporation

took advantage of this opportunity to solve their differences by appointing both Norman and

Cure to the council. They also appointed as mayor William Neleson (mayor 1500), one of

the imprisoned ringleaders in the dispute.[242] Meanwhile, Thomas Burton (mayor 1522), the

most senior of the city's chamberlains and a past recorder of York was sent to London to

plead for the support of the archbishop.[243] However, by this stage the damage was already

done and the city's right to self-government hung in the balance. The King responded to

the elections by sending the council a furious letter stating that the council "nothyng

regardyng our said commandement in that behalf have contrarie therunto of your wilfull

mynds" chosen Norman and Cure as aldermen, and Neleson as mayor, to his "gret mervaylle

and dyspleasour".[244] The king demanded that John Dogeson (mayor 1508 & 17) be

appointed mayor of the city instead, and that all of the aldermen, citizens and commons of

the city were to "accept hym in the sayd offyce and to be unto hym obedyent in all thynges"

or else "abyde our dyspleasour and answer therefore unto us at your uttermost peryll".[245]

Further, two new aldermen were to be chosen in place of Norman and Cure.[246]

As the described dispute demonstrates, division amongst York's civic officials could

have serious ramifications for the stability and autonomy of the entire city. Moreover, as

will be argued, unity and integration was seen as synonymous with strong leadership during

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[241] *Ibid.*, 3: 54. This selection took place in the presence of the King's commissioners "seyng and lokyng upon the ordre of eleccion".

[242] *Ibid.*, 3: 54-5.

[243] *Ibid.*, 3: 55.

[244] *Ibid.*, 3: 56-7.

[245] *Ibid.*, 3: 57.

[246] These orders were accepted by the council who appointed Simon Vicars (mayor 1521) and Paul Gillowe (mayor 1522) as aldermen. They then sent a serious of grovelling letters to the archbishop apologising for their earlier actions; *Ibid.*, 3: 59-61.

the medieval period.[247] It was therefore vitally important to the integrity and authority of late-medieval élites that unity and integration, or the illusion of these, be both constructed and defended. As Stephen Rigby has argued, "consensus did not simply exist; it had to be created and maintained".[248]

III) Ritual Unity

Those arguing for the essential stability of late-medieval urban society have focussed on the importance of the role of feasting, celebration and ritual in reducing tensions and increasing harmony and community.[249] For example, Phythian-Adams and Mervyn James have both placed emphasis on the role of ritualised performances such as Corpus Christi cycles in promoting 'cohesion' and 'social integration' in late-medieval towns.[250] More recently, though, this view has been challenged by historians who argue that far from promoting 'social wholeness', such rituals actually created exclusivity, and occasionally incited conflict.[251] Clearly, York's annual Corpus Christi plays, together with civic processions such as the annual riding of boundaries, played an important role in projecting the unity, as well as the status, of the civic élite. That the corporation appreciated the importance of these activities is reflected in the frequently repeated order that all civic officials attend such

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[247] See A. Black, *Guilds and Civil Society in European Political Thought from the Twelfth Century to the Present* (Methuen: London, 1984), pp. 68-9; Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, pp. 176 & 186-8.

[248] Rigby, 'Urban 'Oligarchy', p. 67.

[249] See in particular, Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*.

[250] Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the Citizen', pp. 238-64; James, 'Ritual, Drama and Social Body', pp. 16-47

[251] See for example, S. Lindenbaum, 'Rituals of Exclusion: Feasts and Plays of the English Religious Fraternities' in M. Twycross (ed.), *Festive Drama: Papers from the Sixth Triennial Conference of the International Society for the Study of Medieval Theatre* (Brewer: Woodbridge, 1996), pp. 54-65.

occasions alongside their fellow councillors.[252] The visual unity of the civic élite of York

was further enhanced on urban ceremonial occasions through the use of a livery, a practice

employed by other urban corporations.[253] Indeed, the role of urban ceremonial and drama

in the construction of "social unity within a hierarchy", has already received a considerable

degree of attention from other medievalists.[254]

By contrast, very little research has been carried out on the importance of

performative unity for late-medieval élites outside of the area of drama and civic ceremony.

In particular, little attention has been paid to the role of everyday or secular ritual and

ritualised actions within civic élites. However, Shaw's pioneering work on the élite of late-

medieval Wells demonstrates the potential richness of this area.[255] It is in literature on

medieval guilds that everyday ritual in towns has been most fully explored. Both McRee and

Rosser have examined in much detail the role of guild feasts, ritual actions and social codes

in lessening tensions and increasing integration among guild members and civic élites of late-

medieval towns.[256] In particular, Rosser has stressed the active and dynamic purpose of

rituals in his work on medieval guilds. He has argued that, far from being "mere optimistic

symbol(s) of idealized community", rituals should instead be viewed as processes through

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[252] See for example, Attreed (ed.), York House Books, pp. 5, 40, 281, 293, 674, 691; Raine (ed.), York Civic Records 2: 96 & 146-7; YCA, House Book 7, fols. 12v & 40r; House Book 8, fol. 76r.

[253] For the use of civic liveries in York, see Attreed (ed.), York House Books, pp. 250, 259, 287-8, 289, 478, 482, 584, 679 & 691; Raine (ed.), York Civic Records 2: 106, 146-7, 155, 165, 169, 170, 177, 184-5; 3: 15 &30. For the importance of liveries for civic élites and guild members elsewhere, see Dyer, Worcester in the Sixteenth Century, p. 196; Rigby, 'Urban 'Oligarchy'', p. 66; R.F.E. Weissman, Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence (Academic Press: New York, 1982), pp. 82-4; McRee, 'Unity or Division?', pp. 192-3. York councillors were sometimes reluctant to adopt this livery over that of their guild as is indicated by the constant re-issuing of ordinances governing the dress of councillors during public occasions. Similarly, civic officials in Exeter also had to be reminded of this duty; MacCaffrey, Exeter, 1540-1640, p. 41.

[254] Rigby, 'Urban 'Oligarchy'', p. 67; See also Sacks, 'Celebrating Authority in Bristol 1475-1640', pp. 187-223; Zemon Davis, 'The Sacred and the Body Social', pp. 40-70; Muir, Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice; essays in Hanawalt and Reyerson (eds.), City and Spectacle.

[255] Shaw, Creation of a Community, pp. 177-215.

[256] McRee, 'Unity or Division?', pp. 189-207; Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast, pp. 430-46; McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Civic Order', pp. 69-97.

which relations could be reconstructed and renegotiated.[257] Ritual was used to "define, protect and alter" social relations.[258] Similarly, McRee has argued that the collective activities of governing guilds, such as feasting, worshipping and marching in procession, brought civic leaders together in friendly circumstances and emphasized the ties that bound them to one another.[259] Further, he also stresses the importance of the more active mechanisms such as arbitration through which guilds could act to diffuse existing conflicts.

Although the evidence does not suggest that late-medieval York possessed a 'governing guild' which catered exclusively for the city's civic élite, it could be argued that the élite itself utilised guild-like rituals and language in order to promote harmony and unity among its members.[260] It is likely that ritualised activities such as feasting, and the use of language and social codes, may have served as mechanisms through which alliances could be renegotiated, differences overcome and relationships consolidated within civic élites, just as they were within medieval guilds. 'Ritualised actions', meaning the ritualised or formalised use and invocation of rules, language, gestures, feasting and drinking, were important to the civic élite in two respects. First, they served to project an impression of unity or integration to the population at large, allowing the city's élite to present itself to the rest of the community as a united group.[261] They enabled the élite to create a "unique social identity for its brethren", something that would have been particularly important in York, given the wide variety of trades and occupations from which the civic élite were drawn.[262]

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[257] Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast', p. 432.

[258] Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, p. ix.

[259] McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Civic Order', p. 96.

[260] On the much neglected topic of 'governing guilds' see McRee, 'Religious Guilds and Civic Order', pp. 69-97; Membership of York's Corpus Christi Guild and the Mercers' Guild is discussed in Part Four below, pp. 254-265.

[261] McRee, 'Unity or Division?', p. 190.

[262] McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Civic Order', p. 97.

As McRee has argued, such portrayal of unity was desirable as it served to frustrate the ambitions of citizens who "depended upon splits within the leadership to advance their position".[263] Second, the rituals also served to forge a sense of common identity among the members of the civic élite.

This section begins by considering the rules and codes which aimed to protect the unity and integration of the civic élite. Throughout medieval Europe, guilds and urban governments sought to lessen factionalism and increase integration by urging members not to 'wrong' one another in word or action.[264] In many guilds and corporations this ethos was embodied in constitutions. It was common for guilds like the Guild of St. Thomas of Canterbury in Lynn to fine or expel members who "bere oþir any falshede, thefte or wroung on hand".[265] Other guilds refused "eny riotour" or "oþer contekar".[266] Civic officials were often subject to similar controls. For example, in Exeter civic officials were not allowed to insult each other, while in Worcester words of reproof were forbidden.[267] As we have already seen, York was no exception in this respect. In 1500 the House Books recorded that by

An auncient ordinaunce...any Alderman or any other of the xxiiij...havyng and unsyttyng words, langage or wordez callyng another fals, untrewe, or thoughtyng hym or makyng comparyson with his brother or felowe...to forfett and lese xli....[268]

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[263] *Ibid.*, p. 96.

[264] Black, *Guilds and Civil Society in European Political Thought*, p. 70.

[265] J. Toulmin Smith (ed.), *English Gilds*, Early English Text Society, original series 40 (1870, reprinted 1963), p. 48; see also pp. 11, 94-5 & 100.

[266] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[267] MacCaffrey, *Exeter, 1540-1640*, p.40; Dyer, *Worcester in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 191.

[268] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 2: 158; Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 305.

It was argued in Part Two that such legislation against slander and backbiting is likely to have reflected notions of seemly behaviour or decorum expected of certain groups, particularly civic officials.[269] However, such legislation also can be seen to have performed two additional functions. First, it aimed to lessen discord within the élite. Second, it was designed to promote an illusion of unity to those outside the group. It is notable that in York the ordinance of 1500 makes special reference to arguments occurring in the presence of the mayor, at council meetings, in processions or at "any other assemble".[270] This suggests that the élite was anxious to avoid public displays of discord which might undermine the unity, and therefore the authority, of the élite. Similarly, medieval guild ordinances forbade wrong doing against fellow members and expelled maintainers of quarrels "by whom þe fraternite myght be ensclaundred".[271]

The desire to keep discord within the bounds of élite groups was almost universal in late-medieval towns. Guild organisations commonly forbade fellow members from seeking external redress until after they had attempted to solve a dispute internally.[272] For example, the ordinances of the guild of St. Katherine in Norwich stated that:

> if eny discorde be bytwen bretheren and sisteren, first yat discorde shal be shewede to other bretheren and sisteren of ye gilde, and by hem acorde shal be made, if it may be skilfully. Ande if he mowen nought bene so acorded, it shal be lefulle to hem to gone to ye comoun lawe...[273]

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[269] See above, pp. 96-108.

[270] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 2: 158.

[271] Toulmin Smith (ed.), *English Gilds*, p. 4.

[272] See McRee, 'Religious Gilds and the Regulation of Behaviour', pp. 122-3.

[273] Toulmin Smith (ed.), *English Gilds*, p. 21; see also pp. 4, 55, 76, 84, 98 & 115.

Civic corporations often had similar rules. In 1502 the York House Books recorded that:

> if ther be any dette, dewte, trespase, offense or any other cause of grieff hereafter
> appyn betwix any of the xij, xxiiij or betweix any other fraunchest man shall not from
> hensfurth compleyn to the kyngs grace or to any lord or other person nor sew any
> court at London or any other place tefore al suche cause and matere be shewed to the
> Maier...[274]

Although the ordinance covered all freemen, as well as councillors, the penalties for breaking the ordinance were much greater for men who held civic office. Whereas failure to comply incurred a 40s fine for freemen, for members of the twenty-four the fine was 10li and for aldermen 20li.[275] Again, this legislation was probably aimed both at discouraging discord and preserving an appearance of unity to those outside the circle. However, it is also likely that guilds and civic governments invoked such rules in an attempt to avoid outside interference which, as we have seen, could threaten the autonomy of the group as a whole.

The desire to keep disputes within the confines of exclusive groups also led to codes of secrecy. York councillors, like those in Exeter and Wells, were forbidden to disclose matters discussed at council meetings to those who were not councillors.[276] In 1484, William Tayte (sheriff 1478) was expelled from the council of twenty-four for disclosing the

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[274] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 2: 173.

[275] *Ibid.*, 2: 173.

[276] See Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 465; W.T. MacCaffrey, *Exeter, 1540-1640: The Growth of an English County Town*, 2nd edition (Harvard University Press: Cambridge Mass., 1975), p. 41; Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, p. 186. For similar rules in guilds, see Toulmin Smith (ed.), *English Gilds*, pp. 55, 58, 61, 65, 69, 76, 79, 81 & 92.

"secretes and privetes" of the council chamber.[277] Such codes protecting the secrecy of

council business allowed élites to push through sensitive or inflammatory legislation or

elections with a minimum of external resistance. Unpopular decisions could be presented

as *faits accomplis*.[278] Further, they helped to preserve the external or perceived unity of the

élite by hiding any dissent within the group from external view.[279]

Interestingly, the privileging of information also took place within the civic élite of

York. Highly contentious issues were often discussed only by the council of aldermen rather

than by all of the city's councillors.[280] For example, the election and dismissal of aldermen

in York, which (as we have seen) was often a contentious issue within the aldermanic circle

as well as the wider population, was discussed only "when the xxiiij were departed".[281]

Thus, in 1499, only the aldermen were party to a disagreement within their group over

whether the dismissed alderman, Thomas Scotton (mayor 1492), should be re-instated to

the council.[282] As well as promoting an image of unity and discouraging discord from

spilling over into the wider population, such codes of intimacy may have created "a special

knowledge that separated members from non-members".[283] The act of sharing privileged

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[277] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 339.

[278] Although the success of this strategy is open to question.

[279] It is interesting to note that historians have sometimes acted as accomplices in this matter. Many of the sections omitted by Raine in his editions of the York House Books consist of disputes within the civic élite!

[280] See Shaw who has argued that any dissent in Wells was discussed in private first; Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, pp. 187-8.

[281] YCA, House Book 8, fol. 45r.

[282] *Ibid.* Whereas most of the aldermen thought that Scotton should be re-admitted to the council, John Gilyot (mayor 1490 and 1503) and John Stockdale (mayor 1501) disagreed, and said "as yet he shuld not". Scotton was a troublesome figure throughout the latter stages of his civic career. He initially refused to accept the office of alderman and was subsequently warned and discharged on several occasions for failing to attend meetings (although he refused to give up his office) before finally being discharged from office in November 1500. YCA, House Book 7 fols. 4r. & 9r; Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 536; Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 2: 159-60.

[283] Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, p. 82. See Shaw who suggests that legal demands of freemen fostered a sense of the community's "specialness"; Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, p. 158.

knowledge no doubt served as a source of common identity and as a means of underlining the exclusivity of the élite. The secrecy of this information would also have served to construct a knowledge-based power relationship between office-holders and non office-holders, as well as a 'knowledge hierarchy' inside the élite itself. This 'knowledge hierarchy' mirrored the divisions that existed within the élite in terms of levels of social integration and occupational structure. However, it could be argued that the rules governing disputes, litigation and secrecy should be viewed within the context of wider discourses of unanimity and communal harmony.

Anthony Black has argued that throughout the medieval period an essential feature of civic ethos was the idea of the city as a corporate community capable of expressing a unified will.[284] Similarly, Susan Reynolds has also stressed the high value placed on civic unity during the medieval period.[285] A discourse of unanimity is clearly evident throughout the York House Books. Elections were commonly recorded as being by "unanimi at communi omni assensu et concensu" or of "one hole and common assent".[286] Similarly, ordinances were recorded as having been "determyned and fully assented and agreed" to, or as having been reached (sometimes "after long concideracons had among theym") by "oon hole mynde, will and content".[287] York was not unusual in this respect: terms and phrases such as 'unison' and 'unanimous assent' were also used in other late-medieval

[284] Black, *Guilds and Civil Society in European Political Thought*, pp. 68-9. Notions of organic unity alongside hierarchy, particularly as represented by comparison to the human body, will not be considered here. However, see Black, *Political Thought in Europe*, pp. 14-17.

[285] Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities*, pp. 190-1.

[286] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 61 & 115. See also YCA, House Book 7, fols. 15r, 19v, 47r-v & 114r; 8, fols. 11r, 13v, 38r, 99v.

[287] YCA, House Book 7, fols. 20r, 61r & 108r. See also fols. 12v, 89v; 9, fol. 22r; Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 45, 46, 78, 215, 216.

towns such as Grimsby and Wells.[288] That this may have been standard throughout European towns is perhaps indicated not only by widespread practice, but also by the existence of a thirteenth-century diplomatic phrase book which recommended the use of phrases such as 'unanimity of council'.[289] Anthony Black has suggested that regardless of whether such language was merely a rhetorical device or something more expressive of reality, it still reflected a general belief in the organic unity of society and the perceived need to promote communal harmony in the face of familial and factional conflict.[290]

Reynolds has suggested that consensus or unanimity was particularly important in elections as they were supposed to express the will of the community as a whole.[291] Consequently, it has been suggested that during the medieval period unanimity was seen to legitimise actions and decisions in a way that majority did not.[292] The importance of the wider community agreeing with decisions taken on their behalf by the élite is well illustrated by the election of John Hastings to the post of esquire of the sword in 1485. This was recorded in the House Books as being "answered and granted" by the commons "with there hole voice...without contradiction of any man".[293]

The desire for unanimity no doubt lay in part behind the frequently repeated requirement in York that aldermen should attend meetings and arrive on time.[294] Failure to attend meetings would have served to demean the status of civic office and would have

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[288] Rigby, *Medieval Grimsby*, p.110; Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, p. 187.

[289] Cited in Black, *Guilds and Civil Society in European Political Thought*, pp. 68-9.

[290] *Ibid.*

[291] Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities*, pp. 190-1.

[292] Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, p. 186.

[293] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 355-6. This subject is considered in greater depth in Part Four of the thesis, see pp. 205-247 below.

[294] See Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 60, 465, 674; Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 2: 190 & 3: 15; YCA, House Book 9, fols. 5 & 75.

constituted a breach of aldermanic obligations.[295] Interestingly, the House Books sometimes

record the assent of councillors who were absent from meetings. For example, in February

1482, it was recorded that "Thoms Neilson, Johannes Gylliot, Johannes Marshall adhunc

absentes concordi sunt as omnium infrascriptum".[296] The civic élite of later-medieval York

was also noticeably reluctant to hold elections or to swear in new officials in the absence of

one or more of the aldermen. For example, in 1486, it was decided that a new recorder

should not be chosen until the city's MPs had returned from London.[297]

The consequences of non-attendance of meetings are well illustrated in the case of the

dismissal of alderman Thomas Scotton (mayor 1492). Much of the discussion and

disagreement over the proposed reinstatement of Scotton in 1499 centred on the legitimacy

of the original decision to discharge him, which was taken in the absence of some of the

aldermen. As a result of this case it was ordained that the mayor "shall not elect of newe

ne discharge non alderman without thassent and consent of x or viij of his brether at the

leest".[298]

Unanimity and the lack of discord were also viewed as important as part of the wider

ideal of communal harmony.[299] Factionalism and discord were seen both as harmful to a

city's stability and authority, and as inherently immoral or sinful, violating the Christian

ethics of peace and friendship. Medieval guild ideals of brotherhood, friendship and love

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[295] For example, the reason for Thomas Scotton's dismissal was given as his failure to give "ayde, assistence and attendaunce as he *aught to do*", and the fact that he had "long stand an Alderman and brother ...and had not don *his duete* in that rome" (my emphasis); Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records* 2: 160. Attendance at council meetings was also compulsory in medieval Worcester; Dyer, *Worcester in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 196.

[296] Thomas Nelson (mayor 1454 & 1465), John Gilyot (mayor 1490 & 1503) and John Marshall (mayor 1467 & 1480), 'who were absent, agree to everything written within'. Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 248.

[297] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 469. See also p. 637. YCA, House Book 9, fols. 63v & 76r.

[298] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 2: 141. This ordinance was repeated in 1514, see *ibid.*, 3: 43-4.

[299] See Black, *Guilds and Civil Society in European Political Thought*, pp. 69-70; idem, *Political Thought in Europe*, pp. 17-18.

appear to go back before 1300.[300] All three continued to be invoked as civic values

throughout Europe during the later-medieval period.[301] Black argues that, as with ideals of

peace and common good, these civic values were the essential glue of unity which promoted

stable government and which served to counterbalance potentially disruptive forces such as

family and class.[302]

Such values were often invoked by guilds in ordinances or oaths of admission. For

example, the ordinances of the Guild of St. Katherine in Aldersgate, London, record that

upon admission to the guild, newcomers were to "in tokenynge of loue, charite, and

pes...schule kusse eueri other ...".[303] Similarly, the first rule of the Guild of St. John the

Baptist in York was that members should cherish each other in brotherly love.[304] A

discourse of love, brotherhood and friendship is also evident on the part of the civic élite of

later-medieval York. For example, it was customary for sheriffs of the city to provide the

mayor with the cloth for his civic livery, and this is recorded as having been carried out by

the sheriffs with "lufyng worde".[305] Similarly, Thomas Clerk managed to avoid being fined

by the élite after refusing the post of sheriff in 1523, in consideration of his "kynde wordes

& lufyng demeanor".[306] However, this type of language was most commonly used in the

York House Books following disputes within the élite. At such times York officials were

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[300] For the invocation of the ideals of brotherhood, friendship and love in early-modern guilds and communes, see Black, *Guilds and Civic Society in European Political Thought*, pp. 57-60.

[301] *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70; *idem, Political Thought in Europe*, p. 18.

[302] Black, *Guilds and Civil Society in European Political Thought*, pp. 69-70.

[303] Toulmin Smith (ed.), *English Gilds*, p. 6. For the symbolic importance of kisses in the initiation rituals of late medieval guilds, see McRee, 'Unity or Division?', pp. 190-1.

[304] Toulmin Smith (ed.), *English Gilds*, p. 146.

[305] YCA, House Book 10, fol. 109v.

[306] *Ibid.*, fol. 75r.

ordered to be "loufyng as brether to gedder" or "full and loufyng frends".[307]

'Brotherhood' was invoked far more frequently in the York House Books than either love or friendship. Like members of medieval guilds, York aldermen were referred to as "brothers", presumably in order to convey or promote unity and conviviality.[308] This language was also employed by the élite in non-official contexts. For example, John Norman (mayor 1524) left money at his death in 1525 for a dinner to be made for his "brother aldermen".[309] However, kinship terms do not appear to have been widely used in York for men below the council of aldermen. One rare example is the will of Thomas Dawson who requests that his "brothers" in the council of twenty-four attend his burial.[310] However, as will be argued in the final chapter, Dawson's will was unusual for reasons other than his choice of language. He was also the only member of the council of twenty-four during the period 1476 to 1525 who requested a civic funeral in his will. It is possible that in requesting the presence of his brothers, Dawson was not only asserting his civic identity but also following in a family tradition: His father Bertram Dawson (mayor 1511) made the same request before him, although on this occasion he requested the presence of his "brothers" in the council of aldermen.[311]

Social boundaries which both emphasised internal unity and social exclusivity would have been established through the usage of the language of love, friendship and brotherhood, as well as the discourses of governance discussed in Part Two of the thesis, notably the almost exclusive use of terms such as discreet or venerable. Moreover, the limitation of a

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[307] *Ibid.*, 8, fol. 92v; 7, fol. 52. See also 9. Fol. 28v.

[308] See Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 294, 320; Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 2: 140-1, 156, 160; 3: 6 & 31; YCA, House Book 9, fol. 19r.

[309] BIHR, Probate Register, 9, fol. 327r.

[310] *Ibid.*, 11, fol. 429.

[311] *Ibid.* 9, fol. 39r.

language of kinship to members of the city's council of aldermen would have further divided them from the rest of York's civic élite, and would have served to further enhance the cohesion of this group. Here again we have another example of the notion of an élite within the élite.

Interestingly, the discussed language was not simply reserved for the aldermen, its usage was also extended to the aldermen's wives, who were referred to as "sisters". For example, in his will of 1537, John Burton, one of the city's mace bearers, referred to "my lord mayre with his brether, my ladye maresse with her sustress".[312] Similarly, Johanne Harper, the wife of John Harper (mayor 1489), made reference in her will to "the mayre and his breder mares and hyr susters".[313] It could be argued that the use of kinship terms for the wives of aldermen further underlines the role of wives in the integration of the highest civic officials.

So far this section has considered usage of language in the ritual construction of unity among the civic élite of later medieval York. Far from being a purely rhetorical device, the repetition of terms of love, friendship and brotherhood reconstructed mentalities. However, language was not the only ritual action that served to promote communal harmony among the élite of later-medieval York. For Rosser, one of the most important roles of medieval guilds was their function as mechanisms through which changes in the 'social structure' could be negotiated and overcome.[314] Communal drinking and eating would have served three purposes. First, as McRee and Reynolds have suggested, annual feasts were one of the most ancient ways of sustaining a spirit of fraternity, and promoting unity and good

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[312] Burton goes on to list the "sheryfse with ther wyfes and all the xxiiij with the chamberlanes and ther wyfes". BIHR, Probate Register 11, fol. 249.

[313] *Ibid.*, 8, fol. 98v-99.

[314] Rosser, 'Communities of Parish and Guild', pp. 29-55.

fellowship.[315] Indeed, annual banquets were often intended for "the promotion of love and charity among the members".[316] Additionally, as Rosser has argued, feasting offered opportunities for the establishment, re-enforcement and re-negotiation of relationships between guild members, particularly those of different occupations and social status.[317] Finally, feasting like oath-taking might be regarded as a 'defining activity', in that it served to underline who was 'in' and who was 'out' of the group.[318]

The festivities associated with the election of new civic officials were perhaps of particular importance to the élite of later-medieval York. For example, following the election enrolment of Robert Wilde (mayor 1527) to the council of aldermen in 1522, "brede, wyne and ayle" was brought into the council chamber "and there the same Maire, his Brethern, Sheriffs and all the affore namyd did lovingly drink togyder in tokyng of luf after their auncient custome".[319] Not only did such acts of conviviality serve to reinforce friendship and unity among the élite, but they bound those men associated with the election of officials into the initiation rites for new members. York's sheriff's feast is particularly interesting in this respect. The new sheriffs were required to ride round the city at some point between their election day on the feast of St. Michael Archangel, and Christmas each year reading aloud the King's proclamation, and they were required to host a dinner for the mayor and councillors.[320] Upon carrying out these duties the sheriffs had to present

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[315] McRee, 'Unity or Division?', p. 191; Reynolds, *English Medieval Towns*, p. 180. See also Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast', pp. 430-46.

[316] Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast', p. 431. The Guild of St Thomas the Martyr in Oxford stated that the purpose of their annual feast was to promote brotherly love; McRee, 'Unity or Division?', p. 191.

[317] Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast', pp. 431-3.

[318] *Ibid.*, p. 431.

[319] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 3: 84. See also YCA, House Book 8, fol. 122r.

[320] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 2: 162, 179; 3: 10, 53-4; 63, 75, 85; YCA, House Book 8, fol. 122r. F. Drake, *Eboracum: Or the History and Antiquities of the City of York* (Bowyer: London, 1736), pp. 196-7.

themselves on the following day when they took the oath to become members of the council of twenty-four. In contrast, on the election of the city's chamberlain it was customary for the outgoing officials to treat the initiates to a dinner or breakfast.[321]

The burial of aldermen was also viewed as an important ritual occasion for the members of the élite.[322] Attendance by the mayor and aldermen at the funeral of one of their number seems to have been standard in late-medieval York, although it is unknown whether such attendances were compulsory, as it was in Worcester.[323] This practice is revealed both in the wills of civic officials and in the city's House Books. For example, on the death of the mayor, John Petty, in 1508, the House Books record that his body was "nobly entered at the pariche church...with the swerd and mase born by the esquyers afor the body and corse and sex Aldermen beryng the sayd corse...".[324] Similarly, the body of the mayor John Fereby, who died in 1491, was also carried to the church by six of the aldermen, preceded by the sword and mace. The aldermen John Rasen (sheriff 1515) and John Shaw (mayor 1510) each left money in their wills for the aldermen who would bear their bodies to the church, interestingly, so did Shaw's widow.[325] Obviously, burial rituals were concerned with asserting the status of the deceased as much as with confirming the status or unity of the group as a whole.[326] Indeed, it was customary during the medieval period for the body of the deceased to be accompanied or borne by men or women of a similar status, and

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[321] YCA, House Book 9, fol. 65v.

[322] In medieval Wells, wives of the city's burgesses took part in a meal hosted by the mayor's wife while the mayor treated the burgesses to a feast in the city's common hall; Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, p. 200. There is no evidence for a similar activity taking place in York.

[323] Dyer, *Worcester in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 196

[324] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records* 3: 25.

[325] BIHR, Probate Register 9, fols. 383 (Rasen), 26 (Shaw); Probate Register 11, fol. 278 (Shaw).

[326] See for example, R. Dinn, 'Death and Rebirth in Late Medieval Bury St Edmunds', in S. Basset (ed.), *Death in Towns: Urban Responses to the Dying and the Dead, 100-1600* (Leicester University Press: Leicester, 1992), p. 155.

sixteenth-century heraldic regulations dictated that the principal mourners should be of the same sex and status as the deceased.[327] Further, as with the feasts and ridings discussed above, the procession of the civic regalia ahead of the corpse that was carried and accompanied by the aldermen, would have acted to reassert visually the status and unity of the civic élite to any onlookers.

Edward Muir has stressed the role of rituals of death in the sustenance of the social community of the living.[328] He suggests that one of the main functions of funeral rites was to "reassert the ties of kinship among survivors".[329] For York's aldermanic circle, their quasi and real ties of kinship would have been reasserted not only through attendance at the funeral, but also through the participation in the post funeral feast. It was also common for London livery companies to hold such feasts following the funeral of one of their members.[330] In his will of 1525, the alderman John Norman (mayor 1524) left money for his executors to make a "worshipful" dinner for his "brother" aldermen of the city and "other such worshipful persons as they shall think best to have there".[331] For the civic élite it is clear that on these occasions the ritual family included aldermen's wives as well as the aldermen themselves. John Burton, the city's mace bearer, requested in his will the presence at his funeral of the mayor and his 'brothers', the mayoress and her 'sisters', the sheriffs and their wives, and the chamberlains and the twenty-four with their wives.[332] Similarly, Jane Harper, the widow of John Harper (mayor 1489) left money for spices and wine for a dirge

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[327] C. Gittings, 'Urban Funerals in Late Medieval England', in Bassett (ed.), *Death in Towns*, p. 177.

[328] E. Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1997), pp. 44-52.

[329] *Ibid*, p. 46. See Dinn, 'Death and Rebirth in Late medieval Bury St Edmunds', p. 157.

[330] Gittings, 'Urban Funerals in Late Medieval England', pp. 175-6.

[331] BIHR, Probate Register 9, fol. 327 (Norman).

[332] *Ibid.*, fol. 249.

for the mayor, his brothers and the mayoress and her sisters.[333] Unlike occasions such as the

sheriffs' feast, funerals may also have served to reinforce the image of the élite as a

'community' composed both of serving officials and of past officials who had since died.

However, while it is plausible to suggest that communal drinking and feasting were

identified as a means of promoting unity, harmony and brotherhood within the civic élite,

the reality was often less harmonious. Civic officials were not always happy to put aside

their differences and go along with acts of conviviality. Indeed, it may be wondered whether

civic feasts occasionally stirred up more trouble than they solved. The sheriffs' feast seems

to have been particularly problematic in this respect. It was an expense that many sheriffs

seemed less than happy to take on, as is evident from the frequency with which sheriffs were

fined for failing in this duty.[334] Further, expense was not the only issue. As we have seen,

in 1516, one of the sheriffs refused to give a feast for the whole of civic élite, preferring

instead to invite only "certan of the Aldermen and othure frends".[335] An event which was

intended to revitalise conviviality and unity among the group was instead used to opposite

ends. Few other acts could so pointedly have served to assert divisions and animosity within

the élite. Even the funerals of aldermen were not sacred in this respect. The House Books

record that at the burial of Thomas Scotton in 1503, the alderman William Nelson (mayor

1500) accused the mayor, John Gilliot, of doing him wrong and used other 'unsittyng

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[333] *Ibid.*, fol. 98v-99.

[334] See Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 2: 162; 3: 27. The civic authorities come across as somewhat cold-hearted in their discussions over who should pay for the Sheriffs' feast of 1504. A couple of days before the feast it was reported that Oliver Middleton (sheriff 1504) was "so sore seke and lykly to depart from this mortall warlde". It was decided that the dinner should be held anyway, but there remained the problem of funding. Eventually it was settled that Middleton's friends should bear half the cost. Should Middleton "discese tofore none of the said Tuesday", Middleton's replacement was to bere the charge, however, "if it please God that he lyff to none of the said Tuysday then the said Oliver to bere the half charge of the dyner of his awn cost". *Ibid.*, 3: 10.

[335] *Ibid.*, 3:53-4; As a result of this, the archbishop who had been acting on behalf of the king throughout the aldermanic dispute, ruled that this year no sheriffs' feast was to be held.

langauge'.[336]

So far this section has concentrated on ritual activities aimed at promoting the values

of love, brotherhood and friendship. However, as we have seen, the promotion of such

values was not always successful. Indeed, activities designed to promote harmony or unity

could themselves provoke or antagonise divisions within the élite. "Active peacekeeping

measures", meaning measures designed to defuse conflicts already under way, have been

explored in the urban context by McRee.[337] Although he accepts that it is inaccurate to view

the élite and the commons as two organised and unified parties, he suggests that the lack of

detail in the Norwich records makes it impossible to trace divisions within the two groups

or individual allegiances.[338] Instead McRee has concentrated on peacemaking procedures

in disputes between the élite and the commons. For York, however, the evidence is more

detailed, allowing an examination to be made of peacemaking and peace-preserving

procedures within the civic élite. Shaw has argued that when issues arose in medieval Wells

which threatened to split the élite, "a great deal of patience and moderation was used to

avoid deep damaging division" as the "solidarity of the oligarchy was inextricably connected

with the integrity of the Community as a whole".[339] Similarly, in York a system of

arbitration and rituals of submission and reconciliation were used to diffuse potentially

divisive disputes.

The first stage of the process of reconciliation consisted of the solution of the

disagreement or quarrel. In York, as in other late-medieval towns, this was often achieved

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[336] YCA, House Book 9, fol. 2v. The dispute seems to have been over property.

[337] McRee, 'Peacemaking and its Limits in Late Medieval Norwich', p. 833.

[338] *Ibid.*, p. 836, including note 1.

[339] Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, p. 176.

through arbitration.[340] The use of arbitration in this context is interesting as it favoured social harmony over abstract justice.[341] Sometimes this consisted of the "mediacion of freinde of both parties".[342] More often, though, arbitrators were 'impartially elected' by the mayor. Those chosen tended to be the type of men who had held or who went on to hold civic, territorial or guild office.[343] Further, the men chosen as arbitrators in each case often corresponded in status to those involved in the dispute. In cases where civic officials were involved in a dispute, it seems to have been common practice for high-ranking civic officials or other high-status men to be chosen as arbitrators. For example, a dispute in 1503 between the mayor John Gilliot (mayor 1490 & 1503) and the alderman William Neleson (mayor 1500) was resolved by Brian Palmer (the city's recorder) and eight of the city's aldermen.[344] Similarly, a more wide-ranging dispute in 1505 between two parties which included on one side the alderman, Richard Thorneton (mayor 1514), and on the other side the alderman, Alan Stavely (1506 & 1519), was resolved by arbitrators who included four aldermen and Thomas Dalby, the provost of Beverley.[345] The choice of high-ranking officials in such cases avoided any possible inversion of civic status which might both have

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[340] For the importance of arbitration procedures in late medieval towns, see E. Powell, 'Arbitration and the Law in England in the Late Middle Ages', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series 33 (1983): 49-67; *idem*, 'Settlement of Disputes by Arbitration in Fifteenth-Century England', *Law and History Review* 2 (1984): 21-43; L. Attreed, 'Arbitration and the Growth of Urban Liberties in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies* 31 (1992): 205-35; McRee, 'Peacemaking and its Limits', pp. 831-66. Very little work has been carried out either on arbitration or rituals of submission and reconciliation in late medieval towns, despite relatively abundant source material. It is an area which clearly deserves further research.

[341] Shaw has also argued that arbitration was politically astute since by delegating the decision process to others, it avoided the master or mayor making too many enemies. Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, pp. 208-12, especially p. 210.

[342] YCA, House Book 7, fol. 6v. See also fols. 9r, 17v, 22r, 23r, 25v.

[343] Carpenter, 'The Post of Bridgemaster', pp. 40 & 41-2.

[344] YCA, House Book 9, fol. 9. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the aldermen found in favour of the current mayor John Gilyot. Ironically, William Nelson was fined under an ordinance which had been made when he himself was mayor.

[345] YCA, House Book 9, fol. 28v.

prejudiced the legitimacy of the final decision and undermined the status of civic office.

Once a dispute was resolved, rituals of submission or reconciliation were used in an attempt to overcome any ill-feelings. Submission rituals were used to re-assimilate rogue officials or freemen back into the community.[346] Perhaps more importantly, though, they served to reassert civic authority and status following a loss of face (corporate or individual) on the part of the civic élite. Submission rituals will be examined in greater detail in the final chapter. Briefly, though, the spoken and body language of these rituals was that of repentance and humility. The wrongdoer would go "lawlie uppon his kneys" and apologise for his misdemeanour, "besechyng" the 'victim' for forgiveness and saying that he "sore repentes and lowliee prays your lordship forto forgyfe and stand my gude lord".[347] Here, the humble status of the wrongdoer in comparison to the wronged man was ritually reasserted. For the healing of factions between men of similar civic status, rituals of reconciliation were used in preference to rituals of submission.[348] In contrast to submission rituals, reconciliation rituals emphasised friendship, love and brotherhood. Further, they did not incorporate any ritualised construction of status hierarchies.[349]

The language used in reconciliation rituals was generally that of brotherhood, friendship or love. For example, following an argument involving "unsittyng langage" between the two aldermen William White (mayor 1491 & 1505) and John Elwald (mayor

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[346] For examples of the use of these rituals in York, see Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 29, 265, 301; YCA, House Book 7, fol. 113r.; 8, fol. 25v.; 9, fol. 26v.

[347] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 77; See YCA, House Books 7, fol. 113r; 8, fol. 25v; 9, fol. 26v. 'Master' was used in the place of 'lordship in cases where the person being apologised to was not the mayor,'.

[348] Although there are a few instances recorded in the House Books of reconciliation rituals between men who had not held civic office, most of those recorded were between members of the civic élite. Further, York councillors appear only to have been subjected to submission rituals if they slandered the current mayor. See for example, YCA, House Book 9, fol. 9r.

[349] A wise move, given that many of the disputes solved this way were over matters such as precedence in processions.

1499), the two were ordered to "be loufyng brether to gedder".[350] Others were ordered to

be "full and loufyng frends".[351] Often reconciliation was more elaborate and involved ritual

actions, although, there is no evidence that kisses were used as in late-medieval Wells. In

York, it was often required of the quarrellers that they "take ather oþer by the hande".[352]

For example, in 1506, the mayor and council attempted to settle a dispute involving Richard

Thorneton (mayor 1502) and Alan Stavely (mayor 1506 & 1519), by ordering that "þe said

Richard & Alan tofore theym ather take other by ye hand & to be good &

frendly....togeder".[353]

Reconciliation was another occasion in which feasting and drinking were used in York

to promote conviviality and unity. For example, we saw at the beginning of this section how

Stavely and Thorneton were reconciled after a disagreement when they took each other by

the hand and "þer upon of both theyr cost....dranke a potell of ele wyne & a potell of

malmesay".[354] Wine was also used in reconciliation rituals elsewhere. For example,

communal meals were used by the Guild of the Holy Cross in Stratford-on-Avon to end

malicious speech and preserve peace among its members.[355] The importance of such acts

of reconciliation for the stability of the civic élite at large is signalled by the occasional

involvement of the rest of the council. Following the long-running dispute between William

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[350] YCA, House Book 8, fol. 92v.

[351] *Ibid.*, 7, fol. 52r.

[352] *Ibid.*, 7, fol. 52r. For the use of kisses in Wells, see Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, p. 207. For a broader consideration of kisses in peacemaking rituals, see W. Frijhoff, 'The Kiss Sacred and Profane: Reflections on a Cross-Cultural Confrontation', in J. Bremmer & A. Roodenburg (eds.), *A Cultural History of Gesture, From Antiquity to the Present Day* (Polity Press: Cambridge, 1991), pp. 210-36.

[353] YCA, House Book, 9, fol. 28v. See also Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 512.

[354] YCA, House Book, 9, fol. 28v.

[355] Cited in McRee, 'Unity or Division?', p. 191, see also pp. 192 for feasts in general. For the use of feasting and drinking in reconciliation in other late-medieval towns, see A.D. Brown, *Popular Piety in Late Medieval England: The Diocese of Salisbury* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1995), p. 169; Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, pp. 199 & 207.

Todd (mayor 1487) and John Harper (mayor 1489), Todd was ordered to pay 10li to

Harper, and Harper was ordered to apologise to Todd before the rest of the council for

calling him a "coyner and a money-maker".[356] The House Books record that "eithre of

theime shuld be fully frenedid with the othre and take handes" and that there was to be "a

diner to be made emonges the hole company in confirmacion of the saide aggrement and

concorde...".[357]

McRee has argued that the peacemaking mechanism that had been developed by the

early-fifteenth century "could not cope with conflicts based on strong personal enmities or

disagreements over fundamental or political values".[358] The York evidence suggests that

despite the use of rituals and languages of harmony and unity, discord and factionalism

among the élite remained common. Indeed, at times, the civic élite seems to have been riven

with factionalism.

Although not always successful in preventing faction, the rituals outlined above were

clearly important in alleviating much tension. First, they allowed the re-assimilation of rogue

officials and facilitated the negotiation and closure of potentially long-running and divisive

disputes. Second, and particularly important in the light of the revealed discord, they

allowed the presentation of the élite to the rest of the city as a coherent and tangible body.

This was particularly important if the élite was successfully to defend its autonomy, but it

was also important in discouraging any disgruntled elements within the city from taking

advantage of perceived factionalism for their own ends. Further, as we have seen, York's

élite seems to have subscribed to the civic values of harmony, love and friendship, and

viewed factionalism and discord as inherently sinful. Finally, the rituals may also have

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[356] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 51. For the history of the dispute see also *Ibid.* pp. 476, 479, 481 & 529.

[357] *Ibid.*, p. 512.

[358] McRee, 'Peacemaking and its Limits in Late Medieval Norwich', p. 866.

served to create and reassert a sense of common identity and status among the otherwise disparate members of the civic élite.

C) Conclusion

In keeping with the rest of the thesis, Part Three has concentrated on social structures and processes as opposed to key events. In particular, methods of social mobility and social stratification and cohesion have been closely examined. While Part Two concentrated on the requirements for civic office holding, Part Three has looked at the means of attaining these qualities and the typical channels of recruitment and social mobility. Moreover, it has also examined the variety of ways in which a relatively diverse group could enhance its real or ritualised unity.

Whereas in the past wealth and occupation have been viewed as the primary means of social stratification or consolidation in medieval towns, Part Three has underlined the importance of alternative social processes. Kinship, marriage and fictive kinship all played vital roles in this respect, providing channels of recruitment and social mobility, and the means through which potential members of the civic élite could be trained and socialised. In the absence of patrilineal ties, marriage and surrogate kinship offered alternative ways of protecting the real and ideological perpetuation of the group as well as increasing its social integration. Although much emphasis has been placed by historians on the patriarchal nature of late-medieval society and the influence of this both on families and systems of government, it has been suggested here that women played a key (if veiled) role in the creation and maintenance of élite groups.

It has also been argued that while elements within the élite, namely those at the very top of the civic hierarchy, displayed a significant degree of social integration, civic élites as a whole did not show signs of embryonic class-formation. Not only was the York élite diverse in terms of occupation and wealth, but the patrilineal, marriage, and social ties within the élite were generally weak. While marriage could be used as a means of consolidating

wealth or political advantage, it is likely that familial ties between members of the élite and those who did not hold civic office served to blur the distinction between rulers and the ruled.[359] This area has not been explored here. However, it is clearly one that deserves much further research. In the context of the relative lack of family ties among members of the civic élite as a whole, the importance of ritual actions in the creation and consolidation of unity and harmony within the group was great. Indeed, it could be argued that it was only through ritual that the élite was able to present itself as a unified, coherent or conscious social body, and even then not always successfully.

Part Three also develops the findings of Part Two in arguing against the binary division of late-medieval society into opposing groups or 'classes'. Within the civic élite gradations of civic power were reflected in hierarchies of wealth, occupation, knowledge, social cohesion and ritual unity. Building on this finding, Part Four of the thesis will examine the extent that there existed a similar blurring of boundaries at the other end of the civic hierarchy. In particular, it will consider the extent to which there existed an élite 'substructure' below the office of bridge master. One of the main contentions of this thesis is that the relationship between civic élites and the rest of the urban population in late-medieval urban society was necessarily inherently antagonistic. The findings of Part Three have gone part of the way towards arguing for the essential fluidity of late-medieval society. The élite did not become ossified, rather it adapted in order to incorporate new interest groups. It could be argued that, because of this 'circulation', civic society was far more flexible and stable than has often been credited. However, in order for this area to be more fully explored, it is necessary that the élite be examined in terms of its relationship with the commonalty of the city. In particular, serious outbreaks of urban unrest and rebellion, and their causes, need to be examined. It is to these areas that the thesis now turns.

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[359] Carpenter, 'York Bridgemasters', pp. 65-6.

Part Four:
Power and Authority

Clark and Slack's "overriding emphasis on crisis, conflict and social polarisation" in early-modern towns continues to colour medievalists' perceptions of urban government and social structure during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[1] Under this schema, violent tensions and unrest have been seen as the inevitable outcome of what has been viewed as a society polarised in terms of wealth and power. This final part challenges some of these assumptions in relation to late-medieval York. In particular, it questions the extent that power within medieval cities was centralised in the hands of the civic élite, and the extent that violence and unrest were either inevitable or the result of 'class' conflict between civic officials and the politically disenfranchised. It draws on prosopographical research and discourse analysis to examine the practice and ideology of civic power in the city.

Part Four begins by drawing on the work of Susan Reynolds and Stephen Rigby in reviewing the ideology of urban authority, both in general, and in relation to York in particular. In essence, it argues that much of the authority of the civic élite derived from their relationship with the commons.[2] Part Four then moves on to examine authority in later-medieval York in a less static sense. It relates the various disturbances and constitutional changes in the city to the ideological and practical administration of civic power. Points of conflict included protests against 'peculation and misgovernment' and the failure of the élite to defend or respect the commons' rights of consultation and representation. However, it is argued that any interpretation of the unrest as symptomatic

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[1] Pearl, 'Change and Stability in Seventeenth-Century London', p. 140. For a discussion of this historiography see above, pp. 1-22.

[2] Throughout Part Four the term 'commons' is used to refer to those who had not held higher civic office in York. It includes the members of the council of forty-eight whose role it was to represent these people. This council is examined in greater depth below.

of an increasingly antagonistic division between the civic élite and a disgruntled commons is easily overstated. Instead, this part suggests that the causes of conflict and unrest in later-medieval York were more complex than have previously been appreciated. While some of the disturbances can be ascribed to protests over maladministration, the evidence also suggests that some of the disturbances should also be viewed in the context of dynastic power struggles within the wider realm.

The final section of Part Four develops on Rappaport's argument that it is erroneous to view higher civic offices as a city's 'primary sources of power'. It begins by exploring whether this period witnessed an increased or decreased 'democratisation' of York's civic government. It then goes on to examine the extent to which civic power was diffused throughout the city through networks of guild, parish and *ad hoc* minor civic posts that were frequently interlocked with the civic *cursus honorum*. As a result of this analysis, wider points are made concerning the distribution of power in later-medieval cities. In conclusion, this section calls for a fundamental re-consideration of the dominant historiography that emphasises centralised civic power and an almost class-based division between the rulers and the ruled.

A) Authority and Conflict

I) Introduction

Access to civic power, and its execution, have been viewed as highly contentious issues in

late-medieval England. However, with the exception of Rigby and Reynolds, few historians

have examined in detail the ideological basis of civic power and authority.[3] The civic élite,

in particular the higher officials, have been viewed as the locus of civic authority. However,

too often the élite has been examined in isolation both from the rest of the city and from

wider ideologies of urban rule. As a result, the ideological and practical role of the

commons in the government of later-medieval towns has been underestimated. Further, this

understanding has also prevented historians from viewing urban unrest in the context of

contemporary theories concerning the legitimacy and authority of civic power. Urban unrest

was common throughout the late-medieval period, and much of it has been ascribed to quasi

class-based struggles over the control and administration of town government.[4]

Analysis of unrest in York during the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries and

the city's various constitutional changes are no exception to this historiography. The city

experienced a range of disturbances during this period, including election-day riots in 1462,

1471, 1482, 1484-5, 1489, 1491, 1504, 1516 and 1529.[5] Serious outbreaks of unrest and

violence connected with inflammatory issues such as common land were also witnessed,

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[3] Reynolds, *English Medieval Towns*, pp. 181-7; *idem*, 'Medieval Urban History and the History of Political Thought', pp. 14-23; Rigby, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 165-77; *idem*, 'Urban 'Oligarchy'', pp. 62-86. See also, Hilton, *English and French Towns, passim*.

[4] For detailed individual studies of urban unrest in other towns see for example, Nightingale, 'Capitalists, Crafts and Constitutional Change', pp. 3-35; Barron, 'Ralph Holland and the London Radicals', pp. 160-83; McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Civic Order', pp. 69-97; *idem*, 'Peacemaking and its Limits in Late Medieval Norwich', pp. 831-866; Dobson, 'The Risings in York, Beverley and Scarborough', pp. 112-42; Dormer-Harris, 'Laurence Saunders', pp. 633-51.

[5] *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1467-77*, p. 239; Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 247-9, 251-2, 254, 629-30, 633, 639, 642 & 706; Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 2: 66-7, 191-4; 3: 1-9, 55-9, 120-8, 351-3. These disturbances are all summarised in Miller, 'Medieval York', pp. 82-4.

with the years 1476, 1480, 1481, 1487 and 1494 proving to be being particularly turbulent.[6]

Indeed, during the unrest of 1487, William Wells (mayor 1479) was murdered by one of the

city's millers, John Robson.[7] Another former mayor, William Holbeck (mayor 1470-2), had

fared somewhat better in 1476 when he managed to take sanctuary for his life at the church

of the Friars Preachers.[8] Alongside this rioting and violence, the commons also petitioned

the civic élite on constitutional issues on several occasions during this period.[9] Possibly as

a result of these disturbances and petitions, the city underwent a number of constitutional

changes. In particular, there were several modifications in the method of electing the city's

mayor, and in 1517 the composition of the common council was also altered.[10]

Most York historians have viewed much of this unrest in terms of an increasingly

radical craft-based commons lobbying for a greater role in the government of the city. For

example, Miller has argued that "the rule of the city by a mercantile oligarchy was under

heavy fire from a 'democratic' movement which drew its strength from the crafts".[11] Acts

of violence within the city, including the murder of William Wells, have been interpreted as

evidence of the common's resentment of the oligarchy.[12] Further, historians have viewed

York's constitutional changes as "the result of continuous targeted pressure from the

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[6] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 60-1, 218-9, 235, 560-2, 564-5, 590; Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 2: 107-23.

[7] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 560-2.

[8] Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 82.

[9] The commons petitioned the élite in 1475, 1484, 1490 and 1504. Sellers (ed.), *York Memorandum Book, part 2*, pp. 245-7; Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 353-4 & 674; Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 3: 6-8.

[10] These changes are discussed more fully below. For details of the changes, see Kermode, 'Obvious Observations', pp. 89-9; *idem, Medieval Merchants*, appendix 1, pp. 323-26; A.G. Dickens, 'Tudor York', in Tillot (ed.), *VCH: The City of York*, pp. 137-8.

[11] Miller, 'Medieval York', pp. 81-84 (quote p. 84).

[12] Kermode, 'Obvious Observations', p. 99.

burgesses".[13] As such, the York unrest has been placed firmly within the context of a historiography which views late-medieval urban society in terms of an antagonistic division between rulers and the ruled.

However, neither the sources of the civic élite's authority nor the disturbances themselves have been examined in the context of contemporary theories concerning the legitimacy of civic power. Moreover, although Swanson has suggested that rivalry and a decline in the degree of occupational homogeneity in the aldermanic 'class' possibly lessened the élite's ability to deal with the economic and political threats posed by the artisans, historians have not fully considered the role of faction or competition within the civic élite in the troubles.[14] Finally, the work of Attreed and Palliser and that of the political historian Michael Hicks, suggests that some of the late fifteenth-century disturbances may have been due primarily to wider unrest within Yorkshire resulting from political instability caused by the Wars of the Roses, and therefore did not self-evidently constitute demonstrations against the ideological authority of York's civic élite.[15]

II) The 'Commons' and the 'Élite'

It is clear that the civic élite of later-medieval York derived its legitimacy from a variety of sources: God, the king and the people. It has already been argued that York's civic élite also sought to derive its legitimacy, at least in part, from an emphasis on the personal

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[13] *Ibid.*, p. 92.

[14] Swanson, 'Craftsmen and Industry', p. 339.

[15] L.C. Attreed, 'The Relations between the Royal Government and the City of York, 1377-1490' (Unpublished MA Dissertation, Centre for Medieval Studies, University of York, 1979), pp. 104-109; D. Palliser, 'Richard III and York', in R. Horrox (ed.), *Richard III and the North*, Studies in Regional and Local History 2 (Hull, 1986), pp. 51-81, especially, pp. 62-69; M.A. Hicks, 'Dynastic Change and Northern Society: The Fourth Earl of Northumberland 1470-89', and 'The Yorkshire Rebellion of 1489 Reconsidered', both in M.A. Hicks, *Richard III and His Rivals: Magnates and Their Motives in the War of the Roses* (The Hambledon Press: London, 1991), pp. 365-94 & 395-418; A.J. Pollard, *North-Eastern England During the Wars of the Roses: Lay Society, War and Politics 1450-1500* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1990), pp. 375-82.

characteristics of its officers, namely: wealth, 'discretion', 'honesty' and 'wisdom'. These

virtues, together with associated expectations of high standards of morality, were seen to

legitimise status and authority.[16] Further, as Susan Reynolds has argued, the hierarchy of

wealth and power within late-medieval cities was viewed as part of the divine order of things

sanctioned and ordained by God.[17] Finally, it is hard not to conclude that for York, as for

medieval Coventry, the civic hierarchy was "dictated from within by the obligations of

wealth" and "legitimised from without by authority from the crown".[18]

Rigby has suggested that while urban political theory explicitly expressed a descending

concept of power in which town rulers ultimately owed their legitimacy to higher powers

such as the king or God, "much political practice implicitly embodied an *ascending* concept

of power, in which the basis of political authority lay in some form of popular consent".[19]

The York evidence would seem to confirm this suggestion. This part will argue that the

commonalty of the city (whose make-up will be discussed) were not excluded from

involvement in civic government, rather they were actively engaged in government in a

number of ways. Further, it will also be suggested that in York (if not elsewhere), an

ascending concept of political power was not only implicitly embodied through political

practice, but it was actually explicitly sanctioned, lobbied for and encouraged.

An active understanding of the concept of citizenship, which stressed the role of the

people in the government of cities, is clearly evident in late-medieval York. Freedom was

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[16] See pp. 86-108 above.

[17] Reynolds, 'Medieval Urban History and the History of Political Thought', pp. 14-23. See also Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, pp. 178-83; Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 137-41.

[18] Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 140-1. Unlike in medieval Coventry, where Phythian Adams has suggested that civic rule was also "sanctioned from above, through the means of moral and religious observance, by the Omnipotent", there seems to have been little official stress placed on the morality and religiosity of the civic officials of medieval York. See above pp. 86-108.

[19] Rigby, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 171-2 (quote p.171).

viewed by the élite as conveying obligations and "oneres communitatis" (communal burdens)

as well as economic and social privileges.[20] Men entering the freedom of late-medieval York

swore to share in "lotto et scotto" (lot and scot) these obligations. In other words they

agreed to paying the 'scot' of taxes and bearing the 'lot' of office holding.[21] Men who did

not meet these obligations were penalised. For example, in 1505, Richard Cutts, a freeman

who moved out of the city with his wife and household (thereby avoiding both tax and civic

office), was told that he could re-enter the franchise only on the payment of a fine and a

guarantee that in the future he would "bere his charge as a citicen".[22] Often these 'burdens'

were purely financial. For example, in 1484, all citizens of 'substance' were to contribute

to the city waits' fee.[23] Similarly, in medieval Coventry a freeman was expected to

contribute to the wealth of the city "after his substance & faculteez".[24]

The 'lot' of office-holding was no less contentious than the burden of office holding

in terms of time and money. Indeed, it seems likely that the burdens of office were tiered

according to wealth. As has already been argued, office holding was viewed as a duty for

the more wealthy, 'discrete' and 'honest' citizens. However, it is possible that less

substantial citizens also had an obligation to participate in the local government of the city.[25]

For example, in 1494, the aldermen appointed four of the "most discrete persones" in each

parish to collect a subsidy. The House Books further record that "And if the said iiij

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[20] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 33, 34, 69, 85 & 112; YCA, House Book 9, fol. 25r.

[21] *Ibid.* See Riley (ed.), *Munimenta Gildhallae Londoniensis*, 1: 269; Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, p. 36.

[22] YCA, House Book 9, fol. 25r.

[23] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 332-3.

[24] Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, p. 137.

[25] It is possible that even those who were not freemen had obligations. In London attendance at the wardmote court was mandatory for all householders and adult males, freemen or not. Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, p. 35. Involvement in other forms of office holding in York is discussed in greater depth below, see pp. 248-273.

persones in every parish soo elect refuse and wilnot perfourme...than my lord Maire to

discharge tham ...of ther fraunches" and to punish those who "wilnot doo ther dewtyes".[26]

Failure to fulfil civic duties was problematic on several levels. On a practical level,

Phythian-Adams has shown that in Coventry the refusal of men to serve in the city's lower

offices created a recruitment crisis higher up the civic hierarchy to the level of mayor,

ultimately causing unrest within the city.[27] Ideologically, failure to hold civic office was

viewed as detrimental to a city's common good. As the letter from the king to the citizens

of Lincoln makes clear, refusal of men of substance to hold civic office forced men of less

substance (and hence less discretion) into civic government "to our heavy damage and

prejudice".[28] In York, as in most medieval cities, the exemption of more substantial citizens

from the duty of civic office could only be allowed if a compensatory contribution was made

to the city's financial 'common wele' through the payment of a fine.[29] Indeed, substantial

men who wanted the benefits of freedom without the obligation of civic office had to obtain

(usually by means of an additional fee) special dispensations in order to enable them to enter

York's freedom. For example, both Robert Appleyard, a gentleman and haberdasher, and

master John Chapman, a public notary and proctor at York's consistory court, both

purchased the freedom of the city with the proviso that they were to be exempted from

holding civic office in the city.[30]

York's economic decline seems to have generated or exacerbated problems in

recruitment to civic office. As the city's financial insolvency increased, so too did the

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[26] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, p. 118.

[27] Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 250-52.

[28] Hill, *Medieval Lincoln*, p. 278.

[29] For the use of the term 'common wele' to refer to the city's financial resources, see Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 305.

[30] YCA, House Book 8, fol. 128v; 10, fol. 25r. See also *Ibid.*, 7, fols. 8r & 9v.

financial burdens of civic office, particularly for the chamberlains. In York, as elsewhere, more and more men sought exemption from civic office towards the end of the medieval period on the grounds of insufficient wealth.[31] Kermode has suggested that exemptions from office in York were not so much a reflection of a crisis of office-holding, as cynical attempts by the élite to extract money from men who were never serious candidates for civic office.[32] However, it can be argued that this case has been overstated. Certainly, the élite were anxious given the state of the civic finances to extract "as myche...as can be gotte" from men keen to circumvent their civic responsibilities.[33] However, in the light of the evidence already discussed on access to civic office, Kermode's interpretation of the type of men who were likely to hold civic office during the period in question seems to be too narrow.[34] Consequently, the number of genuine candidates for office who purchased exemptions has been underestimated.[35] Furthermore, the number of men who purchased exemptions from office, and who then went on to hold the office of sheriff has also been underestimated.[36]

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[31] For similar problems elsewhere, see Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 250-52; Hill, *Medieval Lincoln*, pp. 277-8; Rigby, *Medieval Grimsby*, pp. 138-41. Tudor Worcester does not seem to have faced this problem, a factor which Dyer ascribes to the fact that Worcester officials were not expected to meet expenses or financial shortfalls out of their own pockets. Dyer, *Worcester in the Sixteenth Century*, pp. 195-6.

[32] J. Kermode, 'Urban Decline: The Flight from Office in Late Medieval York', *Economic History Review*, Second Series (1982): 179-98. Kermode argues that the men who typically purchased exemptions from civic office would never have been considered as serious candidates for the post of sheriff on the grounds of wealth or occupation.

[33] YCA, House Book 8, fol. 135r.

[34] See above, pp. 57-83.

[35] Indeed, almost all of the men who were fined in this way had already served in the office of chamberlain, itself a financially onerous post. It was in recognition of this fact that the civic authorities allowed men to be temporarily exempted from the post of sheriff. See, for example, YCA, House Book 7, fol. 141v.

[36] Kermode names only four men who fell into this category, but examples that I have found include: Miles Harom (sheriff 1496), John Beisby jnr. (sheriff 1506), John Birkhede (sheriff 1497 & mayor 1504), John Carter (chamberlain 1500), John Dogeson (sheriff 1497 & mayor 1508 & 1517), John Elys (sheriff 1503), John Gegges (sheriff 1509), William Huby (sheriff 1506), Hugh Hewlay (sheriff 1525), Thomas Jameson (sheriff 1498 & mayor 1507), John Langton (Sheriff 1509), John Lincoln (sheriff 1502),Oliver Middleton (sheriff 1504), Roger Sawer (sheriff 1507) and Robert Symson (sheriff 1504). Moreover, the fact that more men did not fall into this

The 'commons', 'commonalty' or 'communitas' of York appear prominently throughout York's Memorandum and House Books as attending elections, consenting to ordinances and regulations, and scrutinising the city's financial accounts.[37] However, it is by no means clear who constituted this group: whether it included all adult male York residents or only the freemen of the city, or whether it constituted a body supposed to represent the interests of one of these two groups. In reality it seems likely that these terms were used in a variety of ways. 'Commons' seems to have derived from the French term 'commune', or the Medieval Latin 'communa', and it effectively meant the body politic.[38] In medieval towns this term was originally used to refer to sworn confederations of townsmen, usually under the leadership of an elected mayor.[39] As such, these bodies were often analogous with early guild merchants or other groups of burgesses.[40] However, the revolutionary overtones of some such groups meant that by the thirteenth-century the term 'commune' had generally been replaced by the similar, but more neutral term 'communitas'.[41] Indeed, 'communitas' was often used to express incorporation.[42]

Clearly, notions of political independence were deeply entwined with the concepts of 'community' and group will, a point which will be further elaborated on below. As such, it is not surprising to find that the terms 'commons' or 'commonalte' were often used to express the general will or interest of the political community of a town. So, for example,

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category can be explained in part by the fact that a number of men purchased life exemptions from civic office, and many other men died before their exemption period ran out; see appendix one for details of such examples.

[37] McRee, 'Peacemaking and its Limits in Late Medieval Norwich', p. 835.

[38] Kurath, Kuhn and Lewis (eds.), *Middle English Dictionary*, commūne, n.,1 & 2; see also commūnes, n., 1(a).

[39] Reynolds, *Medieval Towns*, p. 106; *idem, Kingdoms and Communities*, pp. 170-83.

[40] Reynolds, *Medieval Towns*, pp. 107-8.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 108.

[42] *Ibid., Medieval Towns*, p. 108.

in 1435, a London chronicle recorded that "All the weyrs..by the meier and cominalte were distroyed, by cause they were ayens the cominalte and ffrauncheise off London".[43]

There remains ambiguity over of whether the political community included all the adult male residents of a town or city, or only a select body. It is clear that 'cominalte' was often used in order to distinguish the higher civic officials from others within medieval towns. For example, proclamations and letters were commonly addressed to "þe maire, sherriefs, aldremen & cominaltee (of Norwich)" or to the "Mayer of the cytte (of London), the Aldermen and comnalte of the same cytte".[44] But to what extent did the 'commonalty' include the non-freemen? McRee has argued that urban government was "the product of a process of continual negotiation among the individuals and groups who could make a claim to political power".[45] This argument suggests that the term 'commonalty' was not static, but instead embraced those who had enough social or economic power to be able to claim a stake in a city's governance at any given time.[46]

There is a discernable implication in many civic records that not all townsmen were considered to be of the 'commonalty'. For example, in 1424, the London Letter books recorded that "All þe comynalte of þe Cite, and all þe Cite, was well plesed with hym", a statement which would appear odd if the 'commonalty' is understood to imply all of the inhabitants of the city.[47] The York records remain somewhat elusive and ambiguous on this matter. There are suggestions that at times 'commonalte' may have included those who

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[43] London Chronicle in BL Cotton Julius B.2, cited in Kurath, Kuhn and Lewis (eds.), *Middle English Dictionary*, commūne, n.,1 & 2; see also commūnalté, n., 1(a).

[44] *Ibid.*, commūne, n.,1 & 2; see also commūnalté, n., 2(a).

[45] McRee, 'Peacemaking and its Limits', p. 835.

[46] However, McRee also suggests that in Norwich the 'commonalty' only included freemen; *Ibid.*, p. 836.

[47] London Letter Book E, cited in Kurath, Kuhn and Lewis (eds.), *Middle English Dictionary*, commūne, n.,1 & 2; see also commūnalté, n., 2(a).

were not freemen. For example, House Book nine contains a letter from the king addressed to the "Mayre, Aldermen, Cytyzens and Commonaltie of our Citie of York", a phrase which is repeated several times throughout the letter, and in one instance is altered to "cytyzins and inhabitaunts".[48] 'Commoners' was certainly used to refer to those who were not free, as is shown by a list of payments due to the city for the payment of the minstrels. 'Citizens' were to contribute 4d, while "every Comonere that is of substance" was to pay at least 2d and "every othere Comonere exept the veray pore Commoners which be not of power nor abilitie therto 1d".[49]

Nevertheless, it is possible that an important distinction was drawn between the term 'commoners', or non-citizens and the terms 'commons' or 'commonalty'. As McRee has suggested was the case for medieval Norwich, certain York records suggest that the 'commonalty' referred only to the citizens of York. In terms of attendance at important meetings and elections, the civic records often made the claim that "all the hole Commynaltie of the...Cytye" were present at the guild hall.[50] Given that on other identical occasions the records sometimes specify instead that "the searchers of every craft with other citizens" met in the guild hall, it might be conjectured that the latter group of men were analogous with the 'commons'.[51] Similarly, the ordinances concerning the governance of medieval Lincoln likewise seem to use the terms "commonalty" and "citizens" interchangeably.[52]

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[48] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 3: 55-7.

[49] *Ibid.*, 1: 102.

[50] *Ibid.*, 3: 58. Obviously, if the commons were comprised of all citizens or all residents they would not have fitted into the guild hall. However, the assertion that 'all' of this group was gathered here should not be taken literally.

[51] *Ibid.*, 2: 104.

[52] Hill, *Medieval Lincoln*, appendix VII, pp. 402-5.

Attendance of York freemen at civic elections and the reading and amendment of city

ordinances was periodically encouraged throughout the later-medieval period. Increasingly,

though, medieval towns chose to represent the views of the commons through the use of a

common council. Indeed, Reynolds suggests that the introduction of common councils from

the late-fourteenth century onwards was designed to answer the need for increased

consultation within the city, something which previously had been dealt with through *ad hoc*

assemblies.[53] Unlike the common councils of medieval London and other towns, such as

Norwich, the York council of forty-eight was not chosen by ward.[54] Rather, the council of

forty-eight appears to have been intended by the late-fourteenth century to broadly represent

the city's craftsmen, although by the middle of the fifteenth century it was composed of

craft searchers.[55] On several occasions during the late-fifteenth century the House Books

record that "the sercheours of diverse craftes" were summoned to the guild hall in order to

act "in the name of the Commonaltie".[56] However, it would be misleading to suggest that

the city's searchers were the only means through which the will of the commons was

represented during this period. On other occasions the records make a distinction between

the commons as represented by searchers, and other citizens or members of the

'commons'.[57] Furthermore, in 1504 it was agreed that the common seal of the city should

not be used "bot with thassent of the Commons or sersours togedder assembled".[58]

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[53] Reynolds, *Medieval Towns*, p. 173.

[54] *Ibid.*, pp. 173-5. It should be noted that ward based and craft based councils were not mutually exclusive systems: in practice, the common councils of towns such as London and Norwich were dominated by craft representatives, even though they were represented by the ward. For common councils elsewhere, see Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, p. 123; Hill, *Medieval Lincoln*, p. 276; Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, pp. 170-2; Dyer, *Worcester in the Sixteenth Century*, pp. 191 & 197-8; Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp. 173-5.

[55] Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 80; Sellers, *York Memorandum Book, part 1*, pp. viii-ix.

[56] See, Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records* 2: 108, 117 and 163.

[57] *Ibid.*, 2: 80, 104, 113.

[58] *Ibid.*, 3: 9.

The role and level of involvement of common councils in the election of civic officials varied from town to town. Between 1343 and 1464, and again between 1489 and 1517, the York commons chose the mayor from two candidates nominated by the outgoing mayor. During the intervening period the role of the commons was significantly increased.[59] Furthermore, the candidates for other posts, although not chosen by the commonalty, had to be approved by them. The constitutional functions of the forty-eight were significant as they clearly indicated that the ideological basis of political authority lay in the consent of the people. Indeed, the civic élite of later-medieval York was often at pains to record that candidates for civic offices had been elected with the "assent and consent of þe serssours of every craffte and cytesans and commons of this said cyte".[60] Furthermore, incoming officials were expected to take their oaths of office before "the hole Commonaltie after the auncient custome".[61]

Important decisions within the city also had to be referred to the commons. Besides participating in elections, the constitutional functions of the council of forty-eight included consenting to city ordinances and legislation, and consenting to the imposition of financial burdens.[62] Again, this consent was something that the élite was often at pains to stress. So, for example, in 1506, a variety of "grauntez and dimisisions...(were) shewed unto the sersours in the name of the Commons assembled in the Common Hall...(which) thei affermed and graunted".[63] Likewise, in 1495, following a dispute over common lands, the

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[59] The details of the modes of election to civic office in York are discussed in Kermode, 'Obvious Observations', pp. 89-90; Miller, 'Medieval York', pp. 70-3 & 78. Changes in the election procedures during this period are discussed in greater detail below. For the role of common councils of other towns in the election of civic officials see above footnote 54.

[60] YCA, House Book 7, fol. 22v.

[61] Raine (ed.), York House Books, 2: 2.

[62] Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 80. Again, for the similar role of common councils in other towns, see footnote 54 above.

[63] Raine (ed.), York Civic Records, 3: 21.

mediation of the earl of Surrey was accepted by the "most party of the serssours of every craft and occupacion within this (Citie), in the name of the hole body of the Commons of the same".[64]

The strength of the authority of the commons was such that on occasions they could overrule the decisions of the élite. The most dramatic example of this concerned the request made by Lord Clifford in May 1489 that he and his troops should be allowed to enter the city and rest overnight. The House Books record that the élite was willing to allow them in "if the Commons will assent and agre to the same...to the which thai wold in nowise agre".[65] Rappaport details a similar occurrence in London in 1546, when Catherine Parr's request that one of her courtiers be made a citizen was referred to the common council "without whose consent her highness' request could not be granted".[66] Examples such as these suggest that the consenting role of common councils in late medieval towns was somewhat analogous to the role of the House of Commons within Parliament.[67]

As in other towns, the commons of York were keen to defend their rights and powers. It was noted at the beginning of this chapter that the commons of York justified the bill that they presented to the civic élite in 1475 on the grounds that "Forasmuch as we be all one body corporate, we think that we be all in like privilege of the commonalty, which has borne none office in the city".[68] The commons' rights of representation and consultation were

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[64] *Ibid.*, 2: 117; Similarly, see Sellers (ed.), *York Memorandum Book, part 1*, pp. 12, 14, 30, 40, 42, 44; *York Memorandum Book, part 2*, p. 52.

[65] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 2: 47. Of course, given the circumstances of this request it is possible that the civic élite was being somewhat disingenuous in this matter, and were really attempting pass the buck to the commons. Apart from anything else, it is perhaps unlikely that a meeting of the commons or their representatives could be called at this short notice. However, the reality of the situation is not entirely relevant here, as the claim of the élite to consult with the commons underlines their ideological acceptance of the role of the commons.

[66] Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, p. 175.

[67] On this point, see Rees Jones, 'York's Civic Administration', pp. 122-3.

[68] Sellers (ed.), *York Memorandum Book, part 2*, p. 246.

perhaps stressed most explicitly by the citizens of Norwich, who in 1414 became embroiled in a bitter dispute with the élite over the government of the city. In particular, it was complained that the élite had "contrary to the force and effect of the [city's] charter" amended customs, and had elected officials purely "of their own authority" and without the necessary consent and assent of representatives of the commonalty.[69] Moreover, the élite had denied the commons' right to oversee the city's finances. In other towns failure to obtain the consent of the commons could undermine the authority of any decisions made. For example, Rigby has noted for medieval Grimsby that lack of such assent or consent occasionally provided justification for resisting civic officers.[70]

It is clear that in York as in many other medieval towns, the legislative authority of the civic élite ultimately rested (ideologically and practically) with the commons of the city. However, the powers of the élite were further limited through the need for them to be seen to be acting in the interests of the city's 'common wele' or 'common good'.[71] Not only was the notion of common good vague, but it was also used variously to justify contrasting forms of government. It is therefore unsurprising to find that the notion of 'common wele' was also variously invoked by medieval townsmen to justify essentially conflicting points of view. For example, both the commons and the élite of Norwich claimed to be acting in the interests of the common good of the city during their dispute in 1414 over the powers of the

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[69] This interesting dispute is transcribed and translated in Hudson and Tingey (eds.), *Records of the City of Norwich*, pp. 66-93 (quote p. 73). It is examined by McRee in 'Peacemaking and Its Limits in Late Medieval Norwich', pp. 846-53.

[70] Rigby, *Medieval Grimsby*, p. 110. As an extension of this logic, London citizens even tried to claim that the mayor was only mayor to those who had elected him, and therefore not to those who were excluded from the city's elections. Barron, 'Ralph Holland and the London Radicals', p. 177.

[71] Kurath, Kuhn and Lewis (eds.), *Middle English Dictionary*, commūn(e wēle, phr., 1(a). For a discussion of 'common good' in late-medieval political thought, see Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 1: 44-8, 58-9 & 60-5; M.S. Kempsahall, *The Common Good in Late Medieval Political Thought* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1999).

commonalty with respect to the election of civic officials.[72] Indeed, it could be argued that the very vagueness of the term 'common good' was the basis of its value as a tool in the civic officials' armoury of rhetoric, a point not missed by York's civic élite, who declared that ordinances were "made, devysed and establisshed...for the common welle of [the] Citie".[73]

However, in addition to its rhetorical qualities, the notion of common good was also useful in two other respects. First, it could be used as a corporate value alongside notions of peace, love or brotherhood to unite an otherwise factional society.[74] Second, despite its vagueness, it nevertheless placed an onus on civic officials to govern in the interests of the whole community. Again this onus was often explicit in civic officials' oaths of office. In York, elements of the civic oaths followed those for London officials dictated by Royal edict in Statute Rolls from the reign of Edward I.[75] In particular, the mayor of both towns swore to "doo Right to Riche & to poore".[76] Even more explicit in this respect were two ordinances from the York House Books. In 1486 the House Books warned that any official who "use and effectually shewe his counsaill parcially in favour of any persone or persones" would be punished and ultimately barred from holding further office.[77] Likewise, in 1499 it was enacted that "if any Maier of this Citie that is...remyse, necligent, or for favour, kinship, aliaunce, maistership, frendship" failed to administer the full fine or forfeit that was

[72] Hudson and Tingey (eds.), *Records of the City of Norwich*, pp. 66-93.

[73] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 3: 90.

[74] For the role of notions of common good as a counterbalance to factionalism, see Black, *Guilds and Civil Society in European Political Thought*, p. 70

[75] See Luders (ed.), *Statutes of the Realm*, 1: 26 & 249-50.

[76] YCA, Freemen's Register D1, fol. 1v. Similarly, see Rigby, *Medieval Grimsby*, p. 108.

[77] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 466.

due would lose his whole mayoral fee of fifty pounds.[78] Unfortunately, there is little

indication as to the reason for these ordinances, but it must be wondered whether they were

enacted in response to the partial behaviour of some members of the civic élite.

As well as having obligations to the people of York, the civic élite were also expected

to act in the wider interests of the city. Indeed, York officials seem to have shared the

conviction expressed by the king's privy council in 1446, that "If hit be in prejudice of

comune wele, it is unlawfull".[79] In 1476, Thomas Yotton, common clerk of the city, was

found "not able to occupie amonges us for our wele and proffit" and was dismissed.[80] It

seems as though the mere act of failing to represent the interests of the city was also held

to be contrary to the town's 'common wele'. This is demonstrated, for example, through

the dismissal of the alderman Thomas Beseby (a case I have already mentioned) for his

"grett hurte and dyspleasour of the Comons", namely speaking against the interests of the

commons when he was supposed to be acting on behalf of them.[81]

Although York's civic élite were the prime agents of civic power, this power

ultimately depended on the consent of the commons for its legitimation. This point holds

serious ramifications for our conception of both urban rule and the structuring of urban

society. Most importantly, the revealed 'philosophies' embody a more diffuse system of rule

which blurs the distinction between rulers and the ruled.[82] The extent to which York's élite

was true to these philosophies, and in, particular the injunction to rule in the interests of the

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[78] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, p. 139.

[79] 1446 Proclamation of the Privy Council 6.44, cited in Kurath, Kuhn and Lewis (eds.), *Middle English Dictionary*, commūn(e wēle, phr., 1(a).

[80] It appears that he had been embezzling funds, and not keeping the common records properly. Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 46-8.

[81] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 3: 34.

[82] The term 'philosophies' is used loosely here and is not intended to suggest a coherent system of beliefs.

common good of the city, will be explored more fully below. Indeed, the revealed

ideologies of civic government and authority also acted as a framework through which civic

power as a point of conflict can be more fully examined.

III) Authority and Conflict

Reynolds has suggested that medieval townsmen "demanded only the traditional and

accepted right of consultation and objected only to the traditional evils of peculation and

misgovernment".[83] In contrast, other historians have stressed the quasi class-based nature

of late-medieval urban conflicts, viewing them as an inevitable consequence of a fundamental

division between the rulers and the ruled.[84] This section begins by looking at the evidence

for the abuse of civic government and complaints about such abuses. It then moves on to

explore discord in late-medieval York in the context of the revealed ideologies of

government.

'Peculation and Misgovernment'?

Although the civic élite was supposed to act in the interests of the 'common wele' they

clearly did not always do so. Maryanne Kowaleski, writing on fourteenth-century Exeter,

has shown that the élite of that city abused their position in a variety of ways. She argues

that the "powers of political office were frequently manipulated for personal financial

gain".[85] The élite escaped taxes and other levies, and obtained privileged access to lucrative

town contracts.[86] Perhaps most damningly, though, she suggests that the "immense power

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[83] Reynolds, *Medieval Towns*, p. 186.

[84] See above pp. 10-22.

[85] Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, p. 113.

[86] *Ibid.*, pp. 113-4.

and influence of the Exeter oligarchy affected even the administration of justice", so that members of the oligarchy were far more likely to receive a favourable decision in a debt case than creditors of a lower political standing.[87] Interestingly, there is little evidence of unrest in medieval Exeter despite this corruption.

Unfortunately, the York evidence does not allow a similar study to be made.[88] In particular, the scarcity of court records makes it impossible to carry out a proper investigation into the administration of justice in the city. However, the evidence which does survive at least allows a few comments to be made in this area. Timothy Andrew has noted, in his study of the late-fifteenth century York wardmote court returns, that there is little evidence of direct manipulation of the law.[89] However, while he suggests that it is unclear whether certain sections of society were given preferential treatment, it is nevertheless noticeable that the more wealthy and well-connected malefactors would sometimes escape with a suspicious absence of fines.[90] Moreover, evidence from government records suggests that contemporary suspicions may have existed in York that wealth and civic office influenced the outcome of legal cases. For example, Kermode has shown that a York vintner complained to Chancery that he was unlikely to have a fair hearing in York over a debt case, as his opponent, Thomas Neleson, was rich and "of standing in the city".[91] Similarly, William Scauceby (chamberlain, 1473) himself a prominent

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[87] Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, pp. 113-4.

[88] The only lay court records that survive for the medieval period are selected late-fifteenth century wardmote records and some sheriffs' court records. For the wardmote records, see YCA, Chamberlains Account Book CB1a, fols. 136r-139r; Wardmote Court Book E31, pp. 1a-20a. Although these remain unpublished, they have been transcribed by Andrew, 'The Fifteenth Century Wardmote Court Returns for York', Appendix. For the sheriffs' court records see YCA, Sheriffs Court Books E25 & 25a.

[89] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

[90] *Ibid.*, pp. 34-5. The results of arbitration cases is rarely recorded in the records, however there are some instances of arbitrators finding in favour of civic officials in cases in which they were involved. See Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 44; YCA, House Book 9, fol. 23r.

[91] Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 63.

merchant and member of the civic élite, claimed in another case that his opponent William Wells (mayor 1479) would be believed in York as he was an alderman.[92]

Similar accusations were occasionally levied at the élites of other towns, particularly during periods of conflict or unrest. Indeed, it could be argued that accusations of injustice were useful tools with which disgruntled townsmen could attack civic officials. In Coventry, for example, Laurence Saunders (himself a civic official) together with his supporters, complained to the crown in 1480 that the mayor and his officials had "denye hym Justice" in an ongoing dispute over common lands.[93] Meanwhile, in London, during the turbulent period of Ralph Holland's activities, a man was imprisoned for producing bills which claimed that one of the city's aldermen had perverted the course of justice by delay, favour and negligence.[94] However, while such examples serve to underline the perceived importance of the administration of fair and impartial justice by civic officials, they cannot be taken in isolation as evidence of malpractice on the part of civic élites in general.

More convincing in the case of York are allegations of financial misconduct. For example, in 1504, a merchant, Robert Whetley, seems to have refused to co-operate in the collection of a royal aid, instead demanding to know how individuals had been assessed for the recent levy. Not content with accusations of tax fixing, Whetley went on to say that the levy, which was to total £160, could be collected four times over "if ilkon of theym that hase ben Maier had leved all forfetts and wronggez of theym that hase ben Maier tofore theym".[95] This was by no means the first complaint of this sort in medieval York. Kermode has shown

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[92] *Ibid.*, pp. 63-4.

[93] Harris (ed.), *Coventry Leet Book*, p. 432.

[94] Barron, 'Ralph Holland and the London Radicals', p. 181. See also *Ibid.*, pp. 173-5 where Barron has shown that unrest in London during 1443 was in a large part caused by a Commission of the Peace which was seen to be acting against the interests of the artisans and as being procured by the city's recorder and common clerk.

[95] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, pp. 8-9, 11 & 16 (quote p. 9).

that as early as 1311 and 1316, the city's tax collectors were accused of fraud.[96] While it

is not possible to comment on the fairness of the 1504 levy, there is evidence to suggest that

in more general terms Whetley may have been justified in his complaint. It is noticeable, for

example, that in the lay subsidy of 1524 a total of six out of the seven York men who

received a reduction from previous years in the amount on which they were levied were high

ranking civic officials.[97] Moreover, these men included the serving mayor, one of the

serving sheriffs and three of the city's aldermen. Finally, the seventh man, William Wilson,

though not a civic official himself, was nonetheless one of the collectors of the subsidy![98]

The York House Books also suggest that Whetley was correct in his accusations of

other financial "wronggez" on the part of the civic élite. Besides receiving reductions in

taxation levies, the élite of York also received other financial privileges. In particular, the

council was clearly in the habit of awarding annuities or financial bonuses to civic officials.

Elderly former civic officials who were said to have fallen into poverty or ill health, such as

Miles Greenbanke or Thomas Fynch, were often awarded annuities.[99] Further, it was not

unusual for serving officials to receive other financial bonuses. In particular, the rent of

council-owned properties appears to have been particularly open to abuse. For example,

I have already discussed a dispute which broke out in 1502 between Richard Thornton

(mayor 1502) and William White (1491 & 1505) over encroachments made by some

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[96] Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 61.

[97] These men were James Blades (sheriff 1523), Thomas Drawswerd (mayor 1515 & 23), Peter Jackson (mayor 1520), John Norman (mayor 1524), Ralph Pullan (mayor 1537), William Wright (mayor 1518). The reasons given for the reduction in taxable wealth include foolishly trusting their goods to "dyverse persons", "chaunce", the loss of goods at sea and the cost of civic office. Peacock (ed.), 'Subsidy Roll for York and Ainsty', pp. 170, 171, 173, 176, 177, 178 & 179.

[98] *Ibid.*, pp. 177 & 179.

[99] YCA, House Book 8, fol. 119v; 9, fol. 22r. See also *Ibid.*, 8, fol. 122v; 9, fol. 30v. The frequency with which esquires of the swords and mace received such bonuses suggests that the council was almost operating a pension system for such men.

building-work that Thornton had carried out on a tenement in North Street.[100] The council

not only found in Thornton's favour, but declared that in view of the fact that he was to

"bere the charge of Mayoralty", he ought to have the tenement rent free for one year.[101]

Further evidence that the council may have been in the habit of offering favourable rates to

members of the civic élite is suggested by the ordinance of 1503, which ruled that from

thenceforth no aldermen or members of the common council (council of twenty four) should

be allowed to rent out the old bailey or any of the city's common ground "bot if they will

giff as muche as Any other will".[102]

As cases such Thornton's show, reductions in rent or taxes were commonly justified

in the name of offsetting the expense of civic office. Whether such examples represented

a genuine worry over the expense of civic office, or merely a cynical attempt to justify the

effective embezzlement of common funds is hard to say. It is clear, however, that the

commons entertained few doubts in judging this matter; Whetley was far from alone in his

charges. Financial misconduct or mismanagement was a common subject of petitions of

complaint in York, and it was possibly one of the main causes of unrest in York during this

period, as it had been throughout the later medieval period.[103] In particular, the 1490

petition presented by the commons to the mayor and council called for the scrutiny of past

mayoral accounts, a reduction in the recorders and mayors' fees, and a reduction in the

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[100] YCA, House Book 8, fols. 113r, 121v & 123v.

[101] *Ibid.*, 8, fol. 123v. Other suspicious rent arrangements included a reduction in the rent charged to John Birkhede in 1503 due to the ill repair of the house. *Ibid.*, 9, fol. 3r.

[102] *Ibid.*, 9, fol. 1v.

[103] See, Dobson, 'The Risings in York, Beverley and Scarborough', esp. p. 120; Rees Jones, 'York's Civic Administration', pp. 132-4. For worries over the financial propriety or competence of élites in other towns, see Reynolds, *Medieval Towns*, p. 176; Barron, 'Ralph Holland', especially p. 172; Hill, *Medieval Lincoln*, p. 277.

amount of legal counsel retained by the city.[104] The commons were not successful in their

request for the reduction in fees paid to the mayor and council.[105] However, the

chamberlain's account rolls suggest that their request for a reduction in the number of

lawyers retained by the city was met. Whereas in 1486 the city retained at least ten lawyers

besides the recorder, by 1499 this number had fallen to only two.[106] The élite was again

attacked over financial issues in 1529 when the commons reiterated earlier demands for a

reduction in the mayor's fee.[107] Interestingly, on this occasion the battlelines were not

straightforwardly drawn with the élite and the commons on opposing sides. Rather, the

House Books suggest that the commons were "stiry[ed]" by five members of the city's

council of twenty-four.[108]

Concern over financial corruption or incompetence among civic officials was also

evident within the élite itself at times during this period, illustrating that it is not possible to

view concerns over financial peculation simply in terms of the élite versus the commons.

One such example concerns the Stavely brothers, Alan (mayor 1506 & 1519) and William

(chamberlain 1498). These two men were involved in various disputes with other members

of the civic élite in the period 1498 to 1516. Although there were a variety of issues

involved, these disputes seem to have been particularly concerned with the use of financial

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[104] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 674; Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 83. For the history of the dispute over mayors fees, see Rees Jones, 'York's Civic Administration', pp. 132-4.

[105] Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 62.

[106] Dobson (ed.), *Chamberlains Account Rolls*, pp. 184 & 206. The number of legal counsel retained by the city seems to have crept up slightly during the early-sixteenth century, without ever reaching levels seen prior to 1490. YCA, Chamberlains Account Rolls, C5:1 (1501-2)- C6:5 (1523-4), although see in particular, C5:1 (1501-2), C5:2 (1506-7), C5:3 (1508-9), C6:3 (1518-19), C6:4 (1520-1).

[107] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records* 3: 120.

[108] The five men were John Richardson alias Paynter (sheriff 1527), Hugh Hewlay (sheriff 1525), James Blades (sheriff 1523), Leonard Shaw (chamberlain 1529) and William Holme (mayor 1546). Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records* 3: 120-8. The possibility that these five members of the élite were stirring up the city's commons in order to pursue their own agendas is discussed in more detail below.

power. The first of the disputes took place in 1498, when Alan Stavely was overheard saying that William Barker (sheriff 1483) was not fit to be an alderman as he had gained some wheat by false means and had also made an unlawful fine.[109] Alan apologised to Barker for these statements and this dispute seems to have ended here.

However, in 1500, following an ordinance forbidding York freemen from purchasing lead other than that which had been weighed at the city crane, William Stavely became embroiled in a dispute involving similar charges of corruption among civic officials. It began in February when Stavely was fined and imprisoned for breaking the ordinance on lead and refusing to cooperate with the civic authorities over the matter.[110] Stavely's obstinacy seems to have stemmed from his conviction that each one of those who convicted him had "bought more lede than he ded".[111] Interestingly, this does not seem to have been an empty accusation. Although Stavely was fined £6 by the authorities, he was subsequently reimbursed £3 of the fine on condition that he did not reveal this arrangement to anyone so that it would not set a precedent.[112] Stavely, however, was obviously not content to let the matter drop, and in August 1500 he brought proof to the council chamber of the fact that three aldermen of the city- John Elwald (mayor 1499), John Gilliot (mayor 1490 & 1503) and William Barker (sheriff 1483)- had all bought lead weighed at Boroughbridge.[113] Perhaps as a result of this action, the council decided the following month that lead could

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[109] YCA, House Book 8, fol. 40v. The election of Stavely to the post of sheriff nine months later, was perhaps indicative of the speculation and politicking which may have surrounded election to civic office.

[110] For the ordinance concerning lead, see Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 2: 144. William had bought his lead from a Miles Stavely, a lead man from Richmondshire who may have been his (and Alan's) brother.

[111] YCA, House Book 8, fol. 74r-v.

[112] *Ibid.*, fol. 87r; see also *Ibid.*, fol. 75v.

[113] *Ibid.*, fol. 95r.

be bought from anywhere.[114] Meanwhile, William Stavely received a 'reward' of 6s 8d for the searches which he had made through the books of one William Tankerd of Boroughbridge, while the mayor of York's was subsequently fined over the affair.[115]

To what extent should complaints such as those of the Stavelys, Whetley or the commons in general be viewed simply as protests against 'peculation and misgovernment'? It is possible that financial issues were used by members of the élite such as the Stavelys or the five members of the twenty-four in 1529 as a means of pursuing their own private quarrels and vendettas. Further, as will be argued in the next section, members of York's civic élite and other substantial citizens sometimes used inflammatory issues in order to manipulate the commons to their own ends.[116] Equally, it is perhaps unwise to take the complaints of the commons at their face value. As was mentioned above, government (whether ascending or descending in form) was often represented as being in the interests of the 'common wele', making it hard for people to attack civic rule without laying themselves open to the charge of attacking the common good of the city. As Rigby has argued, since the rule of the rich was generally justified for the good of society in general, urban conflicts "normally centred on the alleged failure of the rich to carry out their side of the social contract, rather than rejecting the social contract *per se*".[117]

Added to this problem, not only were the values of peace and friendship widely accepted in late-medieval civic thought, but from the crown's point of view one of the main

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[114] *Ibid.*, fol. 97r.

[115] *Ibid.*, fol. 102r & 103r. This was clearly not the end of the matter. In 1501 the issue went to higher arbitration with the justices of the King's assize. See *Ibid.*, fol. 109v.

[116] See the actions of John de Northampton in London during the late-fourteenth century; Nightingale, 'Capitalists, Crafts and Constitutional Change', pp. 3-35, especially p. 33.

[117] Rigby, 'Urban 'Oligarchy'', p. 68.

aims of civic government was the maintenance of the king's peace.[118] For these reasons,

protests against civic government or governors could easily be presented merely as

destructive or subversive acts, a spin that civic élites may well have capitalised upon. For

example, in 1386, the London aldermen described John de Northampton and his followers

as men who in the time of Edward III had been regarded as "rioters, brawlers, disturbers of

the peace, initiators and maintainers of common quarrels and riots in the city...men engaged

to the utmost of their power in oppressing the people and subverting the city".[119] Similarly,

during the disputes within London sixty years later, Ralph Holland's opponents justified his

imprisonment on the grounds that he had threatened men with violence, and they later

accused one of his followers as having uttered words which violently threatened the king's

peace.[120] Perhaps most telling in this respect, though, is the dispute between the 'venerable'

citizens and the commons of Norwich over the method of civic government.[121] In replying

to the (apparently well ordered) complaints of the commons, the élite began by calling the

latter body "de certaines rioteuses persones del Comunalte".[122]

How then should we view the complaints in York against financial management?

Were these simply complaints against the (sometimes evident) corruption of the civic élite?

Or were constrained complaints over 'peculation and misgovernment', one of the few

effective means by which a discontented commons could protest about an élite which

embodied wider and more fundamental causes of dissatisfaction? It is certainly clear that

more fundamental causes of dissatisfaction lay at the heart of other disturbances in York

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[118] Black, *Guilds and Civil Society*, pp. 69-70.

[119] Nightingale, 'Capitalists, Crafts and Constitutional Change', p. 7, note 15.

[120] Barron, 'Ralph Holland', pp. 164 & 176.

[121] Hudson and Tingey (eds.), *Records of The City of Norwich*, pp. 64-108.

[122] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

during this period.

The constitutional changes introduced in York during the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries have been viewed as a response to pressure from the commonalty for increased participation in civic government. In particular, historians have tended to view the numerous occasions on which election days were disrupted by rioting as symptomatic of fundamental dissatisfaction with the government of the city.[123] Arguably, however, it is the petitions presented by the commonalty to the élite during this period which provide the best gauge of the contemporary causes of dissatisfaction. As has been seen, the content of these petitions was often specific, dealing with financial matters or being directed towards individual instances of misgovernment. However, on several occasions the York commons were more radical and wide-reaching in their demands.

The commons most famously justified its requests as they were outlined in a petition cited earlier which was presented to the élite in 1475, on the grounds that "Forasmuch as we be all one body corporate, we think that we be all in like privilege of the commonalty, which has borne none office in the city".[124] Clearly, this statement must be viewed as an overt and bold reassertion of the commons' rights of consultation and representation in the government of the city. In this respect it is somewhat analogous to the actions of the Norwich commons in 1414.[125] However, the actual demands that followed were conservative both in terms of their content and language. The main request was that only 'able' men should be appointed as bridge masters or chamberlains.[126]

Far more radical were the actions of the commons in 1504. On this occasion the

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[123] There was election day rioting during the period in question in 1462, 1471, 1482, 1489, 1492 and 1516.

[124] Sellers (ed.), *York Memorandum Book, part 2*, p. 246.

[125] McRee, 'Peacemaking and its Limits in Late Medieval Norwich', especially pp. 846-53.

[126] For the full petition, see Sellers (ed.), *York Memorandum Book, part 2*, pp. 245-7.

mayor and council were kept in the city's guildhall by a crowd of 3,000 until six o'clock in the evening, when the commons finally agreed to submit their nominations for mayor.[127] Even then, only a few of the commons agreed to take an oath of obedience to the new mayor, and he was not allowed to leave the building until he had signed a bill of demands.[128] Unfortunately, the "many and gret" articles of the bill are not recorded, although a letter from the ringleaders of the riot to the searchers and commons of York noted that they concerned the "hool Comon well of the Citie".[129] That the commons were determined in their demands is indicated by the fact that they hired one Thomas Merley, a lawyer, to represent their case.[130] More radical still was the commons' request later that same year that "thei myght have theyr eleccon of the Shireffs lyke as they have of the Maier", in other words, that they should have a role in the sheriffs' election, a request that was not granted.[131]

These actions have been interpreted by York historians as evidence of a 'mercantile oligarchy under heavy fire from a 'democratic' movement'.[132] However, it can be argued that the situation was in fact far less clear-cut. The events of 1504 were distinct from the other York disturbances in several important respects. First, though the commons were frequently vocal in the defence of their rights of consultation and representation, the events of 1504 are the only documented occasion on which the demands made by the commons

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[127] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records* 2: 191-2

[128] *Ibid.*, 2: 192.

[129] *Ibid.*, 2: 194.

[130] For the quotes see *Ibid.*, 3: 7; 2: 193.

[131] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records* 3: 8; YCA, House Book 9, fol. 19v.

[132] See Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 84; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 122-7; Kermode, 'Obvious Observations', 99-101.

were either 'radical', or 'democratic'.[133] There is no record of the commons having lobbied

for an increased active share in the government of the city at any other time. Of course, it

might be supposed that the constitutional changes of 1464 and 1473, which increased the

role of the crafts in mayoral elections, represented an attempt by Edward IV to diffuse

election-day disturbances. However, there is no evidence to suggest that the changes of

1464 and 1473 were made in direct response to pressure from the commons: indeed, it is

equally likely that Edward IV was simply attempting to remodel York's constitution to make

it like London's. Clearly, due to the paucity of the records it is difficult to assess the

significance or typicality of this event. However, just as it would be unwise to dismiss this

incident out of hand as a unique occurrence, so too is it unwise to ascribe similarly radical

motives to all of the disturbances during this period in the absence of any other supporting

evidence.[134] As will be argued, this was the only occasion on which there was an evident

and uncomplicated divide between artisan commons on the one hand and the civic élite on

the other. Far from being symptomatic of a craft-based 'democratic movement' attacking

a 'mercantile oligarchy', it is arguable that the unrest of 1476 to 1525 should instead be

viewed within the context of existing ideologies of government and ongoing dynastic turmoil

within the wider realm.

Consultation and Representation

Some of the most serious disputes in late fifteenth-century York were concerned with the

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[133] Indeed, it is questionable whether even the events of 1504 could be termed democratic.

[134] Historians such as Swanson or Kermode might argue that their analysis of these disturbances is based not only on rhetoric, but also on their analysis of the socio-political relations within later-medieval York. This thesis argues, however, that the socio-political relations within later-medieval York were less polarised than has previously been suggested.

encroachment or enclosure of common lands.[135] Rioting in York over this issue was rife

between 1484 and 1494. Again, this area of dispute and unrest was not unique to York.[136]

Interestingly, historians have not tended to consider this issue in the context of civic

authority. However, an exception here is Mary Dormer Harris's interpretation of the unrest

led by Laurence Saunders in Coventry during the late-fifteenth century. Harris has

suggested that the problem in Coventry was wider than the issue of common lands, and

related to a tension between wards as traditional representatives of common rights, and

newer methods of civic government which were unable to draw on custom or tradition as

a form of legitimation.[137] The encroachment and enclosure of common lands was certainly

a powerful and potentially explosive issue in its own right. However, it can be argued that

in York too, the riots over common lands should be viewed within the context of wider

notions of civic authority. I will argue that a key issue in these disputes was the role or duty

of civic officials as representatives of the commons' interests.

The first set of riots over common lands in York during the period in question took

place in 1484, following the city's relinquishment of a series of common rights to Lord

Lovell, St. Mary's Abbey and St. Nicholas's Hospital.[138] The rioting reached its peak ten

years later over the case of the Vicar Lees.[139] While the York commons lacked Saunders'

eloquence or bravado in insisting that they should never have their common rights until they

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[135] For disputes over common land in York, see Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 340-1; Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records* 2: 107-23, especially 110-12; Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 83;

[136] Reynolds, *Medieval Towns*, p. 178. See J. Thompson, *The Transformation of Medieval England 1370-1527* (Longman, London, 1983), pp. 40-6; and, for a slightly later period, S.M. Harrison, *The Pilgrimage of Grace in the Lake Counties 1536-7* (Royal Historical Society: London, 1981), pp. 60-66.

[137] M. Dormer-Harris, *Life in an Old English Town: A History of Coventry* (London: Sonnenschein & co. Ltd., 1898), p. 110-11.

[138] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 294, 303, 320-1, 335-41 & 439-41.

[139] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 2: 107-23; Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 82.

had "striken of the hedes of iij or iiij of thes Churles hedes that rulen vs", they shared

Saunders' sentiments in laying the blame for the loss of common lands at the door of the

civic élite.[140] Indeed, it was reported in 1511 that a certain Nicholas Roger was heard

arguing that "Maister Kyrke shulde never be Maire for he lost the Vycar Lees".[141] The same

Roger also claimed with reference to the Vicar Lees that he would not "awayl his bonet" to

any but three of the aldermen as "they gafe hym nether mete ne drinke".[142] These comments

indicate that Roger both blamed the élite for the loss of the common rights, and also felt that

through the loss of the Lees the civic élite had failed properly to defend the interests of both

the commons and the "comon well".[143] It is impossible to determine whether Roger believed

that the lands were lost merely through incompetence or with the active consent of the élite.

However, Roger's slander of Kirk as a "fals traytour" might suggest that suspected Kirk of

having been duplicitous in the matter.[144]

In fact, there is no evidence to suggest that on this occasion York's civic élite had

relinquished the common lands lightly. The House Books from the 1490s are full of details

of the various stages of land disputes with the Vicars choral and Sir James Danby.[145]

However, the same is not true of the dispute a decade earlier over the land relinquished to

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[140] Hariss (ed.), *Coventry Leet Book*, p. 556. For disputes involving Laurence Saunders in Coventry see *Ibid.*, pp. 430-38, 454-64, 510-13, 556-7 & 574-80.

[141] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 3: 36. George Kirk was mayor in 1495 and 1512. In 1494 he had been chosen by the commons in his capacity as alderman as one of the five men to go to London and negotiate over this issue. The other men were the recorder and the alderman, William White, together with John Elwald and John Stockdale of the twenty-four. *Ibid.*, 2: 114.

[142] *Ibid.*, 3: 36. It is unclear whether the reference to meat and drink refers to the practical use of the common lands, or was meant as a more general comment on the practical usefulness of the aldermen from his point of view.

[143] For the invocation of the protection of York's common land in the name of the city's 'common wele', see *Ibid.*, 2: 114 & 115.

[144] *Ibid.*, 3: 36.

[145] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 522-3, 663, 680-1.

St. Nicholas's Hospital. Here the land seems to have been handed over at the specific request of Richard III.[146] The House Books recorded that the request was accepted with the proviso that "the commons agree to the same", and the subsequent transfers were recorded as being agreed to by "all the hole commonalte" of the city.[147] However, in the light of the subsequent rioting it seems unlikely that all of the commons had in fact agreed to this action. Moreover, the mayor at that time was Thomas Wrangwish, a well-known supporter of Richard III.[148]

Aside from the rioting, there are several other indications that Wrangwish may have acted without the consent of the commons, and that the commons may have resented this. First, following the riots, the commons presented the mayor with a petition, the first article of which was a request that "the common seal of the citie be duly kepid and not be deliverd ne sealid therwith without thassest of all the comons".[149] This could be read merely as a general concern. However, it is worth noting that the indenture relinquishing common rights had been presented under the authority of the city's common seal.[150] Moreover, as will be shown, several similarly innocuous sounding requests in the same petition can be interpreted as attacks against Wrangwish.[151]

Second, a suggestion that the élite may have attempted to hide their role in the

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[146] *Ibid.*, pp. 303 & 439. Raine has argued that "the most unpopular thing Richard ever did in York was to ask for and receive from a compliant Council some common pasture", Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 1: viii. While there is no evidence that a similar request was made on behalf of Lord Lovell in 1483, Kermode has noted that Lovell was Richard III's chamberlain at the time. Kermode, 'Obvious Observations', p. 100.

[147] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 303 & 439-41.

[148] For a summary of the relationship between Richard III and Wrangwish see Palliser, 'Richard III and York', pp. 64-6. It appears that Wrangwish retained this affiliation even after Richards death; Attreed, 'The Relations between the Royal Government and the City of York', pp. 106-9.

[149] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 353.

[150] *Ibid.*, p. 439. For rules in medieval Lincoln concerning the presence of an element representing the commons at the sealing of documents with the city's common seal, see Hill, *Medieval Lincoln*, p. 279.

[151] Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 82.

relinquishment of the land arises out of the almost simultaneous repetition of the ordinance that councillors should not divulge council business outside the chamber.[152] Again this could have been coincidental. However, shortly following the presentment of the commons' petition and the punishment of those involved in the riots over common land, the ordinance was again re-issued.[153] Further, William Taite, one of the council of twenty-four, was discharged for having disclosed "the secretes and privetes of the said chambre".[154] Perhaps most tellingly, though, the evidence points out that his indiscretion was provided by one of the ringleaders in the riots.[155]

As with the Laurence Saunders affair in Coventry, the York commons seem to have regarded the loss of lands as a failure in the civic duty of the élite to represent the views and best interests of the rest of the city. However, as already hinted, the disturbances were also bound up with other issues. In particular, the relationship between Richard III and York has been discussed by historians, and it seems likely that Richard was fêted by certain members of the élite, but resented by the commons.[156] This is not the place to discuss or examine Richard III's relationship with York in detail. However, Richard's influence in the city was clearly pertinent to issues of authority and unrest in later-medieval York. In particular, there is evidence to suggest that the commons may have felt that their authority was compromised or threatened by Richard's patronage of the civic élite.

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[152] The first letter from Richard III over the lands was discussed on 17 March. The grant of the pasture was made on the 27 March and the ordinance concerning council secrets was first reissued at a meeting later on the 27 March; Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 305.

[153] *Ibid.*, pp. 339-40.

[154] *Ibid.*, p. 340.

[155] Wandesford's involvement is discussed below.

[156] See, Palliser, 'Richard III and York', pp. 51-81; Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. xxiii; The relationship between Richard III and York stemmed back to his time as Duke of Gloucester. To avoid confusion I have avoided calling him both Richard III and the Duke of Gloucester, instead referring to him as Richard.

Attacks made against Richard and mayor Wrangwish suggest that the commons may have resented the interference of Richard in York, and may even have viewed this interference as a threat to their own role in the government of the city. We have already seen that resentment against the élites' failure to safeguard common lands resulted from an original request made by Richard. Concern over his role in the government of York seems to have been an even greater cause of contention. In 1482, the city witnessed serious rioting on the day of the mayor's election. This rioting appears to have been sparked by a rivalry between two of the mayoral candidates, Richard York (mayor 1469 & 1482) and Thomas Wrangwish (1476 & 1484).[157] Following these disturbances the king ordered that both men should relinquish their claims to the post.[158] However, the prospect of Wrangwish's mayoralty continued to cause concern within the city. The following year, during a discussion over ale concerning who the commons should have for their mayor in the forthcoming elections, someone suggested that he thought "it wold plees the communs" that Wrangwish, should be mayor on the grounds that he was "the man that my lord of Gloucestre will do for".[159] In response to this the cooper William Welles replied "if my lord Gloucestir wold have hym mair the communs woldnot have hym mare".[160] When questioned about this statement Welles claimed that what he meant was that "the mair must be chosyn be the commonalte and not be no lord".[161] Clearly, the interference of Richard in the government of York was resented in some quarters. Furthermore, a slander made against

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[157] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 247-9, 251, 252, 254 & 702. Richard York does not seem to share in Wrangwish's support for Richard III, and he was knighted by Henry VII in 1487 for having stayed loyal to the king during Lambert Simnel's rebellion. Raine (ed.), *Test. Ebor.* 4: 134.

[158] Atreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 247-9, 251, 252, 254 & 702; Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 82.

[159] *Ibid.*, p. 707.

[160] *Ibid.*, p. 707.

[161] *Ibid.*, p. 707. During the same year there was also another slander case involving Wrangwish in which he was accused of being a thief. *Ibid.*, pp. 278-9.

Richard some months earlier which stated: "What myght he do for the cite? Nothing bot gryn of us", suggests that at least some of the commons felt that Richard had little to offer them in compensation for his interference.[162]

Resentment against Wrangwish was further indicated through the bill presented by the commons to the civic élite in 1484.[163] Besides offering general criticism of the government of York, the bill can be interpreted both as an attack on Wrangwish, and as a defence of the rights of the commonalty. As has been mentioned, the bill began by re-iterating the fact that the common seal should only be used with the consent of the commons. It then suggested a range of measures concerning the city's officers of the mace and sword, and the captaincy of York soldiers. In particular, it was requested that in order to reduce costs "ther be noo more at any tyme any of our aldermen to be an captayn bot onely ather the mase berer and swerdberer".[164] Further, the role of the commons in the election of these officers was re-asserted with the injunction that these offices were not be sold but "to be chosen and elect by the mayre and his brether and with thassent of the comons".[165] Quite possibly, the existence of financial concerns over the captaincy of soldiers should be viewed in the context of ongoing complaints about the nonpayments of soldiers who served in Scotland two years earlier.[166] However, as Miller has suggested it is also likely that, the terms of the bill constituted a thinly veiled dig at Wrangwish who had played a prominent role as captain of York troops at that time.[167] It should also be noted that the Wrangwish family seems to

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[162] *Ibid.*, p. 696.

[163] *Ibid.*, pp. 353-4.

[164] *Ibid.*, p. 353.

[165] *Ibid.*, p. 354.

[166] *Ibid.*, pp. 263-4, 265, 267-9 & 272-3.

[167] Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 82. For Wrangwish's activities as a captain of troops see *Ibid.*, pp. 236, 256-7, 284-5, 295, 297 & 298.

have enjoyed connections with the post of sword bearer. A John Strangwishe or Wrangwish held the post from 1481 to 1485, and then again from 1486 to 1487. During this time he was involved in the dismissal (initially against Edward IV's will) of the previous incumbent, John Eglesfeld.[168] Further, in 1500, the House Books recorded that Thomas's son William was to be given the post of sergeant of the mace on account of the fact that his father had been mayor of the city.[169]

Outside Influences

Clearly, the riots and disturbances in York during the 1480s seem to have been provoked or fuelled by a variety of inter-connected issues. Aside from the rivalry between the two aldermen, York and Wrangwish, there existed concerns over the encroachment and enclosure of common land, over the financial management of the city's finances, and over the payment and captaincy of the city's troops. Resentment felt in certain quarters of the city towards Wrangwish and Richard III in relation to these issues, related to wider concerns over the administration of power and authority in later medieval York. In particular, the commons were anxious and willing to assert vocally their rights of consultation and representation. Infringements of these rights were strongly resisted and resented. Actions of resistance like the Coventry protests involving Laurence Saunders, or the fourteenth-century disputes between the élite and commons of Norwich, underline both the perceived importance of the role of the commons in the government of later-medieval towns, and the determination of the commons to protect this role.[170] At the same time however, it is vital

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[168] *Ibid.*, pp. 267, 355, 366, 533, 624-5, 675 & 700-1.

[169] YCA, House Book 8, fol. 79r.

[170] Hariss (ed.), *Coventry Leet Book*, pp. 430-38, 454-64, 510-13, 556-7 & 574-80; Hudson and Tingey (eds.), *Records of The City of Norwich*, pp. 64-108.

that the historian also views the protests discussed in relation to other activities within York and Yorkshire at the time.

Pamela Nightingale has demonstrated in her account of civic unrest in Richard II's London, that dissatisfaction among the city's commons was capitalised on by the factional leader, John de Northampton. She concludes that Northampton "was not a radical leader fighting for the destruction of the merchant oligarchy and for its replacement by a more broadly based civic government", but rather that he was "pursuing, first, the narrow sectional interests of his mystery, and, secondly, his own personal power".[171] Similarly, it seems likely that concerns amongst the commons of York over the enclosure of land, and the actions of Wrangwish and Richard III, were manipulated and exacerbated by men anxious to pursue their own agendas.

As was argued in the previous chapter, York's élite was keen to lay stress upon events which enhanced the group's solidarity and played down any internal discord or divisions.[172] Further, Attreed has demonstrated that during the late-fifteenth century, certain 'sensitive' material concerning the city's dealings with Richard III was kept separate from the main body of the House Books.[173] Due to this selective and doctored reporting, the details of events in York during this period are often extremely hazy, making it difficult for the historian to establish what was happening politically within the city.[174] Nevertheless, despite these problems, several pieces of evidence suggest that much of the unrest within York during this period was instigated or exacerbated, not by a disgruntled commons protesting against the élite, but rather by political factionalism and allegiances among civic officials and

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[171] Nightingale, 'Capitalists, Crafts and Constitutional Change', pp. 3-35 (quote p. 33).

[172] See above pp. 170-200.

[173] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, appendix III, pp. 704-32.

[174] Royal records such as printed rolls do not shed any further light on these events.

members of the Yorkshire gentry.

In particular, certain evidence suggests that some of the unrest within York during the late-fifteenth century may have been a factor of factionalism surrounding Richard III and the Wars of the Roses. In the first place, it is suspicious that much of the unrest during the 1480s seems to have been connected with Wrangwish, a well known supporter of Richard III. Moreover, the evidence suggests that where unrest during the later 1480s was clearly connected to certain individuals it frequently had a national or a regional political dimension. Roger Laton and Thomas Wandesford, both gentlemen and York citizens, were especially shady and suspicious figures.[175] Both men appear to have played prominent parts in the riots over common land in 1484, and they were punished for their role in this affair together with another gentleman, John Hastings.[176] Laton in particular does not seem to have been an ordinary participant in the rioting. As well as being on the panel of men who were appointed to speak with the commons following the riots, it was also Laton who presented the commons' bill of complaints to the mayor and council, thereby further suggesting that he had played a key role in the events.[177] Laton re-emerges in the records several times during the next few years in the context of minor disputes, and on one occasion in 1486 he was accused of insulting the sheriff and striking one of the sheriff's servants.[178] The same month he delivered another bill of petition to the civic élite "in the name of all the

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[175] Roger Laton obtained freedom of the city in 1481 as a gentleman, but was later referred to in the House Books as esquire. Thomas Wandesford became free as a gentleman in 1484; Collins (ed.), *York Freemen's Register*, p. 202; Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 357.

[176] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 336.

[177] *Ibid.*, pp. 336 & 341. This Bill appears to have been aimed at Wrangwish although, as we saw above, it ostensibly aimed at protecting the use of the common seal and dealing with the appointment of the mayor's sergeants.

[178] *Ibid.*, pp. 357, 363 & 397-8.

comons".[179]

The role and the motivation of Laton and Wandesford in the common land riots and subsequent skirmishes is unclear. It has been suggested that these disturbances may have been triggered or exacerbated by Richard III's relationship with members of the civic élite. Interestingly, the evidence suggests that by 1486 both men were involved in activities directed against Henry VII.[180] News of the impending invasion of Lincoln, Lovell and Simnell had reached England at the beginning of May that year, and it was while keeping watch at Bootham Bar that the ex-mayor William Wells was murdered by the miller John Robson.[181] It has been suggested that this act of murder should be viewed as evidence of simmering resentment against the ruling oligarchy.[182] Equally convincing, though, is the suggestion that Wells' murder may have been motivated by national politics, and that it was perpetrated by pro-Ricardian sympathisers in the city.[183] During the same period Laton again seems to have been stirring up trouble. In a letter concerning the murder of Wells, Henry VII requested that Laton should be sent to Pontefract for trial over matters unspecified together with Robson and another man named John Cure.[184] Unfortunately, the civic élite was unable to comply with this request as Laton had already left the city and his

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[179] *Ibid.*, p. 399. Following on from this was another series of disputes which again involved the city's sheriffs. *Ibid.*, pp. 469, 488-9, 491, 530-1 & 538.

[180] There is not necessarily an inconsistency here. It is possible that Laton and Wandesford's involvement in the common land riots and the subsequent bills were either a-political (in terms of national politics) or reflected in-fighting among members of Richard III's retinue. It is also important to note that while the two main factions during the Wars of the Roses were the Lancastrians and the Yorkists, there was also much rivalry and factionalism within and beyond the two main 'parties', and switches of allegiance were not uncommon.

[181] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 557-8 & 560-2. On the Simnell Rebellion in general, see Pollard, *North-Eastern England During the Wars of the Roses*, pp. 375-7.

[182] Kermode, 'Obvious Observations', p. 99.

[183] Palliser, 'Richard III and York', p. 67; Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. xxiii.

[184] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, p. 564.

whereabouts were unknown.[185] However, in August 1486, a York man Alexander Dawson, was punished by the mayor and council for allowing Laton "then standing oute of the kinges grace...in to the said citie at suche tyme as his rebelles approached unto the same".[186] Laton's involvement in political subversion is finally indicated by his beheading on the Pavement in August 1487 for "certain poyntes of treason committed by hyme ayenst the kinges highnesse".[187]

Wandesford's crimes were far less spectacular. Like Laton he was punished for making a riotous assembly during the common land riots of 1484, and he was also charged with the task of speaking with the commons over this matter.[188] The next indication of Wandesford's seditious or riotous activities does not come until January 1487. At that time the contents of a letter of testimonial from the mayor for Wandesford suggests that rumours were abounding concerning Wandesford's involvement in riots and other activities against the king, the king's peace and laws, and the king's citizens.[189] Finally, following the election-day riots of 1489, Wandesford was charged, together with the merchant John Metcalf and other "gentlemen", with having unlawfully taken the keys to Bootham bar and opened the gates on the morning of the elections.[190] This act of opening Bootham bar on the morning of the mayoral elections presumably allowed undesirable elements into the city, and it appears as particularly suspicious given that the elections had been preceded by royal

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[185] *Ibid.*, p. 565.

[186] *Ibid.*, p. 590.

[187] *Ibid.*, p. 588.

[188] *Ibid.*, p. 336.

[189] *Ibid.*, p. 528. Interestingly, despite Wandesford's involvement in the riots of 1484 the mayor denied such accusations against Wandesford and confirmed his good character.

[190] Metcalf was probably the man of that name who became mayor in 1498. At that point he had yet to hold civic office in the city, although was free as a merchant. *Ibid.*, pp. 629 & 633.

proclamations warning people to keep the king's peace. Trouble may well have been

expected from outsiders, as a warning had been issued that no one was to "go defensable

arraied be it estraunger or ffraunchest man...bot that every estraunger leve his wapyn at his

innes and not to entermeit hym ne thame of the eleccion of the maior".[191]

Laton and Wandesford were not the only men to play a prominent role in the

incitement of politically motivated violence within the city during this period. Thomas

Wrangwish's association with Richard III and his connection with a number of the

disturbances in York during the early 1480s (often as a target of resentment) has already

been commented on. Wrangwish played a more direct and serious role in the disturbances

witnessed in the city in 1489 as part of 'Egremont's Rising' or the 'Yorkshire Rebellion' of

1489.[192] The rebellion began in April, prompted it seems by attempts to collect an

unpopular tax in the North, and by 15 May the rebels had entered York.[193] Wrangwish was

also charged with procuring three men from Acomb to take part in the uprising, and having

allowed 5,000 of the rebels into York through Walmgate and Fishergate Bars, which he was

deemed to have defended inadequately in his role as alderman.[194] In June, Wrangwish was

convicted of treason for his role in these activities by a jury which included four of his fellow

aldermen.[195] Although he was sentenced to hang, he and other participants in the uprising

received royal pardons the following month.[196] Perhaps unsurprisingly, the York

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[191] *Ibid.*, p. 631.

[192] Attreed, 'Relations between the Royal Government and the City of York', pp. 106-9. See also, Hicks, 'The Yorkshire Rebellion of 1489 Reconsidered', pp. 365-94 and *idem*,'Dynastic Change and Northern Society', pp. 395-418.

[193] Hicks, 'The Yorkshire Rebellion of 1489 Reconsidered', especially pp. 396 & 406.

[194] *Ibid.*, p. 401. The rebels were armed with bows and arrows which had been supplied by a York fletcher named Hugh Buntyng, possibly the same Hugh Buntyng, fletcher, who held civic office as a bridge master in 1514 and as a chamberlain in 1528 (and who died in 1530). Appendix 1.

[195] Hicks, 'The Yorkshire Rebellion of 1489 Reconsidered', p. 398.

[196] *CPR (1485-1494)*, p. 271.

House Books make no mention of Wrangwish's actions and give sparse treatment to the role of York in this uprising in general.

Given the sparsity of the evidence available, it is unlikely that historians will ever be able to fully unravel the complex events and allegiances which caused such unrest in York during the late-fifteenth century. Indeed, it is not even possible to argue that this period was marked by a significant increase in violence, since civic records such as the House Books, which provide the main sources of evidence for such unrest in York, only begin to survive consistently from the late-fifteenth century onwards.

In the first section of this part it was argued that the extent of the involvement of the commons in the government of later-medieval York has been under-estimated by historians. The latter section has concentrated on the role of the revealed political relationship between the élite and the commons in the disturbances in York during this period. Historians have argued that urban unrest both in York and elsewhere can be explained in terms of conflict between these two groups. This section has shown that to a certain extent such an analysis is justified. Financial peculation and political or administrative mismanagement, whether real or merely perceived, seem to have elicited protest from the commons in the form of bills of complaint, and they possibly provided contributory causes of violent action such as rioting within the city. Further, the commons were anxious to defend their role within the political life of York. Again, the evidence suggests that they defended their rights of representation and consultation through the use of bills of petition and other less peaceful protest. Indeed, there is even evidence to suggest that on occasions, the commons may have made more radical demands, requesting an increased role in the electoral system. To this extent, it is possible to interpret some of the unrest evident in this period in terms of antagonism between the élite and the commons. However, the evidence does not suggest that unrest in York can be ascribed wholly or mainly to pressure for increased 'democracy', or to an

inherently antagonistic division between a craft-based commons and a mercantile oligarchy. Such a view is overly simplistic in terms of the demarcation line between those involved in disturbances or disputes, and also in terms of the causes of the unrest which seem to have been complex and multiple.

While members of the commons protested against corruption among the élite, so too did other members of the élite. As the previous chapter on the structure of the civic élite showed, the élite of late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth century York was riven with factionalism. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that several of the recorded disturbances of the period seem to have been sparked by factionalism within the élite itself. We have seen how rivalry between two main mayoral candidates in 1482 caused unrest and rioting amongst the wider population.[197] Similarly, rivalry within the civic élite also caused rioting within the city in 1516, when the council of aldermen was divided over which candidate should join their ranks.[198] Finally, unrest within the city was instigated or exacerbated in 1529 when five rogue members of the council of twenty-four became involved in the 'plot' to reduce the mayor's fee. Also challenging the identification of a division between a 'craft-based commons' and a 'mercantile élite' is the prominence enjoyed by gentlemen such as Laton and Wandesford as ringleaders in several of the disturbances.

Examining the cause of the disturbances, the actions and activities of key players such as Laton, Wandesford and Wrangwish, suggest that any antagonism between the élite and the commons was complicated by a variety of other interwoven factors. Complaints against financial peculation, the desire of the commons to defend their role within the civic constitution, and inherent factionalism within the élite, all seem to have been exacerbated in York by rivalry and dynastic power struggles within the wider realm. In his analysis of

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[197] Attreed (ed.), *York House Books*, pp. 247-9, 25-2, 254 & 702.

[198] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 3: 51-3 & 55-9.

the 1489 Egremont Rising of 1489, Hicks concluded that "even in the North, local politics were affected by Royal action".[199] It could equally be argued that in turn these 'local politics' affected the politics of towns and cities. The fact that the line between national and local politics could easily become blurred can be illustrated with reference to sixteenth-century Coventry. Phythian-Adams has shown that in Coventry rebels planned to murder the city's mayor and aldermen, not as a protest against the ruling élite, but as part of a treason plot against the king.[200] The experiences of medieval York and Coventry warn us against the dangers of over-arching or one-dimensional explanations of historical events, and they suggest that unrest during this period in other towns should be re-examined with an eye to local and national allegiances, events and circumstances.

A final criticism of a historiography of unrest which views urban unrest as symptomatic of an inherently antagonistic divide between the commons and the élite is that it both feeds off and reinforces the notion of a centralised and sharply graduated linear system of power within late-medieval towns. It is to this topic that Part Four now turns.

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[199] Hicks, 'Dynastic Change and Northern Society', p. 388.

[200] Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a City, pp. 253-4.

B) Structures of Power

I) Introduction

Despite changes such as the introduction or expansion of common councils, the late fifteenth

and early sixteenth-centuries have been viewed as ushering in the 'closed corporations' of

the Tudor period.[201] Studies of late-medieval or Tudor town governments overwhelmingly

have concentrated on the higher civic offices. It is partly for this reason that historians have

viewed civic government as being oligarchical in nature.[202] More recently, though, this trend

in scholarship has slowly begun to change. In particular, Rappaport has argued that it is

erroneous to view higher civic offices as a city's "primary sources of power".[203] The work

of historians such as Pearl, Rappaport and Kowaleski has demonstrated the important role

minor offices played in increasing participation in civic government.[204] Not only have the

lower civic offices been seen as significant in this respect, but there has also been an

increasing emphasis on the role of institutions such as parishes (or wards) and guilds. It has

been suggested that in sixteenth and seventeenth-century London as many as one in ten adult

males participated in some form of local government.[205] Pearl has argued that London urban

government consisted of "a multitude of overlapping courts and jurisdictions in which the

citizens and housekeepers were either represented or took part in person". As a result of

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[201] See, for example, Clark and Slack, *English Towns in Transition*, pp. 126-140; S.M. Jack, *Towns in Tudor and Stuart Britain* (Macmillan Press: Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 70-90.

[202] A criticism which has also recently been levelled at early-modern urban historians also: P. Withington, 'Urban Political Culture in Late Seventeenth-Century England: York 1649-1688', (Unpublished PhD Thesis, department of History, University of Cambridge, 1998), pp. 58-60. Withington states that the "depiction of York in the grip of an unyielding oligarchy is predicated on the assumption that only those householders occupying the most senior civic offices need be studied in any great depth", p. 59.

[203] Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, p. 175 ff.

[204] *Ibid.*; Pearl, 'Change and Stability', pp. 139-165; Kowaleski, 'Commercial Dominance', especially pp. 192-3. See also Carpenter,'The Office and Personnel of the Post of Bridgemaster', *passim*.

[205] Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp. 180-2; Pearl, 'Change and Stability in Seventeenth-Century London', pp. 152-56.

this she suggests that the roots of urban government were diverse and pluralistic".[206]

Similarly, it seems equally likely that power was diffused throughout towns by means of territorial and guild hierarchies rather than being entirely centralised in the hands of medieval civic élites. Medieval urban guilds and parishes have both recently been the focus of research. In particular, historians have begun to consider the importance of these two bodies in the social structuring of late-medieval towns. For example, Beat Kümin has shown that while historians tended in the past to view the parish as a "purely ecclesiastical institution", this was not how it was viewed by contemporaries.[207] Kümin suggests that the parish acted simultaneously as a spiritual focus and as "a political centre" which played a vital role in the development of rural and urban communal identities.[208] Similarly, historians such as Rosser and McRee have concentrated attention on the social and political importance of urban guilds.[209] As a result of this renewed interest, historians have begun to follow Phythian-Adams' lead of two decades ago in placing guild or parochial office within the career-cycle of 'successful' citizens.[210] For example, Judy Ann Ford has illustrated that in late-medieval Sandwich, parochial office holding formed part of a "cursus honorum of public positions in which the secular and religious were intermeshed".[211]

This section examines the extent to which civic power was diffused in late-medieval York through parochial, ward or guild hierarchies. In particular, it assesses the extent to

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[206] Pearl, 'Change and Stability in Seventeenth-Century London', p. 152.

[207] Kümin, The Shaping of a Community, p. 53.

[208] Ibid., p. 54. For recent work on the English parish see also the essays in French, Gibbs and Kümin (eds.), The Parish in English Life; Brown, Popular Piety, passim; Burgess, 'Shaping the Parish, pp. 246-286.

[209] Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast', pp. 430-46; idem, 'Communities of Parish and Guild', pp. 29-55; idem, 'Crafts, Guilds and the Negotiation of Work, pp. 30-1; McRee, 'Unity or Division?', pp. 189-207; idem, 'Religious Gilds and Civic Order', pp. 69-97; idem, 'Religious Gilds and Regulation of Behaviour in Late Medieval Towns', pp. 107-22.

[210] Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a City, pp. 125-7; C. Burgess, 'Shaping the Parish', pp. 255-8.

[211] Ford, 'Marginality and the Assimilation of Foreigners', pp. 201-11 (quote, p. 210).

which territorial or guild office in later-medieval York could be viewed as an extension of the city's civic *cursus honorum*. It also examines the effects of the late-medieval constitutional changes on the distribution and allocation of power within the city. Through this analysis in wider issues such as the political polarisation of society and the means of political and social mobility will be addressed.

II) Increasing or Decreasing Oligarchy?

To what extent did medieval York's constitutional amendments result either in an increased or decreased 'democratisation' of civic government? Rigby has argued that 'democratic' changes in other towns were only short-lived, and it is certainly the case that amendments made in 1464 to the method of electing York's mayors did not last long.[212] Election disturbances continued throughout the period and in 1489 the changes were revoked and previous procedures were restored in response to a request from the élite. It is difficult to say whether the type of men elected to the post of mayor altered as a consequence of the constitutional changes. It is certainly the case that the percentage of artisan mayors increased during the period of election by the crafts. Only one of the fourteen mayors from the period 1456 to 1472 was drawn from the crafts, in comparison to three of the fourteen mayors from the period 1473 to 1489.[213] However, this slight change should be viewed in the context of more general changes in the occupational composition of the civic élites at all levels of the hierarchy at this time. Moreover, the restoration of the 1464 procedure in

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[212] Rigby, *English Society*, pp. 172-5.

[213] William Snawsell (mayor 1468) was a goldsmith, William Chimney (mayor 1486) was a draper, John Newton (mayor 1483) was a dyer and William Lambe (mayor 1475) was an ironmonger.

1489 seems to have had no effect at all on the type of men elected to the office of mayor.[214]

More profound were the effects of a change in the constitution in 1517, which altered the composition of the common council. According to this legislation the common council was henceforth to be made up of two members from each of the thirteen major crafts and one from the fifteen minor ones.[215] The members were chosen by the aldermen from a list of candidates submitted by the crafts, and only men who had already served on this council were eligible to be elected to the post of sheriff. Swanson has viewed this change as an attempt by the corporation to protect the existing socio-economic hierarchy by excluding certain crafts from the government of the city.[216] However, it seems more likely that the immediate catalyst for the changes was rioting in the previous year caused by rivalry within the civic élite over who should be elected to the post of alderman.[217] It is probable that Henry VIII used the opportunity created by the riots to instigate changes intended to bring increased stability to elections. Henceforth, the new council, together with the twenty-eight senior searchers of the crafts, was required to choose the mayor from the existing body of aldermen, and also determine the candidates for the post of sheriff. Since the members of the common council were chosen by the civic élite, and since access to elections was restricted to those sitting on the new common council, the potential for disturbances at elections should have greatly decreased.[218] Further, a ruling that men could only hold the post of mayor twice, and then only after an interval of at least six years had elapsed, was

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[214] Between 1490 and 1506, three of the fourteen men elected to the post of mayor were drawn from the crafts, an identical proportion to that of the previous sixteen years. These men were William White, dyer (mayor 1491 & 1505), Michael White, dyer (mayor 1494 & 1505) and Thomas Grey, goldsmith (mayor 1497).

[215] Dickens, 'Tudor York', pp. 137-8.

[216] Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 123-6.

[217] For this dispute see above p. 246. There is no indication that the crafts which Swanson argues were excluded (the butchers and the tanners) were those involved in the rioting.

[218] Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp. 64-8.

probably designed to reduce rivalry within the élite by ensuring that all aldermen received their turn in office.[219] Palliser has gone a stage further by viewing the 1517 constitution in the context of constitutional changes elsewhere, and he argues that it formed part of a wider royal policy aimed at creating "small, self-perpetuating and, it was hoped, trustworthy oligarchies".[220]

Historians such as Swanson and Palliser have tended to view the constitutional changes of 1517 as evidence of a reduction in wider access to or participation in the political life of late-medieval York. The changes have been placed within the context of a dominant historiography which stresses the closure of civic office over the early-modern period. However, it could be argued that the effects of these changes in terms of craft participation in the government of the city were, far from clear-cut. Though access to the common council was controlled by the élite, the role of the council was greatly increased. In effect, the request made by the commons in 1504 that they should participate in the election of the city's sheriff was granted, while the crafts again regained the right to elect the mayor directly.

Historians have viewed the composition of the new common council as the most reactionary aspect of the constitutional changes. In particular, Swanson has argued that the nomination of the thirteen major crafts and fifteen minor ones was heavily biassed towards the mercantile occupations to the exclusion of crafts such as the tanners and butchers.[221] However, the reality seems to have been somewhat different. York historians have

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[219] More stringent measures had been introduced in 1372 when it was enacted that no-one was to be re-elected in the eight years following their holding the post, while in 1492 re-election was barred until all of the other aldermen had served in this capacity. However, unsurprisingly, these rules were no longer being adhered to by 1517.

[220] London's common council had long been dominated by more 'mercantile' crafts and it is possible that Henry VIII was anxious that the common councils of other towns should be similarly constituted. Palliser, *Tudor York*, p. 69.

[221] Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 123-6.

overlooked a list contained within the House Books of members of the common council in 1522.[222] A study of the men mentioned in this list reveals that only five years after the changes to the common council in 1517, the occupational composition of the council was significantly different from that which is thought to have been prescribed. That the choice of men was in some way governed by craft membership is indicated by the fact that much of the list follows the order of the crafts as they appear in a document of 1547 which confirmed the changes of 1517.[223] However, several of the mercantile occupations were omitted, while a number of craft occupations were added or duplicated. For example, the 1522 list of common councillors, like the 1547 charter, began with two merchants.[224] However, it then skipped any mention of the drapers, grocers and apothecaries, none of whom seems to have been represented in the common council of 1522.[225] The occupations of most of the next seventeen men listed appear to match the order in which the remainder of the thirteen minor crafts were listed in the 1547 charter.[226] Similarly, later sections of the list also match the order in which the minor crafts were listed in the 1547 charter.[227] However, a number of the crafts seem to have been over-represented in the 1522 list. At least two tanners, William Hewbank (chamberlain 1530) and Alan Selybarne were members

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[222] YCA, House Book 10, fol. 46r. This list is noted by Raine, although not transcribed by him in his edition of the House Books.

[223] The charter of 1547, which embodies the letters patent of 1517, lists the crafts as follows. First, the major crafts: mercers, drapers, grocers, apothecaries, goldsmiths, dyers, skinners, barbers, fishmongers, tailors, vintners, joiners, glaziers. Then the minor crafts: hosiers, innholders, vestmentmakers, chandlers, bowers, weavers, walkers, ironmongers, saddlers, masons, bakers, butchers, glovers, pewterers, armourers; YCA, A33, Confirmation Charters of Edward VI (1547). It is not possible to be certain of the identity or occupation of all of those listed in 1522. However, enough of the men can be identified to be certain that, in places, the order in which the men were listed was identical to that in the above charter.

[224] These two men were Thomas Abney (chamberlain 1519) and Thomas Alleyn.

[225] It is possible, though unlikely, given the high status of these occupations, that the men on the 1522 list who it is not possible to identify were drawn from these crafts.

[226] See Appendix 4.

[227] *Ibid.*

of the 1522 common council, despite the fact that the craft of tanners was not mentioned in the 1547 charter of confirmation.[228] Other minor crafts, such as the bakers, bowers and armourers had two representatives on the common council rather than the prescribed one.[229]

These differences suggest either that the changes of 1517 which prescribed the constitution of the new common council were not rigorously adhered to, or that the charter of 1547 did not reflect accurately the 1517 changes. It is possible that the constitution of the common council was altered in 1547 either to reflect, or to instigate, a decline in access to the common council on the grounds of occupation. Either way, it is clear that at least as late as 1522 the common council was still largely representative of non-mercantile occupations. Moreover, as Dickens has argued, its effectiveness as a lobbying body, that safeguarded "popular interests" appears to have increased after 1517.[230] This evidence suggests that it is erroneous to view the changes of 1517 as instigating a closure in access to York's civic government.

III) 'Diffuse Power': Guilds

The councils and higher civic offices were not the only means of political participation. Medieval towns often witnessed strong links between guilds and civic administration.[231] This was particularly the case in seigneurial or royal boroughs where guilds sometimes

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[228] *Ibid.* Similarly, a plumber, Henry Wright (chamberlain 1520) was also included on the 1522 common council.

[229] The bakers were Richard Norton (bridge master 1521) and Hugo Ryg; the bowers were Richard Oliff and William Kykby; and the armourers were William Hogeson and Thomas Skyrro. See Appendix 4.

[230] Dickens, 'Tudor York', p. 138.

[231] Although historiographically a distinction has been made between religious guilds, craft guilds and merchant guilds, it is often not easy to make such a clear distinction between the two. On this point, see McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Civic Order', pp. 69-74, especially note 2.

fulfilled a role as 'surrogate' town councils.[232] In some incorporated towns too, religious

guilds assumed a similar governmental role to that of the older merchant guilds.[233] The

relationship between civic governments and guilds was often highly complex and varied

from town to town. In towns such as Windsor, religious guilds were responsible for the

election of civic officials.[234] Elsewhere, guilds were under the administrative control of the

corporation. For example, in Norwich, where membership of the Guild of St. George was

automatic for civic officials, the master of the guild was always the city's outgoing mayor.[235]

It is craft guilds which have been most closely associated with the government of later-

medieval towns, though. The association between craft guilds and political office was often

enshrined in a city's constitution. As we have seen, York's common council was from 1517

composed of two representatives from each of the major crafts and one from each of the

minor ones.[236] Even before this date, guild searchers were often used to represent the views

of the commonalty and as agents of the civic élite. For example, guild searchers were

increasingly used as enforcers of trading and standards legislation.[237] Moreover, by the

sixteenth century they were also held personally responsible for the maintenance of peace

and law and order within York.[238] Swanson in particular has argued that by the end of the

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[232] Brown, *Popular Piety*, pp. 126-7, 170-1 & 177; McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Civic Order', p. 73; G. Rosser, *Medieval Westminster 1200-1540* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1989), pp. 285-93; Gottfried, *Bury St. Edmunds*, pp. 186-92. In the countryside too, guilds played an important role in local government; V.R. Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside: Social and Religious Change in Cambridgeshire c.1350-1558* (The Boydell Press: Woodbridge, 1996), pp. 123-47.

[233] McRee, 'Religious Guilds and the Regulation of Behaviour', pp. 74-5. For Merchant guilds see Gross, *Gild Merchant*, pp. 77-105.

[234] McRee, 'Religious Guilds and the Regulation of Behaviour', p. 72.

[235] *Ibid.*, p. 91.

[236] YCA, A33, Confirmation Charters of Edward VI (1547).

[237] Rees Jones, 'York's Civic Administration', pp. 123-4.

[238] See Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 3: 2. On this occasion, following rioting within the city, the craft searchers were to "serche emong his occupaconz what personz of the same wer most principal offendours" and then to bring the mayor "the namez of al suche personz".

medieval period craft guilds were under the political control of civic élites to such an extent that it is "more helpful to see craft organisations as vehicles of civic administration than as organisations for industrial protectionism".[239] Arguably, however, this case has been over-stressed. As Rees Jones has suggested, far from being oppressed, craft guilds often gained as much as the civic élite from their increased powers.[240] Moreover, as this thesis has shown, Swanson's (inherent) assumption of a division in medieval society between a mercantile oligarchy and a politically disenfranchised artisan class is unsound. As holders of civic offices themselves, craft officials should be viewed less as agents of the civic élite than as co-members who contributed to the city's political and ideological environment.

However, it is not the intention in Part Four to explore this issue in greater depth. Nor will Part Four consider the religious, social or organisational functions of York guilds *per se*, all of which have been considered elsewhere.[241] Rather, this section concentrates on what could loosely be termed 'civic guilds' and their role in the distribution and exercise of power within later-medieval York.[242] The main guilds under consideration here are the York Corpus Christi Guild, the St. Anthony Guild, the St. Christopher and George Guild, and the

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[239] H.C. Swanson, *Medieval British Towns* (Macmillan Press: Basingstoke, 1999), pp. 98-9. For greater detail, see in particular *idem, Medieval Artisans, passim*. For this theme in the context of a more general historiography of guilds, see Rosser, 'Crafts, Guilds and the Negotiation of Work', pp. 2-9.

[240] Rees Jones, 'York's Civic Administration', pp. 123-4. Rosser has also argued against Swanson's model: Rosser, 'Crafts, Guilds and the Negotiation of Work', pp. 3-31.

[241] See the introductory chapter to Virginia Bainbridge's book on guilds which places secondary works within the ideological contexts in which they were written; Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside*, pp. 1-21; Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds*; H.F. Westlake, *The Parish Gilds of Medieval England* (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge: London, 1919).

[242] The term 'civic guilds' is used to refer to those guilds which had strong links with the civic administration of the city, either through common personnel or through administrative connections. It is not intended as a watertight category. McRee has termed guilds which "provided financial assistance to local government, helped to elect city officials, and contributed to the elaborate ceremony that marked late-medieval public life" as 'governing guilds'. McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Civic Order', p. 69. This term has not been used here as (unlike in Norwich) it would be wrong to suggest that York guilds had a direct role in, or were formally integrated with, the government of the city.

York Mercers' Guild.[243]

In York, links between the civic guilds and the corporation existed both in terms of administrative ties and common personnel. Although none of the guilds played a formal role in the government of the city, the civic élite as a corporate body was involved, to various degrees, in the administration of the 'civic' guilds. For example, though posts within the Corpus Christi Guild were held solely by clerics, the charter of incorporation included the names of three of the city's past mayors.[244] The ties between York's civic administration and the guilds of St. Anthony and St. Christopher and George were even stronger. Little is known about the former guild, although it is clear that it was responsible for the performance of the Paternoster play in the Corpus Christi cycle.[245] The civic corporation was clearly involved in the supervision of this activity, and in 1495 it fined the guild for failing to perform the play.[246] Further, it is clear that by the sixteenth century the guild provided a dinner and breakfast for the mayor, aldermen and their wives among others at a house near the guild hall.[247] The corporation was also at times directly involved in the running of the St. Anthony Guild. Following charges of embezzlement against the guild masters in 1509, the corporation examined the guild accounts and took charge of the guild's

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[243] For an overview of York guilds, see B.P. Johnson, 'The Gilds of York', in A. Stacpoole (ed.), *The Noble City of York* (Cerialis Press: York, 1972), pp. 447-610; Crouch, 'Piety, Fraternity and Power', *passim*. For the Corpus Christi Guild see R.H. Skaife (ed.), *Register of the Corpus Christi Guild in the City of York*, Surtees Society 57 (1872). For the St. Anthony guild, which was an amalgamation of a guild of the same name and the Paternoster Guild, see A. Raine, *Medieval York: A Topographical Survey Based on Original Sources* (John Murray: London, 1952), pp. 91-5. For the St. Christopher and George guild, which was an amalgamation of the two guilds of that name, see E. White, *The St. Christopher and St. George Guild of York*, Borthwick Papers 72 (1987). For the York Mercers' Guild, see Wheatley, 'The York Mercers' Guild'.

[244] Crouch, 'Piety, Fraternity and Power', p. 283.

[245] Raine, *Medieval York*, pp. 94-5.

[246] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 2: 118.

[247] *Ibid.*, 5: 181-3; Johnson, 'The Gilds of York', p. 486.

keys and rolls until a new master was chosen.[248] Similarly, the corporation also became

involved in the guild of St. Christopher and George in similar circumstances in 1533. On

this occasion, the mayor obtained the right to oversee the guild's annual accounts in

response to the charges of embezzlement.[249] Links between the civic administration and the

guild already stretched back many years, since the guild and the civic corporation jointly

funded the building of the city's new common hall in 1445.[250]

Links between municipal governments and guilds could be more obscure, consisting

(on the surface at least) of little more than common personnel. For example, Phythian

Adams has demonstrated for Coventry that membership of one of the city's two civic guilds

was a necessary stage in the civic life cycle of ambitious young men.[251] More recently,

McRee has noted that the likelihood that some members of the guild of St. George in

Norwich would go on to hold civic office was enshrined in the ruling that those "liche in

tyme comyng to ben drawen un to þe estat of meyer' shreue or alderman" were to pay a

higher entry fee.[252] Similarly, Blockmans has argued that civic élites in the Netherlands often

belonged to "quasi-religious archery guilds".[253] Likewise, it has also been suggested that

in York guild membership may have been part of a "complex route to political power".[254]

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[248] Raine (ed.), *York Civic Records*, 3: 26-7. The corporation also intervened in a guild dispute in 1417/18; Sellers (ed.), *York Memorandum Book, part 2*, pp. 70-1.

[249] White, *The St. Christopher and St. George Guild of York*, pp. 6-7 & 12-14.

[250] *Ibid.*, pp. 2-4.

[251] Phythian Adams, *Desolation of a City*, pp. 118-127. See also the guild of St Mary in Hull; Crouch, 'Piety, Fraternity and Power', pp. 339-48.

[252] Cited in McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Civic Order', p. 80. As McRee notes, in practice this higher fee was never levied, no doubt due to the difficulties involved in predicting who would go on to hold civic office.

[253] Blockmans, *The Burgundian Netherlands*, p. 174.

[254] Crouch, 'Piety, Fraternity and Power', pp. 288-9.

Evidence for the membership of York guilds is hard to reconstruct. Only the Corpus Christi Guild has a surviving membership register and even here, the process of reconstructing a membership can be beset with difficulties.[255] Generally, only names (and not occupations) were recorded, and therefore the scarcity of details precludes the accurate identification of many members.[256] However, the membership register does allow a rough estimation to be made of the proportion of civic officials who belonged to the guild. Although no register survives for the Mercers' Guild, surviving account rolls can be used to identify some members.[257] Unfortunately, few records of the other York guilds survive. In the absence of such records, York historians have relied instead on bequests in wills for evidence of guild membership.[258] Due to these limitations, the accurate and complete reconstruction of guild membership among York civic officials is not possible. However, Appendix 1 lists membership among civic officials of the Corpus Christi Guild and Mercers' Guild. This information, combined with other forms of guild evidence from both York and elsewhere, allows important conclusions to be drawn concerning the place of guilds in York's power hierarchies.

The first point to be noted is that in contrast to many other medieval towns, there were no York guilds which catered exclusively for the civic élite and their families. Thus,

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[255] Skaife (ed.), *The Register of the Guild of Corpus Christi.*

[256] Although parish of residence was generally recorded in guild account rolls from 1476, the survival of these rolls is sporadic. Crouch, 'Piety, Fraternity and Power', p. 276.

[257] I am very grateful to Louise Wheatley, archivist of the York Mercers' Guild for this information. For details of membership of the guild and shipping activity before 1500, see Wheatley, 'The York Mercers' Guild', appendix.

[258] Crouch, 'Piety, Fraternity and Power', pp. 22-3; White, *The St. Christopher and St. George Guild*, pp. 14-15. Membership among the civic élite of the Guild of St. Anthony and the Guild of St. Christopher and George was primarily reconstructed using the wills of civic officials. Testamentary bequests to these and other York guilds are also listed in Crouch, 'Piety, Fraternity and Power', appendix; and E. White, 'Bequests to Religious Guilds in York' (Unpublished MS in BIHR).

none of York's guilds can be viewed as "a club for the city's political class".[259] It is possible

that the highest-ranking civic officials were more likely to belong to the smaller, more

exclusive, civic guilds of St. Anthony, and St. Christopher and George. However, in the

absence of reliable evidence of membership, this must remain a speculation. In Hull, the

merchants re-founded the St. George Guild in order to represent "their communal interests

more exclusively" when the size and socio-economic profile of membership of the town's

guild of St. Mary's increased.[260] Perhaps in York too, the smaller guilds of St. Anthony, and

St. Christopher and George, served a perceived need for exclusive communal interests and

a desire for the cachet of social exclusivity.

Despite the absence of a guild that catered exclusively for York's civic élite, there

nonetheless appears to have been a strong relationship between civic office and guild

membership in the city. Table 4:1 below summarises the percentage of civic officials from

the period 1476 to 1525 who belonged to York's Corpus Christi Guild, or Mercers' Guild.

Membership of both guilds is expressed in terms of a percentage range rather than a definite

percentage.[261]

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[259] McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Civic Order', p. 90.

[260] Crouch, 'Piety, Fraternity and Power', pp. 347-8 (quotation p. 348).

[261] The minimum number refers to the number of men who can be accurately identified as having belonged to the Corpus Christi Guild. The maximum number includes all of those who were definitely members together with men who may have belonged to the guild but whose membership is uncertain. The latter group includes men for whom someone of the same name is recorded as entering the guild, but for whom a lack of additional evidence precludes definite identification.

Table 4:1
Percentage of the Civic Élite 1476 to 1525 who Belonged to the York Corpus Christ Guild or the York Mercers' Guild: By Highest Civic Post Attained

Highest Civic Post Attained	Percentage of all Men who Attained each post who were members of:		
	Corpus Christi Guild	Mercers' Guild	Either or Both Guilds
Bridge Master	17-36%	13%	26-43%
Chamberlain	46-70%	39-45%	60-74%
Sheriff	61-77%	47-49%	80-86%
Mayor	74-93%	84-86%	95-100%
All Civic Officials	**46-66%**	**42-43%**	**61-72%**

Source: Appendix 1.

As Table 4:1 demonstrates, a majority (46-66%) of civic officials from the period 1476 to 1525 probably belonged to the Corpus Christi Guild, while less than half (42-43%) of civic officials belonged to the Mercers' Guild. A significant number of the civic officials belonged to only one or the other of the guilds, so overall the percentage of civic officials who belonged to either the Corpus Christi Guild or the Mercers' Guild was relatively high (between 61-72%). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the correlation between civic office and guild membership was more pronounced in the highest civic offices. Whereas less than half of the bridge masters (26-43%) were members of one or the other of the two guilds, almost, if not all, of the mayors were members (95-100%).

Furthermore, most men joined the two guilds around the same time as they entered the freedom of the city, but before they had held any civic office. That guild membership may have played a role in the route to political power is indicated by the fact that men who belonged to one of these two guilds tended to progress up the civic hierarchy faster than those who did not. On average, men who held civic office during the period in question took 15.4 years to reach their first civic post after becoming free. In contrast, men who belonged to the Corpus Christi Guild took an average of 12.9 years, while those who

belonged to the Mercers' Guild took an average of 10.8 years.[262] The fact that membership of the Mercers' Guild seems to have been more advantageous than membership of the Corpus Christi Guild in this respect, may have been due to the fact that it was a much smaller, and possibly more selective guild.

It is likely that the enhanced promotion prospects enjoyed by members of these two guilds was due to a variety of factors. First, many guilds were exclusive and selective.[263] Trexler has argued for Florence that guilds acted as "a filter mechanism for controlling access to political office".[264] Members could be screened on the basis of wealth, and occupation, but also on less tangible factors, such as respectability or social connections. For example, new members of the Hull Corpus Christi Guild who were unrelated to existing members were charged a higher admission fee.[265] Personal contacts and networks appear to have been used by the keepers of the Corpus Christi Guild to recruit new members.[266] The guild account rolls reveal that new members were often recruited in groups by parish, no doubt with the keepers selecting the most 'respectable' households for potential members.[267] Ultimately of course, the fact that members of the Corpus Christi Guild and Mercers' Guild often enjoyed successful civic careers, perhaps reflects a similarity in selection criteria between the guilds and the civic élite; for instance, both may well have favoured wealthy merchants who were related to other civic officials.

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[262] Appendix 1. It should be noted that merchants who did not belong to the Mercers' Guild took, on average, 5.8 years longer to reach their first civic post after becoming free than those who did belong to the guild (14.6 years as opposed to 8.8 years). As this indicates, the speedier election of men who were members of the Mercers' Guild is not merely a factor of the relatively high proportion of merchants belonging to the guild.

[263] Rosser, 'Communities of Parish and Guild', p. 34.

[264] Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, p. 15

[265] Rosser, 'Communities of Parish and Guild', p. 36.

[266] Crouch, 'Piety, Fraternity and Power', pp. 278-9.

[267] *Ibid.*, p. 287.

It may also be significant that many guilds had strict moral codes.[268] For example, the ordinances of York's Paternoster Guild ordered that all members were to keep themselves to 'good and worthy business and company'.[269] Rosser has argued that moral regulation bestowed on guild members an additional stamp of respectability.[270] It is likely that in York the selection processes and moral regulations of the guilds lent a social cachet of 'respectability' or 'acceptance' to all guild members, which in itself might have enhanced the promotion prospects of a civic official. More work needs to be undertaken on York guilds in this respect. However, it is interesting to note that the discourses of power contained within records of the Mercers' Guild seem to be similar to those contained within Yorks' civic records. Officers of the Mercers' Guild, like those comprising the civic élite were expected to be "able and discrete", and to govern "indifferently", "wisely and truly" and with "honestee" and "connyng", indicating that similar personal qualities were valued in both groups.[271]

Medieval guilds also offered a variety of opportunities for mixing with fellow guildsmen and women. Craft and religious guilds may have offered opportunities for 'networking' and the negotiation of trade alliances and business contracts, particularly among men of different occupations.[272] Indeed, guilds themselves could open up all manner of business opportunities for their members. David Crouch has suggested that political motivations may have influenced the decision of several of the city's butchers to join the Corpus Christi Guild. He has shown that while it was unusual for butchers to hold civic

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[268] For the role of religious guilds in the regulation of behaviour, see McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Regulation of Behaviour', pp. 107-22.

[269] Toulmin Smith (ed.), *English Gilds*, p. 137.

[270] Rosser, 'Communities of Parish and Guild', pp. 36-7.

[271] Sellers (ed.), *The York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 75, 88 & 128. See pp. 86-108 above.

[272] Rosser, 'Crafts, Guilds and the Negotiation of Work', pp. 30-1.

office in the city before 1450, on three occasions butchers attained this post after joining the

Guild and supplying mutton for the Guild's annual feast.[273] This example suggests that guild

membership, and its concomitant political and social connections, were particularly

important for artisans eager to hold civic office.

Finally, guilds might have offered more practical means of assistance for civic careers.

As has been mentioned, guild offices seem in towns such as Coventry to have formed part

of the standard hierarchy of offices held by the more successful members of the civic élite.[274]

The same appears to have been true of late-medieval York. York civic officials tended to

join the Corpus Christi Guild and the Mercers' Guild around the time they gained the

freedom of the city. Thereafter, guild posts combined with civic office to form an unofficial

cursus honorum. The merchant John Elwald is a typical example.[275] Elwald became free

in 1471 and also joined the Corpus Christi Guild that year. The following year he became

a member of the York Mercers' Guild, and in 1482 he became its constable. Elwald then

held the civic office of chamberlain in 1486, and sheriff in 1490, before becoming master of

the Mercers' Guild in 1492. Finally, he was elected mayor in 1499. As this example

demonstrates, the posts of craft searcher and constable were usually held before entry into

civic office, while the posts of master of the Mercers' Guild and Master of the Guild of St.

Christopher and George, were normally reached after entry into the post of sheriff, but prior

to entry into the post of mayor. Whether experience in these posts was necessary, desirable

or merely coincidental is impossible to say. Not enough evidence exists for guild posts in

York to enable any firm conclusions to be drawn. However, in the light of evidence from

elsewhere it is perhaps likely that guild membership and office holding were part of an

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[273] Crouch, 'Piety, Fraternity and Power', p. 284.

[274] Phythian Adams, Desolation of a City, pp. 118-127.

[275] See Appendix 1.

informal *cursus honorum* which also encompassed civic and, as will be argued, territorial offices.

IV) 'Diffuse Power': Parish

One of the means through which the parish offered opportunities for local office holding was through church posts such as that of churchwarden. Although not directly connected to the administration of civic power within the city, this post was nonetheless an important one in several respects. Kümin suggests that the "considerable degree of authority and power" attached to the post would have meant that it "must have had a great deal of attraction for ordinary people".[276] Moreover, for some men the experience gained in this post was arguably an important springboard to higher civic office holding later in a career.

Unfortunately, evidence for local administration in York is sparse. The only medieval pre-Reformation parish records to survive for York are those of St. Michael Spurriergate, and even these only survive from 1518.[277] For the most part it is impossible to identify medieval churchwardens in York other than through isolated mentions in other sources such as wills. Clearly, patterns of office-holding may have differed from parish to parish, and therefore, in the absence of sufficient records from other parishes, no definite conclusions can be reached concerning the relationship between the post of churchwarden and higher civic office in York. Nevertheless, the references to churchwardens contained in the St. Michael Spurriergate records can still be used to suggest some likely patterns of office holding within later medieval York. Appendix 6 lists the men who are named in these

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[276] Kümin, *The Shaping of a Community*, pp. 199-200. For the role of church wardens see *ibid*, pp. 27-31.

[277] These have been transcribed and published by C.C. Webb (ed.), *Churchwardens' Accounts of St. Michael, Spurriergate, York, 1518-1548*, 2 volumes, Borthwick Texts and Calendars 20 (1997). Webb notes that isolated accounts compiled by the fabric wardens of St. Margaret Walmgate, and its guild of St. Ann, survive from the years 1394 and 1397 respectively; BIHR, Parish Records, Y/MARG 35 & 36.

records as having held the office of churchwarden in St. Michael Spurriergate between 1518 and 1548.

Christopher Webb has shown that in the parish of St. Michael Spurriergate, wardens were drawn from "both extremes of the financial spectrum".[278] There was a hierarchy within the post of churchwarden, and men could only become senior wardens after previous experience in the post at a more junior level.[279] Webb has suggested that on the whole, men seem to have first held the post of junior churchwarden prior to serving in civic office, Appendix 6 confirms this suggestion.[280]

To what extent did churchwardens go on to hold civic office? At least eighteen (42%), and possibly as many as twenty (47%), of the forty-three men who are recorded in the Spurriergate accounts as having held the office of churchwarden went on to become civic officials, including three men who eventually became mayor.[281] It was not unusual for civic officials to return to the post of churchwarden in a more senior capacity following service in civic office as a chamberlain or, more unusually as a sheriff.[282] John Lewes (mayor 1550) was typical in this respect, although he was unusual in terms of the number of times he held this office. He first held the post of churchwarden in 1523, serving again in this capacity on five subsequent occasions before becoming one of the city's chamberlains in 1532. He then returned to the post of churchwarden in 1534 and 1535, before becoming

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[278] Webb (ed.), *Accounts of St. Michael, Spurriergate*, p. 11. This contrasts with the situation in London where church wardens generally enjoyed high status and wealth. Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p. 186.

[279] Webb (ed.), *Accounts of St. Michael, Spurriergate*, p. 11. Similarly, Burgess also argued for St. Mary-at-Hill in London that the office of senior churchwarden could only be held by those with previous experience in the post as junior warden: Burgess, 'Shaping the Parish', pp. 261-2.

[280] Webb (ed.), *Accounts of St. Michael, Spurriergate*, p. 11; Appendix 6.

[281] Details of these men and their civic and parochial careers are contained in Appendix 6. An additional two men (William Barker and William Watson) may also have held civic office, but the commonness of their names and the absence of any other identifying information precludes accurate identification.

[282] However, service as a churchwarden seems to have ceased once the mayoral office (or possibly the post of alderman) was reached.

one of the city's sheriffs in 1537. Finally, Lewes again acted as churchwarden on five

occasions between 1539 and 1547 before becoming the city's mayor in 1550.[283]

Similarly, historians of other medieval towns have also suggested that men may have

held the post of junior churchwarden before attaining civic office. Clive Burgess has

suggested for St. Mary at Hill, London, that the élite of the medieval parish were self-

electing; those who had already served as wardens invited others of sufficient status and

ambition to take on a junior post as a first rung on the civic ladder.[284] Like Ford, he sees

service as a churchwarden as "essential for access to the élite".[285] This could well have also

been the case for York. That the post of churchwarden was important in York's *cursus*

honorum is indicated by a study of the names of men listed as living in the parish of St.

Michael Spurriergate at the time of the lay subsidy of 1524. Of thirty-three identifiable men,

eleven held civic office.[286] Meanwhile, at least six of these eleven men (55%) can be

identified as having served in the post of churchwarden prior to holding a civic post.[287]

Furthermore, the fact that four of the men, John Beisby (sheriff 1506), John Geldert (sheriff

1515), Thomas Dawson (sheriff 1517) and John Roger (sheriff 1524), cannot be identified

as having held the post of churchwarden prior to attaining civic office is explained by the

fact that the earliest St. Michael's account postdates the start of their civic careers. The

possibility of their having held the post of churchwarden prior to 1518 therefore cannot be

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[283] For details of Lewes's civic career, see Appendix 6.

[284] Burgess, 'Shaping the Parish', p. 262.

[285] *Ibid.*, p. 262; Ford, 'Marginality and the Assimilation of Foreigners', p. 210. See also Kümin, *The Shaping of a Community*, pp. 31-9.

[286] John Beisby or Beirby (sheriff 1506), John Geldert or Geldard (sheriff 1515), Thomas Dawson (sheriff 1517), John Roger (sheriff 1524), Robert Ekrylton or Heckleton (mayor 1543), William Thikpenny (chamberlain 1537), John Wright (chamberlain 1527), Richard Bateman or Bayteman (chamberlain 1534), Richard Savage(sheriff 1540), Hugh Buntyng or Bustyng (chamberlain 1528) and John Lewys or Lewes (mayor 1550). Appendices 1 and 6; Peacock (ed.), 'Subsidy Roll for York and Ainsty', pp. 177-8; Collins (ed.), *Freemen's Register*.

[287] Robert Heckleton, William Thikpenny, John Wright, Richard Bateman, Hugh Bunting, John Lewys; Appendix 6.

ruled out.

As the discussed evidence demonstrates, experience in the post of churchwarden may well have been a desirable pre-requisite for holding civic office. Not only would churchwardens have proved their administrative abilities, but they had also been given the seal of approval from the existing élite by virtue of their appointment to the post. Service in a post such as this may have proved an individual's qualities of 'honesty', discretion' and 'wisdom', which were necessary characteristics for higher civic officials. Moreover, Webb has demonstrated that new junior wardens in York were "nearly always shepherded by more experienced colleagues as they took on more responsibility in their second year".[288] Men such as John Lewes, who both had experience of the post of churchwarden and were members of the civic élite, often acted in this capacity. It is therefore easy to see how the hierarchical and mentoring system of churchwardenship could have acted as a patronage system for the wider civic élite.

Aside from churchwardenships, medieval parishes also offered a range of other administrative positions which were even more closely connected to the civic government of the city. During the medieval period most English towns witnessed a gradual change from a 'territorial' to a 'conciliar' pattern of administration.[289] In matters of defence and local policing, historians have accepted the continued importance of wards, parishes and even tithings. However, with the exception of ward-based higher civic offices, such as that of alderman in York, the role of local structures in the administration and distribution of civic or political power in the later-middle ages has often been overlooked.

Relics of the older territorial system were still in use in York at least as late as the

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[288] Webb (ed.), *Accounts of St. Michael, Spurriergate*, p. 11.

[289] Rees Jones, 'York's Civic Administration', p. 123; Hudson (ed.), *Leet Jurisdiction in the City of Norwich*, pp. lxxii-lxxxiii.

1490s.[290] During the late-fifteenth century the parishes and wards of York retained an important role in the policing and administration of justice within the city.[291] Throughout the medieval period two aldermen were assigned to each of the city's wards.[292] Further, lower posts were available for men to serve as parish constables and ward jurors. These posts carried significant responsibility and power. However, as with the post of churchwarden, evidence for these positions is sparse. York wardmote court books only exist for the years 1491-2 and 1494-6, and even then in an incomplete and damaged form.[293] Further, there are difficulties in identifying accurately those named as parish constables or ward jurors as their occupations were rarely stated in the records. Nevertheless, this problem has partly been overcome by cross-referencing information with prosopographical evidence collated for the purpose of this thesis.[294]

Recently York historians have tentatively begun to suggest that local posts may have formed part of the wider civic hierarchy, with parish constable and ward juror possibly leading on to the civic post of bridge master.[295] As Table 3.2b below shows, a total of twenty-three (7%) of the civic officials from the period 1476 to 1525 can be positively

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[290] In addition to the wardmote courts which are discussed below, see Miller, 'Medieval York', pp. 76-7.

[291] For details of the role of the ward in the policing and the administration of justice in York, see Andrew, 'The Fifteenth Century Wardmote Court Returns for York', pp. 11-15.

[292] The ward assigned was dictated by the latest vacancy and did not necessarily correspond with the parish in which the alderman lived.

[293] York Civic Archives, Chamberlains' Account Book CB1a, fols. 136r-139r; Wardmote Court Book E31, pp. 1a-20a. Although these are unpublished they have been transcribed in Andrew, 'The Fifteenth Century Wardmote Court Returns for York', Appendix.

[294] Parish of residency and date of death are useful in this respect.

[295] Rees Jones, 'York's Civic Administration', p. 131; Andrew, 'The Fifteenth Century Wardmote Court Returns for York', pp. 23-5. Tim Andrew has calculated the percentage of jurors and constables who went on to become bridge masters. It has been necessary, though, to recalculate the percentage who went on to become civic officials to take into account those who missed out the post of bridge master. Further, the additional prosopographical information concerning parish of residence and date of death of the civic officials during this period has enabled a greater degree of accuracy in the identification of parish jurors and constables than was previously possible. However, the research that follows supports Andrew's findings which remain valid.

identified as having served as parish constable or ward juror. Of these men the majority only

reached the post of bridge master, and none of the men reached the post of mayor.

However, although the number of civic officials who can be shown to have served in local

posts is not high, Timothy Andrew has argued that analysis must take into account the

scarcity of records detailing these posts combined with the relatively high turnover of

personnel.[296] As he has shown, the number of parish constables and ward jurors who went

on to become bridge masters is much higher than would be expected bearing in mind these

factors.[297] This indicates that there may have been a stronger relationship between the local

posts and the civic hierarchy than is at first apparent. Moreover, a study of these men

throws up some interesting implications for access to civic office and the structure of the

élite. The political careers of civic officials who can be shown to have held the posts of

parish constable or ward juror are summarised in Table 4:2 below.

Table 4:2
Civic Status of Civic Officials 1476 to 1525 Who Can be Shown to Have Held the Posts of Parish Constable or Ward Juror During the Period 1491-96

a) Status At Date of Earliest Recorded Local Office			b) Highest Civic Status Reached During Lifetime		
	no.	%		no.	%
Not Free	5	22	Bridge master	12	52
Freeman	17	73	Chamberlain	7	30
Bridge master	1	4	Sheriff	4	17
Total	**23**	**99***		**23**	**99**

*Totals do not always equal 100 due to rounding error.
Source: Appendix 1.

As Table 4:2a above demonstrates, men who served in local posts generally had not

previously held civic office, indeed five of the men were not even freemen. Clearly, the

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[296] Andrew, 'The Fifteenth Century Wardmote Court Returns for York', pp. 23-5.

[297] Ibid.

posts of parish constable and ward juror were relatively junior ones. This situation contrasts

sharply with that a century earlier. Names of men acting as parish constables in 1380 are

contained within York's Memorandum Books. It is clear from a prosopographical

examination of these men that in 1380 the post of parish constable was relatively high-

status.[298] Over half of the identifiable men can be demonstrated to have already served as

chamberlain.[299] Perhaps as centralised civic government gradually replaced the older

territorial system, the power and status of the territorial posts also declined, resulting in a

parallel downwards shift in the status of the incumbents.

Rappaport has argued that in London the increased centralisation of government

served to decrease the involvement of the unenfranchised in local government and

administration.[300] Similarly, in York, the increased use of official councils, particularly the

council of forty-eight, helped to exclude the rest of the commons from civic meetings and

elections. Paradoxically, though, in other respects the increased centralization of power in

medieval York seems to have had an opposite effect: the status of the men holding territorial

posts such as that of ward constable seems to have fallen, meaning that access to this form

of government actually expanded rather than contracted.[301] Perhaps more significantly,

there is evidence to suggest that these posts may have played a vital role in increasing access

to the civic élite in general.

Table 4:3 below compares the occupations and civic careers of civic officials who held

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[298] Sellers (ed.), *York Memorandum Book, part I*, pp. 151-5.

[299] Appendix 5.

[300] Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, p. 35.

[301] While undoubtedly desirable, freedom may not have been an absolute prerequisite for some territorial posts even during the late fifteenth-century. See, Andrew, 'The Fifteenth Century Wardmote Court Returns for York', pp. 103-4. A study of the names of men who served as parish sergeants during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth-centuries suggests that likewise, freedom was not a prerequisite for some territorial offices during the earlier period. The names of the men who held these posts are published in Sellers (ed.), *York Memorandum Book, part I*, pp. 12-9, 19-20, 22, 30-1, 236.

the territorial posts of parish constable or ward juror, with the general experiences of men

who held civic office during the period 1476 to 1525.

Table 4:3
Comparison Between All Civic Officials 1476 to 1525 and Those of This Group Who Also Held the Territorial Posts of Parish Constable and Ward Juror

	Civic Officials Who Held Territorial Posts (23 men)		All Civic Officials 1476 to 1525 (315 men)	
Average gap between freedom and civic office	22 years		15 years	
Number of men in each group who:				
Practised a mercantile occupation	1	(4%)	101	(32%)
Held the post of bridge master	20	(87%)	206	(65%)
Held the post of chamberlain	7	(30%)	219	(69%)
Held the post of sheriff	4	(17%)	122	(38%)
Held the post of mayor	0	(0%)	57	(18%)

Source: Appendix 1

As Table 4:3 above shows, all but three (87%) of the twenty-three of the civic officials

who held the posts of parish constable or ward juror also served as bridge master. This

figure is high given that only 206 (65%) of the 315 men who had been civic officials during

the period 1476 to 1525 had held this office.

I have suggested elsewhere that the post of bridge master may have represented a type

of 'buffer zone' between the civic élite and the politically disenfranchised. Among the men

who were bridge masters during the second half of the fifteenth century it is possible to

identify two crude but distinct types of office holders: those for whom the post of bridge

master represented the point of access to higher civic office, and those for whom it

represented the pinnacle of their civic career.[302] It would appear that the men who can be

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[302] Carpenter, 'The Office and Personnel of the Post of Bridge Master', especially pp. 44-5.

identified as having held territorial posts fell strongly into the latter group. Only one of these men practised a mercantile trade. Furthermore, these men took 50% longer on average to reach their first civic office after becoming free than men who cannot be proved to have held territorial posts. Finally, the percentage of civic officials who held territorial posts who went on to hold the offices of chamberlain, sheriff and mayor are much lower than those for civic officials as a whole.

C) Conclusion

Part One of the thesis argued that Clark and Slack's emphasis on "crisis, conflict & social polarisation" has dominated the historiography of later-medieval towns. According to this historiography, historians have conceptualised civic power as being centralised and concentrated in the highest civic offices. Tensions and unrest have been viewed as an inevitable consequence of this polarisation of power. This section has challenged this view and has sought to place the civic élite of later-medieval York within the wider context of the population of York as a whole.

It has been argued in the first section of Part Four that while it is possible to interpret some of the unrest in later-medieval York in terms of antagonism between the élite and the commons, the evidence does not suggest that the unrest in York can be ascribed wholly or mainly to pressure for increased 'democracy', or to an inherently antagonistic division between a craft-based commons and a mercantile oligarchy. The section argued that such a view is overly simplistic in terms of the demarcation line it presupposes between those targeted and those involved in disturbances or disputes, and also in terms of an understanding of the causes of unrest which, surely should be seen to have been multiple.

To a large extent, the Clark and Slack thesis of conflict and unrest both feeds off of and reinforces the notion of a centralised and sharply graduated linear system of power within late-medieval towns. Again, this aspect of their thesis has been challenged here in relation to the distribution of power in later-medieval York. The first section of Part Four explored the role of the commonalty in the government of the city. It has been argued that, to a large extent, the authority of the civic élite derived from its relationship with the commons. The role of the commons in the city appears to have been somewhat analogous to the role of the commons in Parliament. That is to say, it acted as a petitioning body

which also had the power to approve or veto important decisions, a role which has perhaps been under appreciated in the past. Similarly, it has been suggested that some of the discourses of power contained in the York records are similar to those contained in central government sources. The extent and nature of interaction between central and local government during the medieval period at the practical and ideological level is an area which warrants further investigation.

The second section of Part Four has developed on ideas current amongst early modern historians such as Rappaport and Pearl, who believe that civic office was not the primary source of power within late-medieval or early-modern towns, but that power was diffused throughout the city by means of minor civic, territorial or guild posts. The York evidence concerning offices such as churchwarden, parish constable and ward juror supports this view.

I have also sought to challenge the conceptualisation of the *cursus honorum* as a linear progression of civic posts beginning with the position of bridge master or chamberlain. Rather, I have argued that the *cursus honorum* should be conceptualised as a variety of stages or tracks in which civic offices were interlinked with territorial and guild offices. As section three on structure has shown, men who were related to civic officials often achieved faster promotion. Likewise, other groups of men such as the wealthy, or members of particular guilds, were also more likely to be successful in their civic careers. Such men were often able to skip some of the more lowly posts. However, higher civic office was also remarkably open to men drawn from a variety of backgrounds. It seems likely that one reason for this was that men from less advantageous backgrounds were able to prove themselves at a lower level of urban government, often by holding territorial or guild posts or by holding the post of bridge master.

As Part Two on access showed, personal characteristics such as discretion, wisdom

and honesty were valued in higher civic officials. Moreover, Part Three suggested that the

civic élite was anxious to recruit men with similar values and aspirations as themselves. It

may have been the case that territorial or guild office offered an additional means through

which these qualities and values could be inculcated or nurtured. Again, this evidence calls

into question the division of late-medieval urban society into rulers and the ruled. As this

section has demonstrated, the gradations of civic power were much more fluid and subtle

than most historians have envisaged. As the thesis conclusion will argue, this point in turn

challenges our wider conception of how late-medieval urban social structures operated.

Part Five
Conclusion

To what extent were the men who held civic office in York during the period 1476 to 1525 an 'élite'? This depends on how you define 'élite'. It was argued in the Introduction that even among sociologists of Élite Studies, there is no clear consensus over what an 'élite' is, or how it should be defined. Of course, it is always possible to define key terms and then measure groups against such definitions. The problem with this approach is that the terms and scope of the initial definitions limit the inquiry. These definitions are themselves arbitrary, subjective and they can be self-determining. Finally, there is also the risk that such studies can become tunnel-visioned. Potentially more interesting questions remain unasked, such as 'how and through what processes are élites formed and maintained?', and 'in what ways do élites interact with the rest of society?'.

Rather than adopting any single prescriptive definition here, this thesis has instead problematised the notion of 'élite' status. The Introduction discussed areas of disagreement within élite studies. These include the problem of boundaries between élites and the communities in which they operate, the relationship between class, status and 'power', the interplay between different spheres of social stratification, the assumption of group coherence and consciousness, and the notion of the importance of the 'circulation of élites'. The thesis has used these issues as catalysts for exploring the social structure of late-medieval York. This approach has offered two main benefits. First, it has necessitated a more penetrative and wide-ranging exploration of social groups and structures in the city than a reliance on prescriptive definitions would otherwise have prompted. Second, it has helped reveal the assumptions and shortcomings of past studies of English urban élites and social structures, and it has offered a framework though which these areas might be

approached in the future.

Boundaries and élite hierarchies

Many studies of élite groups begin by delineating the group in question. However, one of the most problematic areas in élite studies is where the boundary between an élite and the rest of society should be drawn. The depth of the chosen élite stratum determines the conclusions reached concerning the characteristics of the group. This issue is central to the study of urban élites. In the past, historians have explicitly or implicitly viewed the civic élites of late-medieval cities as those who held the higher civic offices, that is to say those who progressed higher than the post of chamberlain, with some historians restricting their studies yet further to aldermen or councillors.[1] This thesis has concentrated on those who held the posts of bridge master, chamberlain, sheriff, or mayor. However, it has not sought to find a dividing line between the élite and the rest of medieval York's urban community from the outset. Indeed, the thesis has argued against the construction of such artificial boundaries. Rather, it has sought to examine the relationship between higher and lower civic offices, and territorial and guild posts. It has also considered gradations of hierarchy amongst the higher civic officials.

Looking at gradations within York's civic hierarchy, it is clear that there was a distinct innermost group within the élite which comprised those men who had reached the post of mayor: most of whom also belonged to the city's council of aldermen. This group was distinct from the other civic officials in several respects. First, the vast majority of this group practised mercantile trades. There seems to have been exclusionary closure on the grounds of occupation at this level of the civic hierarchy. Second, alongside common

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[1] See above, pp. 10-11.

occupational backgrounds, these men were also linked through numerous blood, marriage and social ties. The ritual ties between members of this group were also very pronounced. A language of 'brotherhood' for themselves and 'sisterhood' for their wives ritually divided these men from the rest of the élite and enhanced the cohesion of the group. Similarly, the status and unity of the group seems to have been further reinforced through funeral rituals and group feasting, again both activities in which wives would have participated. Finally, this group was bound by special codes of secrecy, and their access to privileged information would undoubtably have served as a source of common identity and as a means of underlining their exclusivity.

Moving down the civic hierarchy, as Part Two of the thesis demonstrated, each civic group below the level of mayor was characterised by a proportionally smaller degree of occupational and financial homogeneity. Likewise, the degree of exclusivity in terms of levels of wealth and types of occupations also decreased down the civic hierarchy. Finally, as Part Three of the thesis has shown, the lower the level of civic office, the lower the level of social and ritual integration. The lower civic offices not only offered less real power, they presumably also conveyed less social prestige. However, it is pointless attempting to determine the line at which the degree of exclusivity, integration, power and prestige enjoyed by officials was insufficient to warrant them being considered members of the civic 'élite'. This issue is both subjective and hopelessly relative.

More interesting is a consideration of the ways in which the civic élite may have extended beyond those who held higher civic office. The thesis has argued that in the past higher civic offices have been viewed as the primary sources of power in cities. This thesis follows on from the work of historians such as Rapapport and Pearl in rejecting such a view, and instead stressing the role that minor civic offices and territorial, parochial and guild offices played in widening participation in local government and diffusing power throughout

later-medieval and early modern cities.[2] Within sociology a key area in élite studies is the study of élite substratum, particularly recruitment substratum and administrative substratum. It could be argued that below the post of bridge master, York's civic élite extended into an administrative substratum comprised of *ad hoc* civic posts, guild posts, and territorial offices. Holders of these positions had an important role in terms of the day to day running of the city. Many such posts also offered an important degree of power, albeit in a more limited sphere than that offered by the higher civic offices. Historians should not overlook the importance of the role of these lower posts in the efficient functioning of medieval towns or in extending participation in the political life within urban centres.

Interestingly, the research conducted as part of this thesis has also suggested that the holders of many of these posts may also have comprised part of the recruitment substratum to the élite. As Part Four of the thesis concluded, posts such as churchwarden, parish constable and ward juror may have been part of a complex route to political power. For a number of men service in posts such as these was the first step on the *cursus honorum*. It is likely that service in these posts would have offered the opportunity of office holding experience, and would have acted as points of entry into the ethos or ideology of the élite. These posts may also have provided an arena for up-and-coming young men to be talent spotted, and for them to 'network' with established members of the élite.

Clearly, historians need to undertake more work on the role of such posts in civic hierarchies and the social and political structures of late-medieval towns. It has not been feasible to undertake a thorough prosopographic study of the men who held such posts as part of this thesis. However, it would be possible to conduct such a study for York or other towns given the surviving evidence that is available. More prosopographical research in this

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[2] Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp. 180-2; Pearl, 'Change and Stability in Seventeenth-Century London', pp. 139-166.

area would be useful in furthering our understanding of the type of men who held these posts, and also the roles which these posts played within urban social and political structures. In particular, it would be interesting to consider whether the widespread distribution of political power served to decrease or diffuse tensions in cities as Kowaleski has suggested was the case in medieval Exeter.[3]

Class, status and power

In stressing the importance of such lower civic, parochial, territorial and guild posts, the thesis has rejected a notion of the polarisation of political power that is prevalent in the dominant historiography of medieval English urban centres. A perceived polarisation between wealthy merchants who dominated civic office and poorer artisans who were largely excluded from the political life of the city has been seen by some as evidence of a class-based structuring of late-medieval urban society.[4] As was outlined in the Introduction, one of the main problems with the study of élite groups is confusion over the relationship between the concepts of 'class' (a group's relative economic power) and 'status' (a group's relative social standing). It has been argued that this confusion is reflected in the historiography of late-medieval and early-modern urban élites as is evidenced through the way that terms such as 'élite' and 'class' have been used interchangeably. 'Merchant class', 'mercantile élite' 'political class', 'civic élite', and even 'urban élite' are used to refer to wealthy merchants in late-medieval towns. Historians have either explicitly argued for, or implicitly accepted, a conflation of wealth or occupation and social and political standing. Indeed, wealth and occupation are widely viewed as having determined political power and social status in late-medieval urban communities. Under the schema offered by historians

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[3] Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade*, pp. 95-119.

[4] See especially Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 2-4; although see also pp. 6-13 above.

such as Clark and Slack, Swanson and Hilton, late-medieval urban society has been characterised in terms of class division.[5] That is to say, binary division along the lines of wealth, occupation and civic power, with inherent antagonism and discord proving endemic between the two groups.

This thesis has challenged this dominant historiography. As Part Two of the thesis demonstrated, it is clearly the case that wealth was viewed to a certain extent as a necessary pre-requisite for access to civic office, particularly the higher civic offices. However, the terms 'wealth élite' and 'political élite' can not be viewed as interchangeable. Many of the wealthiest men within the city never held civic office. Indeed, the evidence suggests that wealth alone was insufficient as a determinant of access to civic posts, a point to which I will return.

The perceived dominance of civic offices by merchants has also underpinned the class-based view of urban centres. Under this schema, historians have viewed occupation as the primary or dominant means of social stratification. This thesis does not endorse this view. Prosopographic research on the men who held civic office in York during the period 1476 to 1525 has revealed that merchants did not dominate civic office during this period. Most (over three-quarters) of the civic officials practised non-mercantile trades. Clearly, by the later-fifteenth century a mercantile oligarchy no longer governed the town. Further, this thesis has found that there is little textual evidence of exclusionary closure on the grounds of occupation, apart from at the level of the mayoralty. Obviously, these conclusions relate to York during a specific period. However, they are important as they suggest that certain periods and places may have witnessed more occupational variety among civic officials than has been suggested in the past.

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[5] Clark and Slack (eds.), *Crisis and Order*, especially pp. 19-35; *idem, English Towns in Transition*, especially pp. 126-140; Swanson, 'The Illusion of Economic Structure', pp. 29-48; Hilton, *English and French Towns*, pp. 87-104.

In the light of such evidence it would seem that historians may have been misguided in the stress they have placed on occupational polarisation, just as they have with political polarisation. Further, the significance of factors other than occupation and wealth in determining access to civic office has been underestimated. In particular, with the exception of Shaw, historians have paid very little attention in the past to the importance of personal characteristics. One of the reasons for this is the relative intangibility of character. Perhaps this is because English studies of civic officials and urban government have tended to be exclusively historical with the exception of studies of urban drama and ceremonial.

Although this thesis is firmly rooted within the historical tradition it has drawn on other disciplines in terms of the methodologies used and the types of questions asked. Literary discourse theory and close textual analysis have been particularly useful in this respect. A reading of the variety of discourses contained within York's civic documents reveals the perceived importance of personal characteristics in terms of access to the civic élite and its projection of itself to the wider urban community. Qualities such as wisdom, discretion and honesty all seem to have been particularly important in this respect. Wealth in the absence of these characteristics was not sufficient.

It could be argued that one of the reasons for studying élite groups is that they provide a means of gauging the attributes and qualities esteemed by the society in which they operate. What is particularly interesting in this respect is that those qualities of wisdom, discretion and honesty sought in York civic officials largely parallel those promoted at the level of central government. Notions of an ideal leader seem to have derived as much from royal and parliamentary government as they did from civic humanism. Clearly, the ideology of government in later-medieval York should be placed firmly within the context of the wider political realm.

Coherence

In focussing on the extent to which civic offices in later-medieval towns were filled by wealthy merchants, historians have often taken for granted the coherence of civic élites. However, one of the key sociological debates over élite groups is the extent to which they necessarily constitute coherent groups. An important distinction has been made between social coherence and moral or ideological coherence in this respect. Neither of these has been fully studied in relation to élite groups in medieval English towns, although, to a certain extent, coherence has been assumed. As we have seen, men who held civic office in later-medieval towns have been viewed as being structurally and ideologically linked by virtue of common wealth, occupation, and civic status. Further, historians have viewed family ties and guild membership as having reinforced this class-based status hierarchy. This thesis has challenged these views. This Conclusion has already argued that the men who held civic office during the period studied were not primarily drawn from mercantile trades. Interestingly, Part Three of the thesis suggests that the level of patrilineal ties within the group was also low. Similarly, Part Four of the thesis suggests that York had no 'civic guild' to which most of the civic officials would have belonged. Less than half of the civic officials belonged to the Mercers' Guild or the Corpus Christi Guild.

The evidence suggests that marriage might have played an important role in structurally unifying at least the higher civic office holders within the group. Marriage seems to have been used as a means of creating and consolidating alliances and of maintaining wealth, or less tangible assets such as social standing within a particular community. However, the role of women in consolidating the group seems to have gone beyond acting as a marital lynchpin between civic officials. Testamentary evidence suggests that women may have played an important active role in maintaining social relationships with other civic officials and their families. However, the role of women in the formation and

maintenance of York's civic élite was not confined to marriage and informal social relations. The wives of the higher-ranking civic officials also had an official ritual role to play. As terms such as 'lady mayoress' and 'sisters' applied to the wives of the aldermen 'brothers' demonstrate, such women were viewed as being as much part of the civic élite as were the men themselves.

This thesis has mainly concentrated on civic officials and group manifestations of status. However, the evidence that has been looked at in relation to the wives and daughters of the civic élite suggests that the role and inclusion of women in civic or urban élites might be a profitable area for future research. More work needs to be undertaken on the ritual assimilation of women into the civic élite; indeed, it would be interesting to consider whether there were any specific duties or expectations attached to the wives of aldermen, sheriffs and mayors. It would also be interesting to consider the extent to which such women derived personal status from their relationship to the civic officials. Testamentary evidence, memorialisation or, where surviving, books of hours might be revealing in this respect. In terms of marriage relationships between civic officials, historians have often represented women as passive participants. The York evidence suggests that they may have taken an active role in brokering such alliances. Further, the evidence that relates to the remarriage of civic wives to other civic officials suggests that women were able to 'marry up' in terms of civic status. Clearly, progression up the social hierarchy by means of marriage was as possible for women as it was for men. Again, these issues warrant further investigation.

Marriage and social relationships seem to have played a significant role in socially unifying the higher post-holders within York's civic élite. However, the evidence does not suggest that such ties were common enough to have united the group as a whole. This is particularly the case given that the men who held civic office during this period practised a

variety of occupations and were from a range of family backgrounds and religious, social or ceremonial guilds. Indeed, we might wonder whether the civic officials constituted a structurally or 'morally' unified group within York society. As was demonstrated in Parts Three and Four of the thesis, discord and factionalism within the group were certainly rife. Yet, the élite was clearly aware of the need for perceived unity at least. Again, an analysis of discourses contained within York's civic writing is particularly illuminating in this respect. These discourses placed much stress on harmony and corporate unity, and there seems to have been an interesting tension between corporatism and individual values. While the records stressed and advocated corporate unity, qualities that promoted access to the élite were strongly individual. Valued characteristics such as character (wisdom, honesty etc) and experience in lower parochial, territorial or civic posts could not easily be passed on from generation to generation. Ritual seems to have been used to buffer tensions here, as it was to negotiate more tangible tensions within the élite.

Historians have undertaken a significant amount of work on the role of urban drama and ceremonial in this respect.[6] More recently, urban historians have begun to look at the importance of secular or everyday rituals, including those of language and gesture.[7] This thesis has followed on from the work of historians such as Shaw, Rosser and McCree in stressing the importance of such rituals. Ritualised language, drinking and feasting, together with specific rituals such as those of submission and re-assimilation, appear to have played an important role in the promotion and projection of cohesion among the civic élite. They allowed the re-assimilation of rogue officials and facilitated the negotiation and closure of

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[6] See for example, Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the Citizen', pp. 238-64; James, 'Ritual, Drama and the Social Body', pp. 3-29; Hanawalt and Reyerson (eds.), *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe, passim*; Sacks, 'Celebrating Authority in Bristol 1475-1640', pp. 187-223; Zemon Davis, 'The Sacred and the Body Social', pp. 40-70; Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice, passim*.

[7] See in particular, Shaw, *Creation of a Community*, pp. 177-215; Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast', pp. 430-46; McRee, 'Unity or Division?', pp. 189-207; *idem*, 'Religious Gilds and Civic Order', pp. 69-97.

potentially long-running and divisive disputes. Importantly, they also allowed the presentation of the élite to the rest of the city as a coherent and tangible body. Finally, the rituals may also have served to create and reassert a sense of common identity and status among the otherwise disparate members of the civic élite.

Clearly, much more work needs to be undertaken on the construction of élite groups as coherent entities. This thesis has concentrated on the élite as a body and has looked at 'corporate' rituals and constructions of group unity or status. However, it would also be interesting to consider the role of more individual or personalised rituals such as memorialisation, rituals of death, and place of burial in the construction of civic unity and identity. For example, to what extent might common burial patterns among the officials or the commemoration of past officials through annual obits have served to construct the élite as a group comprised of serving and long-dead civic officials? Moreover, to what extent might the status of the civic élite have fed off the group's promotion of illustrious civic officials of the past?

Recruitment and 'circulation'

Besides the potential problem of coherence, the relative diversity of the group and the scarcity of patrilineal succession posed a further potential problem for the élite: that of the recruitment and assimilation of new civic officials. In the past, historians have paid little attention to the processes through which élite groups were maintained or perpetuated, in real or ideological terms. The process of recruitment seems to have been complex. We have already seen that the élite could not depend on occupation or patrilineage as a means of selecting or recruiting new officials. Family played an important role in this respect. In the absence of widespread father-son succession into civic office, the importance of marriage ties and quasi-kin relationships such as godparenthood and apprenticeship were particularly

important. Each of these provided channels of recruitment and social mobility, and a means

through which potential new members of the élite could be selected, trained and socialised.

Further, Part III also argued that sons-in-law of civic officials often acted as 'surrogate

heirs' to civic officials lacking male heirs, perpetuating their wealth, name and network of

contacts. In sharing similar aspirations to those of the already established élite, these

surrogate sons may have represented 'safe bets' for the real and ideological perpetuation of

the civic élite in ensuring the perpetuation both of élite families and their wider social group.

Guilds were also important in this respect. Indeed, we have already seen how guild,

parochial and territorial offices comprised part of the élite's recruitment substratum. It

seems likely that in addition to offering experience of office holding, guild membership also

acted as a "filter mechanism for controlling access to political office".[8] Members were

screened on the basis of criteria such as wealth, occupation, respectability or social

connections. Membership of the more prestigious guilds such as York's Corpus Christi

Guild or the Mercers' Guild was likely to have further enhanced the likelihood of promotion

up the civic hierarchy by offering members a social cachet of exclusivity and respectability

and providing the opportunity to 'network' with existing civic officials.

It could be argued that besides ensuring the real and ideological perpetuation of the

civic élite, the continued recruitment and assimilation of new civic officials from relatively

diverse family and occupational backgrounds played an important role within the evolving

social structure of the city. The Introduction introduced the notion of the 'circulation of

élites'. According to Pareto, in order for an élite group to survive it is necessary for it to

continue to recruit and assimilate new interest groups within the society in which it operates.

The period of 50 years covered in this thesis is too short to allow Pareto's ideas to be

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[8] Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, p. 15

examined properly. However, to a certain extent his thesis is borne out by the changing profile of the civic officials in York over the wider medieval period. In crude terms, alongside the economic fluctuations experienced by the city, the landowners of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were replaced by the merchants of the early fifteenth century, and then by the artisans of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.[9] Similarly, families represented within civic office came and went. The extent to which these occupational changes may have been matched by other changes in the social make-up of the élite remains unstudied. Potential areas of study in this respect include the importance of the representation of certain political or religious groups.

The concept of the 'circulation of élites' holds important implications for social stability. Historians have argued that the failure of the York élite to represent the growing economic interests of artisans among their ranks resulted in increasing antagonism, discord and violence within the city.[10] This thesis has called into question this interpretation of events, stressing the extent to which artisans did hold civic office during this period. It has also been argued that there is little evidence to suggest that most violence and unrest was aimed primarily at increasing 'democracy' within the city. Indeed, the thesis has highlighted the important role of the commons in the government of York. Much of the power and authority of the élite rested on their relationship with the commons. The commons were certainly anxious to defend and uphold their rights of representation and consultation if they felt that these were being undermined. However, the violence and unrest surrounding the élite during this period also related to the representation within the civic élite of other important, powerful and vocal interest groups. Interference in the government of the city

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[9] Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 71; Part Two above.

[10] Miller, 'Medieval York', p. 84; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp. 122-7; Kermode, 'Obvious Observations', 99-101; see also, pp. 221-231 above.

by Richard III, or those seen to be acting in his interests, seems to have been particularly resented, and it seems possible that much of the unrest surrounding the élite during this period related to a power tussle between people involved in the complicated factionalism surrounding national politics at this time.

New directions

This study has primarily been concerned with structures and processes rather than events. Through focussing on the men who held civic office in late-medieval York, it has offered an important critique of the way that historians have approached urban social groups and structures in the past. It has also revealed some of the ways in which late-medieval urban society operated in terms of its values, its stratifications, and the interaction of different processes and means of social stratification. These conclusions relate not just to late-medieval York, but also to the ways in which we categorise and conceptualise communities in general.

Although this thesis has concentrated on the civic élite, civic officials were only one of several potential élite groups within the city. Historians have viewed civic office as one of the major determinants of status in late-medieval towns, an impression that this thesis has done little to dispel. However, civic office was only one of the criteria on which status may have been accorded. In his study of Medieval Leiden, van Kan has illustrated how the urban élite of the city was comprised of a wealth élite, a civic élite, a professional élite and an aristocratic élite.[11] It has proved beyond the scope of this thesis to consider all such groups in late-medieval York, although a couple of them have been touched on alongside the civic élite. This thesis has highlighted the need to consider the role and position of what appears

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[11] Van Kan, 'Élite and Government in Later-Medieval Leiden', *passim.*

to have been an increasing number of professional men within the city, such as men who worked as recorders, lawyers or common clerks for the city, and as proctors and advocates from the church courts. Another important group within the city was the clergy. The probate evidence from the civic élite suggests that there may have been familial and social links between the two groups. Similarly, the civic records demonstrate that there were also administrative and ritual links between the civic élite and the professional and religious 'élites'. In what ways did potential élite groups such as these interact with other groups within the city? What qualities determined access to these 'élites'? How did they portray themselves? How socially and morally unified were they? How powerful were they within the city? These are some of the questions which deserve to be addressed for York and other late-medieval towns.

Perhaps it is now time for historians to turn their focus away from the civic officials and towards other important groups within late-medieval urban society. The approaches and methodologies that have been adopted in this thesis in relation to the civic élite could equally well be applied to alternative élite groups such as wealth élites, professional élites or religious élites. Clearly, the research which has been carried out on civic élites deserves to be complimented by the similar study of other important groups within towns and the ways in which they interacted with the civic élite and the commonalty. Such research is vital if we are to further our understanding of the varied and simultaneous modes of social stratification and consolidation in later-medieval towns.

Appendices

A) Content

Of the six appendices the first three are based on prosopographical research into the 315 men who held civic office in York during the period 1476 to 1525. Rather than attempting exhaustive prosopographical or biographical listings, the appendices only contain prosopographical or biographical information which is discussed in the main body of the text. Appendix 1 is the only one of the appendices to list all 315 of the men who held civic office in York during the period 1476 to 1525. It contains details of the names, occupations, date and method of freedom, civic careers, membership of the Mercers' Guild and Corpus Christi Guild, service as a parish constable and date of death of the men. They are listed alphabetically by surname for ease of reference. Appendix 2 contains tables relating to genealogical information concerning the officials. Again each of these three tables is listed alphabetically. Appendix 3 covers all 223 of the civic officials for whom some form of probate evidence survives. It includes the probate references of the wills and administrations belonging to the civic officials and details of the number of sons mentioned in each will or administration and whether they went on to become York freemen and/ or hold civic office. It also lists the other officials from the period in question who were cited in each of the wills. Appendices 4, 5 and are different in that, although they depend upon prosopographic research, they relate primarily to individual sources. Appendix 4 details the membership of York's common council in 1522, while Appendix 5 details the men listed in one of the Memorandum Books as having held the post of parish constable in 1380. Both of these appendices are listed in the order in which they appear in the original source. Finally, Appendix 6 details alphabetically the men listed in the parish records of St Michael Spurriergate as having held the post of churchwarden during the period 1518 to 1548.

B) Prosopographic Methodology

Prosopography as a methodology is discussed in greater detail in the thesis Introduction. However, it is also necessary to detail in greater depth the sources and methods used in the compilation of these appendices. The first stage of the research consisted of identifying the names and occupations of the men who held the posts of bridge master, chamberlain, sheriff and mayor. This was primarily achieved through the use of lists of office holders contained within York's Freemen's Register (D1). However, due to the incomplete nature of some of these lists, it was also occasionally necessary to supplement this information with other sources, in particular the York House Books and one of the Chamberlains Account Books (CB1a). These sources and their folio numbers are all listed at the end of Appendix 1. Following on from this, the date and method of entry into the city's freedom was researched using York's Freemen's Register. In medieval York freedom was regarded as a prerequisite for civic office. In the few cases where it was not possible to identify a civic official's occupation from lists of officeholders, it was sometimes possible to obtain this information from the Freemen's Register. In such cases a positive identification was recorded when only one man of that name (first-name and surname) was recorded as free in the thirty-year period prior to the office in question. This method of identification was also used where the occupation of the civic official was known, but the occupation of the freeman was not stated in the Freemen's Register. For the vast majority of men though a positive identification in the Freemen's Register was achieved using a combination of both name and occupation. Unsurprisingly, the commonness of certain surnames, for example Robynson and White, precluded the possibility of identifying the civic officials in the freedom lists and these cases are indicated in Appendix 1.

Once this basic list of names, civic offices and occupations was compiled it was

possible to reconstruct the civic careers of the men who held civic office during this period. Thus, the records of the 621 civic offices held between 1476 and 1525 were compacted down into a list of the civic careers of 315 individuals. From here the wills and administrations of the officials were identified and read. Although a total of 200 wills and 23 administrations survive for the civic officials, in many cases it was necessary to read more than one will before the correct one could be identified (or incorrect ones ruled out). In many cases the wills, or the marginal notes in the probate registers, indicated whether the testator had held civic office. Where such information was lacking identification was made possible through the use of additional information such as occupation. In addition to the wills of officials themselves, where traceable the wills of wives, parents, children and siblings have also been identified and read in order to assist the reconstruction of genealogical information.

As well as enabling the reconstruction of genealogical information, the wills also provided additional means by which civic officials could be positively and negatively identified in other sources such as the Corpus Christi Register, Wardmote Court Records and as witnesses and legatees in other peoples wills. Date of death, parish of residence and the names of wives were all particularly useful in these respects. Particular care has been taken to be sensitive to the possibility of misidentification. Where more than one freeman of the same name is known or thought to have been alive during the period in question, names alone have never been used as the sole means of identifying civic officials in other sources. Despite the body of information which it has been possible to build up though there inevitably remain officials about whom we know little for certain. Included in this group are two types of men. The first type includes men included in lists of officials who then fail to crop up again in any of the sources examined besides the Freemen's Register. The second type encompasses those who due to the commonness of their names it is often

impossible to identify with certainty (sometimes even through the use of additional information) in other sources. Throughout the appendices, italics have been used to indicate such information or relationships which were likely but unverifiable. This information has been listed for reference purposes only and, unless specifically stated, it has not been included in the statistical detail in the main body of the thesis. All sources used are listed in each of the relevant appendices.

Appendix 1: Notes & Sources

ID Numbers: Due to the possible confusion of common names, all of the civic officials have been given unique identification numbers for ease of reference and identification. These numbers run from 1 to 317, and have no intrinsic significance although they do largely correspond with the alphabetical ordering of the surnames of the civic officials. The numbers 203 and 221 are not used. The individuals were numbered at an early stage of my research and the omission of these two numbers represents a compacting of records made possible by new information coming to light at a later stage of research. It was decided not to renumber the officials as by this stage data-bases of information utilizing the identification numbers had already been built up.

Occupations: Aside from the inherent problem of occupational categorisation discussed in the thesis introduction there is also that of dual occupations. A number of the officials practised more than one occupation and in many cases the two occupations practised fell into different occupational categories. Appendix one shows all of the recorded occupations for each individual. The first occupation listed is that recorded at the earliest civic office held (or the next subsequent office if occupation was not recorded). It is this occupation which has determined which occupational category an individual was placed in. Any further occupations listed are those recorded for subsequent offices, entry into the freedom or in probate evidence.

Dates: All dates have been cited according to the modern calendar year. In the case of office-holding the date cited is the modern calendar year in which the individual was elected to the office in question.

Lay Subsidy: Assessment of 1524 valued assets in terms of either pounds or marks. For comparative reasons all values have been converted into pounds at a rate of 0.6 marks to a pound.

Sources: Freedom: YCA, York Freemen's Register D1, fols. 31r-209r, indexed and published in Collins (ed.), *Freemen's Register*. Corpus Christi Guild: Skaife (ed.), *Corpus Christi Register*. Mercers' Guild: Wheatley, 'York Mercers' Guild', appendix; *idem*, D.Phil thesis, department of history, university of York (forthcoming). I am grateful to Mrs Wheatley for this information which was gathered by her in her capacity as archivist of the York Mercers' Guild. Parish Constables/Ward Jurors: YCA, Chamberlains Account Book CB1A, fols. 136r-139r; Wardmote Court Book E31, pp. 1a-20a. Bridge masters: YCA, Chamberlains Account Book CB1, fols. 318r-320r; YCA, Chamberlains Account Book CB2, fols. 40r, 79r, 126v, 172r; Attreed (ed.) *York House Books*, p. 276. Chamberlains: YCA, Freemen's Register D1, fols. 330r-331r; also, as for freedom. Sheriffs: YCA, Freemen's Register D1, fols. 209v, 298r-310r; YCA, House Book 11, fols. 27r, 46r, 81r, 104br, 117r. Mayors: YCA, Freemen's Register D1, fols. 4r-27r; also, as for freedom. Supplementary Information about officials and their occupations can be found in YCA, York House Book 7, fols. 19r, 22v, 53v, 85v, 138v, 142v; Book 9, 52v & 72v; Attreed, (ed), *York House Books*, pp. 247, 276, 300, 497, 573, 643-4, 672, & 675. Lay Subsidy: Peacock (ed.), 'Subsidy Roll for York and Ainsty', pp. 170-199. Date of Death: York, BIHR, Probate Registers of the Exchequer and Prerogative Court of the Archbishop, Prob. Reg. 3-15; BIHR, York Consistory Court Act Books, Cons AB 2 & AB3; YML, Dean & Chapter Probate Registers, DC Reg 1 & 2.

Appendix 1: Information Relating to the Civic Careers of the 315 Men Who Held Civic Office During the Period 1476 to 1525.

Key

Surname: Names in parenthesis () indicate a known alias for the official in question.

Freedom: Date and method of entry into the city's franchise.
app: by apprenticeship.　　pp: by patrimony　　?: no-one free of this name　　?tm: insufficient information/ common name precludes accurate identification.

Corpus Christi Guild: Date of entry into the York Corpus Christi Guild.
+w: civic official is recorded as having joined the guild with his wife. x: no man of this name joined the guild.
Dates in italics indicate that a man of this name joined the guild but that insufficient additional information precluded accurate identification.

Mercers' Guild: Earliest occurrence in the records of the York Mercer's Guild.
s: evidence of shipping activity in the Guild records or the Hull Customs Accounts. x: no man of this name appears to have been a member of the Mercers' Guild.
?tm: insufficient information/ common name precludes accurate identification.
Dates in italics indicate that a man of this name joined the guild but that insufficient additional information precluded accurate identification.

Parish Constable/
Ward Juror: Indicates that this man is listed in the few surviving wardmote court accounts as a Parish Constable or a Ward Juror for the year(s) cited.
Bridge Master: o: Ouse Bridge Master.　　f: Foss Bridge Master.
1524 Subsidy: d: dead by date of subsidy.　　#: value has been converted into pounds from marks.

ID no.	Name	Surname (Alias)	Occupation	Date of Freedom	Corpus Christi Guild	Mercers' Guild	Parish Constable /Ward Juror	Bridge Master	Chamberlain	Sheriff	Mayor	1524 Subsidy (in £s)	Died
001	Thomas	Abney	Merchant	1509	1509 +w	1508		-	1519	-	-	20	After 1525
002	John	Alan	Baker	1484 app	x	x		f1501	-	-	-	-	After 1501
004	Henry jnr.	Albone	Skinner	1488 pp	x	x		o1489	-	-	-	d	1496
003	Henry snr.	Albone	Skinner	1440	1446 +w	1488		f1459	1484	-	-	d	1486
005	Robert	Amyas	Merchant/ Draper	1463	1473 +w	1471 s		-	1468	1469	1481	d	1486
006	Roger	Appilby	Tanner	1456	x	x		f1473	1480	1485	-	d	1495

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ID no.	Name	Surname (Alias)	Occupation	Date of Freedom	Corpus Christi Guild	Mercers' Guild	Parish Constable /Ward Juror	Bridge Master	Chamberlain	Sheriff	Mayor	1524 Subsidy (in £s)	Died
012	Adam	Atkynson	Tanner	1509	*1515 +w*	x		o1522	1528	-	-	7#	1542
008	Adam	Atkynson	Tanner	1463	x	x		-	1485	-	-	d	1499
009	Thomas	Bailley	Butcher	1496	x	x		-	1521	1522	-	20	After 1524
010	John	Bald	Saddler/Roper	1462	x	1481		f1484	-	-	-	d	1487
011	Thomas	Bankehouse	Tailor/Draper	1476	1506 +w	1512		f1492	1494	1500	1521	d	1521
013	John	Barker	Tailor	1459	?	x		f1481	-	-	-	d	1490
016	William	Barker	Merchant	1482	?	1481 s		-	1486	1489	-	d	1503
014	William	Barker	Cornchapman/ Merchant	1501	?	1513		-	1515	1516	1525 1532	30	1538
015	William	Barker	Baker	1465	?	1495		o1479	1482	1483	-	d	1511
017	William	Barton	Hosier/ Tailor	1476	1472 +w	x		f1502	-	-	-	d	1509
018	John	Bateman	Shipman	?	1498 +w	x		-	1506	1508	-	d	1510
019	John	Bateman	Notary & Merchant	1506	?	1503		o1509	1511	-	-	d	1522
020	William	Baxster	Girdler	1458	1471 +w	x		f1477	-	-	-	d	1488
021	John	Baynes	Tanner	1477	*1489 +w*	x		o1494	-	-	-	d	1494
022	Robert	Baynes	Tiler	1475	*1482 +w*	1495		o1492	1497	-	-	-	After 1497
023	John	Becham	Butcher	1488	x	x		f1511	-	-	-	d	1517
024	Thomas	Beene	Capper	1461 pp	1464 +w	1464		o1496	-	-	-	-	After 1496
025	John jnr.	Beisby	Merchant	1490	*1489*	1485 s		-	1491	1506	-	26#	1535

ID no.	Name	Surname (Alias)	Occupation	Date of Freedom	Corpus Christi Guild	Mercers' Guild	Parish Constable /Ward Juror	Bridge Master	Chamberlain	Sheriff	Mayor	1524 Subsidy (in £s)	Died
028	John snr.	Beisby	Merchant	1467	1475 +w	1471 s		-	1484	1486	-	d	1493
026	Thomas	Bentley	Barber	?	1470 +w	x		fl495	-	-	-	d	1506
027	Richard	Bernard	Tapiter	?	1477 +w	x		fl507	-	-	-	d	1508
029	Henry	Bettes	Waxchandeler	1477	1480 +w	x	1491	-	1500	-	-	d	1504
030	John	Beverley	Merchant	1478 pp	1475	1481 s		-	1483	1485	-	d	1485
031	Thomas	Bewley	Tailor	?	?	x	1494	fl512	-	-	-	-	After 1516
047	John	Birkhede	Merchant	1480 pp	1480	1480 s		-	1492	1498	1507	d	1508
032	Maurice	Birom	Organ Maker	1486	1482 +w	x		fl510	-	-	-	d	1510
033	James	Blades	Draper/ Haberdasher	1506	1509	x		o1513	1515	1523	-	16	Before 1531
034	John	Blakey	Capper/ Hosteler	1470	1471 +w	x	1496	o1496	-	-	-	-	After 1496
035	George	Blevet	Fisher	1455	1469 +w	x	1492	fl494	-	-	-	-	After 1494
036	Henry	Bloder	Vintner	1489	x	1499		o1502	-	-	-	d	1503
302	Henry	Boyid (Bayre)	Tailor	?	x	x		fl522	-	-	-	-	After 1522
037	Brian	Bradley	Waxchandeler	1510	x	x		-	1522	-	-	20	1528
038	Thomas	Braxez	Baker	1485 app	1503 +w	x		o1497	1498	1503	-	20	1535
039	Denis	Brokden	Tapiter & Merchant	1471	1474 +w	x	1494	o1498	-	-	-	-	After 1498
040	Roger	Brokholes	Bower	1471	x	x		o1488	-	-	-	d	1492

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ID no.	Name	Surname (Alias)	Occupation	Date of Freedom	Corpus Christi Guild	Mercers' Guild	Parish Constable /Ward Juror	Bridge Master	Chamberlain	Sheriff	Mayor	1524 Subsidy (in £s)	Died
041	Cuthbert	Brownles	Dyer	1486 app	1483	x	-	-	1496	-	-	d	1498
042	Thomas	Bubwith	Spicer/Grocer	1476	1472	1477	-	o1487	1497	-	-	d	1500
043	John	Bukill	Smith/Marshall	1465	x	x	-	f1493	-	-	-	-	After 1493
044	Henry	Bulmer	Merchant	1477	-	1478 s	-	o1493	1503	-	-	-	After 1503
045	Hugh	Buntyng	Fletcher	1479	x	x	-	f1514	1528	-	-	20	1530
046	Thomas	Burton	Merchant	?	?	1514 s	-	-	1517	1518	1522	30	1525
048	John	Carter	Shipman/ Merchant	1469	1470 +w	1460 s	-	f1491	1500	-	-	d	1503
049	John	Catour	Merchant	1477 pp	1480 +w	1479 s	-	-	1487	-	-	d	1505
050	Roger	Chamber	Parchmenter	1493	x	x	1494 & 5	o1515	-	-	-	-	After 1515
053	John	Chapman	Saddler	1487 app	1489	x	-	o1506	1507	1512	-	d	1517
052	Thomas	Chapman	Saddler	1472	1474	x	-	f1486	1487	-	-	d	1506
051	John	Chappell (Bridnall)	Cook	1463	x	x	-	f1487	-	-	-	d	1500
054	Richard	Charlesby	Merchant	1487	1489	1488 s	-	o1501	1503	-	-	d	1510
055	William	Chimney	Draper	1455	1457	1477	-	o1465	1470	1474	1486	d	1509
308	Christopher	Clerk	Dyer	1500	1501 +w	x	-	o1521	1543	-	-	3#	After 1543
056	John	Clerk	Butcher	1479	?	x	-	f1502	-	-	-	-	After 1502
057	Richard	Clerk	Tanner	1482 pp	?	x	1494	o1503	-	-	-	d	1503
058	Richard	Clerke	Draper/Tailor	1452	?	x	-	-	1478	1479	-	d	1495

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059	Edward	Clifford	Merchant	1506	1507	1506		-	1507	-	-	d	1517
060	Simon	Cokay	Baker	1451	x	x		f1477	-	-	-	d	1486
061	John	Colyer	Pewterer	1500	?	x		-	1524	1528	-	20	1541
062	Brian	Conyers	Merchant	1473	1473 +w	1472 s		-	1475	-	-	d	1478
063	Peter	Cook	Chandeler	?	x	1488		-	1488	1492	-	d	1499
064	Thomas	Craven	Vintner/ Chapman	1460	1463	x		o1479	-	-	-	d	1479
065	Thomas	Cundall	Barber	1452	x	x		o1492	1494	-	-	-	After 1494
066	William	Cure	Haberdasher/ Litteratus	1504	1517 +w	1513		o1508	1510	1511	-	d	1523
068	John	Custance	Merchant	1487 pp	1501 +w	1487		-	1493	-	-	-	After 1501
067	John	Custance	Baker	1462	1471 +w	x		f1482	1487	1493	-	d	1515
069	Robert	Dale	Shipman	1463	1472 +w	1501 s		o1490	1493	-	-	d	1517
071	Thomas	Darby	Merchant	1482	1480	1482 s		-	1490	-	-	d	1524
070	Alexander	Dawson	Merchant	1467	x	1469 s		-	1485	1489	-	d	1493
073	Bertram	Dawson	Tailor/ Draper	1476	1479 +w	1485		f1486	1491	1496	1511	d	1516
074	Thomas	Dawson	Mercer	1504 pp	1506 +w	1503		-	1516	1517	-	20	1539
075	Henry	Dayson	Dyer	1504	1506	x		-	1522	1524	1531	20	1540
072	Thomas	Dayvell	Merchant	1484 app	x	1482 s		o1493	-	-	-	d	1516

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076	William	Deken	?	?	1464 +w	x		-	1477	-	-	d	1488
077	Robert	Denton	Fletcher	1467	x	x		o1491	-	-	-	d	1492
080	Robert	Dikonson	Merchant	1501	1508 +w	1501		-	1510	-	-	d	1520
078	John	Dogeson	Merchant	1482	1489 +w	1481 s		-	1490	1497	1508 1517	10	1531
079	Thomas	Drawswerd	Carvour	1496	1500	1501			1501	1505	1515 1523	18 (in lands)	1529
082	John	Elwald	Merchant	1471	1471 +w	1472 s		-	1486	1490	1499	d	1505
081	John	Elys	Waxchandler/ Innholder/ Vintner	1475	x	1486 s		o1489	1491	1503	-	d	1511
083	George	Essex	Grocer/ Apothecary	1474	1475 +w	x		-	1494	1500	1509	d	1510
084	John	Fereby	Merchant	1447	1469 +w	1457 s		-	1462	1471	1478 1491	d	1491
085	Christopher	Feron	Tanner	1482 app	x	x	1492 1494 1495	f1506	-	-	-	d	1522
086	John	Flour	Miller	1493	x	x		o1520	-	-	-	d	1521
087	Thomas	Folneby	Merchant	1479	1475	1477 s		-	1483	1488	-	d	1504
088	Robert	Fons	Merchant/ Innholder	1499	1501 +w	1501		f1505	1513	1521	-	18	1536

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089	Edward	Forster	Hosier/Tailor/Draper	1467	1473	x		f1488	1490	1492	-	d	1502
090	Thomas	Freman	Tanner	1483 app	1495 +w	x		o1495	1499	1501	-	d	1505
091	Thomas	Fynch	Mercer/Merchant	1469 pp	1470	1471 s		o1478	1480	1484	-	-	After 1500
092	Richard	Garnet	Stacioner	1470	1472 +w	1502		-	1493	-	-	d	1519
093	William	Garnet	Merchant	1499	1511 +w	1502 s		-	1509	1510	-	d	1513
094	Richard	Gascoigne (Wedderby)	Vintner	?	1471 +w	1478		o1482	-	-	-	d	1487
095	John	Gaunt	Merchant	1457	1457	c1450 s		-	1488	-	-	d	1488
311	George	Gayle	Goldsmith	1514	1511	x		o1523	-	-	1534 1549	13#	After 1549
097	John	Gegges	Bower	1486	1497 +w	x		o1497	1498	1509	-	d	1519
096	Roger	Gegges	Bower	1490	1511 +w	x	1494	f1503	1504	1521	-	20	1550
098	John	Geldert	Shipwright/Shipman	1486 pp	1494 +w	1508		f1500	1512	1515	-	30	1534
099	Robert	Gibson	Tailor	1491	x	x		f1505	-	-	-	d	1508
100	Thomas	Gilbank	Armourer	1490	x	x	1495	f1509	1514	1517	-	d	1522
112	Robert	Gill	Pewterer	1458	1457 +w	x		o1469	1471	1478	-	-	After 1478
102	Paul	Gillowe	Merchant	1495	x	1496 s		o1508	1509	1514	1522	d	1522

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101	John jnr.	Gilyot	Mercer	1481 pp	1480 +w	1480 s		-	1482	1484	1490 1503	d	1510
103	Peter	Gilyot	Merchant	1522 pp	x	1522		-	1523	-	-	20	1525
104	Thomas	Gookman	Tanner	1493	1511 +w	x		o1512	1527	-	-	22	1541
105	Conrad	Gossepe	Cook	?	1489 +w	1486		-	1487	-	-	-	After 1487
106	Thomas	Gray	Goldsmith	1469	1471 +w	1480		o1480	1482	1488	1497	-	After 1500
107	Miles	Grenebank	Saddler	1455	1471 +w	1475		o1470	1481	1482	-	-	After 1503
108	Robert	Grenebank	Tailor	1483	1498	x		-	1499		-	-	After 1499
109	Adam	Gunby	Scrivner/ Clerk	1439	1451 +w	x		fl476	-	-	-	d	1482
111	John	Gurnerd	Fuller	1471	1474 +w	x		o1495	1497	-	-		After 1497
110	Richard	Gurnerd	Tapiter	?	x	x	1494	fl499	1508	-	-	20	After 1525
113	John	Hagg	Merchant	1471	1474 +w	1473 s		-	1477	1480	-	d	1499
114	John	Hall	Tanner	1481	1483 +w	x		-	1501	1504	1516	10	1528
115	Richard	Hall	Horner	1495	?	x		o1516	-	-	-	13#	1526
116	William	Hall	Tailor	1508	1508 +w	x		-	1523	-	-	-	After 1523
117	Robert	Hancok	Grocer	1462	1462	1477		-	1471	1477	1488	d	1496
118	William	Hancok	Apothecary	1471	1475	1475		-	1484	-	-	d	1484
119	Richard	Harbottle	Merchant	1517	1512 +w	1505		o1516	1518	-	-	d	1521
120	Richard	Hardsange	Fishmonger	1456	x	1478		o1475	1478	1483	-	d	1492

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121	Thomas	Hardsange	Fishmonger	1480	x	x		o1491	1492	-	-	-	After 1492
007	Miles	Harom	Vestmenter	1464	1473 +w	1485		o1485	1488	1496	-	d	1501
122	John	Harper	Merchant	1471	1473	1473 s		-	1478	1481	1489	d	1496
123	Thomas	Hauslyn	Fishmonger	1452	x	1481 s		o1484	1488	-	-	-	After 1488
124	William jnr.	Hewbanke	Tanner	1494 pp	1511 +w	x		o1517	1530	-	-	5	1538
125	William snr.	Hewbanke	Tanner	1452	x	x		o1499	1505	-	-	-	After 1505
126	Hugh	Hewlay	Vintner	?	1506 +w	x		-	1524	1525	-	26	After 1525
127	John	Hodlow	Merchant	1465	1470 +w	1463		f1475	1479	-	-	d	1487
128	John	Hogeson	Merchant	1517	1515	1515		-	1524	1527	1533	20	After 1533
130	Stephen	Hogeson	Uphodsterer	?	x	x	1494	f1497	-	-	-	d	1504
129	Thomas	Hogeson	Glover/ Innholder	?	1489 +w	x	1494	f1498	1504	-	-	d	1511
132	Henry	Holme	Draper/ Tailor	1489 pp	1501 +w	x		f1508	1516	1519	-	26	1534
131	John	Holme	Hosier	1464	1474	x	1494	f1496	-	-	-	-	1496
133	John	Hoode	Yeoman	?	x	x		f1516	1520	-	-	14	1536
134	Christopher	Horner	Mason	1490	x	x		o1500	1511	1512	-	d	1523
135	William	Huby	Horner	?	1500	1501 s		f1493	1495	1506	-	40	1532
314	Henry	Huchonson	Cooper	1501	x	x		o1524	-	-	-	10	After 1524
136	Richard	Huchonson	Butcher	1495	x	x		f1511	1520	1523	-	20#	1535

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137	Robert	Huchonson	Goldsmith	1479	x	x		-	1498	-	-	-	1507
315	Adam	Hudson	Smith	1449	1463 +w	x		fl483	-	-	-	-	After 1483
138	John	Humfrayson	Tapiter	?	x	x		fl515	-	-	-	20	After 1524
140	John	Huton	Potter	1456	1467 +w	x		o1481	1486	1491	-	d	1491-06
139	John	Huton	Cook	1457	1455 +w	x		fl478	1485	-	-	d	1504
141	Richard	Hyndley	Hosier	?	x	x		o1476	-	-	-	-	After 1476
143	Peter	Jakson	Merchant	1510	1510	1508		o1512	1517	1520	1526	20#	1532
142	Robert	Jakson	Baker	1450	?	x		o1483	1489	-	-	d	1496
145	Thomas	Jameson	Merchant	1486 pp	1489 +w	1485 s		-	1492	1497	1504	d	1508
144	Thomas	Jameson	Merchant	1508 pp	1500	1506 s		-	1519	-	-	-	After 1519
146	Robert	Johnson	Pewterer	1480	?	x		fl497	-	-	-	-	After 1497
147	Robert	Johnson	Grocer/ Spicer	1465	1468	1471 s		-	1484	1487	1496	d	1498
149	Thomas	Kendale	Smith	?	1478 +w	x		o1490	1492	-	-	d	1505
150	George	Kirk	Merchant	1475	1483 +w	1475 s		o1483	1485	1487	1495 1512	d	1514
153	James	Kirk	Goldsmith	1482 app	1482	1491		o1502	-	-	-	d	1515
151	Thomas	Knayton	Butcher	?	x	x		o1507	1510	-	-	20	1528
152	Thomas	Knolles	Draper	1469	1480	x		o1477	1489	-	-	d	1499
148	Thomas	Kychen	Tapiter	1473	1475	1491		fl491	-	-	-	-	After 1491

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154	Thomas	Lambe	Tailor	1493	1497 +w	x		o1511	-	-	-	10	1536
155	William	Lambe	Ironmonger/ Merchant	1442	1449 +w	1458 s		o1461	1464	1468	1475	d	1484
303	John	Lameman	Litteratus	1491 pp	x	x	1494	f1522	1526	-	-	10	1535
156	Nicholas	Lancaster	Clerk, Merchant, Dr of Law	1472 pp	1479 +w	1471		-	-	-	1485 1493	d	1501
157	Ralph	Langlay	Merchant	1511	x	1509		-	1522	-	-	20#	After 1525
158	John	Langton	Draper	1486 app	1486 +w	x		-	1499	1509	-	Hull	1542
159	Robert	Lee	Innholder/ Chapman	1494	1491 +w	x		f1508	-	-	-	d	1515
160	William	Lettwyn	Tailor	1442	1446 +w	1474		f1457	1477	-	-	d	1483
161	Thomas	Lewelyn	Tanner	1476	1481 +w	x	1495	f1490	-	-	-	d	1500
168	John	Lincoln	Merchant	1483 app	1482	1492 s		-	1491	1502	-	d	1508
300	John	Lister	Tailor/ Draper	1507	1516	x		f1521	-	-	-	16	1541
162	Robert	Loksmith (Maugham)	Vestmenter	1485	x	x		f1514	-	-	-	16#	1532
163	John	Long	Miller	1467 pp	1472 +w	x		-	1488	-	-	d	1493
167	William	Lounde	Tanner	1485 app	1495 +w	x		f1504	1506	-	-	-	After 1506
165	Thomas	Lounde	Saddler	1489	1491	x	1494	f1507	1517	-	-	16	1534

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166	James	Loundesdale	Tailor	1459	x¹	x		f1479	1489	-	-	d	1495
164	William	Loundesdale	Tanner	1455	1455 +w	x		o1482	-	-	-	d	1488
169	Richard	Makblyth	Clerk	1482	1485 +w	1488		o1506	1508	-	-	d	1513
306	Laurence	Mallome	Pewterer	1505	1503 +w	x		f1524	-	1531	-	10	After 1531
172	Henry	Marshall	Grocer	1495	1494	1496		-	1501	-	-	d	1506
171	John	Marshall	Merchant	1515	1515 +w	1515		-	1521	1522	-	40#	1527
170	John	Marshall	Draper/ Mercer	1445	1470	1458 s		o1451	1455	1459	1467 1480	d	1487
173	William	Marshall	Merchant	1490 pp	1491 +w	1485		-	1490	-	-	d	1493
174	Richard	Marston	Cardmaker	1459	x	1475		o1470	1476	1479	-	d	1485
175	Christopher	Mason	Tailor	1468	x	x		f1485	-	-	-	d	1486
176	Thomas	Mason	Glover	1493	1495 +w	1503		o1510	1514	1518	1528	30	1529
178	William	Mason	Yeoman	1519	x	x		o1520	-	-	-	-	After 1520
177	William	Mason	Tailor	1473	1479 +w	x		-	1493	-	-	d	1506
179	John	Metcalf	Merchant	1482	1482	1484 s		-	1491	1494	1498	d	1502
180	Anthony	Middelton	Merchant	1509	1507	1506 s		-	1518	-	-	d	1520
181	Oliver	Middelton	Merchant	1497	1500	1499		-	1502	1504	-	d	1505

¹ His wife Alicia joined the guild on his death in 1495.

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182	William	Middelton	Plumber	1480	x	x		f1503	-	-	-	d	1508
183	John	Nelson	Tapiter?	1510?	x	x		-	-	1514	-	-	After 1514
184	Ralph	Nelson	Tapiter	1498	1505 +w	-		o1513	-	-	-	d	1520
185	William	Nelson	Merchant	1488 pp	1483 +w	1488 s		-	1489	1495	1500	d	1524
186	William	Nettilton	Fishmonger	1502	x	1503		o1504	-	-	-	d	1509
310	John	Newby	Tanner	1495	1502 +w	x		o1522	-	-	-	-	After 1522
187	John	Newton	Dyer	1469	1469 +w	1477		-	-	1474	1483	d	Before 1501
189	John	Norman	Merchant	1503 pp	1512 +w	1501 s		-	1512	-	1524	40#	1525
188	John	Norman	Merchant	1469	1470	1471		o1486	1487	1490	-	d	1497
312	John	North	Tanner	1515	1516 +w	x		o1523	1527	1529	1538 1554	26	1558
190	Richard	North	Tanner	1491	1494	x	1495	o1504	1512	1513	-	d	1515
191	William	North	Tilemaker/ Yeoman	?	1481 +w	1501	1492	o1494	1497	-	-	d	1502
192	John	Northeby	Butcher	1449	x	x		f1476	-	-	-	d	1500
309	Ralph	Norton	Baker	?	x	x		o1521	-	-	-	-	After 1521
193	John	Ordeux (Nordouse)	Tanner	1467	1470 +w	x		f1490	-	-	-	d	1504
194	Thomas	Parker	Tailor/ Draper	1487	1487 +w	x		o1498	1500	1502	1520	18	1528

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ID no.	Name	Surname (Alias)	Occupation	Date of Freedom	Corpus Christi Guild	Mercers' Guild	Parish Constable /Ward /Juror	Bridge Master	Chamberlain	Sheriff	Mayor	1524 Subsidy (in £s)	Died
195	William	Paynter (Plumber)	Plumber	1460	*1465*	x		f1480	1486	-	-	d	1495
196	John	Pegham	Merchant/ Mercer	1478	x	1480 s		o1500	-	-	-	-	After 1500
198	John	Pety	Glazier/ Innholder	1471	*1474 +w*	x		o1485	1488	1494	1508	d	1508
197	Robert	Pety	Tapiter	1480	*1505*	1508		f1494	1496	1499	-	80	1528
199	John	Pheliskyrk	Pardoner	1510	x	x		f1520	-	-	-	-	After 1520
200	Nicholas	Pierson	Dyer/ Yeoman	1457	1457	1477		-	1474	1476	-	d	1480
201	Thomas	Pierson	Pewterer	1464	1462 +w	1486		f1479	1481	1482	-	d	1493
202	William	Pikard	Skinner	1451	1462 +w	x		o1480	-	-	-	d	1484
305	Thomas	Plasket	Tailor	1502	1519 +w	x		f1523	-	-	-	5	1537
204	Otwell	Portyngton	Merchant	1483 app	1482	1484 s		-	1491	-	-	-	After 1500
205	Robert	Preston	Glazier	1466	1467	x		-	1496	-	-	d	1503
206	Ralph	Pullan	Goldsmith	1502	1506 +w	x		-	1521	1526	1537	18#	1541
207	John	Rasen	Merchant	1499	*1500*	1500 s		-	1513	1515	-	40	1527
208	Richard	Rawlyn	Tailor	1459	*1457*	1476		f1480	-	-	-	d	1485
209	Thomas	Rawson	Baker	1487 pp	x	x		f1482	-	-	-	d	1486
210	Robert	Rede	Girdler	1466	*1486*	1474		f1487	1495	-	-	d	1505

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ID no.	Name	Surname (Alias)	Occupation	Date of Freedom	Corpus Christi Guild	Mercers' Guild	Parish Constable /Ward Juror	Bridge Master	Chamberlain	Sheriff	Mayor	1524 Subsidy (in £s)	Died
220	John	Richerdson	Painter/ Haberdasher	1507	*1500*	1502		f1516	1525	1527	-	?	1538
213	John	Robynson	Tailor	1470	?	x		f1483	1488	-	-	-	After 1492
212	John	Robynson	Butcher	?	?	x		-	1492	-	-	-	After 1492
211	John	Robynson	Clerk/ Public Notary	1484 pp	?	x		o1511	-	-	-	-	1549
214	John	Robynson	Butcher	?	?	x		f1489	-	-	-	-	After 1489
215	Richard	Robynson	Butcher	1472	?	x		-	1493	-	-	-	After 1493
216	Thomas	Robynson	Glover	1478	?	1503		o1499	-	-	-	-	After 1499
217	William	Robynson	Weaver	1478	?	x		f1495	1503	-	-	7	1528
218	William	Roche	Waxchandeler	1485 app	1481	1504		-	1497	-	-	d	1507
219	John	Roger	Fishmonger	1486 app	x	x		f1506	1508	1524	-	198#	1532
222	Roger	Sawer	Tapiter	1479	*1476*	x	1492	-	1495	1507	-	d	1513
223	John	Saxton	Innholder/ Yeoman	1486	*1487*	x		-	1498	-	-	-	After 1498
224	Thomas	Scotton	Merchant	1458	1457	1459 s		-	1472	1475	1492	d	1503
225	Robert	Serl	Fletcher	1447	*1455 +w*	x		-	1479	-	-	-	After 1479
226	William	Sewynson	?	?	x	x		f1513	-	-	-	-	After 1513
229	John	Shawe	Merchant	1469	*1467*	1473		f1478	1483	1486	1510	d	1516
228	John	Shawe	Merchant	1524	*1519*	1519		-	1525	1528	1538	10	1538

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ID no.	Name	Surname (Alias)	Occupation	Date of Freedom	Corpus Christi Guild	Mercers' Guild	Parish Constable /Ward Juror	Bridge Master	Chamberlain	Sheriff	Mayor	1524 Subsidy (in £s)	Died
227	Robert	Sherley	Glazier	1459	1484	x		fl1488	-	-	-	-	After 1488
230	William	Shirburn	Bower	1456 pp	1470	x	1491	fl1496	-	-	-	-	After 1496
231	Miles	Skipton	?	?	x	x		o1514	-	-	-	-	After 1514
233	Robert	Skipton	Tailor	1489	x	x		o1505	1506	-	-	d	1506
232	William	Skipton	Draper/Tailor	1477	1479 +w	x		-	1495	1501	-	d	1508
234	John	Smyth	Tanner	1506	?	x		fl1512	1518	1526	-	40	1527
235	Henry	Spark	Vintner	1504	1512	1504		o1509	1513	-	-	-	After 1513
236	William	Spence	Armourer	1448	1455	x		o1462	1475	1477	-	d	1491
237	Richard	Standyssh	Parish Clerk	1464 pp	1474w	x		-	1499	-	-	d	1502
238	Alan	Staveley	Merchant	1489	1488	1490 s		-	1494	1499	1506 1519	d	1525
239	William	Staveley	Merchant	1487	1481	1488 s		-	1498	-	-	-	After 1500
240	John	Stokdale	Mercer	1476	1477	1476 s		-	1487	1491	1501	d	1507
241	John	Sutton	Mason	1472	?	x		fl1498	1500	-	-	-	After 1500
242	John	Symson	Fuller	1483 app	?	x		o1505	-	-	-	-	After 1505
243	Ralph	Symson	Pewterer	1511	1534 +w	x		fl1520	1525	1529	-	13#	1538
244	Richard	Symson	Wiredrawer	1459	1460	x		fl1481	1490?	-	-	-	After 1490
245	Robert	Symson	Fuller	1458	1489	x		o1494	1502	1504	-	d	1505
247	Thomas	Taillour	Butcher	1447	1470 +w	x		o1475	-	-	-	d	1477

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ID no.	Name	Surname (Alias)	Occupation	Date of Freedom	Corpus Christi Guild	Mercers' Guild	Parish Constable /Ward Juror	Bridge Master	Chamberlain	Sheriff	Mayor	1524 Subsidy (in £s)	Died
246	Thomas	Taillour	Merchant	1491 pp	?	1486 s		-	1496	-	-	-	After 1496
248	William	Tayte	Hosier/ Tailor	1453	1453 +w	x		o1468	1476	1478	-	d	1502
249	Richard	Tebbe	Butcher	1476	1481 +w	x		-	1494	1507	-	d	1520
250	Thomas	Thirsk	Tailor	1460	1470 +w	x		o1476	1481	-	-	d	1482
252	John	Thomson	Wiredrawer	1471	1474	x		o1487	1496	-	-	-	After 1496
251	William	Thomson	Glazier	1497	*1497 +w*	x		f1515	1526	-	-	16	1540
253	John	Thorneton	Merchant	1504 pp	1514 +w	1503 s		-	1505	1508	1514	60	1530
254	Richard	Thorneton	Spicer/ Grocer	1481 pp	1481	1482 s		o1486	1492	1495	1502	d	1506
255	John	Tirell	Textor	1447	x	x		o1463	1476	-	-	d	1504
256	William	Tod	Merchant	1462	1464 +w	1464 s		-	1471	1476	1487	d	1503
258	Thomas	Tone	Butcher	1503	*1508 +w*	x		f1513	1519	-	-	30	1525
257	John	Tong	Merchant	1456 pp	1460 +w	1453 s		-	1462	1468	1477	d	1491
301	Roland/ Reg	Tony?	?	?	x	x		f1521	-	-	-	-	After 1521
260	John	Tramell	Baker	?	x	x		f1500	1507	-	-	-	After 1507
261	Robert	Tubbac	Merchant	1471 pp	1469	1474 s		-	1489	-	-	-	After 1489
259	Robert	Turner	Cook	1486 app	*1489*	x		o1510	1516	1525	-	26#	After 1525
262	William	Undron	Questore	1479	1475 +w	x		-	1497	-	-	d	1501
316	Nicholas	Vicars	Grocer	1471	1473	1474		-	1486	1486	-	d	1489

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ID no.	Name	Surname (Alias)	Occupation	Date of Freedom	Corpus Christi Guild	Mercers' Guild	Parish Constable /Ward Juror	Bridge Master	Chamberlain	Sheriff	Mayor	1524 Subsidy (in £s)	Died
263	Simon	Vicars	Haberdasher/ Chapman	1500	1513	1502	-	o1507	1511	1513	1521	20	1535
264	William	Walker	Hosier/ Tailor	1492	?	x	1494	f1510	-	-	-	-	After 1510
304	Thomas	Warde	Barber	1498	?	x		f1523	-	-	-	-	After 1523
265	William	Warde	Draper/ Merchant	1462	1479 +w	x		o1473	1475	-	-	d	1486
266	Edward	Warwyk	Merchant	1495	1493	1492 s		o1501	1506	-	-	d	After 1506
313	Robert	Waterton	?	?	1515 +w	x		o1524	-	-	-	16	After 1524
269	Thomas	Watson	Litster	1473	1473 +w	x		f1485	-	-	-	d	1504
268	Thomas	Watson	Tanner	1451	1453 +w	x		o1481	1490	-	-	d	1492
267	William	Watson	Spicer?	1482 app?	1486	?		-	1495	-	-	d	After 1495
270	William	Webster	Parchmenter	1510	?	x		f1517	-	-	-	10	1527
271	John	Wedall	Merchant	1514	x	1514		-	1515	1516	-	-	After 1516
272	Anthony	Welburn	Baker	1485 app	1491 +w	x	1496	-	1496	1501	-	d	1525
273	Thomas	Welles	Goldsmith	1460	1461 +w	?		o1484	1489	-	-	d	1500
274	William	Welles	Merchant/ Vintner	1453	1473 +w	1458 s		-	1461	1467	1479	d	1487
275	Thomas	Wharf	Bower	1461	x	x		o1488	-	-	-	d	After 1489
276	John	White	Ironmonger	?	?	x		f1489	1494	-	-	d	After 1494
277	John	White	Grocer	1492	?	1502		-	1505	1510	-	d	1519

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ID no.	Name	Surname (Alias)	Occupation	Date of Freedom	Corpus Christi Guild	Mercers' Guild	Parish Constable /Ward Juror	Bridge Master	Chamberlain	Sheriff	Mayor	1524 Subsidy (in £s)	Died
278	Michael	White	Dyer	1467	1469	1493		o1477	1479	1480	1494 1505	d	1510
279	William	White	Dyer	1472	1472	1490		o1478	1480	1481	1491 1505	d	1505
280	John	Whitehed	Woolman	1513	1515	x		o1514	-	-	-	d	1521
281	Robert	Whitfeld	Merchant	1512	1521	1513 s		-	-	1519	1529	20	1534
282	Alan	Wilberfosse	Merchant/ Gentleman	1473	1470 +w	1473		-	1474	1475	-	d	1492
283	Robert	Wilde	Merchant	1501	1490	1501		-	1514	1520	1527	30	1533
284	John	Williamson	Tailor	1512	?	x		f1517	-	-	-	-	1519
285	Richard	Williamson	Merchant	1480	x	1470 s		-	1493	-	-	-	After 1493
307	Robert	Wilman	Hosier/ Tailor	1509	1521	x		f1524	-	-	-	-	After 1524
287	William	Wilson	Goldsmith	1491 pp	1492 +w	1507		o1503	1504	1505	1513	d	1517
286	William	Wilson	Fishmonger	1487	?	x		f1492	1498	-	-	-	After 1498
288	Henry	Wod	Waxchandeler	1507	1507	1520		o1515	1523	-	-	20	1529
317	John	Wodhall	Butcher	1487	x	x		f1504	-	-	-	d	After 1504
289	Thomas	Wrangwish	Merchant	1458	1461	1455 s		-	1463	1466	1476 1484	d	After 1484
292	Henry	Wright	Plumer	1495	1496 +w	x		o1517	1520	-	-	16	1531
290	John	Wright	Fishmonger	1446	1455 +w	x		f1475	-	-	-	d	1484

ID no.	Name	Surname (Alias)	Occupation	Date of Freedom	Corpus Christi Guild	Mercers' Guild	Parish Constable /Ward /Juror	Bridge Master	Chamberlain	Sheriff	Mayor	1524 Subsidy (in £s)	Died
291	John	Wright	Cooper	1494	?			fl509	-	-	-	d	1548
293	Thomas	Wright	Fishmonger	1476	?	x		fl499	-	-	-	d	1509
294	William	Wright	Merchant/ Notary	1508	1530	1508 s		-	1509	1511	1518 1535	16#	1543
295	Richard	Wynder	Pewterer	1474	1483	x		-	1495	1498	-	d	1505
296	Laurence	Yole	Mason	1474	1484	x		fl484	-	-	-	d	1486
297	Gerard	Yong	Wiredrawer/ Pinner	1491	x	x		fl501	-	-	-	d	1506
299	Richard	York	Merchant	1457	1469	1462 s		-	1460	1465	1469 1482	d	1498
298	Thomas	York	Merchant/ Gentleman	1498 pp	1498	1498		-	1502	-	-	d	1515

Appendix 2a:
Verifiable Patrilineal Relationships Between the 315 Men Who Held Civic Office 1476-1525.

Key:
PR: Probate Register in BIHR.   CAB: City Act Book in BIHR   DC: Dean & Chapter Probate Register in YMA
PRO: Probate Register in PRO   Freemen: Collins (ed.), *York Freemen's Register.*   CPG: Cause Paper in BIHR
Information in *italics* indicates that the relationship in question was likely but not definite.

	Name of Official		Name of Relation	Relationship of Testator to Relation	Sources
003	Henry Albone snr	004	Henry Albone jnr	Father	PR5, fol. 280 (Albone); Freemen, p. 213.
004	Henry Albone jnr	003	Henry Albone snr	Son	
067	John Custance	068	John Custance	Father	AB2, fol. 2 (Custance); Freemen, p. 212.
068	John Custance	067	John Custance	Son	
073	Bertram Dawson	074	Thomas Dawson	Father	PR9, fol. 39 (Dawson); Freemen, p. 228.
074	Thomas Dawson	073	Bertram Dawson	Son	
096	Roger Gegges	097	John Gegges	Unknown *(Brother?)*	PR9, fol. 385 (Gegges); PR13, fol. 570 (Gegges); AB2, fol. 16 (Gegges).
097	John Gegges	096	Roger Gegges	Unknown *(Brother?)*	
101	Peter Gilyot	103	Peter Gilyot	Father	PR8, fol. 32 (Gilyot); PR9, fol. 324 (Gilyot); Freemen, p. 244.
103	Peter Gilyot	101	John Gilyot jnr	Son	
107	Miles Greenbank	108	Robert Greenbank	Uncle	PR4, fol. 31 (Greenbank).
108	Robert Greenbank	107	Miles Greenbank	Nephew	

Name of Official		Name of Relation		Relationship of Testator to Relation	Sources
117	Robert Hancok	William Hancock	118	Brother	PR5, fol. 457 (Hancock).
118	William Hancock	Robert Hancock	117	Brother	
124	William Hewbanke jnr.	William Hewbanke snr.	125	Son	Freemen, p. 219.
125	William Hewbanke snr.	William Hewbanke jnr.	124	Father	
128	John Hogeson	Thomas Hogeson	129	Son	PR8, fol. 64 (Hogeson).
129	Thomas Hogeson	Thomas Hogeson	128	Father	
131	John Holme	Henry Holme	132	Father	Freemen, p. 214.
132	Henry Holme	John Holme	131	Son	
139	John Huton	John Huton	140	Father	PR6, fol. 110 (Huton).
140	John Huton	John Huton	139	Son	
144	Thomas Jameson	Thomas Jameson	145	Son	PR7, fol. 26 (Jameson); Freemen, p. 211.
145	Thomas Jameson	Thomas Jameson	144	Father	
170	John Marshall	William Marshall	173	Father	PR5, fol. 311 (Marshall); PR6, fol. 164 (Marshall); PR9, fol. 357 (Marshall); Freemen, p. 215.
		John Marshall	171	Grandfather	
173	William Marshall	John Marshall	170	Son	
		John Marshall	171	Father	
171	John Marshall	John Marshall	170	Grandson	
		William Marshall	173	Son	
177	William Mason	Thomas Mason	176	Father	PR6, fol. 166 (Mason); PR9, fol. 435 (Mason).
176	Thomas Mason	William Mason	177	Son	

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	Name of Official		Name of Relation	Relationship of Testator to Relation	Sources
180	Oliver Middelton	181	Anthony Middelton	*Unknown*	PR6, fol. 130 (Mason); PR9, fol. 107 (Middelton).
181	Anthony Middelton	180	Oliver Middelton	*Unknown*	
188	John Norman	189	John Norman	Father	PR 5, fol. 497 (Norman); PR9, fol. 327 (Norman); PR11, fol. 68 (Norman);
189	John Norman	188	John Norman	Son	Freemen, p. 227.
190	Richard North	191 / 312	William North / John North	Son / Father	PR6, fol. 36 (North); PR9, fol. 18 (North); PR15/2, fol. 289 (North).
191	William North	190 / 312	Richard North / John North	Father / Grandfather	
312	John North	190 / 191	Richard North / William North	Son / Grandson	
197	Robert Pety	198	John Pety	Brother	PR9, fol. 420 (Pety); DC2, fol. 76 (Pety).
198	John Pety	197	Robert Pety	Brother	
211	John Robynson	217	William Robynson	Son	Freemen, p. 208.
217	William Robynson	211	John Robynson	Father	
228	John Shawe	229	John Shawe	Unknown (*Son?*)	PR9, fol. 26 (Shaw); PR11, fols.10, 276, 574 & 278 (Shaw).
229	John Shawe	228	John Shawe	Unknown (*Father?*)	
232	William Skipton	233	Robert Skipton	Brother	PR6, fol. 169 (Skipton); PR7, fol. 65 (Skipton).
233	Robert Skipton	232	William Skipton	Brother	
238	Alan Staveley	239	William Staveley	Brother	PR9, 316 (Staveley).
239	William Staveley	238	Alan Staveley	Brother	

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		Name of Official		Name of Relation	Relationship of Testator to Relation	Sources
246		Thomas Taillour	247	Thomas Taillour	Son	PR5, 191 (Taillour); Freemen, p. 216.
247		Thomas Taillour	246	Thomas Taillour	Father	
253		John Thorneton	254	Richard Thorneton	Son	PR6, fol. 76 (Thorneton); PR9, fol. 464 (Thorneton), PR11, fol. 64 & 491
254		Richard Thorneton	253	John Thorneton	Father	(Thorneton); Freemen, p. 228.
277		John White	279	William White	Son	PR6, fol. 127 (White); AB2, fol. 14 (White).
279		William White	277	John White	Father	
298		Thomas York	299	Richard York	Son	PRO 11/11 36 (York); PR9, fol. 11 (York); Freemen, p. 222.
299		Richard York	298	Thomas York	Father	

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Appendix 2b:
Verifiable Patrilineal Relationships Between Men Who Held Civic Office 1476-1525 and Men Who Held Civic Office Outside This Period.

Key:
PR: Probate Register in BIHR.   CAB: City Act Book in BIHR   DC: Dean & Chapter Probate Register in YMA
PRO: Probate Register in PRO   Freemen: Collins (ed.), *York Freemen's Register*.
Information in *italics* indicates that the relationship in question was likely but not definite.

Id no.	Name of Civic Official	Name of Relation	Relation's Highest Civic Office	Relationship of Civic Official to Relation	Source
2	John Alan	Thomas Alan	Sheriff 1470	Unknown (*Son?*)	DC2, fol. 27r (Alan).
06	Roger Appilby	Robert Appilby	Bridge master 1469	Brother	PR5, fol. 467 (Appilby).
8b	Adam Atkynson	John Atkynson	Chamberlain 1547	Father	PR11, fol. 656 (Atkynson); Freemen, p. 258.
24	Thomas Beene	John Beene	Bridge master 1468	Son	Freemen, fols. 181 & 245.
			Mayor 1565	Father	
30	John Beverley	Thomas Beverley	Mayor 1460 & 1472	Son	PR5, fol. 184 (Beverley); Freemen, p. 200.
49	John Catour	Thomas Catour	Sheriff 1465	Son	PR5, fol. 467 (Catour); Freemen, fol. 199.
061	John Colyer	Christopher Colyer	Chamberlain 1541	Father	PR11, fol. 563 (Colyer); Freemen, fol. 245.
062	Brian Conyers	Christopher Conyers	Chamberlain 1536	*Father*	PR5, 130 (Conyers).

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Id no.	Name of Civic Official	Name of Relation	Relation's Highest Civic Office	Relationship of Civic Official to Relation	Source
080	Robert Dikonson	George Dikonson	Chamberlain 1549	Father	Freemen, p. 258.
		John Dikonson	Chamberlain 1605	Grandfather	
082	John Elwald	Robert Elwald	Sheriff 1532	Father	DC2, fol. 43 (Elwald); Freemen, p. 230.
101	John Gilyot jnr.	John Gilyot snr.	Mayor 1464 & 1474	Son	PR5, 237 (Gilyot); Freemen, p. 203.
107	Miles Greenbank	Nicholas Greenbank	Bridge master 1457	Brother	PR4, fol. 31 (Greenbank).
108	Robert Greenbank	Nicholas Greenbank	Bridge master 1457	Nephew	PR4, fol. 31 (Greenbank).
150	George Kirk	Anthony Kirk	Chamberlain 1540	Father	PR8, fol. 117 (Kirk); Freemen, p. 248.
152	Thomas Knolles	John Knolles	Bridge master 1453	Son	PR2, fol. 485 (Knolles); PR4, fol. 210 (Knolles).
		William Knolles	Sheriff 1471	Brother	
176	Thomas Mason	John Mason	Chamberlain 1530	Father	PR9, fol. 435 (Mason); Freemen, p. 236.
177	William Mason	John Mason	Chamberlain 1530	Grandfather	PR6, fol. 166 (Mason); PR9, fol. 435; Freemen, p. 236.
180	Anthony Middelton	John Middelton	Chamberlain 1553	Father	PR9, fol. 107 (Middelton); Freemen, p. 261.
185	William Nelson	Thomas Nelson	Mayor 1465	Son	PR5, fol. 212 (Nelson); PR9, fol. 305 (Nelson); Freemen, p. 213.
191	William North	Richard North	Chamberlain 1561	Great Grandfather	PR6, fol. 36 (North); PR9, fol. 18 (North); PR15/2, fol. 289
190	Richard North	Richard North	Chamberlain 1561	Grandfather	(North); Freemen, p. 260.
312	John North	Richard North	Chamberlain 1561	Father	
305	Thomas Plasket	Richard Plasket	Chamberlain 1542	Father	Freemen, p. 256 (York); PR11, fol. 219.
229	William Shirburn	William Shirburn	Chamberlain 1453	Son	Freemen, p. 176.

Id no.	Name of Civic Official	Name of Relation	Relation's Highest Civic Office	Relationship of Civic Official to Relation	Source
234	John Smith	Thomas Smith	Chamberlain 1537	Father	PR9, fol. 359 (Smith)
254	Richard Thorneton	Richard Thorneton	Sheriff 1446	Grandfather	PR4, 214 (Thorneton); PR5, 116 (Thorneton); PR6, fol. 76
253	John Thorneton	Richard Thorneton	Sheriff 1446	Gt. Grandfather	(Thorneton); PR9, fol. 464 (Thorneton); Freemen, pp. 159, 228.
261	Robert Tubbac	Thomas Tubbac	Chamberlain 1454	Son	PR5, fol. 299 (Tubbac); Freemen, p. 191.
288	Henry Wod	Henry Wod	Chamberlain 1552	Father	PR9, fol. 442 (Wod); Freemen, p. 260.
294	William Wright	John Wright	Bridge master 1464	Grandson	Freedom, p. 204; YCA, Memorandum Book A/Y, fol. 132.
299	Richard York	Bertram York	Chamberlain 1534	Grandfather	PRO 11/11, fol. 36 (York); PR9, fol. 11 (York); Freedom, pp. 222
298	Thomas York	Bertram York	Chamberlain 1534	Father	& 248.

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Appendix 2c:
Verifiable Marriage Links Between Men Who Held Civic Office 1476-1525.

Key:

PR: Probate Register in BIHR. CAB: City Act Book in BIHR DC: Dean & Chapter Probate Register in YMA

PRO: Probate Register in PRO CP: Cause Paper in BIHR Freemen: York Freemen's Register (ed.), Collins.

Test Ebor: Lists of marriage licences printed in Testamenta Eboracensia (ed.), Raine

Information in *italics* indicates that the relationship in question was likely but not definite.

	Civic Officials Name		Name of Marriage Relation	Relationship of Civic Official to Relation	Source
7	Miles Harom	70	Alexander Dawson	*MH married AD's widow*	Test Ebor 4: 360.
15	William Barker	168	John Lincoln	Father-in-law	PR8, fol. 65 (Barker); PR8, fol. 56 (Lincoln).
16	William Barker	120	Richard Hardsange	Son-in-law	PR6, fol. 52 (Barker); PR5, fol. 423 (Hardsange).
		279	William White	WB's widow re-married WW	PR6, fol. 127 (White); Test Ebor 4: 363.
		254	Richard Thorneton etc	Member of Thorneton network	As above and see White below.
17	William Barton	145	Thomas Jameson	Brother-in-law	PR7, fol. 26 (Jameson); PR8, fol. 18 (Barton).
18	John Bateman	43	John Bukill	Son-in-law	PR8, fol. 28 (Bateman) & 10 (Bukill).
23	John Becham	157	Ralf Langlay	Father-in-law	PR9, fol. 52 (Becham); AB 27, fol.154 (Becham).

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	Civic Officials Name		Name of Marriage Relation	Relationship of Civic Official to Relation	Source
28	John Beseby snr.	257	John Tong	Step-son-in-law	PR5, fols.215 (Thorneton); 398 (Tong) & 434 (Beseby).
		122	John Harper	Brother-in-law (common father-in-law was Thomas Brounflete sheriff 1457)	PR2, fol. 380 (Brounflete); PR5, fol. 215 (Thorneton), 434 (Beisby), 478 (Harper); PR8, fol. 98 (Harper).
		254	Richard Thorneton etc.	Member of Thorneton network	As above.
30	John Beverley	84	John Fereby	Son-in-law	PR5, fols. 419 (Beverley), 417 (Fereby); Test Ebor 4: 347.
		179	John Metcalf	Brother-in-law (common father-in-law)	PR5, fols. 419 (Beverley), 417 (Fereby).
		256	William Todd	JB's brother married WT's sister	PR4, fol. 176 (Beverley).
33	James Blades	253	John Thorneton	Brother-in-law	PR11, fol. 491 (Thorneton)
		243	Ralph Symson	Unknown	CP G204
41	Cuthbert Brownles	232	William Skipton	Father-in-law	PR3, fol. 333 (Brownles); PR7, fol. 65 (Skipton).
		233	Robert Skipton	CB's daughter married RS's brother	As above.
42	Thomas Bubwith	87	Thomas Folneby	TB's widow remarried TF	PR6, fol. 179 (Folneby).
43	John Bukill	18	John Bateman	Father-in-law	PR8, fol. 28 (Bateman) & 10 (Bukill).
46	Thomas Burton	283	Robert Wilde	Brother-in-law	PR9, fol. 326 (Burton).
		240	John Stokdale etc	Member of Stockdale network	As above and see Wilde below.
48	John Carter	263	Simon Vicars	Unknown (*Father-in-law?*)	PR6, fol. 57 (Carter); PR9, fols. 87 (Carter) & 92 (Vicars).
49	John Catour	257	John Tong	Son-in-law	PR5, fol. 398 (Tong); PR6, fol. 193 (Catour).
		254	Richard Thorneton etc	Member of Thorneton network.	As above & see Tong notes below.
53	John Chapman	83	George Essex	Son-in-law	AB2, fol. 9 (Chapman); PR8, fol. 51 (Essex).

	Civic Officials Name		Name of Marriage Relation	Relationship of Civic Official to Relation	Source
54	Richard Charlesby	101	John Gilliot	Son-in-law	AB2, fol. 9 (Charlesby); PR8, fol. 32 (Gilyot); PR9, fol. 283 (Gilyot).
		103	Peter Gilliot	Brother-in-law	As above.
59	Edward Clifford	82	John Elwald	EC married JE's widow	Test Ebor 4: 365.
70	Alexander Dawson	7	Miles Harom	*AD's widow married MH*	Test Ebor 4: 360.
73	Bertram Dawson	97	John Gegges	BD's son married JG's daughter	PR9, fol. 39 (Dawson) & see Thomas Dawson.
74	Thomas Dawson	97	John Gegges	Son-in-law	AB2, fol. 16 (Gegges); PR9, fol. 385 (Gegges); PR11, fol. 403.
75	Henry Dayson	197	Robert Pety	HD married RP's widow	PR14, fol. 98 (Pety).
77	Robert Denton	287	William Wilson	Father-in-law	PR5, fol. 405 (Denton).
		254	Richard Thorneton etc	Member of Thorneton network	As above and see Wilson below.
78	John Dogeson	224	Thomas Scotton	Son-in-law	PR6, fol. 60 (Scotton); PR10, fol. 47 (Dogeson).
80	Robert Dikonson	240	John Stockdale	Son-in-law	PR9, fol. 94 (Dikonson); PR6, fol. 185 (Stockdale).
		117	Robert Hancock	Brother-in-law	PR5, fol. 473 (Hancock); PR7, fol. 52 (Hancock).
		172	Henry Marshall	Brother-in-law	PR6, fols. 164 (Marshall) & 226 (Marshall).
		283	Robert Wilde	RD's widow re-married RW	Test Ebor, 4: 371; DC2, fol. 165 (Wilde).
82	John Elwald	59	Edward Clifford	JE's widow re-married EC	Test Ebor 4: 365.
83	George Essex	53	John Chapman	Father-in-law	AB2, fol. 9 (Chapman); PR8, fol. 51 (Essex).
84	John Fereby	30	John Beverley	Father-in-law	PR5, fols. 419 (Beverley) & 417 (Fereby); Test Ebor 4: 347.
		179	John Metcalf	Father-in-law	PR5, fol. 417 (Fereby).

	Civic Officials Name		Name of Marriage Relation	Relationship of Civic Official to Relation	Source
87	Thomas Folneby	42	Thomas Bubwith	TF married TB's widow	PR6, fol. 179 (Folneby).
97	John Gegges	74	Thomas Dawson	Father-in-law	AB2, fol. 16 (Gegges); PR9, fol. 385 (Gegges); PR11, fol. 403.
		73	Bertram Dawson	JG's daughter maried BD's son	PR9, fol. 39 (Dawson) & as above.
101	John Gilyot jnr.	54	Richard Charlesby	Father-in-law	AB2, fol. 9 (Charlesby); PR8, fol. 32 (Gilyot); PR9, fol. 283 (Gilyot).
		128	John Hogeson	*(Father-in-law?)*	PR9, fol. 324 (Gilyot).
		143	Peter Jakson	JG's son married PJ's daughter	PR9, fol. 324 (Gilyot); PR11, fol. 1 (Jakson).
103	Peter Gilyot	54	Richard Charlesby	Brother-in-law	AB2, fol. 9 (Charlesby); PR8, fol. 32 (Gilyot); PR9, fol. 283 (Gilyot).
		128	John Hogeson	Brother-in-law	PR9, fol. 324 (Gilyot).
		143	Peter Jakson	Son-in-law	PR9, fol. 324 (Gilyot); PR11, fol. 1 (Jakson).
115	Richard Hall	228	John Shaw	Brother-in-law. Their wives were sisters.	PR9, fol. 349 (Hall); PR11, fol. 276 (Shaw) & 574 (Shaw).
117	Robert Hancock	80	Robert Dikonson	Brother-in-law	PR5, fol. 473 (Hancock); PR7, fol. 52 (Hancock).
		240	Robert Stockdale	Member of Stockdale network	As above & see Dikonson below.
118	William Hancock	316	Nicholas Vicars	WH's son married NV's daughter.	YCA, House Book 8, fol. 35r. PR5, fol. 257 (Hancock) & 355 (Vicars).
		240	John Stockdale	WH's widow remarried 2) JS	PR5, fol. 510 (Johnson); PR6, fol. 227 (Stockdale).
		147	Robert Johnson	WH's widow re-married 1) RJ	PR6, fols. 185 (Stockdale) & 227 (Stockdale).
120	Richard Hardsange	16	William Barker	Father-in-law	PR6, fol. 52 (Barker); PR5, fol. 423 (Hardsange).
		279	William White	Father-in-law	PR6, fol. 127 (White); Test Ebor 4: 363.
		254	Richard Thorneton etc	Member of Thorneton network	As above & see White below.

Civic Officials Name		Name of Marriage Relation	Relationship of Civic Official to Relation	Source
122	John Harper	28 John Beisby snr.	Brother-in-law (common father-in-law was Thomas Broumflete sheriff 1457)	PR2, fol. 380 (Broumflete); PR5, fol. 215 (Thorneton), 434 (Beseby), 478 (Harper); PR8, fol. 98 (Harper).
		254 Richard Thorneton etc	Member of Thorneton network	As above & see Beseby above.
128	John Hogeson	101 John Gilyot	*Son-in-law*	PR9, fol. 324 (Gilyot).
		103 Peter Gilyot	Brother-in-law	PR9, fol. 324 (Gilyot).
143	Peter Jakson	103 Peter Gilyot	Father-in-law	PR9, fol. 324 (Gilyot); PR11, fol. 1 (Jakson).
		101 John Gilyot jnr.	PJ's son married JG's daughter	PR9, fol. 324 (Gilyot); PR11, fol. 1 (Jakson).
145	Thomas Jameson	17 William Barton	Brother-in-law	PR7, fol. 26 (Jameson); PR8, fol. 18 (Barton).
147	Robert Johnson	118 William Hancock	RJ married WH's widow	PR6, fols. 185 (Stockdale) & 227 (Stockdale).
		240 John Stockdale	RJ & WH's widow re-married JS	PR5, fol. 510 (Johnson); PR6, fol. 227 (Stockdale).
155	William Lambe	204 Otwell Portyngton	Father-in-law	PR5, fol. 227 (Lambe) & 448 (Lambe).
157	Ralph Langlay	23 John Becham	Son-in-law	PR9, fol. 52 (Becham); AB 27, fol.154 (Becham).
168	John Lincoln	15 William Barker	Son-in-law	PR8, fol. 65 (Barker); PR8, fol. 56 (Lincoln).
172	Henry Marshall	240 John Stockdale	Son-in-law	PR6, fol. 164 (Marshall); PR6, fol. 227 (Stockdale).
		80 Robert Dikonson	Brother-in-law	PR6, fols. 164 (Marshall) & 226 (Marshall).
		283 Robert Wilde	Brother-in-law	Test Ebor, 4: 371; DC2, fol. 165 (Wilde).
179	John Metcalf	84 John Fereby	Son-in-law	PR5, fol. 417 (Fereby).
		30 John Beverley	Brother-in-law (common father-in-law)	PR5, fols. 419 (Beverley), 417 (Fereby).

Civic Officials Name		Name of Marriage Relation	Relationship of Civic Official to Relation	Source
188 John Norman	207	John Rasen	Unknown	PR9, fols.327 (Norman) & 383 (Rasen).
	254	Richard Thorneton etc	*JN's granddaughter married JT's son*	PR9, fol. 327 (Norman); PR11, fol. 68 (Norman).
189 John Norman	207	John Rasen	Unknown	PR9, fols.327 (Norman) & 383 (Rasen).
	253	John Thorneton etc	*JN's daughter married JT's son*	PR9, fol. 327 (Norman); PR11, fol. 68 (Norman).
190 Richard North	219	John Roger	RN's son married JR's daughter	PR11, fol. 1 (Roger).
191 William North	219	John Roger	WN's grandson married JR's daughter	PR11, fol. 1 (Roger).
312 John North	219	John Roger	Son-in-law	PR11, fol. 1 (Roger).
197 Robert Pety	75	Henry Dayson	RP's widow married HD	PR14, fol. 98 (Pety).
198 John Pety	231	Miles Skipton	Father-in-law	DC2, fol. 76 (Pety).
204 Otwell Portyngton	155	William Lambe	Son-in-law	PR5, fol. 227 (Lambe) & 448 (Lambe).
206 Ralph Pullan	281	Robert Whitfeld	RP's brother married RW's sister	PR11, fols. 105 (Whitfeld), 106 (Whitfeld) & 562 (Pullen).
207 John Rasen	253	John Thorneton	Brother-in-law	PR9, fol. 383 (Rasen).
	188	John Norman	Unknown	PR9, fols.327 (Norman) & 383 (Rasen).
	189	John Norman	Unknown	PR9, fols.327 (Norman) & 383 (Rasen).
219 John Roger	312	John North	Father-in-law	PR11, fol. 1 (Roger).
	190	Richard North	JR's daughter married RN's son	PR11, fol. 1 (Roger).
	191	William North	JR's daughter married WN's grandson	PR11, fol. 1 (Roger).
224 Thomas Scotton	78	John Dogeson	Father-in-law	PR6, fol. 60 (Scotton); PR10, fol. 47 (Dogeson).

#	Civic Officials Name	#	Name of Marriage Relation	Relationship of Civic Official to Relation	Source
228	John Shaw	115	John Hall	Brother-in-law. Their wives were sisters.	PR9, fol. 349 (Hall); PR11, fol. 276 (Shaw) & 574 (Shaw).
231	Miles Skipton	198	John Pety	Son-in-law	DC2, fol. 76 (Pety).
232	William Skipton	41	Cuthbert Brownles	Son-in-law	PR3, fol. 333 (Brownles); PR7, fol. 65 (Skipton).
233	Robert Skipton	41	Cuthbert Brownles	RS's brother married CB's daughter	PR3, fol. 333 (Brownles); PR7, fol. 65 (Skipton)
240	John Stockdale	80	Robert Dikonson	Father-in-law	PR9, fol. 94 (Dikonson); PR6, fol. 185 (Stockdale).
		172	Henry Marshall	Father-in-law	PR6, fol. 164 (Marshall); PR6, fol. 227 (Stockdale).
		283	Robert Wilde	Father-in-law	Test Ebor, 4: 371; DC2, fol. 165 (Wilde).
		118	William Hancock	JS married widow of 1) WH	PR5, fol. 510 (Johnson); PR6, fol. 227 (Stockdale).
		147	Robert Johnson	2) RJ	PR6, fols. 185 (Stockdale) & 227 (Stockdale).
243	Ralph Symson	33	James Blades	Unknown	CP G204.
		254	Richard Thorneton etc	Member of Thorneton family network	As above, see also Blades above.
247	Thomas Taillour	254	Richard Thorneton	Father-in-law	PR5, fol. 191 (Taillour); PR6, fol. 41 (Taillour).

Civic Officials Name		Name of Marriage Relation	Relationship of Civic Official to Relation	Source
253	John Thorneton[1] (& see R. Thorneton below)			
	33	James Blades	Brother-in-law	PR11, fol. 491 (Thorneton)
	188	John Norman	*JT's son married JN's granddaughter*	PR9, fol. 327 (Norman); PR11, fol. 68 (Norman).
	189	John Norman	*JT's son married JN's daughter*	PR9, fol. 327 (Norman); PR11, fol. 68 (Norman).
	207	John Rasen	Brother-in-law	PR9, fol. 383 (Rasen).
	277	John White	Brother-in-law	PR6, fol. 76 (Thorneton).
	298	Thomas York	TY's son married JT's daughter	PR9, fol. 11 (York), 469 (Thorneton); PR11, 491 (Thorneton).
	299	Richard York	RY's grandson married JT's daughter	PR9, fol. 11 (York), 469 (Thorneton); PR11, 491 (Thorneton).
254	Richard Thorneton (& see J. Thorneton above)			
	247	Thomas Taillour	Son-in-law	PR5, fol. 191 (Taillour); PR6, fol. 41 (Taillour).
	257	John Tong	RT's aunt married JT	PR5, fols. 116 (Thorneton), 215 (Thorneton); PR6, fol. 76 (Thorneton).
	277	John White	Father-in-law	PR6, fol. 76 (Thorneton).
	279	William White	RT's daughter married WW's son	PR6, fols. 76 (Thorneton) & 127 (White); AB2, fol. 14 (White).
256	William Todd			
	30	John Beverley	WT's sister married JB's brother	PR4, fol. 176 (Beverley).

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[1] The Thorneton's were also indirectly linked by marriage to numerous other civic officials from the period in question as is indicated in individual entrys in the table.

Civic Officials Name		Name of Marriage Relation	Relationship of Civic Official to Relation	Source
257 John Tong	49	John Catour	Father-in-law	PR5, fol. 398 (Tong); PR6, fol. 193 (Catour).
	254	Richard Thorneton (& family)	JT married the daughter of Richard Thorneton snr. (sheriff 1447) & aunt of Richard Thorneton jnr. (254)	PR5, fols. 116 (Thorneton), 215 (Thorneton); PR6, fol. 76 (Thorneton).
	28	John Beseby	Step-father-in-law	PR5, fols.215 (Thorneton); 398 (Tong) & 434 (Beseby).
	278	Michael White	JT's son married MW's daughter	PR8, fols. 61 (White) & 84 (White).
263 Simon Vicars	48	John Catour	Unknown (Son-in-law?)	PR6, fol. 57 (Carter); PR9, fols. 87 (Carter) & 92 (Vicars).
	240	John Stokdale etc	Member of Stokdale network	As above and see Catour above.
277 John White	254	Richard Thorneton	Son-in-law	PR6, fol. 76 (Thorneton).
	253	John Thorneton	Brother-in-law	PR6, fol. 76 (Thorneton).
	287	William Wilson	Brother-in-law	PR6, fol. 127 (White) & 189 (White); PR9, fol. 52 (Wilson).
278 Michael White	257	John Tong	MW's daughter married JT's son	PR8, fols. 61 (White) & 84 (White).
	254	Richard Thorneton etc	Member of Thorneton network	As above & see Tong.
279 William White	120	Richard Hardsange	Son-in-law	PR6, fol. 127 (White); Test Ebor 4: 363.
	287	William Wilson	Father-in-law	PR6, fol. 127 (White) & 189 (White); PR9, fol. 52 (Wilson).
	254	Richard Thorneton	WW's son married RT's daughter	PR6, fols. 76 (Thorneton) & 127 (White); AB2, fol. 14 (White).
	16	William Barker	WW married WB's widow.	PR6, fol. 127 (White); Test Ebor 4: 363.
281 Robert Whitfeld	206	Ralph Pullen	RW's sister married RP's brother	PR11, fols. 105 (Whitfeld), 106 (Whitfeld) & 562 (Pullen).

Civic Officials Name		Name of Marriage Relation	Relationship of Civic Official to Relation	Source
283	Robert Wilde	John Stockdale	Son-in-law	Test Ebor, 4: 371; DC2, fol. 165 (Wilde).
		Henry Marshall	Brother-in-law	Test Ebor, 4: 371; DC2, fol. 165 (Wilde).
		Thomas Burton	Brother-in-law	PR9, fol. 326 (Burton).
		Robert Dikonson	RW married RD's widow	Test Ebor, 4: 371; DC2, fol. 165 (Wilde).
287	William Wilson	Robert Denton	Son-in-law	PR5, fol. 405 (Denton).
		William White	Son-in-law	PR6, fol. 127 (White) & 189 (White); PR9, fol. 52 (Wilson).
		John White	Brother-in-law	PR6, fol. 127 (White) & 189 (White); PR9, fol. 52 (Wilson).
		Richard Thorneton etc	Member of Thorneton network	As above and see White above.
316	Nicholas Vicars	William Hancock	NV's daughter married WH's son.	YCA, House Book 8, fol. 35r. PR5, fol. 257 (Hancock) & 355 (Vicars)
		John Stockdale etc	Member of Stockdale network	As above & see Hancock above.
298	Thomas York	John Thorneton	TY's son married JT's daughter	PR9, fol. 11 (York), 469 (Thorneton); PR11, 491 (Thorneton).
299	Richard York	John Thorneton	RY's grandson married JT's daughter	PR9, fol. 11 (York), 469 (Thorneton); PR11, 491 (Thorneton).

Appendix 3:
Civic Officials From the Period 1476-1525 Who Cited Other Men in this Group in their Wills.

Sources: York, BIHR, Probate Registers of the Exchequer and Prerogative Court of the Archbishop, Prob. Reg. 3-15; York, BIHR, York Consistory Court Act Books Cons. AB2 & AB3; York Minster Library, Dean & Chapter Probate Registers D/C Reg. 1 & 2. The wills were identified using Collins, F. (ed.), *Index of Wills in the York Registry, 1389-1490, 1514-53, 1554-1568*, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series 6 (1889), 11 (1891) & 14 (1893); Collins, F. (ed.), *Index of Wills from the Dean and Chapter's Court at York, 1321-1636*, Yorkshire Archaelogical Society Record Series 38 (1907). Some (as indicated*) are partly transcribed in Raine (ed.), *Testamenta Eboracensia*, although these were not used for the purpose of this study due to inaccuracies and omissions.

Key:
Information in *italics* indicates that the identity of the person cited is ambiguous.
Probate Source: **PR:** Probate Register in BIHR.   **CAB:** City Act Book in BIHR.   **DC:** Dean & Chapter Probate Register in YMA
  *: Also partly transcribed in Raine (ed.), *Testamenta Eboracensia*

ID	Name of Official	Testamentary Source	Sons mentioned in will		Other Civic Officials from the Period 1476-1525 Cited in Will		
			No.	Of Whom Became Free Civic Officials	ID	Name of Person Cited	Cited as
003	Henry Albone snr.	PR5, fol. 280	1	1	245	Robert Symson	Witness
004	Henry Albone jnr.	PR5, fol. 487	0	-	Administration/ probate details only		
005	Robert Amyas	PR5, fol. 279	Mentions unnamed 'children'.	-	289	Thomas Wrangwish	Administrator
006	Roger Appilby	PR5, fol. 467	0	-	43	John Bukill	Witness
008	Adam Atkynson	PR6, fol. 23	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1524		
012	Adam Atkynson	PR11, fol. 656	2	2	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1524		

ID	Name of Official	Testamentary Source	Sons mentioned in will		Other Civic Officials from the Period 1476-1525 Cited in Will		
			No.	Of Whom Became Free Civic Officials	ID	Name of Person Cited	Cited as
010	John Bald	PR5, fol. 303	Mentions unnamed 'children'.		None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1524		
011	Thomas Bankehouse	PR9, fol. 195	2	1	206 219	Ralph Pullen John Roger	Executor Witness
013	John Barker	PR5, fol. 376	0	-	63 161	Peter Cook Thomas Lewelyn	Executor Witness
014	William Barker	CAB3, fol. 11	1[1]	0		Administration/ probate details only	
015	William Barker	PR8, fol. 65	1	0	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
016	William Barker	PR6, fol. 52	0	-	25 238 240 254	John Beisby jnr. Alan Staveley John Stockdale Richard Thorneton	Witness Witness Witness Witness
017	William Barton	PR8, fol. 18*	0	-	294 1 145	William Wright Thomas Abney Thomas Jameson	Legatee, supervisor & witness Legatee Legatee
019	John Bateman	PR9, fol. 158	0	-		Administration/ probate details only	
018	John Bateman	PR8, fol. 28	0	-	85 219	Christopher Feron John Roger	Witness Witness
020	William Baxster	PR5, fol. 339	1	?	47 73 237	John Birkhede Bertram Dawson Richard Standyssh	Supervisor Witness Supervisor

[1] Another son, Simon, not mentioned in William Barkers's will was free by patrimony in 1541.

ID	Name of Official	Testamentary Source	Sons mentioned in will		Other Civic Officials from the Period 1476-1525 Cited in Will		
			No.	Of Whom Became Free Civic Officials	ID	Name of Person Cited	Cited as
021	John Baynes	PR5, fol. 451	1[2]	1	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
023	John Becham	PR9, fol. 52	1 Mentions unnamed 'children' also.[3]	0	9	Thomas Bailley	Witness
					136	Richard Huchonson	Witness
					258	Thomas Tone	Witness
025	John Beisby jnr.	PR11, fol. 147	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
028	John Beisby snr.	PR5, fol. 434*	0	-	25	John Beisby jnr.	Supervisor
					30	John Beverley	To be buried next to JB, his 'beloved master'
					147	Robert Johnson's daughter	Legatee
026	Thomas Bentley	PR6, fol. 178	1	0	222	Roger Sawer	Witness
027	Richard Bernard	PR7, fol. 50	0	-	185	William Nelson	Supervisor
029	Henry Bettes	PR6, fol. 124	1	0	11	Thomas Bankehouse	Witness
					288	Henry Wod	Legatee
047	John Birkhede	PR6, fol. 57	0[4]	-	73	Bertram Dawson	Witness
					145	Thomas Jameson	Witness
032	Maurice Birom	DC2, fol. 95*	0	-	88	Robert Fons	Witness
					294	William Wright	Supervisor
036	Henry Bloder	PR6, fol. 70	4	0	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		

[2] Another son, John, not mentioned in John Baynes' will was free by patrimony in 1503.

[3] One of these children was a son, Robert, who was a chantry priest at All Saints Pavement.

[4] A son, Nicholas, was free by patrimony in 1506.

ID	Name of Official	Testamentary Source	Sons mentioned in will		Other Civic Officials from the Period 1476-1525 Cited in Will		
			No.	Of Whom Became Free Civic Officials	ID	Name of Person Cited	Cited as
037	Brain Bradley	PR9, fol. 392	1	0	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
038	Thomas Braxez	PR11, fol. 158	2	1	96	Roger Gegges	Witness
040	Roger Brokholes	PR5, fol. 408	1	?	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
041	Cuthbert Brownles	PR3, fol. 333	0	-	197 232 279	Robert Pety William Skipton William White	Witness Witness Supervisor
042	Thomas Bubwith	PR3, fol. 313	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
045	Hugh Buntyng	PR9, fol. 474	Mentions unnamed 'children'.		None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
046	Thomas Burton	PR9, fol. 326	1	1	283	Robert Wilde	Supervisor & witness
048	John Carter	PR6, fol. 57	1	?	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
049	John Catour	PR6, fol. 193	1	0	150 168 238	George Kirk John Lincoln Alan Staveley	Supervisor Witness Supervisor
053	John Chapman	CAB2, fol. 9	0	-	Administration/ probate details only		
052	Thomas Chapman	PR6, fol. 156	?5	-	83	George Essex	Executor
051	John Chappell	PR3, fol. 309	0	-	161	Thomas Lewelyn	Witness
054	Richard Charlesby	CAB2, fol. 6	0	-	Administration/ probate details only		

[5] Thomas Chapman mentions a John Chapman to whom his relationship is not stated.

ID	Name of Official	Testamentary Source	Sons mentioned in will		Other Civic Officials from the Period 1476-1525 Cited in Will		
			No.	Of Whom Became Free Civic Officials	ID	Name of Person Cited	Cited as
055	William Chimney	PR8, fol. 3	1	1	73 185	Bertram Dawson William Nelson	Supervisor Supervisor
057	Richard Clerk	PR6, fol. 76	1	?	74 193 245 254	Thomas Dawson John Ordeux Robert Symson Richard Thorneton	Witness Witness Witness Supervisor
058	Richard Clerke	PR5, fol. 461	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
059	Edward Clifford	DC2, fol.114	0	-	Administration/ probate details only		
060	Simon Cokay	PR5, fol. 296	1 Mentions other unnamed 'sons' also.	0	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
061	John Colyer	PR11, fol. 563	1	1	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
062	Brian Conyers	PR5, fol. 130	Mentions unnamed 'children'.	-	91	Thomas Fynch	Witness
063	Peter Cook	PR3, fol. 309	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
064	Thomas Craven	PR5, fol. 149	2	1	282	Alan Wilberfosse	Executor
066	William Cure	PR9, fol. 264*	3	0	33 207	James Blades John Rasen	Legatee Legatee
067	John Custance	CAB2, fol. 2	1[6]	1	Administration/ probate details only		
069	Robert Dale	PR9, fol. 57	1	0	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		

[6] Another son, John, was not mentioned in John Custances' administration. He became free by patrimony in 1487 and went on to become a civic official (ID number 68)

ID	Name of Official	Testamentary Source	Sons mentioned in will		Other Civic Officials from the Period 1476-1525 Cited in Will		
			No.	Of Whom Became Free Civic Officials	ID	Name of Person Cited	Cited as
071	Thomas Darby	PR9, fol. 286	0	-	Administration/probate details only		
073	Bartram Dawson	PR9, fol. 39*	2	1	207	John Rasen	Witness
					294	William Wright	Witness
074	Thomas Dawson,	PR11, fol. 403	1	?	96	Roger Gegges	Witness
070	Alexander Dawson	DC1, fol. 380	?[7]	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
075	Henry Dayson	PR11, fol. 429	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
076	William Deken	DC1, fol. 371	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
077	Robert Denton	PR5, fol. 405	0	-	137	Robert Huchonson	Witness
					148	Thomas Kychen	Supervisor & Witness
					287	William Wilson	Legatee & Executor
080	Robert Dikonson	PR9, fol. 94	Mentions unnamed sons.[8]		240	John Stockdale	Legatee
078	John Dogeson	PR10, fol. 47	1	0	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
079	Thomas Drawswerd	PR9, fol. 448*	1 (dead?)	0	165	Thomas Lounde	Witness
082	John Elwald	DC2, fol. 43	1	1	198	John Pety	Witness
					218	William Roche	Witness
081	John Elys	PR8, fol. 63	2	1	159	Robert Lee	Witness

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[7] Alex Dauson mentions a John Dauson & a Thomas Dauson in his will although his relationship to them is not stated.

[8] One of whom was probably a chamberlain in 1549.

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ID	Name of Official	Testamentary Source	Sons mentioned in will		Other Civic Officials from the Period 1476-1525 Cited in Will		
			No.	Of Whom Became Free Civic Officials	ID	Name of Person Cited	Cited as
083	George Essex	PR8, fol. 51*	1 Mentions other unnamed 'children' also.	0	53 256 54 129 298	John Chapman William Todd Richard Charlesby Thomas Hogeson Thomas York	Legatee Left his daughter a spoon which had belonged to WT Witness Witness Witness
084	John Fereby	PR5, fol. 417	0	-	15 166 168 179	William Barker James Loundesdale John Lincoln John Metcalf	Executor Executor Witness Legatee
085	Christopher Feron	PR9, fol. 203	2	0	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
086	John Flour	PR9, fol. 161	0	-	Administration/ probate details only		
087	Thomas Folneby	PR6, fol. 130	2	1	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
088	Robert Fons	DC2, fol. 174	1	0	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
089	Edward Forster	PR6, fol. 15	1	1	150	George Kirk	Supervisor
090	Thomas Freman	PR6, fol. 201	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
092	Richard Garnet	CAB2, fol. 13	0	-	Administration/ probate details only		
093	William Garnet	PR8, fol. 10	0	-	38 96 97 294	Thomas Braxez Roger Gegges John Gegges William Wright	Witness Legatee Supervisor & Witness Supervisor & Witness
094	Richard Gascoigne	PR5, fol. 294	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
095	John Gaunt	PR5, fol. 336	1	0	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		

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ID	Name of Official	Testamentary Source	Sons mentioned in will — No.	Sons mentioned in will — Of Whom Became Free Civic Officials	Other Civic Officials from the Period 1476-1525 Cited in Will — ID	Name of Person Cited	Cited as
097	John Gegges	CAB2, fol. 16	0[9]	-	Administration/ probate details only		
096	Roger Gegges	PR13, 570	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
098	John Geldert	PR11, fol. 83	2	1	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
099	Robert Gibson	PR7, fol. 19	0	-	Administration/ probate details only		
100	Thomas Gilbank	PR9, fol. 239	0	-	132	Henry Holme	Witness
102	Paul Gillowe	DC2, fol. 131*	3	0	46 / 206 / 294	Thomas Burton / Ralph Pullen / William Wright	Supervisor / Witness / Supervisor
101	John Gilyot jnr.	PR8, fol. 32*	3	1	39 / 135 / 158	Denis Brokden / William Huby / John Langton	Legatee / Supervisor / Legatee, supervisor & tutor to JG's daughter
103	Peter Gilyot	PR9, fol. 324	0	-	128 / 143 / 263	John Hogeson / Peter Jakson / Simon Vicars	Supervisor & Legatee / Supervisor / Witness
104	Thomas Gookman	DC2, fol. 185	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
109	Adam Gunby	PR5, fol. 95	1	0	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
113	John Hagg	PR3, fol. 307	5	0	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
115	Richard Hall	PR9, fol. 349	1	0	75	Henry Dayson	Witness

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[9] A son, John was free by patrimony in 1519.

ID	Name of Official	Testamentary Source	Sons mentioned in will — No.	Of Whom Became Free Civic Officials	Other Civic Officials from the Period 1476-1525 Cited in Will — ID	Name of Person Cited	Cited as
114	John Hall	PR9, fol. 369	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
117	Robert Hancock	PR5, fol. 473	0	-	80 / 150 / 156	Robert Dikonson / George Kirk / Nicholas Lancaster	Legatee / Legatee / Witness
118	William Hancock	PR5, fol. 257	1 Mentions other unnamed 'children' also.	0	117 / 293	Robert Hancock / *Thomas Wright*	Executor / *Witness*
119	Richard Harbottle	CAB2, fol. 20	2	0	Administration/ probate details only		
120	Richard Hardsange	PR5, fol. 423	0	-	16 / 121	William Barker / Thomas Hardsange	Executor / Witness
007	Miles Harom	DC2, fol. 27	1	0	198	John Pety / William Roche	Witness / Witness
122	John Harper	PR5, fol. 478	0	-	238 / 254	Alan Staveley / Richard Thorneton	Supervisor / Supervisor
124	William Hewbanke jnr.	PR11, fol. 287	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
127	John Hodlow	PR5, fol. 310	2	0	53 / 101	*John Chapman* / John Gilyot jnr	*Witness* / Supervisor
130	Stephen Hogeson	DC2, fol. 34	1	0	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		

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ID	Name of Official	Testamentary Source	Sons mentioned in will		Other Civic Officials from the Period 1476-1525 Cited in Will		
			No.	Of Whom Became Free Civic Officials	ID	Name of Person Cited	Cited as
129	Thomas Hogeson	PR8, fol. 64	1	?[10]	100 260	Thomas Gilbank John Tramell	Witness Witness
132	Henry Holme	PR11, fol. 98	?[11]	-	1	Thomas Abney	Supervisor & Legatee
133	John Hoode	PR11, fol. 183	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
134	Christopher Horner	DC2, fol. 135	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
135	William Huby	PR11, fol. 9	0	-	9 294	Thomas Bailley William Wright	Executor Supervisor
136	Richard Huchonson	PR11, fol. 142	2	2	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
137	Robert Huchonson	PR6, fol. 190	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
139	John Huton	PR6, fol. 110	1 (Dead) -	?[12]	260	John Tramell	Witness
142	Robert Jakson	PR5, fol. 482	0	-	8 56 273	*Adam Atkynson* John Clerk Thomas Welles	*Legatee* Supervisor Supervisor
143	Peter Jakson	PR11, fol. 1	2	2	128 228	John Hogeson John Shawe	Supervisor Supervisor & to recover beads.

[10] Thomas Hogeson's son John was possibly the John Hogeson who became mayor in 1533 (ID number 128).

[11] A Thomas Holme is mentioned in his will, although Henry's relationship with this man is not stated.

[12] John's dead son John was possibly the man of that name who had been sheriff in 1491.

ID	Name of Official	Testamentary Source	Sons mentioned in will		Other Civic Officials from the Period 1476-1525 Cited in Will		
			No.	Of Whom Became Free Civic Officials	ID	Name of Person Cited	Cited as
145	Thomas Jameson	PR7, fol. 26	4	1	17 73 135 150	William Barton Bartram Dawson William Huby George Kirk	Legatee Witness Witness Supervisor
147	Robert Johnson	PR5, fol. 510*	0	-	179 239 277 279	John Metcalf William Staveley John White William White	Legatee Witness Witness Legatee & Witness
149	Thomas Kendale	PR6, fol. 128	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
150	George Kirk	PR8, fol. 117	3	1	80 102 294	Robert Dikonson Paul Gillowe William Wright	Legatee, Supervisor & Witness Supervisor & witness Supervisor & Witness
153	James Kirk	PR9, fol. 19	0	-	119 143 157 294	Richard Harbottle Peter Jakson Ralph Langlay William Wright	Witness Witness Witness Supervisor
151	Thomas Knayton	PR9, fol. 412	0	-	9 135 136	Thomas Bailley William Huby Richard Huchonson	Legatee Supervisor Legatee
152	Thomas Knolles	PR3, fol. 340	0	-	158	John Langton	Witness
154	Thomas Lambe	PR11, fol. 185	1	0	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
155	William Lambe	PR5, fol. 228	1	0	28 122	John Beisby snr. John Harper	Witness Executor
303	John Lameman	PR11, fol. 155	0	-	305	Thomas Plasket	Witness

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ID	Name of Official	Testamentary Source	Sons mentioned in will		Other Civic Officials from the Period 1476-1525 Cited in Will		
			No.	Of Whom Became Free Civic Officials	ID	Name of Person Cited	Cited as
156	Nicholas Lancaster	DC2, fol. 29	0	-	47 / 82 / 279	John Birkhede / John Elwald / William White	Executor / Legatee / Legatee
158	John Langton	PR11, fol. 600	1	0	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
159	Robert Lee	PR9, fol. 16	3	0	72	Thomas Dayvell	Witness
160	William Lettwyn	PR5 fol. 46	1	0	52	*Thomas Chapman*	*Executor*
161	Thomas Lewelyn	PR3, fol. 315	1	1	146 / 246 / 234	Robert Johnson / Thomas Taillour / *John Smyth*	Legatee / Supervisor / *Legatee*
168	John Lincoln	PR8, fol. 56	Mentions unnamed 'children'.[13]		15	*William Barker*	*Witness*
300	John Lister	DC2, fol. 199	1	0	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
162	Robert Loksmith	DC2, fol. 163	?[14]	-	Administration/ probate details only		
163	John Long	PR5, fol. 429	1	0	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
166	James Loundesdale	PR5, fol. 463	1	0	152	Thomas Knolles	Supervisor
164	William Loundesdale	PR5, fol. 325	2	2	268	Thomas Watson	Witness
165	Thomas Loundesdale	PR11, fol. 68	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
169	Richard Makblyth	PR8, fol. 97	1	0	19	John Bateman	Witness

[13] His wife mentions seven sons in her will. Of these, John was free by patrimony in 1517.

[14] It is possible that Alexander Maugham mentioned in Robert Loksmith alias Maugham is his son.

ID	Name of Official	Testamentary Source	Sons mentioned in will		Other Civic Officials from the Period 1476-1525 Cited in Will		
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173	William Marshall	PR5, fol. 424	1	1	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
170	John Marshall	PR5, fol. 311	1[15]	1	39	Denis Brokden	Legatee
					95	John Gaunt	Witness
					101	John Gilyot jnr	Legatee & Executor
					211	John Robynson	Witness
171	John Marshall	PR9, fol. 357*	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
172	Henry Marshall	PR6, fol. 164	2	?	79	Thomas Drawswerd	Legatee
					114	John Hall	Legatee
					145	Thomas Jameson	Witness
					240	John Stockdale	Supervisor
					207	John Rasen	Witness
					232	William Skipton	Legatee
					284	John Williamson	Legatee
174	Richard Marston	PR5, fol. 245	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
175	Christopher Mason	PR5, fol. 290	2	?	56	John Clerk	Witness
					83	George Essex	Legatee & Witness
177	William Mason	PR6, fol. 166	1	0	169	Richard Makblyth	Legatee & Witness
					232	William Skipton	Witness
176	Thomas Mason	PR9, fol. 435*	1	1	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		

[15] John Marshall also had another son, Roger who was free by patrimony in 1482.

ID	Name of Official	Testamentary Source	Sons mentioned in will		Other Civic Officials from the Period 1476-1525 Cited in Will		
			No.	Of Whom Became Free Civic Officials	ID	Name of Person Cited	Cited as
180	Anthony Middelton	PR9, fol. 107*	1	1	1 12 219 143 305	Thomas Abney Adam Atkynson John Roger Peter Jakson Thomas Plasket's wife	Supervisor Legatee & Witness To bear him to church To bear him to church Legatee
181	Oliver Middelton	PR6, fol. 130	1	0	137 263 287	Robert Huchonson Simon Vicars William Wilson	Witness Witness Witness
182	William Middelton	PR7, fol. 28	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
185	William Nelson	PR9, fol. 305*	3	0	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
184	Ralph Nelson	PR9, fol. 133	1	?	197 222	Robert Pety Roger Sawer	Supervisor, Legatee & Witness Witness
186	William Netilton	PR8, fol. 3	Mentions unnamed 'children'.		185 190	William Nelson Richard North	Supervisor Supervisor
189	John Norman	PR9, fol. 327*	2	1	207 253	John Rasen John Thorneton	Supervisor & witness Supervisor & witness
188	John Norman	PR5, fol. 497	0[16]	-	Administration/ probate details only		
312	John North	PR15/2, fol. 289	1	1	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
190	Richard North	PR9, fol. 18	1	1	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		

[16] His son John Norman (ID number 189) who was mayor in 1524 was not mentioned in his administration.

ID	Name of Official	Testamentary Source	Sons mentioned in will		Other Civic Officials from the Period 1476-1525 Cited in Will		
			No.	Of Whom Became Free Civic Officials	ID	Name of Person Cited	Cited as
191	William North	PR6, fol. 36	2	1	74 90 276	Thomas Dawson Thomas Freman John White	Witness Supervisor Supervisor
192	John Northeby	PR3, fol. 310	1	0	214 216	John Robynson Thomas Robynson	Supervisor Supervisor
193	John Ordeux	PR6, fol. 112	1	0	Administration/ probate details only		
194	Thomas Parker	PR9, fol. 430	0	-	Administration/ probate details only		
195	William Paynter	PR5, fol. 461	2	0	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
198	John Pety	DC2, fol. 76*	0	-	231	Miles Skipton	Legatee
197	Robert Pety	PR9, fol. 420*	0[17]	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
201	Thomas Pierson	PR5, fol. 439	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
200	Nicholas Pierson	PR5, fol. 176	0[18]	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
202	William Pikard	PR5, fol. 228	1	0	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
305	Thomas Plasket	PR11, fol. 219	1	1	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
205	Robert Preston	PR6, fol. 71*	0	-	295	Richard Wynder	Legatee
206	Ralph Pullan	PR11, fol. 529	1	0	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		

[17] A Christopher Pety and Robert Pety were mentioned in his will, although his relationship with these two men is not stated.

[18] A son Thomas, who was not mentioned in Nicholas Pierson's will was free by patrimony in 1474.

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ID	Name of Official	Testamentary Source	Sons mentioned in will		Other Civic Officials from the Period 1476-1525 Cited in Will		
			No.	Of Whom Became Free Civic Officials	ID	Name of Person Cited	Cited as
207	John Rasen	PR9, fol. 383*	1	1	33 61 243 253 283	James Blades John Colyer Ralph Symson John Thorneton Robert Wilde	Legatee & Witness Witness Witness Legatee Witness
208	Richard Rawlyn	PR5, fol. 247	1 Other unnamed children mentioned also.[19]	0	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
209	Thomas Rawson	DC1, fol. 367	0	-	82	John Elwald	Witness
210	Robert Rede	PR6, fol. 200	2	1	47 135	John Birkhede William Huby	Executor Legatee & Executor
220	John Richerdson	PR11, fol. 321	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
211	John Robynson	PR13, fol. 533	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
217	William Robynson	PR9, fol. 394	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
218	William Roche	DC2, fol. 69	1	0	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
219	John Roger	PR11, fol. 1	0	-	312	John North	Supervisor
222	Roger Sawer	PR8, fol. 123	1	0	197	Robert Pety	Witness
224	Thomas Scotton	PR6, fol. 60	2	0	78	John Dogeson	Executor

[19] One of whom was his son Thomas who was free by patrimony in 1485.

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ID	Name of Official	Testamentary Source	Sons mentioned in will		Other Civic Officials from the Period 1476-1525 Cited in Will		
			No.	Of Whom Became Free Civic Officials	ID	Name of Person Cited	Cited as
229	John Shawe	PR9, fol. 26	1	0	228	John Shawe	Legatee
					264	William Walker	Witness
228	John Shawe	PR11, fol. 276	0	-	294	William Wright	(Supervisor) to help and counsel John's wife
232	William Skipton	PR7, fol. 65	1	0	198	John Pety	Legatee
233	Robert Skipton	PR6, fol. 169	Mentions unnamed children.		None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
234	John Smyth	PR9, fol. 359*	1	1	143	Peter Jakson	Supervisor
236	William Spence	PR5, fol. 390	1	0	Administration/probate details only		
237	Richard Standyssh	PR6, fol. 45	0	-	145	Thomas Jameson	Supervisor
					295	Richard Wynder	Supervisor
238	Alan Staveley	PR9, fol. 316	0	-	Administration/probate details only		
240	John Stokdale	PR6, fol. 185*	1	0	80	Robert Dikonson	Legatee & Executor
					117	Robert Hancock's wife	Legatee
					150	George Kirk's wife	Legatee
245	Robert Symson	PR6, fol. 186	2	?	253	John Thorneton	Executor
					254	Richard Thorneton	Supervisor
					277	John White	Legatee & Witness
243	Ralph Symson	PR11, fol. 321	1 — Other unnamed children mentioned also.[20]	0 — 0	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		

[20] One of whom was his son George who was free by patrimony in 1549.

ID	Name of Official	Testamentary Source	Sons mentioned in will		Other Civic Officials from the Period 1476-1525 Cited in Will		
			No.	Of Whom Became Free Civic Officials	ID	Name of Person Cited	Cited as
247	Thomas Taillour	PR5, fol. 191	4	?	127	John Hodlow	Witness
248	William Tayte	PR6, fol. 57	1	0	99 132	Robert Gibson Henry Holme	Witness Witness
249	Richard Tebbe	PR9, fol. 93	0	-	151 294	Thomas Knayton William Wright	Witness Supervisor & Witness
250	Thomas Thirsk	PR5, fol. 71	0	-	*57* 236	*Richard Clerk* William Spence	*Witness* Witness
251	William Thomson	DC2, fol. 184	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
254	Richard Thorneton	PR6, fol. 76*	3	2	11 92 *114* 185 239 257 277	Thomas Bankehouse Richard Garnet *John Hall* William Nelson William Staveley's son John Tong's son John White	Witness Witness *Witness* Supervisor Legatee Legatee Legatee
253	John Thorneton	PR9, fol. 464	2[21]	1	33 298	James Blades Thomas York	Supervisor Executor
255	John Tirell	PR6, fol. 114	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		

[21] He also had another son, Thomas who was free in 1528 and died in 1533 or 4.

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ID	Name of Official	Testamentary Source	Sons mentioned in will		Other Civic Officials from the Period 1476-1525 Cited in Will		
			No.	Of Whom Became Free Civic Officials	ID	Name of Person Cited	Cited as
256	William Todd	PR6, fol. 59*	0	-	96 97 244 294	Roger Gegges John Gegges Richard Symson William Wright	Witness Witness Witness Witness
258	Thomas Tone	PR9, fols. 303 & 328	0	-	9 151 136	Thomas Bailley Thomas Knayton Richard Huchonson	Supervisor Witness Supervisor
257	John Tong	PR5, fol. 398	1	0	92 93 28 49 152 254	*Richard Garnet* *William Garnet* John Beisby snr. John Catour Thomas Knolles Richard Thorneton's children	*Witness* *Legatee* Supervisor Legatee & Supervisor Witness Legatees
262	William Undron	DC2, fol. 32	1	0	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
263	Simon Vicars	PR11, fol. 118	2	0	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
316	Nicholas Vicars	PR5, fol. 355	1	0	77 117	Robert Denton Robert Hancock	Witness Executor
265	William Warde	PR5, fol. 275	2	?	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
268	Thomas Watson	PR5, fol. 413	0	-	8 92 166	Adam Atkynson Richard Garnet James Loundesdale	Supervisor & Witness Witness Supervisor
269	Thomas Watson	PR6, fol. 129	0	-	216	Thomas Robynson	Witness
270	William Webster	PR9, fol. 356	2	0	9 50	Thomas Bailley Roger Chamber	Supervisor & Witness Supervisor & Witness

ID	Name of Official	Testamentary Source	Sons mentioned in will		Other Civic Officials from the Period 1476-1525 Cited in Will		
			No.	Of Whom Became Free Civic Officials	ID	Name of Person Cited	Cited as
272	Anthony Welburn	PR9, fol. 295	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
273	Thomas Welles	PR3, fol. 322	1	1	56	John Clerk	Supervisor & Legatee
274	William Welles	DC1 fol. 369	1	1	Administration/ probate details only		
279	William White	PR6, fol. 127	4	2	72	Thomas Dayvell	Witness
					218	William Roche	Executor
					232	William Skipton	Executor
					287	William Wilson	Executor and to look after his son's portion
278	Michael White	PR8, fol. 61	0	-	92	Richard Garnet	Witness
					115	Richard Hall	Witness
277	John White	CAB2, fol. 14	1[22]	0	Administration/ probate details only		
280	John Whitehed	PR9, fol. 166	1	0	176	Thomas Mason	Supervisor & Witness
					292	Henry Wright	Supervisor & Witness
281	Robert Whitfeld	PR11, fol. 106	1	0	Administration/ probate details only		
283	Robert Wilde	DC2, fol. 165	0	-	311	George Gayle	Witness
284	John Williamson	PR9, fol. 79*	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
287	William Wilson	PR9, fol. 52	1; Other unnamed 'children' mentioned also.[23]	0	25	John Beisby jnr.	Witness
					34	John Blakey	Witness

[22] John White also had another son George who was free by patrimony in 1532.

[23] One of whom is a son, Robert, who was free by patrimony in 1540.

ID	Name of Official	Testamentary Source	Sons mentioned in will		Other Civic Officials from the Period 1476-1525 Cited in Will		
			No.	Of Whom Became Free Civic Officials	ID	Name of Person Cited	Cited as
288	Henry Wod	PR9, fol. 442	2	2	14 37 281	*William Barker* Brian Bradley Robert Whitfeld	*Witness* Witness Witness
291	John Wright	PR13, fol. 393	1	?	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
294	William Wright	PR11, fol. 680	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
292	Henry Wright	PR10, fol. 73	0	-	124	William Hewbanke jun.	Witness & Supervisor
290	John Wright	PR5, fol. 231	0	-	Administration/ probate details only		
293	Thomas Wright	PR8, fol. 3	1	?	219	John Roger	Legatee & Executor
295	Richard Wynder	DC2, fol. 46	?[24]	-	165 197 198	*Thomas Lounde* Robert Pety John Pety	*Witness* Witness Legatee & Executor
296	Laurence Yole	PR6, fol. 273	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
297	Gerard Yong	PR6, fol. 219	0	-	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		
298	Thomas York	PR9, fol. 11	1	1	None of those cited can be identified as civic officials from the period 1476-1525		

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[24] Mentions a John and William Wynder the nature of whose relationship with Richard Wynder is unknown.

Appendix 4:
Occupation and Civic Careers of Men Listed as Members of the York Common Council of 1522.
(In the Order in Which they Appear in the Original Document)

Occupations in *Italics* indicate that more than one man of that name was listed in the Freemen's Register during the period in question. Where possible, the individual listed in the first occupation and date of freedom column represents the most likely identity of the common councillor in view of the apparent occupational order of parts of the original list. Potential alternative identities are listed in the following column. Where there is ambiguity over the correct identity of a common councillor stars (*) have been used to indicate the individual to whom the information on civic office refers.

Sources: YCA, House Book 10 fol. 46r; YCA, Confirmation Charters of Edward VI (1547), A33; Collins (ed.), *York Freemen's Register*, Appendix 1.

Key:

?: Indicates that no record can be found of a man of that name becoming free. ? too many: Indicates that too many men of this name became free to attempt identification in the absence of any other identifying evidence.

Name of Common Councillor	Occupation & Date of Freedom	Possible Alternative Identity/ ies: Occupation & Date of Freedom	Highest Civic Office Held by 1522	Highest Civic Office Held During Lifetime
Thomas Abney	Merchant 1509	-	Chamberlain 1519	Chamberlain 1519
Thomas Alleyn	*Merchant 1482*	Grocer 1495, or Saddler 1479	Did not hold higher civic office	
Ralph Pullan	Goldsmith 1502	-	Chamberlain 1521	Mayor 1537
George Bayle	?	-	Did not hold higher civic office	
Henry Dayson	Dyer 1504	-	Chamberlain 1522	Mayor 1531
Christopher Clerk	Dyer 1500	-	Bridge Master 1521	Chamberlain 1543
William Tailbus	Skinner 1496	-	Did not hold higher civic office	

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Name of Common Councillor	Occupation & Date of Freedom	Possible Alternative Identity/ies: Occupation & Date of Freedom	Highest Civic Office Held by 1522	Highest Civic Office Held During Lifetime
George Keld	Barber 1481	-	Did not hold higher civic office	
James Bland	Not stated 1486	-	Did not hold higher civic office	
William Wilson	Fishmonger 1487*	Sawer 1486, or Shoemaker 1506, or Lister 1515, or Founderer 1514	*Chamberlain 1498	*Chamberlain 1498
John Roger	Fishmonger 1486*	Fletcher 1512, or Baker 1488	*Chamberlain 1508	*Sheriff 1524
Thomas Lambe	Tailor 1493*	Merchant 1487 or Cordwainer 1497	*Bridge Master 1511	*Bridge Master 1511
William Halle	Tailor 1508*	Tanner 1500, or Bladesmith 1503	-	*Chamberlain 1523
Hugh Hewlay	Vintner	-	-	Sheriff 1525
Robert Waterton	Carvour & Joiner 1499	-	-	Bridge Master 1524
Robert Dunwell	Carpenter 1490	-	Did not hold higher civic office	
John Cawdbek	Glazier 1490	Butcher 1514, or Lock/Blacksmith 1506, or Saddler 1493	Did not hold higher civic office	
Robert Petty	Glazier 1482	Tapiter 1480	Did not hold higher civic office	
William Hewbanke	Tanner 1494	-	Bridge Master 1517	Chamberlain 1530
Alan Selybaye	Tanner 1491	-	Did not hold higher civic office	
Henry Wright	Plumber 1495	-	Chamberlain 1520	Chamberlain 1520
Henry Wod	Waxchandler 1507	-	Bridge Master 1515	Chamberlain 1523
Richard Olif	Bower 1509	-	Did not hold higher civic office	
William Robynson	? too many	Too many to list.	Did not hold higher civic office	

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Name of Common Councillor	Occupation & Date of Freedom	Possible Alternative Identity/ies: Occupation & Date of Freedom	Highest Civic Office Held by 1522	Highest Civic Office Held During Lifetime
John Craggs	?	-	Did not hold higher civic office	
John Story	Panyerman 1522	-	Did not hold higher civic office	
Thomas Lund	Saddler 1489*	Cook 1514	*Chamberlain 1517	*Chamberlain 1517
Edward Keld	Mason 1522	-	Did not hold higher civic office	
Richard Norton	Baker 1507	-	Bridge Master 1521	Bridge Master 1521
Thomas Knayton	Butcher (date of freedom unknown)	-	Chamberlain 1510	Chamberlain 1510
George Ledale	Glover 1493	-	Did not hold higher civic office	
Ralph Symson	Pewterer 1511	-	Bridge Master 1520	Sheriff 1529
William Hogeson	Armourer 1481	-	Did not hold higher civic office	
Thomas Halle	? too many	Baker 1483, or Yeoman 1491, or Tanner 1495, or Innholder & Habberdasher 1507, or Habberdasher 1508	Did not hold higher civic office	
Robert Loksmith	Vestmenter 1485	-	Bridge Master 1514	Bridge Master 1514
William Kykby	Bower 1508	-	Did not hold higher civic office	
Roger Walles	Weaver 1488	-	Did not hold higher civic office	
William Hyll	? too many	Baker 1488, or Tapiter 1512	Did not hold higher civic office	
Marmaduke Shaw	Saddler 1509	-	Did not hold higher civic office	
William Eline	?	-	Did not hold higher civic office	
Hugo Ryg	Baker 1501	-	Did not hold higher civic office	

Name of Common Councillor	Occupation & Date of Freedom	Possible Alternative Identity/ies: Occupation & Date of Freedom	Highest Civic Office Held by 1522	Highest Civic Office Held During Lifetime
Thomas Mason jnr	? too many	Baker 1498, or Shoemaker 1505, or Hosier 1509, or Glover 1512	Did not hold higher civic office	
Robert Johnson	? too many	Pewterer 1480*, or Mariner 1494, or Armourer 1504	*Bridge Master 1497	(A man of this name was also Chamberlain in 1537)
Thomas Warde	? too many	Surgeon 1488, or Barber 1498*, or Cordwainer 1514	*Bridge Master 1523	(A man of this name was also Chamberlain in 1537)
Thomas Skyrro	Armourer 1508	-	-	Chamberlain 1540

Appendix 5:
The Civic Careers of Men who Held the Post of Parish Constable or Sub-constable in York in 1380.

Sources: Sellers (ed.), *York Memorandum Book, part I*, pp. 151-4; For civic offices see the sources listed in appendix 1.

Name	Parish	Post	By 1380	Highest Civic Post Attained During Lifetime
Thomas de Howom	St Mary, Castlegate	Constable	Mayor 1374	Mayor 1374
William Fox	St Mary, Castlegate	Sub-constable	Did not hold civic office	
John Blakhornby	St Mary, Castlegate	Sub-constable	Did not hold civic office	
William Fissh	St Mary Senior & Junior	Constable	Chamberlain 1366	Chamberlain 1366
Roger de Crome	St Mary Senior & Junior	Constable	Chamberlain 1379	Chamberlain 1379
Thomas de Kelfeld	St Mary Senior & Junior	Constable	Chamberlain 1377	Chamberlain 1377
William de Clapham	St Mary Senior & Junior	Constable	Did not hold civic office	
John Chapman	St Mary Senior & Junior	Constable	Did not hold civic office	
John Brathwayt	St Michael, Spurriergate	Constable	Bailiff 1374	Mayor 1393
John de Cotyngham	St Michael, Spurriergate	Constable	Chamberlain 1366	Chamberlain 1366
John de Ceszay	St Michael, Spurriergate	Constable	Bridge master 1378	Chamberlain 1385
Robert Sauvage	St Martin, St Gregory & Holy Trinity, Micklegate	Constable	Bailiff 1374	Mayor 1384 & 1391-2
John de Askham	St Martin, St Gregory & Holy Trinity, Micklegate	Sub-constable	-	Bailiff 1388

Name	Parish	Post	By 1380	Highest Civic Post Attained During Lifetime
Robert Tothe	St Martin, St Gregory & Holy Trinity, Micklegate	Sub-constable	-	Bailiff 1394
Simon de Quixlay	St John, Ouse Bridge	Constable	Bailiff 1375	Mayor 1381-3
Thomass de Staynlay	St John, Ouse Bridge	Sub-constable	Bailiff 1376	Mayor 1395
Richard de Taunton	St John, Ouse Bridge	Sub-constable	Chamberlain 1368	Bailiff 1373
Richard de Acastre	St John, Ouse Bridge	Sub-constable	Chamberlain 1367	Bailiff 1370
John de Kenley	All Saint's Pavement and St Peter-the-Little	Constable	Did not hold civic office	
William Redhede	All Saint's Pavement and St Peter-the-Little	Constable	Chamberlain 1378	Bailiff 1395
William de Pountfract	All Saint's Pavement and St Peter-the-Little	Constable	Bailiff 1380	Bailiff 1380
John de Doncastre	All Saint's Pavement and St Peter-the-Little	Constable	Free 1370	Bailiff 1390
William de Beverlay	All Saints, Northstreet	Constable	Bailiff 1353	Bailiff 1353
William Bell	All Saints, Northstreet	Sub-constable	Chamberlain 1374	Chamberlain 1374
John de Smethon	All Saints, Northstreet	Sub-constable	-	Chamberlain 1382
Roger de Selby	St Martin, Coney Street	Constable	Mayor 1369-70	Mayor 1369-70
Roger de Moreton	St Martin, Coney Street	Sub-constable	Mayor 1473	Mayor 1473
Adam de Misterton	St Martin, Coney Street	Sub-constable	Chamberlain 1379	Chamberlain 1379
Constantine del Dam	St Martin, Coney Street	Sub-constable	-	Bailiff 1383
Robert del Gare	St Michael-le-Belfry	Constable	Bailiff 1362	Bailiff 1362
William de Houyngham	St Michael-le-Belfry	Constable	Bailiff 1371	Bailiff 1371
William de Selby	St Michael-le-Belfry	Constable	Bailiff 1373	Mayor 1385 & 1387-8

Name	Parish	Post	By 1380	Highest Civic Post Attained During Lifetime
Richard Storour	St Michael-le-Belfry	Constable	Did not hold civic office	
John de Rypon	St Helen, Stonegate & St Wilfred	Constable	Bailiff 1356	Bailiff 1356
John Yole	St Helen, Stonegate & St Wilfred	Constable	Chamberlain 1364	Bailiff 1366
William de Leuesham	St Helen, Stonegate & St Wilfred	Constable	-	Chamberlain 1386
Thomas de Kilburn	St Helen, Stonegate & St Wilfred	Constable	-	Chamberlain 1383
Robert de Howom	Holy Trinity, Goodramgate & St John -del-Pyke	Constable	Mayor 1368	Mayor 1368
Richard de Waghen	Holy Trinity, Goodramgate & St John -del-Pyke	Sub-constable	Bailiff 1369	Bailiff 1369
Richard de Soureby	Holy Trinity, Goodramgate & St John -del-Pyke	Sub-constable	Did not hold civic office	
John de Seleby	Holy Trinity, Goodramgate & St John -del-Pyke	Sub-constable	Did not hold civic office	
John de Sheffeld	St Sampson, St Andrew and St Helen-in-the-Walls	Constable	Bailiff 1378	Bailiff 1378
William de Hensham	St Sampson, St Andrew and St Helen-in-the-Walls	Constable	Did not hold civic office	
Adam de Burton	St Sampson, St Andrew and St Helen-in-the-Walls	Constable	Did not hold civic office	
Hugo del Chartrot	St Sampson, St Andrew and St Helen-in-the-Walls	Constable	-	Bailiff 1393
John de Houeden	Holy Trinity, King's Square	Constable	Bailiff 1374	Mayor 1386
Walter de Frothyngham	Holy Trinity, King's Square	Constable	Did not hold civic office	
John de Chestre	Holy Trinity, King's Square	Constable	Did not hold civic office	
William de Tankerlay	Holy Trinity, King's Square	Constable	Did not hold civic office	
John de Westiby	Holy Trinity, King's Square	Constable	Did not hold civic office	
Roger de Moreton	St Saviour & St Cuthbert	Constable	Bailiff 1367	Mayor 1373

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Name	Parish	Post	By 1380	Highest Civic Post Attained During Lifetime
William de Burton	St Saviour & St Cuthbert	Sub-constable	Bailiff 1368	Bailiff 1368
Robert Duffeld	St Saviour & St Cuthbert	Sub-constable	Bailiff 1375	Bailiff 1375
John de Santon	St Crux	Constable	Mayor 1377	Mayor 1377
John de Berden	St Crux	Constable	Mayor 1378	Mayor 1378
William de Tykhill	St Crux	Sub-constable	Bailiff 1378	Bailiff 1378
John de Pathorn	St Crux	Sub-constable	Bailiff 1373	Bailiff 1378
Nicholas de Skelton	St Denys, St Margaret & St Lawrence	Constable	Did not hold civic office	
William de Dalton	St Denys, St Margaret & St Lawrence	Constable	Did not hold civic office	
Robert de Baynton	St Denys, St Margaret & St Lawrence	Constable	Did not hold civic office	
John de Cotyngwyrth	St Denys, St Margaret & St Lawrence	Constable	Did not hold civic office	
John de Willardby	St Denys, St Margaret & St Lawrence	Constable	Did not hold civic office	

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Appendix 6: Men Listed in the Parish Records of St Michael Spurriergate as having held the Post of Curchwarden during the Period 1518 to 1548.

Sources: Webb (ed.), *Accounts of St. Michael, Spurriergate*; Collins (ed.), *York Freeman's Register*; YCA, York Freeman's Register D1, fols. 209v, 298r-310r & 318r-320r.

Name of Churchwarden[1]	Date of Churchwardenship	Details of Civic Posts
Anthony Allen	1528, 1529, 1536	-
Thomas Appleyard	1539, 1540	Chamberlain 1536, Sheriff 1542, Mayor 1551
Richard Baitman	1519, 1520, 1526, 1527, 1530, 1531	Chamberlain 1534
Peter Ballard	1543, 1544	-
William Barker	1548	Commonness of name precludes accurate identification
George Kell	1518	-
Hugh Bunting	1517, 1525	Chamberlain 1528
John Cawdwell	1528, 1529, 1532	-
John Thornell	1548	-
William Colton	1548	Chamberlain 1548
Thomas Dawson	1533, 1534, 1535, 1537	Chamberlain 1516, Sheriff 1517
Nicholas Dixon	1536, 1537	-
Rolan Garth	1527, 1528	-

[1] To avoid confusion, the spelling of these names reflects the standardisation adopted by Webb in the index to his edition of the St Michael Spurriergate accounts.

Name	Years	Office
Thomas Glasyn	1520, 1522	-
Henry Golle	1522, 1523	Chamberlain 1537
William Grizdale	1540, 1541, 1542, 1545, 1546, 1547	-
William Gylman	1530, 1531	-
John Hardsong	1518, 1519	-
Robert Heckleton	1520, 1522, 1524, 1525, 1526, 1532, 1533, 1538	Chamberlain 1533, Sheriff 1535, Mayor 1543
John Hewetson	1535, 1536, 1540, 1541	Chamberlain 1537
Thomas Hewetson	1544, 1545, 1458	Chamberlain 1548
John Hodshon	1538, 1539	-
Richard Lelum	1523	-
John Lewys	1523, 1524, 1525, 1526, 1531, 1532, 1543, 1535, 1539, 1540, 1545, 1546, 1547	Chamberlain 1532, Sheriff 1536, Mayor 1550
Brian Lorde	1525, 1526, 1527	-
Thomas Medyllam	1517	-
John Metcalf	1530	-
Miles Middleton	1533, 1534, 1537	-
William Mynne	1538, 1539	-
Thomas Hopperton	1533, 1534	-
William Pereson	1544, 1545	Chamberlain 1545
William Pennyngton	1542, 1543	Chamberlain 1544
John Preston	1546, 1547	-

Name	Years	Notes
Richard Savage	1538, 1543, 1544	Chamberlain 1537, Sheriff 1540
Robert Smyth	1542, 1543, 1546, 1547	Chamberlain 1547
John Strynger	1522, 1523, 1527	-
Ralph Symson	1519, 1520	Bridge Master 1520, Chamberlain 1525, Sheriff 1529
William Thikpenny	1529, 1530, 1541	Chamberlain 1537
Thomas Thornton	1517	Chamberlain 1531, Sheriff 1539
James Walker	1517	-
William Watson	1524, 1537, 1541, 1542	Commonness of name precludes accurate identification
John Wirrall	1518	-
John Wright	1518, 1519, 1524, 1535, 1536	Chamberlain 1527

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